

The Truth About God, and its Relevance for a Good Life in Society

The Proceedings of the XI Plenary Session
17-19 June 2011



*Homo habet naturalem inclinationem ad hoc quod veritatem
cognoscat de Deo, et ad hoc quod in societate vivat (ST 1-2.94.2)*

DOCTOR COMMUNIS

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VATICAN CITY 2012

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The opinions expressed with absolute freedom during the presentation of the papers of this meeting, although published by the Academy, represent only the points of view of the participants and not those of the Academy.

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In the Second Part of the *Summa Theologica* St Thomas considers man, impelled by Grace, in his aspiration to know and love God in order to be happy in time and in eternity. First of all the Author presents the theological principles of moral action, studying how, in the free choice of the human being to do good acts, reason, will and passions are integrated, to which is added the power given by God's Grace through the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as the help offered by moral law. Hence the human being is a dynamic being who seeks himself, seeks to become himself, and, in this regard, seeks to do actions that build him up, that make him truly man; and here the moral law comes into it. Grace and reason itself, the will and the passions enter too. On this basis St Thomas describes the profile of the man who lives in accordance with the Spirit and thus becomes an image of God.

Benedict XVI, *General Audience*, 23 June 2010



San Tommaso d'Aquino, opera di San Giovanni da Fiesole detto Beato Angelico, *Crocifissione e patriarchi, santi e beati* (particolare), sala del capitolo, museo di San Marco, Firenze, dipinto murale, 1441-1442.

St Thomas Aquinas by Fra Angelico (Giovanni da Fiesole), *Crucifixion* (detail), Chapter House, San Marco, Florence, fresco 1441-1442.





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Introduction

After the ninth plenary session of the Academy, it was decided to dedicate two plenary sessions to the consideration of *ST* 1-2.94.2. The tenth plenary session (June, 2010) considered the ‘naturalness’ of the natural law, with a special attention to Ulpian’s definition of natural law as ‘quod natura omnia animalia docuit’.

For the eleventh plenary session, the idea is to consider (human) nature as connected more strictly with reason, with special attention to what Thomas says in *ST* 1-2.94.2 about man’s inclination to know the truth about God and to live peaceably in society.

It is hoped that the first day (afternoon/evening) of the eleventh session can set the tone for – and clarify the major theme of – the entire session.

Saturday’s discussion would first treat issues having to do with our knowledge of God; it would then move on to life in society. Regarding the first, it is important to understand that it is part of human rationality itself to seek to know the truth about God. The relationship, however, between our rational nature and our ultimate end has been a source of much controversy in twentieth century philosophy and theology, so it is imperative to address this issue, as well. A closely connected theme is the place in religion of the knowledge of God. For many contemporary thinkers, the serious study of religion concerns only religious experience, understood either as a personal or a sociological phenomenon. Regarding the second theme, an important issue in our contemporary pluralistic society is whether the proper organization of political society is a good connected in a direct manner with reason itself (and so with human nature) or whether it is instrumental to man’s achieving fulfillment in the attainment of other human goods. What is the role of government in promoting social virtue? The day would conclude with a panel discussion regarding these same themes.

The final day’s (morning’s) discussion would be about, not so much political society, but rather culture itself and religion’s historical role in it.

Programme

► FRIDAY, 17 JUNE

- 15:30 *Word of Welcome*
Msgr. Prof. Lluís Clavell President of the Academy
- 15:45 Prof. Terence Kennedy
The Relationship Between the Human Inclination 'ad hoc veritatem cognoscat de Deo' and 'ad hoc quod in societate vivat'
- 16:15 *Discussion*
- 16:45 Prof. Horst Seidl
On 'Natural Virtue' According to Aristotle and St Thomas, in Comparison with Kant
- 17:15 *Discussion*
- 17:45 Break
- 18:15 Prof. Stephen L. Brock
The Distinctiveness of the Natural Inclinations Proper to Man in Summa theologiae 1-2.94.2
- 18:45 *Discussion*
- 19:15 Prof. Ricardo Ferrara
Inclinación natural a conocer la verdad acerca de Dios (ST I-II 94, 2c)
- 19:45 *Discussion*
- 20:15 *General Discussion*
- 20:30 Dinner at the Casina Pio IV

► SATURDAY, 18 JUNE

- 9:00 Prof. Charles Morerod
Man's Need to Know the Ultimate Cause of All Things
- 9:30 *Discussion*
- 10:00 H.Em. Card. Georges M.M. Cottier
The Natural/Supernatural Distinction and its Connection with Man's Natural Inclination to Know the Truth About God
- 10:30 *Discussion*
- 11:00 Break
- 11:30 Prof. Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti
Religion and Science as Inclinations Toward the Search for a Global Meaning

- 12:00 *Discussion*
- 12:30 Prof. John M. Finnis
Social Virtues and the Common Good
- 13:00 *Discussion*
- 13:30 Lunch at the Casina Pio IV
- 15:00 Prof. John M. Finnis, Prof. Lawrence Dewan, Prof. Russell Hittinger
Panel Discussion on the Nature of the Political Good
- 16:00 *General Discussion*
- 16:30 Prof. Vittorio Possenti
The Secular State and Religion's Contribution to the Good Society
- 17:00 *Discussion*
- 17:30 Break
- 18:00 *Closed Session*
- 18:30 *Council Meeting*
- 19:30 Dinner at the Casina Pio IV

► **SUNDAY, 19 JUNE**

- 8:00 *Holy Mass presided over by H.Em. Card. Giovanni Battista Re, 'Mater Ecclesiae' Monastery (Largo del Monastero, Vatican City), Sisters of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary*
- 9:00 Prof. Maria Celestina Donadío Maggi de Gandolfi
The Natural and the Historic in the Determination of Social Morality
- 9:30 *Discussion*
- 10:00 Prof. Angelo Campodonico
Culture and Religion
- 10:30 *Discussion*
- 11:00 Break
- 11:30 Msgr. Peter B. Wells
Religion and Society in a Secularized Age
- 12:00 *Discussion*
- 12:30 *Concluding Remarks* by Prof. Lluís Clavell and Prof. Kevin L. Flannery
- 13:30 Lunch at the Casina Pio IV

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“THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD” AND THE NATURAL HUMAN INCLINATIONS

■ TERENCE KENNEDY

The present Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XVI has often drawn attention to the fading of the awareness of God in contemporary culture. With the process of secularisation God seems to be given less access to public space in society. This issue is the crucial challenge for the “new evangelization” and no doubt inspired the choice of topic for this meeting on the third human inclination: “The truth about God and its relevance for a good life in society”. The argument of this essay begins with a dilemma: how is it that while natural law stems from the Stoics St. Thomas Aquinas hardly mentions them in this context? Yet they did contribute, particularly to the classification of the inclinations. St. Thomas added “the truth about God” to their classification and so transformed the conception of the inclinations and of natural law itself. The conclusion is that “the truth about God” is part of natural law and is needed to interpret it correctly.

I. The Enigma of Stoicism in St. Thomas

It is a *locus communis* in the history of philosophy that Stoicism invented the theory of the natural law and that its impact on later formulations both ancient and modern has been continuous and profound. This is equally true for medieval philosophy and theology. Commenting on the thousand year long interaction between Stoic and Christian thought Gérard Verbeke asserts that, “three *fundamental* Stoic notions have deeply influenced medieval philosophy and theology. These notions are *synderesis*, *conscience* and *natural law*”.¹ The Church Fathers in particular purified and refined such notions over the centuries, making them available to mainstream Christian thought. Cicero might be considered a test case. St. Thomas usually welcomed his Stoic theories about justice and the virtues but not without modification. The classical scholar E.K. Rand noted how Cicero’s vocabulary particularly in the *De Officiis* is woven through the *Summa Theologiae*’s fabric, with the remarkable exception of the questions on fate and providence where “St.

¹ Gérard Verbeke, *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1983, 70.

Thomas apparently finds an opponent in Tully”.² Myrto Dragona-Monachou is even more outspoken in “St. Thomas Aquinas’ Prejudiced Silence on Stoicism in *Summa Theologica*”.³ He believes that St. Thomas strove not to mention the Stoics by name deliberately although they had fixed the terms for debate. St. Thomas explicitly repudiated the astronomical idea of fate while referring to them anonymously. “So therefore we can admit that fate exists in the sense that everything happening on earth is the subject of divine providence in that it is ordained by the latter and, as it were, fore-spoken. The doctors of the Church however, avoided using this word *fate* because of those who twisted the term into meaning a force deriving from the position of the stars” (S.T. I. q. 116, a. 1). Gérard Verbeke has examined the question of “fatalism and freedom”⁴ at length with special emphasis on Nemesius. St. Thomas clarified his position by supplying the metaphysical foundations required. In S.T. I. q. 116⁵ he examines the point in contention in the light of S.T. I. q. 22. He resolved the problem of fate by positing an adequate distinction between Providence as God’s plan for the world and its actual execution in events that fall under God’s governance. The Stoics, having collapsed providence into fate, lacked the means to make this distinction. St. Thomas habitually appealed to Christian Neoplatonists or the Fathers of the Eastern Church so as to overcome the metaphysical opposition between, “Stoic materialistic monism...the immanence of the corporeal Stoic God and the Christian divine transcendence”.⁶ As regards law he appealed to St. Augustine’s conception of the eternal law as the ultimate point of reference to fill the vacuum left by the Stoics.

Just as in S.T. I. q.116 he accorded the Stoics no accolades so in the law tract he afforded them no explicit recognition for inventing the idea of natural law as historians would have done. Indeed he employed Stoic sources

² E.K. Rand, *Cicero in the Courtroom of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 1946, 32.

³ Myrto Dragona-Monachou, “St. Thomas Aquinas’ Prejudiced Silence on Stoicism in *Summa Theologica*” in *Tommaso d’Aquino nella storia del pensiero II: dal medioevo ad oggi*, Edizioni Domenicane Italiane, Napoli 1974, 43-8.

⁴ Gérard Verbeke, “Fatalism and Freedom according to Nemesius and Saint Thomas” in *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, Canada 1974, 283-313.

⁵ The English citations are from the 60 volume Blackfriars’ edition of St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London 1963-1976. The notes give the original Latin for other works.

⁶ Myrto Dragon-Monachou, 43.

spasmodically but any systematic appreciation of their worth is conspicuously wanting. This discrete “putting aside” by St. Thomas contradicts our expectations and calls for some explanation. The obvious conclusion would be that his stance on Providence in S.T. I. q. 116 has had a distant, long range and surreptitious effect here so that the law tract should be read with this perspective in mind. St. Thomas himself reinforced this impression when he stated that “the world is ruled by Providence and this we have shown in the *Prima Pars*” (S.T. I-II. q. 91, a. 1c). Further, “the Eternal Law is the idea in divine Providence” (S.T. I-II. q. 93, a. 4. obj. 3) and “the whole universe is subject to the Eternal Law”, so that non-rational creatures are also “moved by divine Providence” (S.T. I-II. q. 93, a. 5c). But even this does not completely resolve the enigma and lay to rest the question of whether Stoic sources are present or not, and whether they support his account of natural law.

II. The Stoics’ Silent Contribution

Scholars do not doubt the great significance of the idea of inclination for Stoic ethics. “According to the Stoics *oikeiosis* is the starting point for the moral life”.⁷ Following nature by living according to reason meant precisely finding what was appropriate for human beings. The Stoic *oikeiosis* corresponded to the medieval *synderesis* which expresses the content, meaning and orientation of the fundamental human inclination to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. It probably inspired St. Thomas’s concept of connaturality as what is naturally related to a *finis* outside itself, where a subject can realise its full identity. *Oikeiosis* can then be defined as what is properly part of oneself, that to which one is well disposed in the sense of belonging to one’s household. Its common translation into English is as “affinity”, i.e., everything that makes human existence distinctly human in contradistinction from other species. Therefore it is something for which one spontaneously experiences affection as being appropriate and so endearing. It does not have to imply either possession or necessarily a relationship of mutuality. It stands in opposition to what is alien, that to which one is not well disposed and so it is not “dear” to the self. *Oikeiosis* is a universal notion that can be realised in various forms, all of them predisposed by universal Nature.

S.G. Pembroke highlights an image favoured by Stoic authors: that of man as standing at the centre of a series of concentric circles. Affection for the self, the impulse to self-preservation, stations the human subject at the

⁷ Gérard Verbeke, *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought*, 55.

centre–point. The circles extend to children, parents, the wider family, and acquaintances that one makes in the course of life. The whole human race, the *cosmopolis* marks its outermost perimeter. From the centre the instinctive tendency to preserve one’s being and identity radiates out to permeate all the other circles, joining them to the centre. Relationships to others are governed by *logos* and so are subject to human decision.

Pembroke explains that “‘what the *telos* is’ sets out three distinct kinds of *oikeiosis*”.⁸ Each of the concentric circles pulls inwards toward the centre where they all combine in the human subject. Cicero and Seneca call this *constitutio*. What a being is results from participating in the various *oikeiosis* that make it up, composed as it were by Nature with which it is identified. Thus the definition of an entity, its nature and characteristic way of functioning, is given in terms of the orders to which it belongs and is inserted by Nature. Humans in this conception pertain to the cosmos (the cosmological order), to the biosphere (the vital order of living beings), and to the spiritual realm (the rational order) animated by the *logos* that spans the whole universe. Stoicism divinised the universe, spreading it out, as it were, on a flat surface, the universal *logos* infusing the various orders with varying intensity.

III. Classifying the Inclinations

The most likely source for the classification of distinct inclinations is Cicero’s *De Officiis*; “Nature has endowed every species of living creature with the instinct of self-preservation. . . . A common property of all creatures is also the reproductive instinct (the purpose of which is the propagation of the species). . . . Nature likewise by the power of reason associates man with man in the common bonds of speech and life; . . . Above all, the search after truth and its eager pursuit are peculiar to man . . .”.⁹ One cannot help noticing a certain flatness or sameness in this vision where everything is suffused with the divinising *logos* defined as Nature, an immanent force permeating the whole. Such flatness allows no space for an adequate distinction between God’s Providence and its execution in actual events. The Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* corrected this vision, gave it depth and a third dimension, setting it apart from God as Lord of creation.

⁸ S.G. Pembroke, “Oikeiōsis” in *Problems in Stoicism*, A.A. Long (ed.), The Athlone Press, London 1971, 126.

⁹ Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, 4, 11–14, trans. W. Miller, Loeb ed. (1968), 12–7. Citation from J-P. Torrell, O.P., *St. Thomas*, vol. 2., *Spiritual Master*, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 2003, 286, no. 36.

Father Jean-Pierre Torrell points out how antiquity's inheritance entered into the Church's intellectual life. The following comment reveals some interesting background information on S.T. I-II. q. 94, a. 2. "But we should also note how it is common possession of human nature that inclines man to live in society; by underscoring three times that there is a *communicatio* at the base of each *inclinatio*, Thomas finds here the *koinônia* postulated by Aristotle as the starting-point of all social amity".¹⁰ St. Thomas welcomed these Stoic insights and expounded them with the help of Aristotelian logic.

Both he and Father Pinckaers¹¹ point out what has gone unnoticed here, namely, Aquinas considered himself the direct heir of the ancient world. This is obvious in the case of Aristotle. As regards natural law, however, he depends on the Stoics in a special but tacit way. St. Thomas echoes the citation from Cicero's *De Officiis*, making the Roman orator leap to mind as the author of his conception of the natural inclinations.¹² These are the original expression of the demands of the natural law. They were employed later to justify moral norms and to found theories of natural and of human rights which, in most cases, can be traced back historically to a common ancestor in Cicero. What sets St. Thomas' list in S.T. I-II. q. 94, a. 2 apart from Cicero's is that he adds "the truth about God" to the third inclination. That makes the decisive difference.

IV. The Importance of "The Truth about God"

Beginning with the mystery of the revealed God St. Thomas in fact reworked the traditional definitions of the inclinations and their bearing on natural law. The *Index Thomisticus* registers three concentrations of texts in the *Prima Pars* that furnish the presuppositions for their treatment in the *Prima Secundae*. St. Thomas deviated from the established mentality of his period which was juridic, working from both civil and canonical sources. He clung to a theological method that focused everything on God. The first concentration is in questions 59 and 60. He starts with the theology of creation to manifest how God diffuses his goodness into the whole universe giving every being the appetite appropriate to its nature, beginning with the angels. "For all things emanate from the divine will, and consequently each and every thing has its own distinctive appetite for goodness" (q. 59, a. 1c). He analysed inclination as an appetite seeking its proper good. In *De*

¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol 2: *Spiritual Master*, 286.

¹¹ Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *Sources of Christian Ethics*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1995, 405.

¹² See J-P. Torrell, 286.

Veritate, q. 22. a. 12 he adds that, “Inclination is the disposition of the agent according to which it acts efficaciously”.¹³ This concept is analogous and defines an agent’s nature from its form. Its form determines its appetite to love as either natural, or animal, or properly spiritual when it seeks its ultimate good in God. In the second concentration, questions 78 through 83, St. Thomas applied this general theory of appetite to his anthropology. The three orders of participative *communicatio* mentioned above, natural, sensitive and rational converge in the human person (Cf. q. 80, a. 1c). The will tends to good as such and so is necessitated by happiness as its final end. Being inclined to the good seen as good by the intellect is regarded as the most perfect way of being inclined. Lastly, the questions following 103 focus on God’s governance of the world through the inclinations he has impressed in creatures (Cf. q. 103, a. 8). The fundamental axiom is: “the end of a thing corresponds with its origin” (S.T. I. 103. a. 2c).¹⁴ While each being has its proper appetite and inclination, man’s inclination to happiness includes natural, vital and spiritual tendencies. God, however, is the origin and end, Alpha and Omega of the whole universe in which man is inserted. His wise government brings it back to himself, moving it purposefully through the inclinations he has inscribed in it. Here is the bridge connecting the *Prima Pars* with the law tract in the *Prima Secundae*.

St. Thomas introduces a pivotal distinction into the argument at this point. The universe has its own proper end, intrinsic and immanent to itself. But the ultimate end is extrinsic and so transcends the universe’s limited good. “Since ... its origin is a reality beyond the whole universe, namely God himself, its end is also some transcendent good” (q. 103, a. 2c). The particular end for humans as part of the universe is precisely to form a human society and to live in peace among themselves (Cf. q. 60, a. 5). They are social beings characterised by the inclination to seek their common good together. Sometimes this is further specified as the inclination to form a community of peoples and nations, the *ius gentium*.¹⁵ The good of the whole universe is, however, the universal good (a. 2). St. Thomas then asks if the universe has one ruler and argues that “as all things desire their good, so also they desire that unity without which they cannot exist. The conclusion is that unity or peace is the aim intended by the ruler of any group”

¹³ “Inclinatio autem est dispositio moventis secundum quod efficiens movet”.

¹⁴ “Cum finis respondeat principio...”

¹⁵ See St. Thomas’s *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, V. lect. 12. Also Dario Composta, “Le inclinaciones naturales e il diritto naturale in S. Tommaso D’Aquino” in *Studi Tomistici* 4, Città Nuova, Roma 1974, 40-53.

(q. 103, a. 3c). God governs the universe according to the nature and the inclinations he has impressed in each created being. "For every act is fitted to the subject whose act it is ... some beings are autonomous agents, having control over their own acts; these are governed by God not only in their being moved by him working interiorly in them, but also by their being drawn toward the good and restrained from evil through commandments and prohibitions, rewards and punishments" (ad 2um.). God promulgates his law to the universe, but in a specific way to humans that they may achieve the goods to which they are inclined consciously and deliberately. He established society as a real secondary cause, governing it immediately and giving it the task of executing his Providence with autonomy by choosing genuine goods freely and responsibly.

V. Natural Law and "The Truth about God"

St. Augustine incorporated the ancient world's conceptions of law and morality under Eternal Law, thus reconciling them with the Christian God. The concentric vision of the Stoics has now been structured as a hierarchy of laws where God governs all. St. Thomas took St. Augustine's effort further by assimilating the Stoic tradition in a new manner by illustrating how God ordered this hierarchy from outside, that is, precisely as its transcendent end. God gave humanity different types of law so as to instruct and educate it about his purposes in history. "Since all things are regulated and measured by Eternal Law ... it is evident that all somehow share in it, in that their tendencies to their own proper acts and ends are from its impression" (S.T. I-II. q. 91, a. 2c). The rational creature participates in Eternal Law by exercising providence over its life. "Accordingly it is clear that natural law is nothing other than the sharing in the Eternal Law by intelligent creatures" ... "the impression of the divine light on us" (S.T. I-II. q. 91, a. 2c). Reason can thereby participate in the Eternal Law but only imperfectly and in its own manner. As regards human law it does not have "proper knowledge of every single truth which divine wisdom comprehends". So practical reason grasps "some general principles without knowing all individual directives" of the Eternal Law (S.T. I-II. q. 93, a. 3 ad 1um). Natural law then consists in principles that can be grasped only as universal propositions in this general sense. By clearly distinguishing various types of law St. Thomas avoided the following dilemma. Either natural law can be over-sacralising as in the pantheistic vision that hypnotized the Stoics. They leveled all reality down, fusing it on one plane where everything that was good became divine. The other alternative was to deny every reference to God and to "cut out" the transcendent dimension relating to "the Other". This occurs in modern

atheism and processes of secularization that corrode religious values and convictions. Therefore “the truth about God” is necessary to gain a correct understanding of natural law and its implications.

For St. Thomas the human person is a microcosm that participates in the three orders composing the universe; the cosmic, the biological and the spiritual realms. That God is the transcendent *telos* for the whole universe means that each order is at the service of the one immediately above it beginning with the lowest. At the rational level this service is no longer rendered automatically or instrumentally but is freely given because man exercises dominion over his decisions as the “principle agent”.¹⁶ It is man’s nature to strive to bring the dynamism of the inclinations to fullness for the good of the person. Since each order incorporates the one below, practical reason formulates the first principles of its activity following the order of the inclinations. *Bonum est faciendum et prosequendum et malum vitandum* is the supreme precept governing all practical thinking. It includes all the other precepts that are known naturally as specifically human and inherently rational. These become manifest immediately because the divine light’s shining in the human intellect empowers it to distinguish between good and evil for itself.¹⁷

The three inclinations embraced by natural law are all ways of acting according to reason. The highest is the third which identifies reason as what makes us specifically and authentically human. Without it the others really would not make sense as human inclinations. And so practical reason embraces, integrates and incorporates the cosmic and biological orders within the unity of the human person. Reason conceives the goods to which the inclinations tend as ends that define and so constitute them as such. These ends are necessary for the human person to bring its desire for happiness to fulfillment. They are the first principles of human action and we know them as the first principles of natural law. Quite a few authors believe that here is a case of knowing by connaturality or “cognitio per inclinationem”, listening, as it were, to the inner resonance or harmony of *natura ut ratio*. This would provide a source of knowledge not grasped by and superior to dry pure rationality. Jacques Maritain popularised an analogy with mystical knowledge, the affective illuminations overflowing from the gift of wisdom,

¹⁶ *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book III: Providence, (Part II), chapter 112, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN. 1975, 115. The argument of this chapter is, “That rational creatures are governed for their own sake while others are governed in subordination to them”.

¹⁷ This involves the activity of the *intellectus agens* and so does not imply an illuminist theory of knowing.

intuitive knowledge through love. While this was a healthy response to rationalism at that time it threatened to lift the natural inclinations out of the natural order, without perceiving their inherent rationality. In his classic text on natural law St. Thomas never mentions either connaturality or knowledge by inclination. Instead he identifies natural law with the principles of human action "naturally known" (q. 91, a. 2 ad 2um).

The only text cited as parallel to S.T. I-II. q. 94, a. 2. is IV Sent. dist XXXIII, q. 1, a. 1. There St. Thomas asserts that the intellect's "cognitio naturalis" accompanies the "inclinatio naturalis" of the will and that the two are inseparable, functioning, as it were, in synergy.¹⁸ Ultimately such knowledge leads back to God as the origin and end of all human inclinations. The references to the principles of natural law as "naturally known", also assert that they are self-evident (Cf. q. 94, a. 2, and *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8c).¹⁹ The reason given is that these inclinations have been impressed by God into human nature from the Eternal law. In other words God wants to communicate the principles for distinguishing between good and evil actions in an unmistakable and infallible way. The distinction of eternal and natural law as measure and measured makes it possible to see these principles are naturally known and so self-evident (Cf. q. 91, a. 2 and 6).

VI. "The Truth about God" as Lawgiver

The text of S.T. I-II. q. 94, a. 2, as far as I can ascertain, is the only one where the third specifically human inclination is spelt out precisely in terms of seeking for the truth about God and of living in society. This formulation appears to be unique in the history of natural law, though each term may often be found separately. "The truth about God" penetrates all of St. Thomas's thought both theologically and philosophically. The inclinations then become more than just the way humans communicate in the predetermined orders of creation. That would fit a Stoic approach. More importantly, they are also the way God communicates with humanity as its origin and end. They have been radically personalized and express God's free choice in creating *ex nihilo*. The object of the intellect is being, and the object connatural to the human intellect is the being of material things. This

¹⁹ "Inviolabilem veritatem (intuemur) in sui similitudinem, quae est menti nostrae impressa, in quantum aliqua naturaliter cognoscimus ut per se nota" (*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8c).

¹⁸ For a discussion of "cognitio per inclinationem" see Marco D'Avenia, *La conoscenza per connaturalità in S. Tommaso D'Aquino*, Edizioni Studium Domenicano, Bologna 1992, 195-204.

means that the one good, the unique *telos* that can satisfy the will's desire for happiness has to be discovered. Although God's existence is *per se* or self evident *in se* it is not *quoad nos*, for we acquire knowledge of it by reasoning from the effects of God's creative and salvific action. The inclination toward the truth makes us aware of his presence to creation in a confused and obscure way. The conviction that "God exists is naturally implanted in us, insofar, that is, as God is man's happiness" (S.T. I. q. 2, a. 1 ad 1). In his *Commentary on the Romans* St. Thomas says that people are aware of this tendency to know God; "They know him as the final end, to which all tends" (no. 117).²⁰ Implicitly, perhaps unawares, they seek God naturally, "just as to see that someone is approaching, is not to see that Peter is, although it is Peter who is approaching" (S.T. I. q. 2, a. 1 ad 1).

The precepts following on knowledge of God's existence appear not to be on the same level as the first or most common principles of practical reason. They are so close to these principles, however, that they must have been derived from them and so pertain to natural law.²¹ In his *Commentary on the Romans* St. Thomas expounds an unavoidable consequence in St. Paul's thinking. There is no excuse for not knowing God and not taking his existence onto account in a practical way, since adults enjoy the light of reason and can exercise this power implanted in the human mind by God at creation. This implies that God has to be acknowledged, given his place and worshipped in society, and not just known speculatively or in theory. Since the practical intellect naturally reaches out to God, ignorance that avoids acknowledging him cannot be excused. Such ignorance causes moral fault, obscuring the human mind and depriving it of the light by which it can judge between true and false in human actions. But, "That the first fault was not from ignorance, is shown by the fact that having knowledge of God they did not use it for good" (no. 127).²² In St. Paul's logic when reason is violated in this way impiety and injustice spread and our knowledge of God becomes uncertain. The effects of opposing the natural inclination to virtue multiply in the human community and put man's relationship to God and neighbour radically out of order.

The natural law posits a positive precept to love God and one's neighbour as oneself. This precept connects the truth about God with life in society

²⁰ "Cognoverunt Deum sicut ultimum finem, in quem omnia tendunt".

²¹ Kevin Flannery, S.J., *Acts amid Precepts*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2001, 43-4.

²² "Quod autem prima eorum culpa non fuerit ex ignorantia, ostenditur per hoc quod Dei cognitionem habentes ea non sunt usi ad bonum".

without confusing them. "These two are primary and common precepts of the natural law, self evident to human reason, whether by nature or by faith. Consequently, all the precepts of the Decalogue are related to them as conclusions to general principles" (S.T. I-II. q. 100, a. 3, ad 1). And St. Thomas adds, "But the moral precepts derive their efficacy from the very dictate of natural reason, even if they were never included in the Law. . . . Some are most certain, and so evident as to need no promulgation. Such as the commandments of the love of God and our neighbour, and others like these ... which are, as it were the ends of the commandments" (S.T. I-II. q. 100, a. 11c). Regarding grace St. Thomas asks a question relevant to our concerns: can we by nature love God above all things? He replies, "Yes!" "Now to love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational. Now it is manifest that the good of the part is for the good of the whole. Hence each particular thing, by its natural appetite or love, loves its own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe, which is God" (S.T. I-II. q. 109, a. 3c, and Cf. S.T. I. 60, a. 3).

Of course, charity is needed to put natural law into practice efficaciously as God draws and guides us toward beatitude. Natural law, although impressed in us by the divine light, cannot guarantee its own activation and successful putting into practice. Another gift of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, is called for. "Something may be inward to man as though added on to nature by the gift of grace. It is in this sense that the New Law is inward to man; it not only points out to him what he should do, but assists him actually to do it" (S.T. I-II. q. 106, a. 1 ad 2).²³

Conclusion

We may conclude that the third human inclination satisfies the criteria set out in the definition of law in S.T. I-II. q. 90: a rule of reason, given by an authority, for the common good, and promulgated. This definition is usually applied to life in society in all its forms while "the truth about God" is often forgotten or simply put aside. In St. Thomas' account of the inclinations only the third names "the truth about God" as lawgiver explicitly. Through this inclination the desire to know who God really is and to encounter him personally finds its voice within his plan of salvation. We are thereby challenged to ask: where might natural law lead when God is acknowledged as the beginning and end of human existence?

²³ "Alio modo est aliquid inditum homini quasi naturae superadditum per gratiae donum, et hoc modo lex nova est indita homini, non solum indicans quid sit faciendum, sed etiam adiuvans ad implemendum".

SULLA “VIRTÙ NATURALE” SECONDO ARISTOTELE E S. TOMMASO, IN CONFRONTO CON KANT

■ HORST SEIDL

1. L’etica tradizionale aristotelico-tomista come etica delle virtù

L’etica tradizionale, che consideriamo in Aristotele e S. Tommaso, è esposta a un doppio fraintendimento. Come etica delle virtù sembra offrire meri ideali astratti, lontani dalla vita concreta, il che, però, non è vero perché la tradizione parla anche di una virtù naturale nell’uomo concreto. Ma questa rischia, di nuovo, di essere fraintesa nel senso naturalistico che toglie dall’etica il carattere normativo. Il presente tema mi permette di rispondere a tali problemi, rivolgendomi ad alcuni testi in Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea*, e in S. Tommaso, *Summa theologiae*, I-II.

a. Punto di partenza: la questione del bene morale, il fine ultimo della prassi e della vita

Il libro I dell’*Ethica Nicomachea* parte dalle molteplici azioni umane, in quanto sono qualificate come moralmente buone a motivo dei loro diversi fini speciali. Dato che non tutti i fini hanno la stessa importanza, ma gli uni sono subordinati agli altri, sorge la questione di un ultimo fine, al quale tutti gli altri sono subordinati, mentre esso non più a nessun altro. Aristotele, dopo una serie di argomenti, lo definisce infine come “l’attività dell’anima secondo virtù” che corrisponde alla più alta facoltà dell’anima, alla ragione (I, 6, 1098a 16-18).

Per il nostro tema interessa il fondamento antropologico della definizione perché presuppone la natura dell’uomo come costituito da corpo e anima. Quest’ultima ha di nuovo tre principi di vita: il vegetativo, il sensitivo e l’intellettuale. Inoltre, l’inizio del capitolo menziona anche il fondamento metafisico, indicando il bene – secondo una tesi già esistente e qui citata – come ciò cui tutto aspira: ἀγαθὸν οὗ πάντ’ ἐφίεται, 1094a 3. Si noti che l’espressione parla di “tutto” (πάντα), non di “tutti”, riguardando non solo gli uomini ma tutte le cose naturali, indirizzate al bene metafisico. Negli uomini a questo indirizzo metafisico si aggiunge un indirizzo naturale al bene morale.

S. Tommaso ha integrato questa dottrina aristotelica nella sua *Summa theol.* I-II che, prima della teologia morale, tratta dell’etica filosofica, basata

sulla natura dell'uomo, costituito dal corpo e dall'anima razionale. (Si veda q. 6 sulla volontà, q. 12 sulla intenzione della ragione pratica).

L'argomento susseguente (1094a 18-22) contro un regresso in infinito dei fini intermedi tra la volontà e il fine ultimo, si basa sull'evidenza che i fini intermedi sono oggetto della volontà soltanto grazie al fine ultimo, che è l'unico oggetto della volontà proprio e vero, il bene morale. Tolto questo la volontà stessa viene tolta, il che è impossibile per il semplice fatto della volontà e del volere negli uomini. Quindi, il rapporto naturale della volontà con il bene, sia metafisico che morale, in senso generale come fine ultimo, è un presupposto fondante delle singole azioni morali con i fini speciali.

b. Volontà naturale del bene

Nei libri seguenti Aristotele si dedica alle virtù, prima introducendo la distinzione tra le virtù di abitudine, come per es. la giustizia, la forza, la temperanza, nella quale le passioni sono disciplinate sotto la guida della ragione, e due virtù della stessa ragione, cioè prudenza e sapienza. La virtù di abitudine viene definita, nel libro II, come "abito dell'anima di proposito" che tiene il mezzo tra estremi stati delle passioni, di eccesso e di mancanza, come lo determina la ragione (II, 6, 1107b 36-1108a 2). Il libro III definisce, sempre attraverso dettagliata argomentazione, il volontario e il proposito, che sono parti integranti delle virtù, per arrivare poi alle definizioni di una serie di virtù di abitudine.

L'argomentazione sul proposito (*προαίρεσις*) conduce a considerazioni che riguardano anche il fondamento naturale dell'etica. Infatti, al proponimento, che inizia l'azione, precede la deliberazione che motiva la volontà verso l'azione, cosicché il proponimento è definito come "volontà con deliberazione" ossia come "deliberazione con volontà" (III, 5, 1113a 9-12, cfr. VI 2, 1139b 4-5). Ora, mentre la deliberazione considera i mezzi per i fini, gli stessi fini devono essere dati per ogni azione, e almeno un fine ultimo come il bene morale di cui il libro I ha trattato. La volontà deve essere già indirizzata a questo bene.

Quindi sorge la questione se la volontà sia rivolta al "bene in sé", o al "bene come appare a ciascuno" (II 6, 1113a 15 seg.). Tuttavia entrambe le tesi risultano in conseguenze inaccettabili. Se solo il bene è voluto, secondo la prima tesi che è di Platone, allora chi ha scelto il male, non lo ha voluto del tutto, mentre è innegabile che egli ha scelto, voluto e fatto il male. Se, al contrario, ciò che ciascuno vuole è soltanto un bene come gli appare, allora non sarà più nessun bene oggettivo, "voluto per natura" (III 6, 1113a 21 *φύσει βουλευτόν*), il che, però, non si può escludere. Aristotele poi risolve il dilemma, differenziando riguardo al soggetto agente tra il virtuoso e il

vizioso: è vero che ciascuno possa agire soltanto secondo il bene come glielo appaia, ma nel virtuoso il bene soggettivo, come glielo appare, è consona con il bene oggettivo, mentre nel vizioso c'è dissonanza tra l'uno e l'altro.

Quindi nella tesi platonica che nessuno vuole fare il male c'è qualcosa del vero e del falso. Certamente gli individui seguono il bene come appare loro soggettivamente che può essere oggettivamente cattivo. Ciò nondimeno tutti sono dotati della volontà, indirizzata per natura sua al bene, come proprio oggetto, nel senso generale oggettivo. Questo bene oggettivo si manifesta già nel volere della semplice esistenza, voluta naturalmente da ciascuno per se stesso e per altrui, con il desiderio naturale di una vita felice, accompagnata da una benevolenza vicendevole.

S. Tommaso, *Summa theol.* I-II, più volte rileva una “naturale inclinazione” (*naturalis inclinatio*) della volontà al bene (q. 1, a. 2c; q. 6, a. 4c; q. 8, a. 1c), nonché della “naturale notizia” (*naturalis notitia, naturalis cognitio*) dell'intelletto riguardo al bene (q. 5, a. 5c). Si veda inoltre *De veritate*:

La volontà inclina naturalmente al bene come al suo oggetto. Il fatto che talvolta inclina al male, accade soltanto perché le viene presentato il male sotto l'apparenza di un bene (*sub specie boni*); infatti il male non viene voluto (per sé)... (q. 24, a. 8. Cf. *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3).

Il testo in *Summa theol.* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, offre una concezione complessiva delle inclinazioni naturali, considerandole a tre livelli: a quello di tutte le cose naturali, quello degli animali e quello dell'intelletto umano. A mio parere Tommaso non usa tre diverse concezioni di “inclinazione naturale”, bensì una concezione con tre significati analoghi; infatti è sempre la natura che si presenta ai tre livelli, anche se analogamente in tre diversi gradi. Nell'uomo si trovano tutte le tre inclinazioni, grazie alla sua complessa natura che comprende analogamente sia la realtà corporale e animale che quella intellettuale. Contro un grave frainteso naturalistico vorrei sottolineare che Tommaso parla della “inclinazione naturale” non solo riguardo a quelle sensuali, ma per analogia altrettanto a quella della volontà intellettuale. Mentre la sensualità inclina al bene fisico, cioè la conservazione della vita e la propagazione, la volontà inclina al bene intellettuale morale.

Le espressioni tomistiche dell'inclinazione e della conoscenza naturali attorno al bene hanno fonti stoiche, nelle quali esse sono più sviluppate, mentre quelle corrispondenti in Platone e Aristotele si trovano solo accennate in pochi luoghi (come quello citato, *Ethica Nicom.* III 6).

La definizione di Ulpiano: *ius naturae est, quod natura omnia animalia docet*, intende la natura come finalità, e questa nel senso analogo, che si estende sugli animali e sugli uomini. La natura nell'uomo significa sia quella animale che, analogamente, quella intellettuale, essendo ai due livelli sempre la causa

finale. Al livello animale tende verso la procreazione e la conservazione della vita, al livello intellettuale invece verso la perfezione morale.

Nella complessa natura dell'uomo la sua natura animale e quella intellettuale sono (ontologicamente) unite, il che significa (moralmente) il compito, nel matrimonio, di integrare il fine fisico della procreazione nel fine intellettuale della vita morale, con l'amore personale dei coniugi. Del resto, già al livello animale, la natura istintiva dell'uomo ha qualcosa di comune solo analogamente con quella degli animali, ferma restando la differenza essenziale tra entrambe.

Molto prezioso è lo sguardo di Ulpiano su tutta la natura, nella quale l'uomo è inserito, con il compito di rispettare la multiforme finalità ordinata nell'intera natura, cioè nella creazione di Dio. Osserviamo oggi un rapporto molto disturbato tra uomo e natura (come mostrano i danni dell'ambiente, malattie del corpo, vivendo in condizioni innaturali ecc.). Non si lascia più "insegnare" dalla natura, cioè dalla sua finalità immanente.

c. La virtù naturale come base delle virtù qualificate

Dobbiamo ritornare ancora all'*Ethica Nicom.*, libro VI, che tratta della retta ragione e della sua virtù, la prudenza, e rileva (cap. 1-3) le seguenti importanti inclusioni: la conoscenza della prudenza è pratica, non teorica, con una specifica verità pratica (*ἀλήθεια πρακτική*, 1139a 26) che si distingue da quella teorica per un altro rapporto tra ragione e volontà; mentre nella conoscenza teorica la volontà sta nel servizio alla ragione teorica (con il volere di progredire nel conoscere), nella conoscenza pratica, invece, la ragione pratica sta nel servizio alla volontà proponendo certi fini come perseguibili e motivando la volontà a perseguirli. Ma tale funzione la ragione pratica può compierla soltanto in uomini virtuosi, mentre in uomini viziosi lo sguardo a fini buoni è disturbato, non vedendoli più. Infatti, compete proprio all'intelletto (non alla ragione discorsiva) di comprendere i principi e i fini, con sguardo intuitivo (cap. 6).

In VI, cap. 12-13, Aristotele discute due aporie riguardo alle virtù intellettuali, la prudenza e la sapienza, cioè se la sapienza abbia la priorità, sebbene in quanto teorica non sia utile per la prassi, e quale utilità la prudenza possa avere, perché anche se la sua conoscenza sia pratica, tuttavia per la prassi non la conoscenza sia decisiva bensì buoni costumi. Quest'ultimo punto, però, Aristotele lo corregge: nell'uomo c'è una naturale disposizione all'agire bene, una "virtù naturale" (*ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετή*, 1144b 3), con una prudenza naturale di trovare i mezzi per arrivare ai fini desiderati. Ma ciò non basta per l'autentico comportamento morale che richiede al soggetto agente il proponimento con la conoscenza sul bene agire, in ogni virtù qualificata.

Tuttavia, vale anche, inversamente, che le virtù qualificate richiedono quella disposizione naturale, con una intuizione naturale dei fini da parte dell'intelletto. Aristotele constata:

“che i principi sembra siano dati per natura, e che nessuno è sapiente per natura sì, ma possiede nondimeno comprensione, intendimento e intelletto”, VI 6, 1143b 6-7. All'essere dati i principi per natura corrisponde la loro comprensione naturale da parte dell'intelletto. Si veda inoltre *Analitica poster.* II 19.

Parallelamente leggiamo in S. Tommaso:

Come nel procedere dell'intelletto il principio è ciò che viene conosciuto naturalmente (*cognoscitur naturaliter*), così nel procedere del desiderio spirituale, che è la volontà, il principio deve essere ciò che viene desiderato naturalmente (*naturaliter desideratur*), *Summa theol.* q. 1, a. 5.

Un altro testo importante si trova in *1 Sententiarum* che descrive l'*intelligere* in quanto atto semplice intuitivo dell'intelletto con cui ha sempre presente se stesso e Dio, e a cui segue un amore indeterminato (di sé e di Dio), dist. 3, q. 4, a. 5 (riferendosi ad Aristotele, *De anima* III 4-5). Rispetto alla volontà Tommaso offre riflessioni dettagliate sulle sue condizioni naturali. Si veda anche *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 8, da me citato sopra. Cfr. *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3.

S. Tommaso ha assunto da Aristotele il termine di “naturale virtù”. In *Summa theol.* I-II, q. 55 a. 2 arg. 2, egli mette la virtù naturale (*virtus naturalis*) nella ragione umana morale in parallelo con una virtù naturale in tutte le cose naturali riguardo al loro essere. In q. 62 a. 3 arg. 1, egli osserva che tale virtù naturale è sostenuta da un'inclinazione naturale al fine connaturale, sia al livello naturale che quello soprannaturale delle virtù etiche e quelle teologiche. Dinanzi alle molteplici virtù da acquisire si evidenzia la virtù naturale come una sola.

d. Diritto naturale

La riflessione generale sul presupposto naturale delle virtù qualificate è espressa nella speciale dottrina sul diritto naturale che Aristotele espone in *Ethica Nicom.* V, 10, continuando la discussione platonica con i Sofisti che hanno introdotto la distinzione tra diritto positivo e quello naturale, per dichiarare tutte le leggi, praticate nelle città, come meramente convenzionali e per riconoscere come l'unico diritto per natura quello del più forte. Aristotele assume la distinzione come tale ma corregge il concetto della natura umana cui si riferisce l'espressione del diritto naturale. Per i Sofisti la natura umana è soltanto quella istintuale dell'individuo che cerca di impadronirsi degli altri, mentre per Aristotele (e Platone) la ragione appartiene altrettanto alla natura umana, che è complessa. Perciò nelle leggi positive si trova anche qualcosa “per natura”, in quanto hanno un rapporto al bene comune, basato sulla na-

tura razionale dell'uomo. (Cfr. *Politica*, III 12, 1282a 16-17: ἔστι δὲ πολιτικὸν ἀγαθὸν τὸ δίκαιον, τοῦτο δ' ἔστι τὸ κοινῇ συμφέρον). Le leggi sono buone se concordano con la norma morale razionale, mentre le cattive discordano.

Tuttavia, non basta il solo rinvio alla ragione, perché anche il giuspositivismo si richiama alla ragione, quando parla di norme naturali universali (non uccidere, nessuno offendere, a ciascuno il suo). Tuttavia li ritiene come meri ideali. Occorre, però, rinviare alla natura razionale sostanziale dell'uomo in cui quelle norme valgono realmente.

e. Coscienza morale naturale

Infine, occorre menzionare che riguardo alla bontà reale insita nella natura razionale dell'uomo, la ragione ossia l'intelletto ha un sapere che accompagna le azioni e che possiamo chiamare, nel modo più adatto, coscienza morale. Uno dei testi fonte si trova in *Ethica Nicom.* libro IX 9, che discutendo la questione se l'uomo buono abbia bisogno dell'amico risponde positivamente perché egli, anche se non per altri scopi utili, può godere contemplando la bontà nel buon amico più direttamente che nella riflessione su se stesso; presupposto naturalmente che ciascuno ha un sapere del suo essere e del bene in esso.

S. Tommaso tratta della coscienza in *Summa theol.* I, q. 79, a. 12-13, distinguendo due livelli: un primo, chiamato *synderesis*, come semplice accorgimento naturale (letteralmente: osservanza) del bene normativo in generale, e un secondo, chiamato *conscientia* (nel senso stretto) come giudizio capace di applicare la norma universale alle azioni concrete, che vengono accompagnate dal sapere del loro essere buone o meno, a seconda del giudizio.

2. Confronto con Kant

a. Aspetto comune

Se passiamo adesso al tentativo di confrontare la dottrina aristotelico-tomista, or ora riferita, con corrispondenti aspetti nell'etica di Kant, si può in primo luogo constatare un aspetto comune, in quanto Kant mantiene ancora, con la tradizione, l'esigenza etica di un principio di moralità universale razionale che vale *a priori*; cioè deve essere prescrittivo per le esperienze morali, non valendo solo *a posteriori*, dipendente sempre da nuove esperienze, dalle quali deve essere approvato sempre di nuovo. Il ben noto "imperativo categorico", *Critica della ragion pura*, Parte I, libro 1, Cap. 1, § 7:

Agisci così che la massima della tua volontà possa valere sempre, egualmente, come principio di una legislazione universale, rileva i due criteri di una legge morale, cioè che essa debba essere razionale e universale.

Confrontando questa dottrina con quella aristotelico-tomista della prudenza possiamo trovare in essa come scienza pratica della ragione gli stessi due criteri: la prudenza è razionale e normativa per tutti gli uomini.

b. Aspetti differenti

1.

Tuttavia, ci accorgiamo pure di una grande differenza per il fatto che l'imperativo categorico di Kant non ha nessun riferimento al bene morale, mentre, invece, nella tradizione aristotelico tomista ogni legge o principio normativo prende la sua forza dal bene come dall'ultimo fine delle azioni e della vita dell'uomo. Kant rifiuta espressamente il bene come norma morale, nel cosidd. "paradosso del metodo" (Parte I, libro 1, Cap. 2, no. 110) dicendo che il concetto del bene e del male non debba precedere la legge morale ... ma solo essere determinato dopo questa e attraverso questa.

Kant annota: il procedere tradizionale, con la priorità del bene come principio morale, era la causa di "tutte le confusioni dei filosofi" (no. 112).

Si può osservare che il metodo di Kant, che, come egli stesso confessa, è paradossale, cioè il rifiuto di prendere il bene come norma *a priori*, risulta dalla sua filosofia teorica secondo cui oggetto della nostra conoscenza può essere soltanto ciò che è dato nell'intuizione sensitiva; infatti, Kant nega all'uomo l'intuizione intellettuale. Perciò ogni etica che prende la norma dell'agire da un bene oggettivo, ossia da un fine ultimo, come un dato naturale, può trovarsi soltanto nell'intuizione sensitiva come motivo; per es. anche Dio come fine ultimo, essendo già dato, potrebbe essere soltanto oggetto di un sentimento di felicità e, in quanto tale, sarebbe inaccettabile come principio *a priori* della moralità.

Il mio commento è questo: Kant, opponendosi all'empirismo di Hume, critica giustamente che nessun bene, dato come sensibile motivo (*sinnliche Triebfeder*), può essere principio *a priori* della moralità. Tuttavia, l'etica tradizionale rappresenta il bene normativo, la perfezione dell'anima e il Dio trascendente, non come oggetti dell'intuizione sensitiva, bensì come oggetti intelligibili. Per la comprensione di questi né Aristotele né Tommaso chiedono una mera intuizione, ma piuttosto argomentazione e giudizio, accompagnato da un atto intuitivo di coscienza della bontà di questi oggetti. Kant critica l'etica tradizionale del fine ultimo ossia del bene normativo come eteronomia, sostenendo il suo imperativo categorico, con l'auto-determinazione della volontà dalla parte della ragione, come l'unica autonomia. Tuttavia, se si toglie dalla legge morale il riferimento al bene, allora rimane un formalismo dell'auto-determinazione, la quale non è più per il bene morale, bensì di nuovo per l'auto-determinazione.

2.

Anche riguardo alle virtù e alle passioni la concezione in Kant è molto diversa da quella in Aristotele e in Tommaso. Questi vedono le passioni irrazionali e la ragione, nonostante la loro essenziale differenza, in una coordinazione complementare cosicché dal compito della ragione di educare e guidare le passioni risultano le virtù, nelle quali le passioni sostengono e rafforzano la ragione nella sua attività. Al contrario in Kant (*Cr. r. pr.*, Parte I, libro 1, Cap. 1, § 7), il quale vede le passioni e la ragione in opposizione cosicché la ragione debba mantenere la legge morale contro la resistenza delle passioni e dei sentimenti che sono di origine sensitiva. L'unico sentimento positivo è quello del rispetto dinanzi alla legge morale stessa: un sentimento di obbligo (*Pflicht*) su cui si basa ogni virtù. Questa è, per definizione, un "sentimento morale" (*moralische Gesinnung*) e si aggiunge alla legge formale come oggetto materiale della volontà, con la sua fonte dalla sensitività soggettiva. Perciò, a differenza con Aristotele e Tommaso, le virtù in Kant non possono essere norme morali *a priori*. Giustamente si è parlato di un rigorismo stoico in Kant.

Inoltre, la coscienza morale che, tradizionalmente, è un sapere del bene morale ossia del fine ultimo come norma *a priori*, presenta questo bene con forza normativa prescrittiva, mentre in Kant la coscienza ha soltanto una funzione subordinata di conferma per il soggetto di avere agito secondo l'imperativo categorico.

3.

Forse la più grande differenza tra l'etica kantiana e quella tradizionale si trova riguardo al rapporto tra ragione e natura. La tradizione dispone di un concetto di natura nel senso realistico analogico, che comprende sia la sensitività che la ragione, e parla, perciò, persino di una naturalità nella volontà, nella ragione, nella prudenza e nelle virtù, in quanto essa rinvia alla natura razionale dell'uomo. Diversamente in Kant, per il quale la natura è, primariamente, il mondo sensibile empirico, con la connessione delle esperienze secondo regole o leggi. In questo senso essa è opposta alla volontà e alla ragione, che esercitano l'auto-determinazione in libertà. Solo secondariamente Kant parla anche, accanto alla natura sensibile, della "natura soprasensibile" come un mondo di ideali speculativi e morali nel puro pensiero.

Infatti, in conseguenza della sua filosofia teorica che ha eliminato la cosa in sé dalla conoscenza umana, a Kant manca, nella filosofia pratica, il suo fondamento sulla natura umana che comprenderebbe sostanzialmente sia la natura sensitiva che quella razionale. Per Kant una ragione naturale con una virtù naturale sarebbe contraddittoria.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE NATURAL INCLINATIONS PROPER TO MAN IN *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* 1-2.94.2

■ STEPHEN L. BROCK

Why these examples?

In this paper I wish to raise and address a question that bears directly on the passage from the *Summa theologiae* that sets the theme for this gathering of the Academy.¹ The article to which the passage belongs is *Prima secundae*, q. 94, a. 2. For my purposes, it will be useful to have in mind the passage's immediate context within the article. Let me start with that.

Having laid down the general thesis that a certain order is found among the things that fall into the apprehension of everyone, Thomas sets out an order among the precepts of natural law. On his view, these precepts fall into the apprehension of everyone, and evidently what he means to present is the order in which they do so. Earlier in the *Summa* he had laid down quite generally that in the human intellect's knowledge, the more universal is naturally prior to the less universal.² This is exactly the sort of order that he lays down in 94.2.

First comes the most universal precept of all, "the good is to be done and sought, and the bad, avoided".³ Then come more particular precepts, all of them concerned with goods to which man is naturally inclined. Their order is said to be the same as that of the natural inclinations to which they correspond. Thomas groups these inclinations into three levels or "modes", each of which is in function of some dimension of human nature. The order among these modes goes, again, from the more universal or general to the more particular or special.

Thomas does not try to give a complete list of the goods pertaining to each mode. He does, however, cite some examples. In relation to my question,

¹ Pontificia Academia Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, XI Plenary Session, *The Truth about God, and its Relevance for a Good Life in Society*, 17-19 June 2011, Rome. I am grateful to Steven Jensen and Luca Tuninetti for very helpful comments on drafts of this essay.

² See *Summa theologiae* (hereafter *STh*), I, q. 85, a. 3. For example, "animal" is understood prior to "man".

³ Translations throughout this paper are mine.

all of the examples will be of interest. In the first mode is inclination toward that which is good according to the nature that man shares with all substances, “inasmuch as any substance whatsoever desires the conservation of its being according to its nature”. Then comes inclination to more special things, according to the nature that man shares with the other animals. Here Thomas cites the “union of male and female” and the “rearing of offspring”. Finally comes our passage: “In a third mode, there is in man inclination toward what is good according to the nature of reason, which is proper to him; thus man has natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society”.

My question is about these goods, knowing the truth about God and living in society. Is there some reason why Thomas cites, together, precisely these two? In other words, does he see in them a distinctive unity, some common feature that sets them apart from other objects of natural human inclination? Personally I think it unlikely that he selected them at random.

Now of course the passage itself presents a feature that distinguishes these goods from the ones previously cited in 94.2. These are “good according to the nature of reason, which is proper to man”. This, however, does not fully answer the question, since for Thomas these are not the only objects of natural inclination that fit this description. For instance, in the very next article he posits a natural inclination to act “virtuously,” which is to say, “according to reason” (94.3).⁴ So this feature, “good according to the nature of reason, which is proper to man,” is not especially distinctive of knowing the truth about God and living in society.

Nevertheless I do think that these goods have something rather special about them, as compared with other goods proper to reason such as virtue. It is not so special as to be entirely exclusive to them; on the contrary, in a way it does also belong to virtue. But as I shall explain further on, in the case of virtue it is somewhat “under the surface,” less explicit or immediate than in the cases of knowing the truth about God and living in society. I think it also offers a plausible explanation for Thomas’s citing these in 94.2.

Before presenting this feature, however, I would like to dwell a little on this notion of things that are good “according to the nature of reason” or according to the nature “proper” to man. It seems to me that in a sense, or even in two senses, *all* of the goods that Thomas cites in 94.2, as objects of natural human inclination and as pertaining to natural law, could be said to fit this description. Determining the sense in which the description does

⁴ Another one would be the inclination toward knowing truth, not specifically about God, but in general. I discuss this in section V below.

define the third mode of inclination and sets it off from the other two will help in bringing out what is even more special, within this mode, about knowing the truth about God and living in society.

The meaning of “good according to the nature of reason” in 94.2

Elsewhere I have argued at some length that all of the natural human inclinations cited in 94.2 are inclinations of the will.⁵ That is, they are inclinations of the rational appetite, the appetite whose objects are always things apprehended and presented to it by reason. I shall not repeat my arguments for this here.⁶ But however it stands with 94.2, Thomas certainly does not limit the natural inclinations of the will to objects that are strictly proper to man or in no way common to man and other things. For instance, the will naturally has the inclination found in every substance, toward the conservation of its being according to its nature. In fact the human will is naturally inclined, in a global way, toward everything that suits man according to his nature.⁷ This includes both those goods that are proper to him and those that he shares with others.

So this is one way in which even the first two modes of inclination in 94.2 could be viewed as pertaining specifically to reason. To the extent that they belong to the will or the rational appetite, they are inclinations toward goods that are naturally apprehended by reason, and they arise from that apprehension. In this sense, they are proper to man. It belongs to reason to direct man toward all of his true goods.

Another way in which the first two modes of natural human inclination could be seen as proper to man is with respect to their very objects. For example, in man’s case the natural inclination toward conservation in being must regard the being that is according to *man’s* nature, specifically *human* being. Every substance is said to be inclined toward the conservation of “its” being, according to “its” nature, not being in general.⁸ Likewise, the

⁵ Stephen L. Brock, “Natural Inclination and the Intelligibility of the Good in Thomistic Natural Law”, *Vera Lex* 6.1–2 (Winter 2005): 57–78.

⁶ For the gist of one of the arguments, see below, n. 39.

⁷ See *STh* I-II, q. 10, a. 1.

⁸ At least, Thomas is not speaking of any such general object of inclination in 94.2. Elsewhere he does indicate that the nature of being, *ens inquantum ens*, is universally “agreeable”: *STh* I-II, q. 29, a. 1, ad 1. He also seems to hold that charity involves an inclination toward the conservation in being of all specific natures – see *STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 3 – and I think that this could very well have a natural analogue. But it would be proper to man in the way that the inclinations in the third mode are. Only reason can relate to the specific being and good of every nature.

union of male and female toward which man is naturally inclined would be that of human male and female, and the rearing of offspring, that of human offspring. In other words, if the goods pertaining to the first two modes of inclination in 94.2 are in function of natures that man has in common with other things, this is only in the sense that man's species has certain genera in common with other species, and that some of the goods pertaining to his species have genera in common with those pertaining to other species. What each species is inclined toward is its own specific form of the genus of the good in question, not the whole genus.⁹

This enables us to say more precisely in what sense the goods in the "third mode" are proper to the nature of reason. They are goods that do not have any genus in common with those of other natures. They have no sub-rational counterpart. There is such a thing as the conservation of the walrus's being according to its nature, but there is no such thing as the walrus's approach to the knowledge of God. This sort of good exists only in a rational form.

The same holds, I take it, for living in society. By "*societas*", Thomas does not seem to mean just any group or community whose members somehow cooperate with each other. In order to relate as *socii*, the members must have some grasp of the relationship itself, and they must be living in it by choice. That is, a *societas* is a friendship of one sort or another.¹⁰ Only rational substances are capable of friendship, in the proper sense.¹¹ This is not to say that *societas* is confined to civil society. For instance, there is also domestic society.¹² But this too is something proper to humans, more than mere union of male and female. Thus Thomas asserts that between man and woman, the union "ought" to be social.¹³ It might not be.

⁹ That the inclination of each substance toward its proper being can be considered in a general way does however mean that we can see all substances as falling under a single general order, and so under a single (divine) precept. The same holds for inclination in the second mode, that which is common to all animals. The point also applies at the level of the very first precept of natural law. This precept corresponds to the absolutely universal inclination, common to all beings, toward the good. The goods of different beings differ (see *STh* I, q. 6, a. 2, ad 2), but insofar as they all fall under the common *ratio* of the good, we can consider a single general precept dictating that each being seek its good.

¹⁰ "*Eos enim qui conueniunt uel per nature originem uel per morum similitudinem uel per cuiuscumque societatis communionem, uidemus amicitia coniungi*": Thomas Aquinas, *De regno ad regem Cypri*, Lib. I, cap. x, ll. 47-50 (Leonine).

¹¹ See *STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 3.

¹² See Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, Lib. VIII, lect. 12, §1720 (Marietti).

¹³ *STh* I, q. 92, a. 3.

It is in this sense, then, that knowing the truth about God and living in society are good according to man's proper nature. They do not exist in any form apart from the operation of reason itself. But while this distinguishes them from the other examples cited in 94.2, it does not distinguish them from other goods of reason such as virtue. Does anything?

Essentially common goods

One conjecture that occurred to me, to explain Thomas's choice of the two examples, is that he was seeing them in relation to the broad division of the properly human pursuits – the pursuits that pertain to the life of the intellect – into the contemplative and the active.¹⁴ The truth about God would be the chief focus of the contemplative life, and society would provide the main field for the active life. However, I do not think that this quite fits with the overall concern of 94.2. Thomas is presenting a very global vision of practical reason and of the ends that naturally govern its work. They are things that everyone needs and naturally understands that he needs. The need to know the truth about God is not confined to those who pursue the contemplative life, nor is the need to live in society limited to those who follow the active life.

To this one might respond that even if we are not thinking of the pursuits to which people chiefly dedicate themselves, we can still distinguish between speculative and practical ends. So perhaps what Thomas has in mind with his choice of examples is simply the broad division of reason's operations into those that are speculative and those that are practical. This is more plausible, but I still do not find it convincing, for two reasons.

One reason is that for Thomas, even though "truth about God" is chiefly speculative truth, it is not exclusively so. Considered simply in Himself, God is a purely speculative theme, because He in no way depends on our action. But we may also consider Him in relation to us, and even in a practical relation. We may look to Him for practical direction or guidance. Thus Thomas judges that while *sacra doctrina*, the science of theology, is primarily speculative, secondarily it is also practical.¹⁵ Now, he does seem to hold that the "natural" or philosophical science that treats of God, namely metaphysics, is purely speculative.¹⁶ We do not obtain divine guidance by doing

¹⁴ See *STh* II-II, q. 179, aa. 1 & 2. Thomas relates this division to the two kinds of happiness posited in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7-8, 1177a12-1179a2; see *STh* II-II, q. 180, aa. 2 & 4; q. 181, a. 1; q. 182, a. 1.

¹⁵ See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 4.

¹⁶ See *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 3.

metaphysics. It should be noticed, however, that in 94.2, Thomas does not speak precisely of scientific knowledge (*scientia* or *scire*) about God. He speaks generically of “cognizing” the truth about God, “*cognoscere veritatem de Deo*”. Not all cognition of truth is scientific. For example, the wisdom that is a gift of the Holy Spirit is not scientific, and yet it is certainly true.¹⁷ And it has a practical dimension.¹⁸ Of course the gift of wisdom, like theology, depends on supernatural influence. But Thomas also seems to posit a desire for divine guidance at the natural level. This comes out rather clearly in another passage of the *Summa* concerning a dictate of natural law that regards God. In the discussion of the virtue of religion, at the beginning of the question on sacrifice, he says that “natural reason dictates to man that he be subject to some superior, on account of the defects that he perceives in himself, in which he needs to be helped *and guided* by some superior. And whatever this [superior] be, this is what is called a God by all”.¹⁹ So the natural inclination toward knowing the truth about God may well be, at least secondarily, inclination toward a practical sort of knowledge. It would not pertain exclusively to the speculative domain.

As for my other reason for doubting whether Thomas’s examples in 94.2 are meant to reflect the speculative-practical distinction, I shall be in a better position to explain it further on, in the last section of the paper, after I have presented the substance of my own proposal.

Now, consider again the examples in the second mode. Here too Thomas could have cited other things, other objects of natural “animal” inclination that have no sub-animal counterparts. Perhaps the most obvious one would be pleasure. Between pleasure and the objects that he does cite, however, there is this difference: pleasure can be a purely individual or private goal. It can be so not only in itself, but also in its object, the pleasant thing that gives rise to it. An eater’s pleasure is in something that he has made exclusively his own, by ingesting it. It has become his private good. It cannot be shared. By contrast, each of the two examples cited is an essentially common good. It is “common”, not in the mere sense that it can be taken universally, as capable of many instances, but in the sense that a single instance of it is intrinsically a good shared by more than one individual. The union of male and female is the good of both. That is of its very nature. The male’s pleasure in it differs from the female’s, but it is the same union. The rearing of offspring is similar.

¹⁷ See *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 2.

¹⁸ See *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 3.

¹⁹ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

What about the example of the first mode of inclination, the conservation of a substance's being according to its nature? Fr. Dewan has long been insisting that this does not refer only to the substance's individual being, but also, and even primarily, to the being of its kind, the *whole* being that is "according to its nature".²⁰ This must be right. Thomas knows very well that reproduction is not confined to animals. Plants are doing it all the time. Aristotle calls it the *most natural* work of living things, the end of all that they do by nature. By it they "share in the immortal and the divine" as far as they can.²¹ Nor is Thomas even confining this inclination to living things. He speaks of all substances.²² For him, every natural thing tends to effect its like and to promote the being of its kind, as far as it can.²³ An especially clear example, to which he often refers, is that of fire.²⁴ My point is that the being of the kind is a common good.

As for the examples in the third mode, that society is a common good needs no argument. It is probably what the phrase "common good" first brings to mind. I shall look at the other example in a moment. But recall the possible example that is not cited here, virtue. This does not refer quite so immediately or so explicitly to common good. Granted, it is a delicate point. Probably almost everyone understands that a human individual is not going to advance very far in virtue, if he or she associates with no one else in pursuing it. Even more importantly, the virtues intrinsically bear on things other than themselves. They have objects. And the primary objects of virtue are indeed common goods, not anyone's private possession. Nevertheless, the sheer notion of virtue does not refer to common good in such an explicit way as does the notion of life in society. Thus, in 94.3, Thomas sees the need to defend the idea that virtue is ordered to common good.

²⁰ For example, in Lawrence Dewan, O.P., "St. Thomas, John Finnis, and the Political Good", *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 337-74, at 366-67.

²¹ Aristotle, *De anima*, II.4, 415a27-b1.

²² The passage from Cicero's *De officiis* that I have put in the *Appendix* is sometimes cited as background for the discussion of natural inclinations in 94.2. See Servais Pincketers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P., Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 1995, pp. 405-408. There are indeed notable parallels. But while Cicero does treat self-preservation and reproduction together, he attributes them only to *animantes* (par. 11). By this he seems to mean, not animated things generally, but solely animals. If Thomas did have this passage in mind, then his speaking of "all substances" was quite deliberate and is all the more significant.

²³ See *STh* I, q. 19, a. 2. The point is fundamental for the very doctrine of the good; see *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4.

²⁴ Again, see *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4; cf. *STh* I, q. 60, a. 4; *STh* I, q. 80, a. 1.

At first glance, some virtues, such as temperance, seem to be ordered only toward private goods.²⁵ Although in truth even temperance is ordered to common good, the point is not simply obvious, something immediately understood by all.²⁶

This is what I propose as the distinctive feature serving as criterion for Thomas's choice of examples: that their very notions refer quite explicitly and immediately to common goods.

God and common good in natural law

But should we see "knowing the truth about God" as meant to refer to a common good? If we took it on the side of the activity, we might doubt it. Each instance of such knowing is the good of a single individual. However, the same could be said of "living in society"; everyone has his or her own social life. We should look on the side of the object, the side of what the knowing is about. With respect to this, there is nothing that is more truly a common good.

Perhaps we are not very accustomed to speaking of God as a "common good". Usually we apply the expression to things like peace or justice, things that inhere in a community as attributes. But a "common" good is not always an attribute of a community. It is an end to which a community is ordered. It may be extrinsic to the community. Every community is ordered toward the good primarily intended by its commander or governor, and sometimes both the governor and his good are extrinsic to it. For instance, the President of the United States is the commander in chief of the armed forces, which are a sort of community, but he is a civilian. And the good that he primarily intends, the nation's welfare, is also in large part extrinsic to the armed forces. Nonetheless their operations are ordered to it.

It is in this way that God's good, which is God Himself, is the universal end of all things.²⁷ Thomas does not hesitate to call God the common good of the universe.²⁸ God's good is the supreme end. All other ends are subordinate to it, because in comparison with it they are all merely particular. "Thus in order that someone will a particular good with an upright will,

²⁵ *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 3, obj. 1 & ad 1.

²⁶ According to Thomas, the Epicureans sought virtue as ordered only to the pursuit of maximum pleasure; that is, sense-pleasure, a private good. See *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, lib. I, lect. 5, §57 (Marietti).

²⁷ See *STh* I, q. 103, a. 2.

²⁸ For example, *Quodlibet* I, q. 4, a. 3; *STh* I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 3 & ad 5; *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 3.

that particular good must be willed materially” – willed as “for an end” – “and the divine common good must be willed formally”, as the end.²⁹

What I am suggesting is that this is also how Thomas wants us to be chiefly thinking of God as we read 94.2. We should not be thinking of Him only as the principle and end of “religion”, meaning by this a special field of activity that is itself defined by reference to Him. We should mainly be thinking of God *as God*, principle and end of the *world*, its universal overseer and highest good. This is the conception that Thomas takes to be what is commonly understood by this so familiar name, “God”.³⁰ And so understood, that all naturally see the need to know the truth about God seems hard to quarrel with. Atheists can see it too.³¹

This view is favored, I think, by the approach to the precepts of natural law used in 94.2, the absolutely universal outlook adopted. The precepts are seen in the setting of an order running through all things, the order to the good. Even before the phrase “natural inclination” appears, the first precept is said to be founded on the “*ratio* of the good”, this being “what all desire”; that is, what *all beings* desire. And the discussion in 94.2 is surely meant to recall *Prima secundae*, q. 91, a. 2, on the existence of a natural law. There the presence of natural inclinations in all creatures is very prominent. These are seen as effects of God’s providence, and even as “participations” in His eternal law. It is in 91.2 that Thomas famously defines natural law as the participation in the eternal law proper to the rational creature. Just prior to this he had said that the end of God’s government, the common good to which the eternal law primarily orders things, is God Himself.³² I think we can very well take “natural inclination to know the truth about God” as signaling the way of being ordered to this end that is proper to the nature of the rational creature. It is the *beginning* of this way.

Someone might object that if God is supposed to enter into 94.2 predominantly under the aspect of the supreme *good*, then what ought to be cited is not knowing the truth about Him, but rather loving Him. Thomas of course does take the love of God to be a matter of natural law.³³ But we

²⁹ *STh* I-II, q. 19, a. 10.

³⁰ See *STh* I, q. 13, a. 8.

³¹ This is not to say that they actually pursue the question with the full seriousness that it calls for. Thomas judges that disbelief in God usually involves some culpability. I discuss this in Stephen L. Brock, “Can Atheism be Rational? A Reading of Thomas Aquinas”, *Acta Philosophica* 11.2 (2002): 215–238.

³² *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 1, ad 3.

³³ See *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 1.

should not forget that here he is talking about those inclinations that are quite strictly proper to rational nature, with no sub-rational counterpart. The love of God is not actually of this sort, any more than inclinations toward lower common goods are. “Each and every nature is inclined toward conserving not only its individual reality, but also its species. And in a much stronger way, each and every one has a natural inclination toward that which is the unqualifiedly universal good”.³⁴ The walrus has no way of knowing the truth about God, but it does have its way of loving Him. Indeed, in any inclination toward a good, God is being loved somehow.³⁵ We could go so far as to say that in a confused, but still real way, even the first precept of natural law, the one based on “the good”, is directing toward God.

This is the case even though not every inclination toward a good has God as its *object*, its proper formal principle. An inclination is a sort of movement, toward the reality of its object, and insofar as its object is a good, it is somehow ordered toward the reality of God as well. It is going “in His direction”. Every desire of a good is ultimately “for” God, even if only in an instrumental way, through being under His control.³⁶ In fact sub-rational desire cannot be for any common good except in an instrumental way. Even if the reality that is its object is, in itself, a common good, the *ratio* according to which that reality moves sub-rational desire is some particular or private goodness in it, such as its gratifying the senses. Bearing directly on something common, *as* common, requires reason.³⁷ The union of male and female walrus is the good of both, but this is not *their* motive for seeking it. It could only be “nature’s” motive for “teaching” them to seek it, the purpose for which sense-pleasure is naturally joined to it.³⁸ Nevertheless, in non-rational animals, the inclination toward pleasure is naturally regulated in such a way as to be generally in accordance with the order toward their common good and, ultimately, with the eternal law.³⁹ In this sense, it is an inclination toward God.

³⁴ *STh* I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 3.

³⁵ See *STh* I, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2; *STh* I, 44, a. 4, ad 3.

³⁶ See *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 2, corp. & ad 3.

³⁷ And evidently in man’s case, sub-rational inclinations are firmly ordered toward common good only to the extent that they are controlled by reason; see below, n. 39.

³⁸ I am alluding to the phrase from Ulpian that Thomas cites in 94.2 – “*quae natura omnia animalia docuit*”. Very pertinent to this is *STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 2, obj. 2 & ad 2.

³⁹ In this respect the human sense-appetite differs from that of the other animals. It is ordered toward the common good and directly in accordance with the eternal law, not spontaneously, but only insofar as it is regulated by man’s own reason. See *STh* I, q. 91, a. 6, esp. obj. 3 & ad 3. See also *STh* I-II, q. 56 a. 4 ad 2; I-II, q. 62, a. 3; I-II, q. 63, a. 1; and especially 94.2, ad 2, which says that the inclinations of the lower parts of man’s nature

What is proper to rational nature, then, is an inclination that has God as its very object.⁴⁰ Only the will's desire can bear directly on the universal, divine good. But this is because only intellect can assimilate the *ratio* of the desirable, "the good", in an absolute mode, universally. That gives it a certain proportion to God, understood as the "first principle of all goodness".⁴¹ It provides a means of relating to the divine good in a proper, not merely instrumental way.⁴² The good pertains to intellect, as "a true", before it pertains to will as "desirable".⁴³ The will's natural love of God presupposes a natural inclination to know the truth about His goodness.⁴⁴ And this inclination is altogether proper to the rational creature.⁴⁵

But my main point is that Thomas's examples in 94.2 all refer to common goods. Is this not entirely fitting? We are in a treatise on law. It is of the very essence of any law to order to a common good.⁴⁶ In fact this is of the essence of any true principle of practical reason. "Just as nothing stands firmly in speculative reason except by resolution to first, indemonstrable principles, so nothing stands firmly in practical reason except by ordination to the last end, which is a common good".⁴⁷ This is because "every part is ordered to

pertain to natural law only insofar as they are ruled by reason. This serves, I think, to confirm the thesis that the natural human inclinations cited in the corpus of 94.2 as directly corresponding to precepts of natural law are all inclinations of the rational appetite.

⁴⁰ See *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 8; cf. *STh* I, q. 65, a. 2, in *fine corp.*

⁴¹ *STh* I, q. 6, a. 4.

⁴² Pertinent here is *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 3. Insofar as rational nature "knows the universal *ratio* of being and good, it has an immediate order to the universal principle of being". Thomas is here explaining that this natural order toward God as the universal principle of being is what *makes possible* the supernatural order, the movement toward God as He is in Himself. The beginning of *that* movement is believing God's Word, clinging to "truth about God" as spoken *by* God Himself. The inclination cited in 94.2, toward simply knowing truth about God, is not the inclination of supernatural faith itself; we should not there be thinking of God precisely as the object of faith. Rather, faith presupposes and perfects this natural inclination.

⁴³ *STh* I-II, q. 19, a. 3, ad 2. See *STh* I, q. 82, a. 3; I-II, q. 9, a. 1.

⁴⁴ "*Quia dilectio Dei est maius aliquid quam eius cognitio, maxime secundum statum viae, ideo praesupponit ipsam. Et quia cognitio non quiescit in rebus creatis, sed per eas in aliud tendit, in illo dilectio incipit, et per hoc ad alia derivatur, per modum cuiusdam circulationis, dum cognitio, a creaturis incipiens, tendit in Deum; et dilectio, a Deo incipiens sicut ab ultimo fine, ad creaturas derivatur*": *STh* II-II, q. 27, a. 4, ad 2 (emphasis of course mine). Here the topic is charity, but I think this discussion must apply to the natural order as well; see *STh* I, q. 60, a. 1, *Sed contra*, and a. 5, *Sed contra*.

⁴⁵ See *STh* I, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2.

⁴⁶ *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ad 3. One might ask why, if nothing stands firmly in practical reason except by ordination to common good, the very first precept of natural law only speaks of

the whole as the imperfect to the perfect; but one man is part of a perfect community”.⁴⁸ Some precepts of law may directly regard goods that in themselves are private. But they always do so with a view to the common good that the law as a whole regards.⁴⁹ The more directly a precept regards the common good, the more perfectly it shares in the nature of law.⁵⁰ All of Thomas’s examples in 94.2 serve to highlight the fact that the precepts of natural law are truly laws, firm principles of practical reason, and hence also sound moral rules, rules for the will. “The will of a man who wills some particular good is not right unless he refers it to the common good as its end”.⁵¹ Even if the “primacy of common good” is not cited explicitly in 94.2, it is very much on the scene. Given the exceptional importance of 94.2 within Thomas’s teaching on natural law, this surely deserves stressing.

The natural priority of the good of truth over that of society

There is one other point about Thomas’s examples of inclinations proper to reason that I think the criterion of the common good serves to explain. This is the order in which he presents them. I would suggest that even in this small detail, he is attending to the type of order that he has in mind throughout 94.2 – the order in which things fall into the apprehension of human reason, and which goes from the more general to the more particular.

If we look one last time at the examples in the second mode, we see that the one cited first is indeed both more general and prior in apprehen-

“good” and not of “common good”. I have already suggested that in a sense, by ordering toward the good, this precept is in fact ordering toward God, and hence toward common good. Moreover, natural law’s legislator is God, and what comes first in His practical reason is not goodness in general; it is His own goodness, which is the end of all goodness. But the precept based on goodness in general is the first in our apprehension, because it is the most general. “Good” is more general than “common good”. However, clearly the division of the good into common good and private good is not *ex aequo*, like that of a genus into species. It is analogical, *per prius et posterius*. And even if the principle of the priority of common good is not our very first practical principle, nonetheless it surely pertains to the same level as the first principle; that is, it stands above the precepts corresponding to the more particular (generic or specific) natures of things. I discuss this in Stephen L. Brock, “The Primacy of the Common Good and the Foundations of Natural Law in St. Thomas”, in *Ressourcement Thomism*, ed. Reinhard Hüter and Matthew Levering, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 2010, pp. 234-255, especially 250-255.

⁴⁸ *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 2, corp.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ad 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, corp.

⁵¹ *STh* I-II, q. 19, a. 10.

sion. It is more general, because (as far as Thomas knew) among all animals there is union of male and female, but not all rear the offspring; and among those that do, the union of male and female is still more common, since any rearing of offspring presupposes the offspring's existence. For the same reason, the goodness of the union of male and female is prior in practical reason's apprehension. If one saw no good in the children's existence, he would hardly see any good in their education.⁵²

Assuming that Thomas does have the aforesaid order in mind, it seems to me that even if we take the knowledge of God to be purely speculative, his examples of inclinations proper to reason cannot be meant to reflect the mere generic distinction between speculative and practical ends.⁵³ If they were, surely he would have put first the inclination toward living in society. For on the whole, practical ends are more common in human life. Thomas says that "the active life precedes the contemplative, as that which is *common to all* precedes, in the order of generation, that which is proper to those who are perfect".⁵⁴ After all, the objects of the first two modes of inclination are practical ends as well. Sheer survival is a practical end. Political society itself first "comes into being for the sake of life".⁵⁵ On the whole, practical ends are more urgent. Purely speculative ends are the privilege of the leisured.⁵⁶ As the saying has it, *primum vivere, deinde philosophari*. And practical reason naturally understands this.

One thing, however, is the set of speculative ends taken as a whole, and another is that particular end which is the knowledge of the truth about God. Even if this is just one among many branches of speculative knowledge, only it is *wisdom*. This is because, in the proper and unqualified sense

⁵² The passage from Cicero's *De officiis* also cites the inclination toward sexual union first (see *Appendix*, par. 11). In his formulation, its being for the sake of procreation is quite explicit. This makes its conceptual priority vis-à-vis the care of the offspring even more evident than it is in 94.2.

⁵³ See above, section III.

⁵⁴ *STh* II-II, q. 182, a. 4, ad 1.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 1252b29-30.

⁵⁶ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.1, 981b21-25; I.2, 982b23. (Notice too that according to Aristotle, in the purely speculative order, the investigation of lower or smaller questions precedes inquiry into the higher or more universal causes: *Metaphysics* I.1, 982b14-17). The passage from Cicero's *De officiis* posits an inclination proper to man toward knowing truth, not specifically about God, but quite generally (*Appendix*, par. 13), and prior to this it posits an inclination proper to reason toward social life (par. 12). Regarding the inclination toward truth, he says that we engage in this when we are free from necessary occupations and cares (par. 13).

of the term, “wisdom” means knowledge of the absolutely highest, most universal cause.⁵⁷ And in a way this knowledge is in a class by itself, because one of its functions is to rule over all the other human disciplines, by judging and ordering them.⁵⁸ As Thomas says at the beginning of the *proemium* to his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, all of the sciences and arts are ordered to a single end, namely, the perfection of man, which is beatitude; and for this reason, one of them must rule over all the others. This one is wisdom.

The ruling function of wisdom – even philosophical wisdom, metaphysics, which in itself is purely speculative – is not limited to the speculative domain. As is obvious, the practical sphere too is ordered to man’s beatitude. That the knowledge of the highest cause is fit to rule even over the practical sphere makes sense, if we consider that the highest *kind* of cause is the final cause, and that therefore the highest and most universal cause is in fact the most universal end. Being concerned with this end pertains to the very notion of wisdom. “With respect to the things that are truly good, there is some highest cause that is the supreme good, which is the last end, through knowledge of which a man is said to be truly wise”.⁵⁹ Understood as wisdom, the knowledge of the truth about God is nothing other than the knowledge of the truth about the supreme common good. Even if in itself this knowledge is speculative, its object is not just the end of those things are matters for speculation, such as natural things. It is also the ultimate end of the things that depend on man’s own deliberate action, practical things. The entire practical order is subordinate to it. All practical ends are apt to be judged in light of the knowledge of it.

So even setting aside the point mentioned earlier about seeking divine guidance, in a sense the knowledge of God stands above the distinction between the speculative and the practical. As wisdom, it rules over both of them. And in this sense, it is a very general, comprehensive good, even more so than is living in society. This fits with Thomas’s citing it first in 94.2.

But does the desirability of this knowledge fall into the apprehension of practical reason prior to that of living in society? That is, does grasping the need to live in society somehow presuppose grasping the need for this knowledge, as grasping the need to rear the offspring presupposes that of

⁵⁷ See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6; I-II, q. 57, a. 2; I-II, q. 66, a. 5; II-II, q. 45, a. 1.

⁵⁸ “*Sapientia habet iudicium de omnibus aliis virtutibus intellectualibus, et eius est ordinare omnes, et ipsa est quasi architectonica respectu omnium*”: *STh* I-II, q. 66, a. 5.

⁵⁹ *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 1, ad 1. This article is about the infused gift of wisdom, but the wisdom that is an intellectual virtue also bears on the last end or beatitude. See *STh* I-II, q. 66, a. 5, ad 2.

doing what is required to bring the offspring into being? Thomas clearly regards wisdom as a fundamental human need.⁶⁰ Knowledge of the truth about God is far and away more urgent than other speculative knowledge.⁶¹ Even if we could expect no practical help or guidance from Him in remedy of our defects, God would still be our ultimate end, and our end is the most urgent thing for us to know.⁶² And I think we can indeed see a way in which it does fall into reason's apprehension prior to the good of living in society, if we reflect on a phrase in the last sentence of the corpus of 94.2.

The sentence is a concluding observation about the inclination toward the good that is in accordance with the nature of reason. "And according to this, those things that regard this inclination pertain to natural law, for instance *that man avoid ignorance*, that he not offend those with whom he needs to associate, and so forth". Clearly Thomas is associating the dictate to avoid ignorance with the inclination to know the truth about God. Yet he does not say "ignorance about God". He simply says "ignorance". This suggests two things.

First, it suggests that man has not only an inclination toward knowing the truth about God, but also an inclination toward knowing truth as such, truth taken absolutely or in general. Thomas posits such an inclination explicitly, in the article on the natural inclinations of the will.⁶³ Truth is the mind's connatural and proper good. Everyone understands that on the whole, knowing truth is better than being in ignorance. We might say that they understand that having a mind is better – intrinsically better, just in itself – than not having one.

Of course the inclination toward truth in general would also be proper to reason. However, truth taken generally does not refer so directly or explicitly to common good as does truth about God. Some truths are only of interest to this or that individual; for instance, the truth regarding the circumstances of an action that one is deliberating about performing. So the

⁶⁰ Notice how he takes this need for granted. "*Adeptis autem singulis praemissorum [bonorum exteriorum], possunt adhuc multa bona homini necessaria deesse, puta sapientia, sanitas corporis, et huiusmodi*": *STh* I-II, q. 2, a. 4.

⁶¹ On Thomas's view, this urgency accounts for the fact that God himself has revealed the truth about Him that reason can arrive at. The leisure and the other conditions that the investigation requires are too scarce. See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1. At the same time, precisely because of the urgency of knowing about God, leisure itself is something urgent, not just for a few but for everyone; on this see the discussions of the third precept of the Decalogue in *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 2, and I-II, q. 100, a. 5.

⁶² On this see *STh* I-II, q. 89, a. 6.

⁶³ *STh* I-II, q. 10, a. 1.

fact that in 94.2, Thomas speaks of truth about God, not truth simply, further supports the idea that his examples are chosen for their reference to common good.

The second suggestion is that in a way, the inclination toward knowing the truth about God and the inclination toward knowing truth generally are one and the same. We can make sense of this, I think, if we keep in mind that knowing the truth about God is the same as possessing wisdom. For wisdom is also called the “science of truth”.⁶⁴ To be sure, all human disciplines are concerned with truth. Truth is an end in every intellectual operation, whether speculative or practical.⁶⁵ But if wisdom stands over the rest, this is because it bears on truth to the highest degree.⁶⁶ This in turn is because it regards the highest cause.⁶⁷ We grasp the truth about something more perfectly, with greater certitude, the more perfectly we know its cause or its explanation.⁶⁸ In this sense, the inclination toward knowing truth generally, and the inclination toward knowing the truth about God, are virtually the same thing. If by “God” is meant the highest cause – the most universal good, the ultimate end of reality – then indifference toward the truth about God would be nothing short of indifference toward the very meaning of existence. To be sure, some may not put much effort into seeking it. They may be distracted by other occupations, or discouraged by its difficulty. But this does not mean that they are judging the knowledge of it to be no better than ignorance about it. If they were, *could* they be judging that in general knowledge is better than ignorance? In the end, would they not be judging that having a mind is really no better, in itself, than not having one?

⁶⁴ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II.1, 993b20.

⁶⁵ Thus prudence, which is an intellectual virtue and as such is ordered toward knowledge of the truth, pertains to the active life: *STh* II-II, q. 181, a. 2.

⁶⁶ This is one reason why wisdom must be a kind of speculative knowledge; practical intellect only regards truth up to a point, viz. insofar as it is applicable to action. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II.1, 993b21–22. Aristotle does make the desire to avoid ignorance the proper motive of speculative inquiry: *Metaphysics* I.2, 982b20. But this hardly entails that the principle, “ignorance is to avoided”, only regards speculative knowledge. There is also bad and even culpable ignorance in the practical sphere; see *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.1, 1110b28–34; III.5, 1113b29–1114a3. Thomas posits a kind of sin called “negligence”, which is voluntary ignorance of what one ought to know, and which extends to both speculative and practical matters; see *STh* I-II, q. 76, a. 2. Also interesting is *STh* II-II, q. 166, a. 2, obj. 1 & ad 1, on Aristotle’s use of the term *studiosus* (σπουδαῖος) as a synonym for *virtuosus*.

⁶⁷ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II.1, 993b23–30.

⁶⁸ See *STh* II-II, q. 9, a. 2.

If this is right, then there does seem to be a way in which understanding the desirability of living in society would presuppose understanding the desirability of knowing the truth about God. For again, by “society” is meant the sort of community that is properly rational. Living in society primarily means communing with other minds. It means reasoning together. Our natural need for society, and even society’s own nature, is very much in function of our natural need for truth. If we did not see truth as a goal, we would not – or rather, *could* not – engage in reasoning at all. Much less would we be inclined to engage in it together. The sheer idea of society, to say nothing of its intrinsic desirability, would be unintelligible to us.

And, I dare say, so would the very principle of the primacy of common good. As we saw, only intellect relates directly to common good. No common good holds sway except through some intellect. Seeing the primacy of common good seems to go hand in hand with seeing that intellect, and therefore truth, ought to rule.

Appendix

M. Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, I.iv.11-14

- [11] *IV. Principio generi animantium omni est a natura tributum, ut se, vitam corpusque tueatur, declinet ea, quae nocitura videantur, omniaque, quae sint ad vivendum necessaria, anquirat et paret, ut pastum, ut latibula, ut alia generis eiusdem. Commune item animantium omnium est coniunctionis adpetitus procreandi causa et cura quaedam eorum, quae procreata sint; sed inter hominem et beluam hoc maxime interest, quod haec tantum, quantum sensu movetur, ad id solum, quod adest quodque praesens est, se accommodat paulum admodum sentiens praeteritum aut futurum; homo autem, quod rationis est particeps, per quam consequentia cernit, causas rerum videt earumque praegressus et quasi antecessiones non ignorat, similitudines comparat rebusque praesentibus adiungit atque annectit futuras, facile totius vitae cursum videt ad eamque degendam praeparat res necessarias.*
- [12] *Eademque natura vi rationis hominem conciliat homini et ad orationis et ad vitae societatem ingeneratque in primis praecipuum quendam amorem in eos, qui procreati sunt, impellitque, ut hominum coetus et celebrationes et esse et a se obiri velit ob easque causas studeat parare ea, quae suppeditent ad cultum et ad victum, nec sibi soli, sed coniugi, liberis ceterisque, quos caros habeat tuerique debeat; quae cura exsuscitat etiam animos et maiores ad rem gerendam facit.*
- [13] *In primisque hominis est propria veri inquisitio atque investigatio. Itaque cum sumus necessariis negotiis curisque vacui, tum avemus aliquid videre, audire, addiscere cognitionemque rerum aut occultarum aut admirabilium ad beate vivendum necessariam ducimus. Ex quo intellegitur, quod verum, simplex sin-*

cerumque sit, id esse naturae hominis aptissimum. Huic veri videndi cupiditati adiuncta est appetitio quaedam principatus, ut nemini parere animus bene informatus a natura velit nisi praecipienti aut docenti aut utilitatis causa iuste et legitime imperanti; ex quo magnitudo animi exsistit humanarumque rerum contemptio.

- [14] *Nec vero illa parva vis naturae est rationisque, quod unum hoc animal sentit, quid sit ordo, quid sit, quod deceat, in factis dictisque qui modus. Itaque eorum ipsorum, quae aspectu sentiuntur, nullum aliud animal pulchritudinem, venustatem, convenientiam partium sentit; quam similitudinem natura ratioque ab oculis ad animum transferens multo etiam magis pulchritudinem, constantiam, ordinem in consiliis factisque conservandam putat cavetque, ne quid indecore effeminateve faciat, turn in omnibus et opinionibus et factis ne quid libidinese aut faciat aut cogitet.*

Quibus ex rebus conflatur et efficitur id, quod quaerimus, honestum, quod etiamsi nobilitatum non sit, tamen honestum sit, quodque vere dicimus, etiamsi a nullo laudetur, natura esse laudabile.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ M. Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, with an English translation by Walter Miller, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press 1975, pp. 12–16.

INCLINAZIONE NATURALE A CONOSCERE LA VERITÀ SU DIO

■ RICARDO FERRARA

homo habet naturalem inclinationem ad hoc quod veritatem *cognoscat* de Deo et ad hoc quod in societate *vivat*... quod ignorantiam vitet, quod alios non offendat cum quibus debet conversari (ST I-II q. 94, a. 2 c).

Proposito del presente lavoro è di interpretare nel testo precedente *l'inclinazione a conoscere la verità su Dio*, di assegnarne il carattere di legge naturale e quindi normativo o morale.

I. Un senso possibile del testo

Nell'articolo 2 San Tommaso cerca armonizzare l'unità della legge naturale con la pluralità dei suoi precetti, mediante un'analogia fra i precetti dell'ordine pratico e i principi dell'ordine speculativo. Per quanto riguarda *l'unità*: come i principi dell'ordine speculativo si unificano per riduzione al *principio supremo di non-contraddizione* fondato nella formalità (*ratio*) dell'essere in quanto incompatibile con il non essere,¹ così i precetti della legge naturale si unificano per riduzione al *dovere supremo di fare il bene*, un bene non astrattamente considerato ma concretamente, nella bontà della natura *umana*.² Appunto la *pluralità* dei precetti della legge naturale viene fondata sulla complessità di questo bene umano, ossia sul triplice livello delle inclinazioni *naturali* dell'uomo,³ cioè con le sue inclinazioni *comuni*, condivise da tutti i viventi (sopravvivere) o dagli animali (procreare ed educare la prole) e, dall'altra parte, con le inclinazioni *proprie* della natura razionale (conoscere la verità su Dio e convivere in società). Qui ci limitiamo a domandare per la prima di queste inclinazioni *proprie*.

1. Inclinazione (o appetito) naturale

Per San Tommaso il processo teleologico di ogni ente implica: 1) il suo *appetito naturale*, cioè la sua natura in quanto esiste in *proporzione* con il fine,

¹ "Et ideo primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra *rationem entis* et non entis" (STh I-II q. 94 a. 2 c). Il corsivo delle citazioni è nostro (RF).

² "...ut scilicet omnia illa *facienda vel vitanda* pertineant ad praecepta legis naturae, quae ratio practica *naturaliter* apprehendit esse bona *humana*" (*ibidem*).

³ "Secundum igitur ordinem *inclinationum* naturalium, est ordo *praeceptorum* legis naturae" (*ibidem*).

2) il suo dinamismo naturale o il suo muoversi al fine, 3) il riposarsi nel fine.⁴ In questo contesto l'appetito o “*inclinazione* della cosa al suo fine naturale” (*In III Sent* d. 27 q. 1 a. 2 c) non deve confondersi con il suo moto o dinamismo (*actus*) naturale. Non è ancora qualità (*actio-passio*) ma relazione (*ordo*). È semplicemente “l’ordinarsi la sua natura al suo fine” (*In Phys* I lect 15,10),⁵ la sua proporzione o relazione con il fine; in una parola, la sua *affinità*.⁶

Questa relazione con il fine è nell’uomo la sua stessa natura, *prima di ogni moto* o dinamismo, sia di cieca pulsione, sia di consapevole operazione, sensibile o razionale. Per questo carattere ha ricevuto nella scuola il nome di *appetitus innatus*, non cosciente, non “*elicitus*”.⁷ Il suo arco abbraccia due estremi. Il positivo e supremo viene rappresentato dal così detto “*desiderio naturale di vedere Dio*”: qui le parole “*desiderio*” e “*vedere*” devono intendersi in un senso metaforico che soltanto traduce l’ordinazione o affinità dell’intelligenza con la visione di Dio in quanto *possibile*, non la sua consecuzione e tanto meno il suo merito che è per grazia.⁸ L’estremo negativo e infimo si trova nell’*inclinazione naturale al bene* che rimane nel *dannato* ma che, dovuto alla sua ostinazione nel male, viene impedita di passare all’atto di volere il bene.⁹ Per questo carattere “innato” dell’appetito naturale alcuni testi di

⁴ “Manifestum est autem quod omne quod tendit ad finem aliquem, primo quidem habet *aptitudinem seu proportionem* ad finem, nihil enim tendit in finem non proportionatum; secundo, *movetur* ad finem; tertio, *quiescit* in fine post eius consecutionem” (*STh* I-II q. 25 a. 2).

⁵ “Nihil est aliud appetitus naturalis quam *ordinatio* aliquorum secundum propriam naturam in suum finem” (*In Phys* I lect 15, N° 10).

⁶ Il gioco di parole non pretende fare etimologie. Al riguardo vedere A. Ernout-A.Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*, Paris 1979 p. 237 col. 1 (s.v. finis, composés de finis).

⁷ L’opposizione “innatus-elicitus” sembra mancare in Tommaso per chi *elicitus* si oppone a *imperatus* (*STh* I-II q. 6 a. 4 c et *passim*) mentre *innatus* si oppone a *acquisitus*: “sicut cognitio principiorum *accipitur* a sensu et tamen lumen quo principia cognoscuntur est *innatum*” (*In Boet De Trin* q. 3 a. 1 ad 4m).

⁸ “Inest... homini naturale desiderium cognoscendi *causam*, cum intuetur effectum; et ex hoc admiratio in hominibus consurgit. Si igitur intellectus rationalis creaturae pertingere non *possit* ad primam causam rerum, remanebit inane *desiderium naturae*...” (*STh* I q. 12 a. 1 c); “Quamvis homo *naturaliter inclinetur* in finem ultimum non potest tamen *naturaliter illum consequi* sed solum *per gratiam* et hoc est propter eminentiam illius finis” (*In Boet de Trin* q. 6 a. 4, 5m). Dalla frondosa bibliografia rileviamo J. Laporta, *La destinée de la nature humaine selon S. Thomas d’Aquin*² Paris 1965 e *Pour trouver le sens exact des termes: “appetitus naturalis, desiderium naturale” etc. chez Thomas d’Aquin*: AHDLMA (1973) 37-95.

⁹ “...etiam in damnato manet *naturalis inclinatio* qua homo naturaliter vult bonum; sed haec inclinatio *non dicit actum* aliquem, sed solum *ordinem* naturae ad actum. Hic autem ordo et habilitas nunquam in actum exit, ut bonum actualiter velit, propter per-

Tommaso sembrano confinarlo al mondo inanimato o vegetativo o a gradi che non arrivano alla coscienza sensibile o razionale.¹⁰ Ma altri testi riconoscono chiaramente che *anche l'intelligenza* ha un appetito “naturale” o innato, cioè, quello della *verità*, non ancora conosciuta sotto la formalità di verità.¹¹ Questo ci porta a indagare sull'altra espressione del nostro testo.

2. *Conoscere la verità su Dio*

Questa espressione può intendersi al meno in due sensi possibili che rimandano al contenuto della verità o alla sua forma. Con accenno al contenuto questa verità riguarda Dio in se stesso o Dio in quanto fatto uomo in Cristo.¹² Con riferimento alla forma essa viene colta per ragione (o anche per rivelazione)¹³ e viene opposta *all'opinione*.¹⁴ Siccome non sembra che il primo senso abbia rapporto con un'inclinazione naturale o con la legge naturale resta il secondo, come più probabile. Dunque “*conoscere la verità*” viene opposto a una mera conoscenza dialettica (*disputative*) di quello che altri *opinano*. In conseguenza denota una conoscenza critica e metafisica di quello che il soggetto in questione è realmente, cioè, *se esiste* e che cosa è. Questo occorre quando, insoddisfatti con quello che di lui “*si dice*” o si argomenta dialetticamente, domandiamo quel che lui realmente è. Così formulava Tommaso il procedere metodico di Aristotele quando, dopo di esaminare

petuum impedimentum obstinationis voluntatem ligantis; sed tamen naturalis cognitio manet...” (*In II Sent d. 39 q. 3 a. 1, 5m*).

¹⁰ “... omnia suo modo *per appetitum inclinantur* in bonum sed diversimode. Quaedam enim inclinantur in bonum, *per solam naturalem habitudinem, absque cognitione*, sicut plantae et corpora inanimata. Et talis inclinatio ad bonum vocatur *appetitus naturalis*. Quaedam vero ad bonum inclinantur cum aliqua cognitione; non quidem sic quod cognoscant ipsam rationem boni sed *cognoscunt aliquod bonum particulare*... inclinatio autem hanc cognitionem sequens dicitur *appetitus sensibilis* ... Quaedam vero ad bonum inclinantur cum cognitione qua *cognoscunt ipsam boni rationem*, quod est proprium intellectus ... Et haec inclinatio dicitur *voluntas*...” (*STh I q. 59 a. 1 c*; cf *q. 60 a. 1 c*).

¹¹ “Verum enim est bonum intellectus, ad quod naturaliter ordinatur: unde sicut res cognitione carentes moventur ad suos fines absque ratione, ita interdum *intellectus hominis quadam naturali inclinatione tendit in veritatem, licet rationem veritatis non percipiat*” (*In Phys I lectio 10 N° 5*).

¹² “*veritas de Deo, hoc contingit esse dupliciter: quia aut est de ipso Deo tantum, aut de Deo ratione naturae assumptae*...” (*In III Sent d. 25 q. 1 a. 2*).

¹³ “Ad ea etiam *quae de Deo ratione humana investigari possunt, necessarium fuit hominem instrui revelatione divina*. Quia *veritas de Deo, per rationem investigata*, a paucis, et per longum tempus, et cum admixtione multorum errorum, homini proveniret...” (*STh I q. 1 a. 1 c*).

¹⁴ “...*de Deo secundum veritatem, et de Deo secundum opinionem*” (*STh I q. 13 a. 10 ob 2*).

le opinioni dei suoi predecessori sull'infinito, passava a risolvere la questione reale: "Postquam Philosophus *disputative* processit de infinito, hic incipit determinare *veritatem*. Et primo ostendit an [quomodo] *sit* infinitum; secundo quid *sit*". (*In Phys* 3, lect. 10 N° 1; cf. lect. 7 N° 1). Questo dunque sarebbe il senso del testo sull'inclinazione naturale a conoscere *la verità su Dio*: la parola "verità" farebbe riferimento alla necessità di *impostare la questione della realtà di Dio, cioè se Dio esiste e che è Dio*.

A modo di conclusione qui vorrei sottolineare due atteggiamenti nel nostro testo. Innanzitutto per quanto riguarda Dio il testo parla di inclinazione a *conoscere*, non specificamente a "vivere" né a convivere: lì è ben chiaro il contrasto fra *cognoscat* e *vivat*.¹⁵ In secondo luogo, questa inclinazione non viene messa in rapporto con qualsiasi conoscenza, ma denota specificamente una conoscenza di Dio *obiettiva, critica e ontologica o metafisica*.

II. È naturale un'inclinazione a "conoscere la verità su Dio"

Conseguentemente occorre dire che una mera esperienza psicologica o sociologica non è sufficiente come fondamento naturale della sopraddetta inclinazione: qui ne abbiamo bisogno di una deduzione "trascendentale" o metafisica, analoga a quella impiegata nell'ipotesi del desiderio naturale di "vedere" Dio. Qui quel "desiderio" *innato* non viene sperimentato ma dedotto, da una parte, dall'appetito naturale *elicit* o cosciente di sapere o di conoscere una cosa per la sua *causa*¹⁶ e, dall'altra parte, dalla nostra insoddisfazione per ogni conoscenza di Dio a partire degli *effetti*.¹⁷ Nei due casi l'argomentazione rimanda *all'apertura trascendentale dell'intelligenza*, apertura che permette sconfinare il mondo empirico e, nel caso della conoscenza di Dio, sorpassare ogni mediazione concettuale tanto propria come metaforica. Ma nel caso del desiderio naturale di "vedere Dio" la differenza risiede nel fatto che l'argomentazione riguarda soltanto la possibilità di essere "elevati" per grazia a vederlo, *non il fatto stesso* di questa elevazione, un mistero che conosciamo soltanto per rivelazione. Invece nel caso dell'inclinazione na-

¹⁵ Questa sfumatura ci distacca da un'altra interpretazione più libera ma rispettabile del nostro testo, cioè dalla Commissione Teologica Internazionale, "A la recherche d'une éthique universelle: Nouveau regard sur la loi naturelle", Cité du Vatican 2009 N° 50 ("...la tendance à vivre en communion avec Dieu ou l'Absolu. Celle-ci se manifeste dans le sentiment religieux et le désir de connaître Dieu").

¹⁶ Il "scire" di Tommaso traduce il vedere-sapere (εἰδέναι) di Aristotele (*Metafisica* I, 1 980a 21) e rimanda alla "scientia" (ἐπιστήμη) che è "conoscere per causam".

¹⁷ Vedere R. Ferrara, *El misterio de Dios. Correspondencias y paradojas*. Salamanca 2005, 245-7.

turale a “*conoscere la verità su Dio*” l’argomentazione riguarda l’esistenza di Dio¹⁸ e non soltanto il fatto che noi siamo capaci di conoscerla. Per lo sviluppo di questa argomentazione rimandiamo al lavoro previsto per l’inizio della prossima giornata di questa sessione Plenaria. Lo sviluppo potrebbe comprendere, oltre l’intera “teologia naturale”, una parte della teologia fondamentale, quella che in altri tempi riguardava il dovere di ricercare la “vera religione” e che, da Karl Rahner, viene centrata nell’“uditore della parola”.

III. Da questa inclinazione si ricava il dovere di evitare l’ignoranza religiosa

Dall’inclinazione naturale a conoscere la verità su Dio e dal principio “*inclinatio naturae pertinet ad praecepta legis naturalis*” (STh II-II q. 79 a. 2, 2m) viene ricavato l’aspetto morale di quella inclinazione che il nostro testo riassume nel *dovere di evitare l’ignoranza religiosa (quod ignorantiam vitet)* il che, detto positivamente, è *dovere di istruirsi in materia religiosa*.¹⁹ È importante sottolineare che questo dovere riguarda tanto colui chi afferma Dio come colui chi lo nega. Restringersi ad affermare Dio o a negarlo, desistendo di “dare ragione” (1 Pt 3 15) della propria fede o della propria non credenza, limitandosi a invocare il mero sentimento (anche il “religioso”) o la pressione sociale di quel che è detto da tutti, o dalla maggioranza o da certe autorità qualificate, sarebbe chiamare a sostegno una “ragione debolissima”.²⁰

Resterebbe chiarire in qual senso il dovere di evitare l’ignoranza religiosa e il correlativo diritto all’istruzione religiosa appartengono ai precetti della legge *naturale*.²¹ Qui dobbiamo ricordare quel che Tommaso insegnava sul triplice modo di appartenenza dei precetti morali alla legge naturale: quelli

¹⁸ Si veda: “*Innatum est enim homini ut ex causatis desiderio quodam moveatur ad inquirendum causas; nec quiescit istud desiderium quousque perventum fuerit ad primam causam, quae Deus est*” (De Virt q. 1 a. 1).

¹⁹ La nostra interpretazione attende al parallelismo strutturale del nostro testo:

positive	quod veritatem <i>cognoscat</i> de Deo	quod in societate <i>vivat</i>
negative	quod <i>ignorantiam</i> vitet	quod <i>alios</i> non offendat

²⁰ L’assioma di Boezio [In Top. Cicer. 1, 6] “*locus ab auctoritate est infirmissimus*” viene ripreso da San Tommaso ma circoscritto al livello dell’autorità *umana* (STh I q. 1 a. 8, obj. 2 y ad 2m).

²¹ Possono elencarsi più di 50 ricorrenze del tema nel programma *El Magisterio de Juan Pablo II y los principales documentos pontificios del siglo XX*. Programa elaborado por el Centro de Estudios y Documentación “Padre Hurtado” de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (www.puc.cl/hurtado). Se non sbaglia, in nessuna di quelle ricorrenze il diritto all’istruzione religiosa viene proposto come diritto *naturale*.

spontaneamente (*statim per se*) capiti da tutti, quelli che risultano da una ricerca dei sapienti e dalla sua comunicazione tramite l'educazione (*disciplina*), quelli originati in una istruzione divina (*instructione divina*; *STh* I-II q. 100 a. 1 c).²² Supponendo che la ragione naturale può raggiungere Dio come Creatore e Signore di tutto²³ si può presumere che quel dovere e diritto appartengano alla legge naturale nel *sensu ampio* praticato da Tommaso, anche se non siano capiti spontaneamente né dedotti da una *pura* ragione ma abbiano bisogno della mediazione di una formazione culturale e, in certi casi, di una "ragione *informata* dalla fede" (*STh* I-II q. 104 a. 1, 3m).²⁴

IV. Istruzione religiosa e convivenza sociale

Se non è facile scorgere il carattere "naturale" del dovere e diritto all'istruzione religiosa, rivendicati dal magistero della Chiesa da Leone XIII fino ai nostri giorni, non è nemmeno semplice il compito di sviluppare la sua compatibilità con la convivenza sociale. Qui ci asteniamo di quello sviluppo e ci limitiamo a indicare le coordinate tracciate dal concilio Vaticano II nel suo insegnamento sulla libertà religiosa. Da una parte "questa libertà consiste nel dover essere tutti immuni di coazione da privati o da gruppi sociali o da qualsiasi potere umano in modo tale che in materia religiosa nessuno venga obbligato ad agire contro sua coscienza né sia impedito di operare in conformità con essa" (*Dignitatis humanae* I,2). Ma dall'altra parte "si violano i diritti dei padri se i loro figli vengono obbligati a frequentare lezioni che non corrispondano alla convinzione religiosa dei loro padri o se si impone *un sistema unico di educazione del quale si escluda totalmente la formazione religiosa*" (*Dignitatis humanae* I,5).

²² "...necesse est quod *omnia* praecepta moralia pertineant ad legem naturae, sed *diversimode*. Quaedam enim sunt quae *statim per se* ratio naturalis cuiuslibet hominis diiudicat esse facienda vel non facienda, sicut "honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam" et "non occides, non furtum facies" [Ex 20. 12ss]. Et huiusmodi sunt *absolute* de lege naturae. Quaedam vero sunt quae subtiliori consideratione rationis a *sapientibus* iudicantur esse observanda. Et ista sic sunt de lege naturae, ut tamen *indigeant disciplina* qua minores a sapientioribus *instruantur*, sicut illud, "coram cano capite consurge", et "honora personam senis" [Lv 19,32], et alia huiusmodi. Quaedam vero sunt ad quae iudicanda ratio humana indiget *instructione divina*, per quam erudimur de divinis, sicut est illud, "non facies tibi sculptile neque omnem similitudinem" [Ex 20,4]; "non assumes nomen Dei tui in vanum" [Dt 5,11]" (*STh* I-II q. 100 a. 1 c). Vedi R. Ferrara, *Legge naturale e legge nuova nel recente magistero e nella teologia di San Tommaso*, Doctor Communis (2007) fasc 1-2, 209s.

²³ Concilio Vaticano I, sessione 3, capitolo 2, canone 1; Cf. DS 3026.

²⁴ "quaedam sunt *moralia*, quae *ipsa ratio fide informata* dictat, sicut Deum esse amandum et colendum" (*STh* I-II q. 104 a. 1 3m).

MAN'S NEED TO KNOW THE ULTIMATE CAUSE OF ALL THINGS

■ CHARLES MOREROD, O.P.

Considering the topics of the other presentations in this Session, I shall address the topic of our desire to know the ultimate Cause of all things in a basic and general way, avoiding the disputes on the details and interpretation of this basic human need.

The Unification of “Natures” According to Aristotle

When Aristotle looks at the world and thinks about what he sees, he sees natures. In other words, all things have some kind of standard “behaviour” that depends on what they are. And possible exceptions do not infringe that rule:

Those things are natural which, by a continuous movement originated from an internal principle, arrive at some completion: the same completion is not reached from every principle; nor any chance completion, but always the tendency in each is towards the same end, if there is no impediment.¹

When we see a baby dog, we know that if nothing interferes, it will become a bigger dog, and we know more or less how this bigger dog will behave. Such a certainty, understandable to all, is based on a simple observation of nature. And this is what Aristotle describes, precisely, as “nature”:

Of things that exist, some exist by nature, some from other causes. (...) Nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute. (...) ‘That nature exists, it would be absurd to try to prove; for it is obvious that there are many things of this kind, and to prove what is obvious by what is not is the mark of a man who is unable to distinguish what is self-evident from what is not. (...) What grows qua growing grows from something into something. Into what then does it grow? Not into that from which it arose but into that to which it tends.’²

¹ Aristotle, *Physics*, II.8, 199b.

² Aristotle, *Physics*, II.1, 193a.

From something into something: from what we already are – because of our efficient and formal causes – into what we must be. The second part is crucial. We do not understand things only in view of their efficient cause, but also of their final cause. If I receive a tool as a gift, my main question is not “who made it?”, but “what is it for?” Of course in order to find an answer to the question “what is it for?”, I might have to go to the maker, but precisely as a source of information on the final cause.

We live in a world of finalized natures, which altogether constitute “the nature”. All individual things, with their own natures, are somehow related to each other:

Nature proceeds little by little from things lifeless to animal life in such a way that it is impossible to determine the exact line of demarcation, nor on which side thereof an intermediate form should lie. Thus, next after lifeless things in the upward scale comes the plant, and of plants one will differ from another as to its amount of apparent vitality; and, in a word, the whole genus of plants, whilst it is devoid of life as compared with an animal, is endowed with life as compared with other corporeal entities. Indeed, as we just remarked, there is observed in plants a continuous scale of ascent towards the animal. So, in the sea, there are certain objects concerning which one would be at a loss to determine whether they be animal or vegetable.³

Aristotle assumes that both individual natures and the whole cannot be vain:

Nature does nothing in vain. For all things that exist by Nature are means to an end, or will be concomitants of means to an end.⁴

Aristotle is not unable to notice that some things go wrong, but if they do, it is still in line with their nature.⁵ That nature does nothing in vain reflects our experience. If we know what dogs are, and hear a dog bark, we will assume that we know the possible reasons of its barking. We can make a mistake, of course, but it remains that things “act” according to what they are: such a certainty is presupposed by any systematic knowledge of the world.

³ Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*, VIII.1, 588b.

⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, III.12, 434a. See also Aristotle, *Physics*, VIII.1, 252a: “That which is produced or directed by nature can never be anything disorderly: for nature is everywhere the cause of order.”

⁵ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.13, 1118b: “In the natural appetites few go wrong, and only in one direction, that of excess; for to eat or drink whatever offers itself till one is surfeited is to exceed the natural amount, since natural appetite is the replenishment of one’s deficiency.”

Aristotle's "World of Natures" and St. Thomas' Created World

Aquinas takes from Aristotle the "*causa cuius gratia fit aliquid, scilicet causa finalis*",⁶ and confirms its major importance:

The first of all causes is the final cause. The reason of which is that matter does not receive form, save in so far as it is moved by an agent; for nothing reduces itself from potentiality to act. But an agent does not move except out of intention for an end.⁷

On this basis, Aquinas follows Aristotle in his recognition of an order of the Universe, adding the light of his own Christian faith in a Creator:

The whole order of the universe is due to the first mover, so that what is in the ordained universe explicates what is in the intellect and in the will of the first mover. And thus it is necessary that the whole organization of the universe be from a first mover. When he then says "all things" he shows how all parts of the universe are related to the order; he says that all things that are in the universe are somehow ordained, but all do not have the order, like the animals of the Sea, and the birds, and the plants. And although they are not ordained in the same way, they are not related in such a way that one would not belong to the other; but there is some affinity and order of the one to the other. The plants are for the animals and the animals for men. And that all are ordained to each other is clear from the fact that all together are ordained to one end. (...) The nature of anything is some inclination given to it by the first mover, ordaining it to its due end. And from this it is clear that natural things act because of and end, although they do not know their end, because they receive from a first intelligent the inclination to an end.⁸

Add or suppress one animal species in a given context, the whole context is going to be disturbed. The coordination of things of different natures is something the contemporary ecological movement thinks it has discovered. It actually rediscovered one aspect of Aristotle's philosophy of nature. What the ecological movement rarely takes into consideration is the reason for the organisation it discovers in the universe. Aquinas understands this organisation as an indication of the Creator's action. All natures are organised by a Creator in order to make a complex nature, and they have some kind of "natural love" that relates them to their end, again because of their Creator:

⁶ *Expositio libri Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 2 l. 9 n. 2.

⁷ *Ia IIae* q. 1 a. 2.

⁸ *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 12 l. 12.

Natural things seek what is suitable to them according to their nature, by reason of an apprehension which is not in them, but in the Author of their nature. (...) The connaturalness of a heavy body for the centre, is by reason of its weight and may be called 'natural love.'⁹

Of course "love" is taken by analogy, the first analogate being an intelligent way of loving. And this comes from the fact that the case of intelligent beings is special, because their nature does not determine them completely. They can make choices, although these choices are not independent from their nature:

The will is distinguished from nature as one kind of cause from another; for some things happen naturally and some are done voluntarily. There is, however, another manner of causing that is proper to the will, which is mistress of its act, besides the manner proper to nature, which is determinate to one thing. But since the will is founded on some nature, it is necessary that the movement proper to nature be shared by the will, to some extent: just as what belongs to a previous cause is shared by a subsequent cause. Because in every thing, being itself, which is from nature, precedes volition, which is from the will. And hence it is that the will wills something naturally.¹⁰

God is the final end of all creation, and it could not be otherwise, as it can be seen from the point of view of creation and from the possible point of view of the Creator.

From the point of view of creation, the whole of nature points to a final end. The things that we can see have their existence from another, and have in themselves a move towards something. In other words, the question of the final end arises from the efficient cause¹¹ and from the formal cause.¹² And the end of all must be different from creation itself:

As the end of a thing corresponds to its beginning, it is not possible to be ignorant of the end of things if we know their beginning. Therefore, since the beginning of all things is something outside the universe, namely, God, it is clear from what has been expounded

⁹ Ia IIae, q.26, a.1.

¹⁰ Ia IIae, q.10, a.1, ad 1.

¹¹ See De Veritate, q.5, a.2: "Some of the very ancient philosophers admitted only a material cause. Since they would not admit an efficient cause, they could not affirm the existence of an end, for an end is a cause only in so far as it moves the efficient cause". See also John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas, From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2000, p.480-485.

¹² See Ia, q.5, a.5: "Upon the form follows an inclination to the end".

above, that we must conclude that the end of all things is some extrinsic good. This can be proved by reason. For it is clear that good has the nature of an end; wherefore, a particular end of anything consists in some particular good; while the universal end of all things is the Universal Good; Which is good of Itself by virtue of Its Essence, Which is the very essence of goodness; whereas a particular good is good by participation. Now it is manifest that in the whole created universe there is not a good which is not such by participation. Wherefore that good which is the end of the whole universe must be a good outside the universe.¹³

From the point of view of the Creator, we should ask why God might have wanted to create at all. The reason why God wanted to create is certainly not that he would have wanted to get some created thing, that he would have needed. It is not either because he would have enjoyed something that he did not need. These are two meanings of the will in us: I want what I do not have, I enjoy the good I have. There is a third meaning: I want to share the good I have. In this third sense God creates:

God wills not only Himself, but other things apart from Himself. This is clear from the comparison which we made above. For natural things have a natural inclination not only towards their own proper good, to acquire it if not possessed, and, if possessed, to rest therein; but also to spread abroad their own good amongst others, so far as possible. Hence we see that every agent, in so far as it is perfect and in act, produces its like. It pertains, therefore, to the nature of the will to communicate as far as possible to others the good possessed; and especially does this pertain to the divine will, from which all perfection is derived in some kind of likeness. Hence, if natural things, in so far as they are perfect, communicate their good to others, much more does it appertain to the divine will to communicate by likeness its own good to others as much as possible. Thus, then, He wills both Himself to be, and other things to be; but Himself as the end, and other things as ordained to that end; inasmuch as it befits the divine goodness that other things should be partakers therein.¹⁴

Because of their nature, all things “love God”, who is the final cause of every created nature. This dynamism of any nature towards God has been inserted by the Creator:

¹³ Ia, q. 103, a. 2.

¹⁴ Ia, q. 19, a. 2.

To love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational, and even to inanimate nature according to the manner of love which can belong to each creature. And the reason of this is that it is natural to all to seek and love things according as they are naturally fit (to be sought and loved) since 'all things act according as they are naturally fit' as stated in *Phys. ii, 8*. Now it is manifest that the good of the part is for the good of the whole; hence everything, by its natural appetite and love, loves its own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe, which is God. Hence Dionysius says (*Div. Nom. iv*) that 'God leads everything to love of Himself.'¹⁵

The fact that non-rational beings aim at their end in an organized way is not trivial. It is a hint to the existence of God, due precisely to the fact that we are dealing with beings that are non rational:

We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.¹⁶

The teleological organization of non-rational beings is impressive, but the case of intelligent creatures is in part different. Each nature fits in the universe in its own way. And there is a radical difference, that depends on whether a creature is intelligent or not:

Every creature exists for its own proper act and perfection, and the less noble for the nobler, as those creatures that are less noble than man exist for the sake of man, whilst each and every creature exists for the perfection of the entire universe. Furthermore, the entire universe, with all its parts, is ordained towards God as its end, inasmuch as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the Divine goodness, to the glory of God. Reasonable creatures, however, have in some special and higher manner God as their end, since they can attain to Him by their own operations, by knowing and loving Him.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ia IIae, q.109, q.3.

¹⁶ Ia, q.2, a.3. See also *Super Sent.*, lib. 2 d. 25 q. 1 a. 1; *Sententia libri Ethiconum*, lib. 1 l. 1.

¹⁷ Ia, q.65, a.2.

The Human Move Towards the Human End

Human beings do not aim at their end in the way non-rational beings do. The organisation of nature is impressive, but can be frightening. Human beings do not accept to fit into natural determinism. This refusal of determinism is not a refusal of our nature; it is a consequence of our nature. We are not fully determinate. Although we cannot choose our final end, we are not *determinati ad unum*. We can choose the means towards the end:

The effect of this government appears variously in various natures according to the difference between them. Some creatures are brought into being by God to possess understanding, to bear his likeness and present His image. They not only are directed, but also direct themselves by proper actions of their own to their due end.¹⁸

Intelligent creatures can and must choose the means towards their final end. They are not determinate to one, because God moves them according to their nature, and he gave them a free will (*liberum arbitrium*):

God moves everything in its own manner, just as we see that in natural things (...), on account of their diverse natures. Hence He moves man to justice according to the condition of his human nature. But it is man's proper nature to have free will. Hence in him who has the use of reason, God's motion to justice does not take place without a movement of the free-will; but He so infuses the gift of justifying grace that at the same time He moves the free-will to accept the gift of grace, in such as are capable of being moved thus.¹⁹

The process of the choice involves the intellect and the will. In the present life, there is a margin of uncertainty in the process:

There are some things intelligible which have not a necessary connection with the first principles; such as contingent propositions, the denial of which does not involve a denial of the first principles. And to such the intellect does not assent of necessity. But there are some propositions which have a necessary connection with the first principles: such as demonstrable conclusions, a denial of which involves a denial of the first principles. And to these the intellect assents of necessity, when once it is aware of the necessary connection of these conclusions with the principles; but it does not assent of necessity until through the demonstration it recognizes the necessity of such connection. It is the same with the will. For there are certain indi-

¹⁸ SCG III, 1.

¹⁹ Ia IIae, q. 113, a. 3.

vidual goods which have not a necessary connection with happiness, because without them a man can be happy: and to such the will does not adhere of necessity. But there are some things which have a necessary connection with happiness, by means of which things man adheres to God, in Whom alone true happiness consists. Nevertheless, until through the certitude of the Divine Vision the necessity of such connection be shown, the will does not adhere to God of necessity, nor to those things which are of God. But the will of the man who sees God in His essence of necessity adheres to God, just as now we desire of necessity to be happy.²⁰

We can miss the end by making bad choices, not because of the free will as such, but because our free will is deficient:

We note a second difference regarding which there can be free choice as the difference between good and evil. But this difference does not intrinsically belong to the power of free choice but is incidentally related to the power inasmuch as natures capable of defect have such free choice. For inasmuch as the will of itself is ordained for good as its proper object, the will can strive for evil only insofar as evil is understood under the aspect of good, and such understanding belongs to a deficiency of the intellect or reason, which causes choice to be free. But it does not belong to the nature of a power to be deficient in its activity. For example, it does not belong to the nature of the power of sight that one see things indistinctly. And so nothing prevents there being a power of free choice that so strives for good that it is in no way capable of striving for evil, whether by nature, as in the case of God, or by the perfection of grace, as in the case of the saints and the holy angels.²¹

The deficiency of our free will is in part due to our intellect, in part to our will. The part of the intellect is decisive,²² as it appears from the fact that in the beatific vision the knowledge available determines the will. This shows how a knowledge of the final end is required to a good direction of our life.

²⁰ Ia, q.82, a.2.

²¹ *De Malo*, q.16, a.5. translation *The De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*, With Facing-page Translation by Richard Regan, Edited with and Introduction and Notes by Brian Davies, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York, 2001, p. 875.

²² The situation of the angels is different, See Ia, q.58, a.5: "Since the minds of demons are utterly perverted from the Divine wisdom, they at times form their opinions of things simply according to the natural conditions of the same. Nor are they ever deceived as to the natural properties of anything; but they can be misled with regard to supernatural matters...".

Human Nature Requires some Knowledge of the Final End

Our nature has an end, as all natures. But our nature also implies that we can know this end, in order to direct our lives towards it. Therefore, our nature requires some knowledge of God, in a way similar to the undisputed fact that it requires some human community:

There is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society.²³

Because of our origin – in God – we naturally try to relate to him. This is the root of religion, which is related to a desire of knowing also ourselves:

Since any creature existed in God before it existed in itself, and proceeded from God (...) the rational creature must bind itself to God himself, to whom it was bound before it existed.²⁴

If we cannot know in any way the reason why we – contingent as we are – exist, and cannot know where we go, then human nature is the oddest thing that can be observed. Our nature would be even more surprising than a platypus:

The ultimate end of human life is the contemplation of God. If then man could not achieve that, he would be constituted as a vain being, since according to the Philosopher is vain what is constituted for some end that it does not achieve, as it is said in Psalm 88,48: *hast thou made all the children of men in vain?*²⁵

A well ordered human life would be impossible without some knowledge of God, because any act is towards an end and partial ends have to be unified, as St. Thomas says in direct reference to Aristotle:

If we should proceed to infinity in our desire for ends so that one end should always be desired on account of another to infinity, we will never arrive at the point where a man may attain the ends desired. But a man desires fruitlessly what he cannot get; consequently, the end he desires would be useless and vain. But this desire is natural, for it was said above that the good is what all beings naturally desire. Hence it follows that a natural desire would be useless and vain. But this is impossible. The reason is that a natural desire is nothing else but an inclination belonging to things by the disposition of the First Mover, and this cannot be frustrated.²⁶

²³ Ia IIae, q.94, a.2.

²⁴ *Contra impugnantes*, pars 1, corpus.

²⁵ *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d.3, q.1, a.1.

²⁶ *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, lib. 1, l. 2.

Our Creator knows what he is doing, and provides us with some way of knowing him:

Because the perfect good of man consists in his knowing God in such way as he can, there is given man a way of ascending to the knowledge of God, to the end that so noble a creature should not seem to exist altogether in vain, unable to attain the proper end of his existence.²⁷

This certainly indicates a fittingness of revelation, but it does not require it absolutely. What human nature requires is *some* knowledge of God:

Est igitur ultimus finis hominis intelligere quoquo modo Deum.²⁸

I do not want to deal with the question of a supernatural desire included within our nature, but I just mention the fact that I agree with Steven Long's view: if we do not suppose Thomas to be incoherent, we must take into consideration all his texts on our final end, and this full consideration makes difficult to avoid a distinction between a knowledge of God as cause of our nature and a divine gift which is not due to our nature in virtue of its creation.²⁹

A Refusal of the Divine Cause?

We cannot choose not to be human. In this sense we cannot refuse that some knowledge of God is actually our final cause. But we can refuse to acknowledge it, or even to think about it. This is one of the most striking parts of the famous dialogue between Fr. Copleston and Bertrand Russell, in 1948:

Copleston: Are you going to say that we can't, or we shouldn't even raise the question of the existence of the whole of this sorry scheme of things – of the whole universe?

Russell: Yes. I don't think there's any meaning in it at all.³⁰

Such an attitude is what the previously atheist Antony Flew describes as dogmatic atheism:

We see how easy it is to let preconceived theories shape the way we view evidence instead of letting the evidence shape our theories. (...) And in this, it seems to me, lies the peculiar danger, the endemic evil, of

²⁷ *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book 4, chapter 1.

²⁸ *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book 3, chapter 25.

²⁹ See Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura, On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2010.

³⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian, And other essays on religion and related subjects*, Unwin Books, London, 1967, p. 138.

dogmatic atheism. Take such utterances as “We should not ask for an explanation of how it is that the world exists; it is here and that’s all”.³¹ Some atheists would bluntly recognise that a denial of God simply means that our nature – or the whole of nature – is absurd:

How do we know there is an order? How do we know reason is right? What makes us think there is no such thing as the absolutely inexplicable? Why should contingency not have the last word – or the final silence? Because it would be absurd? So what? Why shouldn’t the truth be absurd?³²

A purely materialistic understanding of the universe would not even be enough to deny a certain finality in the universe. As Peter Strasser rightly observes about Richard Dawkins’ atheism, the finality given by God is substituted by the blind destiny of *The Selfish Gene*, which could hardly be described as good news.³³ Meanwhile one could perfectly consider that the evolution of species is an indication about God:

The evolution of living beings, of which science seeks to determine the stages and to discern the mechanism, presents an internal finality which arouses admiration. This finality which directs beings in a direction for which they are not responsible or in charge, obliges one to suppose a Mind which is its inventor, its creator.³⁴

Our nature confronts us with a radical choice: either there is a God or we are absurd. The second term of the alternative basically implies a refusal to think about the reason why we exist, and this is precisely dogmatic atheism, a refusal of our rational nature:

To speak of chance for a universe which presents such a complex organization in its elements, and such marvelous finality in its life would be equivalent to giving up the search for an explanation of the world as it appears to us. In fact, this would be equivalent to admitting effects without cause. It would be an abdication of human intelligence which would thus refuse to think, to seek a solution for its problems.³⁵

³¹ Antony Flew, in: Antony Flew, With Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God, How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, Harper One, New York, 2007, p. 86.

³² André Comte-Sponville, *The Book of Atheist Spirituality*, Bantam, London – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland – Johannesburg, 2009, p. 82.

³³ See Peter Strasser, “*Warum überhaupt Religion?*”, *Der Gott, der Richard Dawkins schuf*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 2008, p. 104–106.

³⁴ John Paul II, General Audience, 10 July 1985.

³⁵ John Paul II, General Audience, 10 July 1985.

Agnostics are more careful. The agnostic philosopher Amelia Varcácel sees that our reason implies a God – otherwise ourselves and our thinking as a whole do not make sense – but she acknowledges that she dislikes the idea because she cannot see religion as rational. Her concise formula summarizes the situation:

Although religion is irrational, reason is religious. It is anxious to totalize, and we cannot avoid it.³⁶

The refusal of God has many causes, among which the responsibility of Christians.³⁷ But a conscious acceptance or refusal of the final cause goes against our nature, which is *ad Deum*. This is a tremendous consequence of our rational nature. We cannot choose our final cause, but we can choose means that divert us from it. By doing so, we have the frightening possibility to miss our end altogether. And this starts with reason. When a child becomes able to choose an end – even a partial end – his choice has a weight of eternity:

It is impossible for venial sin to be in anyone with original sin alone, and without mortal sin. The reason for this is because before a man comes to the age of discretion, the lack of years hinders the use of reason and excuses him from mortal sin, wherefore, much more does it excuse him from venial sin, if he does anything which is such generically. But when he begins to have the use of reason, he is not entirely excused from the guilt of venial or mortal sin. Now the first thing that occurs to a man to think about then, is to deliberate about himself. And if he then direct himself to the due end, he will, by means of grace, receive the remission of original sin: whereas if he does not then direct himself to the due end, and as far as he is capable of discretion at that particular age, he will sin mortally, for through not doing that which is in his power to do. Accordingly thenceforward there cannot be venial sin in him without mortal, until afterwards all sin shall have been remitted to him through grace.³⁸

As Maritain commented, “by virtue of the internal dynamism of his choice of the good for the sake of the good, he wills and loves the Separate Good as ultimate end of his existence”.³⁹ The importance of the choice of the

³⁶ “Aunque la religión sea irracional, la razón es religiosa. Tiene, y non podemos evitarlo, ansia de totalizar” (Amelia Varcácel in: Victoria Camps, Amelia Varcácel, *Hablemos de Dios*, Taurus, Madrid, 2007, p. 172).

³⁷ See Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 19.

³⁸ Ia IIae, q.89, a.6.

³⁹ Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953, 69-70.

end should never be underestimated. If we do not accept God to be our final end, we choose a created good and can be left without God for ever:

According to Gregory it is just that he who has sinned against God in his own eternity should be punished in God's eternity. A man is said to have sinned in his own eternity, not only as regards continual sinning throughout his whole life, but also because, from the very fact that he fixes his end in sin, he has the will to sin, everlastingly. Wherefore Gregory says that the "wicked would wish to live without end, that they might abide in their sins for ever."⁴⁰

What are the consequences of the radical disorder which comes from a choice against the final end, i.e. against God? St. Thomas shows this in a synthetic way when he speaks about the original sin:

Inasmuch as through sin man's mind withdrew from subjection to God, the result was that neither were his lower powers wholly subject to his reason, whence there followed so great a rebellion of the carnal appetite against the reason: nor was the body wholly subject to the soul; whence arose death and other bodily defects.⁴¹

The initial disorder leads to other disorders. First of all the relation of human beings with God is disturbed, our first parents lose both their internal unity (soul and body) and the earthly paradise. Then the mutual relation of the man and the woman is disturbed, as well as their relation to the world in which they live and will have to work.⁴² This shows a general pattern: from a disorder in relation to God flow personal and social disorders.

Conclusion

Looking at the world, we can see that its components are organized and that it is organized as a whole. Each thing has a nature, which explains why it moves towards certain ends, and these natures are coordinated among them. St. Thomas relates this observation to his faith in God as Creator: there are natures, with their ends, because God created a teleological universe. The universe is unified by its direction towards the Creator. All things "love" God, although "love" is taken analogically. The intelligent creatures can love consciously, and accept or not to behave according to their nature, i.e. in such a way that they can know God. The real drama is that intelligent creatures can miss the target (this is the original meaning of "sin"). If, abus-

⁴⁰ Ia IIae, 87, 3, ad 1.

⁴¹ IIa IIae, q.164, a.1.

⁴² Cf. I IIa IIae, q.164, a.2.

ing our own dignity, we choose ourselves rather than God, the whole order of our life is disturbed, with consequences on other creatures around us.

The impact of a personal life rightly directed is most obvious in the social impact of Christian interior conversion. This is best showed by Pope Benedict XVI:

Those who, as far as their civil status is concerned, stand in relation to one another as masters and slaves, inasmuch as they are members of the one Church have become brothers and sisters – this is how Christians addressed one another. By virtue of their Baptism they had been reborn, they had been given to drink of the same Spirit and they received the Body of the Lord together, alongside one another. Even if external structures remained unaltered, this changed society from within.⁴³

⁴³ Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Spe Salvi* (30 November 2007), § 4.

SÉCULARISATION ET ASPIRATION AU DIVIN

■ GEORGES M.M. COTTIER

Introduction

1. Nos sociétés sont des sociétés sécularisées. Si le fait n'est pas contesté, son interprétation n'est pas évidente. Nécessité historique, progrès, ou recul? Toute une gamme d'explications et justifications ont été proposées, qui appellent un jugement critique.

Ainsi la célèbre formule de Max Weber: *die Entzauberung der Welt durch die Wissenschaft*, le désenchantement du monde par la science, sonne comme un diagnostic sans appel. En réalité, elle présuppose une conception positiviste de la science, dont le grand sociologue a sans doute constaté la diffusion au niveau de l'opinion, mais qui ne saurait équivaloir comme une définition de la nature du phénomène. Selon cette conception, à mesure qu'elle grandit, la maîtrise de l'homme sur la nature en élimine le "mystère"; par là on entend le non-encore-connu, avec le postulat (peut-être asymptotique) que la réalité serait un jour totalement "transparente", c'est-à-dire totalement sous la domination de l'homme.

Il est vrai qu'en soi l'emprise de notre esprit sur la nature constitue un progrès. Mais le raisonnement pêche sur deux points. Il repose sur une idée pragmatique et vraiment pauvre du mystère. Si celui-ci désigne, comme c'est le cas, la densité intelligible du réel, avec les nouvelles découvertes grandit le sens de l'admiration. L'autre carence est dans la mise entre parenthèses du jugement éthique: la domination comme telle de la nature, peut conduire à des catastrophes. (Cela, aujourd'hui, nous le savons d'expérience). Elle a elle-même besoin d'être éthiquement réglée. L'usage technique des découvertes scientifiques n'est pas, humainement parlant, auto-régulé.

On évoque encore, au sujet de la sécularisation, l'expression de Grotius: *etsi daretur Deum non esse*, même si Dieu n'existait pas. Mais loin de penser au phénomène de la sécularisation, le grand juriste entendait glorifier le Créateur pour la perfection rationnelle de son œuvre.

Il reste que le phénomène de la désaffection de beaucoup par rapport à Dieu et aux dimensions religieuses de l'existence est un trait marquant de nos sociétés modernes. Le divertissement, au sens fort d'éloignement spirituel qu'il a chez Pascal, y trouve maintes occasions, ce qui a pour conséquence l'oubli de Dieu. A elles seules, les analyses psychosociologiques ne sont pas aptes à fonder un jugement sur la portée du phénomène du point

de vue de sa correspondance aux valeurs fondamentales. C'est là l'objet de l'anthropologie philosophique.

La doctrine thomasienne du désir naturel de voir Dieu retiendra tout particulièrement notre attention.

Ce désir ne se confond pas avec celui qui a sa racine dans la grâce. Car l'espérance théologique, dont la certitude repose sur les promesses divines, est, elle aussi, un désir de voir Dieu. Le désir, dont nous entendons parler, est antérieur au don de la filiation divine; il est inscrit dans la nature de l'intelligence, dont il illustre la vocation métaphysique.

La contemplation immédiate de l'essence divine est l'objet de la béatitude. Avec elle, c'est le sujet, la personne dans son intégralité, qui est concernée. Le désir dont nous parlons touche directement l'ontologie du connaître. Distincts, les deux thèmes sont connexes.

Les réflexions que je propose ne sont pas sans lien avec la question de la sécularisation.

Le désir naturel de voir Dieu

2. Saint Thomas emploie comme équivalentes les deux expressions: *désir naturel de voir Dieu* et *appetitus naturel de voir Dieu*. Il le fait parce l'*appetitus* entre dans la définition du désir, celui-ci appartient à la partie sensitivo-affective de l'être humain.

Dans ce qui suit, je conserverai le terme latin, le français appétit, dans son usage courant, n'ayant plus la même ampleur.

Appetitus désigne donc l'inclination, la tendance, d'un être vers ce qui lui convient, vers son bien, l'origine d'un mouvement de la puissance à l'acte. Le terme inclination peut s'entendre dans un sens actif ou dans un sens passif, comme quand il est appliqué à la matière qui, de soi, est passivité.

On distingue l'*appetitus naturalis* et l'*appetitus electivus*. Ce dernier est orienté par un choix, alors que le premier est inscrit dans la nature même d'un être. Il se trouve déjà chez les êtres privés de connaissance.

Le concept a une portée métaphysique. Il permet de mettre en évidence l'élan fondamental, le dynamisme de l'être, la relation transcendantale de l'être en puissance à son actualité.

Partant de la considération de la matière, au sens philosophique de pure potentialité, saint Thomas, dans une grande vue de sagesse, explicite la signification du dynamisme qui soulève tout l'être créé en tant que tel (*Summa contra Gentiles*, III, c. 22). La matière elle-même tend vers les réalités divines (*divinum*).

Il donne le principe de ce processus: toute réalité mue, en tant qu'elle est mue, tend à la similitude divine afin d'atteindre sa perfection. Or tout être at-

teint sa perfection en tant qu'il est en acte. Il faut donc que l'intention de tout être existant en puissance tende à l'acte, qui est ainsi sa perfection et son bien. Mais toute perfection est telle en tant qu'elle est une similitude divine.

D'où cette précision essentielle: plus un acte est éloigné (*posterior*) de la matière et plus parfait et plus fortement (*principalius*) est porté vers lui l'*appetitus* de la matière.

Nous avons là une affirmation de la priorité ontologique de la cause finale. C'est la perfection de l'*Ipsum esse subsistens* qui soulève et attire l'entier dynamisme des êtres. C'est *principalement* lui que vise l'*appetitus* d'un être quand il tend à sa perfection.

Il convient de souligner la nature ontologique de cet *appetitus* et de l'attraction de la suprême perfection, la perfection divine, à laquelle il obéit dans chaque être. Bien des discours sur la finalité portent à faux, parce qu'ils s'en tiennent à une image descriptive et phénoménale de celle-ci.

Et voici la conclusion: Il faut que l'*appetitus* par lequel la matière appète la forme tende à l'acte ultime et le plus parfait que la matière peut recevoir, comme à la fin ultime de l'ensemble du processus de génération.

Il existe ainsi un ordre de perfection pour les formes naturelles qui constituent autant de degrés de la plus élémentaire à la plus parfaite qui est l'âme humaine. La matière première est en puissance à la forme simple; existant sous cette dernière elle est en puissance aux corps mixtes; puis de là, à l'âme végétative qui est l'acte du végétal; l'âme végétative est en puissance à l'âme sensitive et celle-ci à l'âme intellectuelle.

La même gradation se vérifie dans la génération humaine, le fœtus ayant d'abord la vie végétative, puis la vie animale, et au terme du processus la vie humaine. Dans le monde des êtres soumis au processus de génération et de corruption, il n'y a pas de forme au-dessus de la forme intellectuelle, ni de plus digne. L'âme humaine est ainsi la fin ultime du processus de génération; la matière y tend comme à sa forme ultime. L'homme est la fin de toute génération. Et ce qui vaut pour la génération, vaut également pour la conservation.

Notons en passant l'intérêt de cette conception pour l'intelligence des problèmes de l'évolution.

L'article du *Contra Gentiles* que nous venons de commenter concerne la structure ontologique de l'univers physique. Il ressortit à la philosophie de la nature, tout en la débordant.

Participation et similitude

3. Il a une portée métaphysique, car le principe énoncé, qui s'applique en premier lieu aux êtres composés de matière et de forme, comme sont

les êtres de notre univers physique, peut être transposé, d'une manière plus radicale, à tous les êtres composés de puissance et d'acte comme sont les substances intellectuelles (cf. CG II, c. 54).

En effet, dans les êtres composés de matière et de forme, il y a une double composition de puissance et d'acte: celle qui concerne la substance elle-même, qui est précisément la composition de matière et de forme, et celle entre cette substance composée et son être (*esse*). Les formules l'exprimant sont: *quod est et esse*: (ce qui est et être) ou *quod est et quo est* (*ce qui est et ce par quoi il est*).¹

Il apparaît ainsi que la composition en acte et en puissance est plus large que celle en forme et matière. Celle-ci concerne les substances physiques, alors que la division en acte et puissance concerne l'être commun (*ens commune*). Elle est propre aux substances créées, qu'elles soient matérielles ou immatérielles. Dans les deux cas, on peut utiliser les mêmes verbes: recevoir et être reçu, parfaire et être porté à la perfection (*recipere et recipi, perficere et perfici*).

La distinction entre ces deux compositions est essentielle. Saint Thomas s'oppose énergiquement à ceux qui appliquent aux substances créées immatérielles les notions de matière et de forme.

Les expressions *quod est* et *quo est* désignent l'essence et l'exister (*actus essendi*). L'exister, l'acte d'être ne procède pas de l'essence, il est reçu, il est participé selon la configuration de l'essence. La participation s'entend par rapport à la cause première, Dieu, dont elle est une similitude. Là où un être tend à sa pleine actualisation, non donnée d'emblée, cette aspiration, cette tendance, est un processus d'assimilation à la cause première. Chaque être réalise cette assimilation selon les capacités de son essence. Pour les substances intellectuelles cette assimilation se fait par la connaissance par laquelle le connaissant devient intentionnellement la chose connue.

Ainsi se comprennent les affirmations suivantes. Tous les êtres, déjà ceux qui sont privés de connaissance, appètent le bien. Avoir l'intelligence de Dieu (*intelligere Deum*) est la fin des substances intellectuelles (cf. CG III c. 24 et 25).

Félicité

4. Nous pouvons reprendre le fil de la démonstration de Thomas au livre III de la *Summa contra Gentiles*.

L'*appetitus* naturel de voir Dieu est commun aux substances intellectuelles, les anges, et aux substances rationnelles, l'adjectif se référant à la connaissance proprement humaine, abstraite et discursive.

¹ C'est à dire posé dans l'exister.

Le chapitre 37 établit que l'ultime félicité de l'homme consiste dans la contemplation de Dieu. En effet, il s'agit de la contemplation de la vérité, non de la vérité pratique, de celle des principes ou des réalités inférieures mais de la vérité, objet de la contemplation de sagesse qui porte sur les choses divines.

Il est question de félicité et non de béatitude, non pas que les deux termes portent sur des réalités différentes. Mais le second est proprement théologique, alors que le premier est philosophique. La *Somme contre les Gentils* a en vue notamment des auteurs qui sont hors de la foi chrétienne, juifs ou philosophes arabes, commentateurs d'Aristote et héritiers de courants néoplatoniciens. C'est pourquoi les arguments que présente ici saint Thomas sont des arguments en eux-mêmes philosophiques. L'horizon transcendant de la foi en confortant la raison dans sa ligne propre lui donne la force de se développer pleinement. C'est le cas pour la doctrine du désir naturel de voir Dieu: elle nous offre une démonstration de la vocation métaphysique de l'intelligence.

Les substances intellectuelles atteignent la plénitude de leur perfection dans l'union parfaite au souverain bien, Dieu, être suprême et première vérité. Cette démonstration peut être considérée comme une explicitation de l'affirmation d'Aristote: *nous pensons savoir parfaitement quand nous connaissons la cause première* (I Mét., III, 1, 983 a, cité CG III, c. 25).

L'apaisement du désir

5. Le chapitre 50 établit que le désir naturel des substances séparées n'est pas apaisé par leur connaissance naturelle de Dieu (cf. CG III, c. 50). Les arguments valent *a fortiori* pour la connaissance humaine.

Tout ce qui est imparfait dans une certaine espèce désire atteindre la perfection de cette espèce. Ainsi celui qui a une opinion qui est une information (*notitia*) imparfaite, sur une chose est incité par cela à désirer le savoir (*scientia*) de cette chose. Or la connaissance que les substances séparées ont de Dieu, n'étant pas connaissance de sa substance, est une espèce imparfaite de connaissance. En effet, le principal dans la connaissance d'une chose donnée, est d'avoir le savoir de ce qu'elle est. C'est pourquoi à partir de la connaissance de Dieu que possède la substance séparée, son désir naturel, loin d'être apaisé, est davantage incité à la vision de la substance divine.

La connaissance des effets incite le désir de connaître la cause. Comme le dit Aristote, les hommes ont commencé à philosopher quand ils commencèrent à chercher les causes des choses (I Mét., II, 8, 982b). C'est pourquoi le désir de savoir qui est naturellement inné (*inditum*) dans toutes les substances intellectuelles n'est apaisé que quand, connaissant la substance

des effets, elles connaissent aussi la substance de la cause. Du fait donc que les substances séparées connaissent que Dieu est la cause de toutes les choses dont elles voient la substance, leur désir naturel ne s'apaise pas si elles ne voient aussi la substance de Dieu lui-même.

Ceux qui connaissent l'existence d'une chose désirent naturellement savoir ce que cette chose est par l'intelligence de sa substance. Le désir naturel n'est donc pas apaisé quand de Dieu nous savons seulement qu'il existe. Le chapitre propose encore d'autres arguments qui tous conduisent à la même conclusion.

L'ultime félicité ne peut consister que dans une opération de l'intelligence (*intellectus*), car aucun autre désir ne porte à une telle sublimité que le désir de connaître la vérité. En Dieu, fondement et créateur de toutes choses, ce désir trouve son repos.

C'est avec une calme assurance et sans les accompagner de conditions ou de restrictions que saint Thomas énonce les arguments prouvant le désir naturel de voir Dieu.

Une aporie?

6. Or cette doctrine semble en opposition avec ce que le Docteur angélique nous dit par ailleurs de la connaissance de Dieu.²

Dieu est la très pure et suprême vérité. Il est intelligence (*intellectus*) et l'acte d'intelligence est son essence. Aussi bien connaître la substance divine, selon un mode divin et parfaitement intuitif, est le propre de Dieu. Seul l'intellect divin est proportionné à l'essence divine avec laquelle il ne fait qu'un.

Quant à la connaissance que nous avons de Dieu, elle est tributaire de l'objet propre de notre intelligence que sont les choses matérielles et d'où nous tirons nos concepts par abstraction. Nous les appliquons à Dieu par la triple voie de causalité, d'éminence et de rémotion.³ Elle est très imparfaite, à considérer sa disproportion à la perfection divine. Bien qu'il faille concéder que d'une certaine manière la créature est semblable à Dieu, d'aucune façon il ne faut concéder que Dieu est semblable à sa créature, précise saint Thomas.⁴

Il semble que nous nous trouvions devant une aporie majeure. L'*appetitus* naturel porterait sur un objet impossible, parce qu'il est contradictoire.

Avant d'aborder le problème, faisons deux remarques.

²Voir, par exemple, dans la *Summa contra Gentiles* I, les c. 44 et sv., et le traité de Dieu dans la *Sum. Theol.* I.

³Voir *Sum. Theol.* I, les questions 12 et 13, plus précisément 12, 12 et 13, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I q. 4, a. 3, ad 4.

La première est que Thomas parle d'*appetitus* ou de désir, et non pas d'exigence. La seconde est qu'il faut éviter la formule: désir naturel du surnaturel, ce qui en rigueur de termes vide le surnaturel de la surnaturalité.

L'aporie n'est qu'apparente. Pour s'en convaincre, il convient de saisir comment s'harmonisent les deux principes suivants:

1. Aucune substance créée ne peut par ses forces naturelles (*sua naturali virtute*) parvenir à voir l'essence divine (*ad videndum Dem per essentiam*) (CG III, c. 52).

Il est impossible qu'un *appetitus* naturel soit en vain (*frustra*) (cf. CG II, c. 79). Du premier nous avons dit un mot. Du second, il suffit de faire remarquer que supposer que la tendance d'une nature vers sa fin soit vaine, c'est poser une impossibilité métaphysique, une contradiction, une tendance autodestructrice.

Il convient ici de prendre en considération le contexte dans lequel est posée cette affirmation. Elle intervient dans la réfutation d'une thèse néoplatonicienne reprise par des philosophes arabes, selon laquelle l'accès des substances spirituelles au Premier, au Principe (à Dieu) n'est pas direct, mais se fait par mode de médiation, une substance spirituelle participant directement à la lumière de la substance qui la précède en perfection, seule la substance la plus parfaite ayant contact direct avec le Principe. Saint Thomas discute cette position sous diverses formes (cf. CG III, c. 42 sv.). Elle pré-suppose la doctrine de l'émanationnisme, qui explique la pluralité des êtres par un progressif éloignement du Principe, ce qui implique une conception univoque de l'être. Les doctrines émanationnistes sont directement opposées à l'idée de création.

D'où l'importance du c. 57 du livre III de la *Somme contre les Gentils*: *Tout intellect, quel que soit son grade, peut participer à la vision divine.*

La distance de l'intelligence la plus haute selon l'ordre de la nature à Dieu est infinie quant à la perfection et la bonté, tandis que la distance de cette intelligence à celle qui est la plus petite (*infima*) est finie. De ce qui est fini à ce qui est fini il ne peut exister une distance infinie. La distance qui existe entre la plus humble des intelligences créées et celle qui est au degré suprême, est comme un néant comparée à la distance entre le suprême intelligence créée et Dieu.

Ainsi tout esprit créé a la possibilité d'atteindre la vision de Dieu, mais il est aussitôt précisé que ce ne peut être en vertu de ses propres forces, car seul l'intellect divin est à la hauteur de l'infinie intelligibilité de Dieu. Celle-ci, transcendante à tout esprit créé, lui est inaccessible. *En soi* Dieu est suprêmement connaissable; il ne l'est pas *pour nous* de connaissance directe à cause de la finitude de notre capacité.

Désir et capacité

7. A des philosophes qui ne connaissent pas la révélation surnaturelle portant sur notre vocation à partager éternellement la divine béatitude, Thomas propose une analyse du dynamisme métaphysique de l'intelligence créée. La doctrine de l'*appetitus* naturel de voir Dieu les conduit au seuil de la foi. Il affirme tout aussi fermement qu'aucune créature intellectuelle ne peut se donner à elle-même une telle vision. Elle est un don de la libre initiative de Dieu, elle est surnaturelle.

Il existe ainsi une dissymétrie entre désir et capacité d'y satisfaire par soi. Cette dissymétrie découle de la participation et de la similitude de la créature à l'égard de la cause première dont elle dépend totalement et dont elle subit l'attraction.

Tout être, tendant à sa perfection, à sa pleine actualisation, tend à être assimilé à la cause première. Cette assimilation se réalise selon les possibilités inscrites en lui. Pour les êtres spirituels, elle se fait par la voie de la connaissance. En devenant intentionnellement le connu, le connaissant devient *un* avec lui. Dans la vision de l'essence divine, l'intellect créé reçoit le don gratuit d'une lumière qui l'assimile à la vision que Dieu a de lui-même. Tout être créé possède sa propre essence, de qui il tient sa configuration essentielle et, par mode de conséquence, ses limites. Mais, plus radicalement, c'est à l'être lui-même et aux transcendants qu'il participe. Le dynamisme de cette participation l'aspire au-delà des limites de son essence particulière. Pour marquer ce paradoxe, ou plutôt cette bipolarité, Maritain parle de *désir transnaturel*.

Le désir naturel de voir Dieu est le désir qui porte la créature spirituelle en tant qu'être causé, vers la Cause première. Ce désir sera satisfait quand il y aura connaissance parfaite, c'est-à-dire vision, de la substance de cette cause. Saint Thomas passe en revue les autres types possibles de connaissance de Dieu. Il ne les rejette pas, il constate qu'aucun ne suffit à apaiser le désir.

La création ne découle pas par nécessité de l'essence divine. C'est librement que Dieu crée par sa sagesse et sa volonté. Or la cause ne nous est connue qu'à partir de ses effets. Et c'est vers la connaissance parfaite, la vision, de la cause comme telle qu'est dirigé le désir naturel.

Nous pouvons maintenant résoudre l'aporie dont il a été question plus haut. Une précision de Jean de Saint Thomas nous y aide: "en tout objet spécifiant une connaissance on distingue la raison matérielle (*objectum quod*) et la raison formelle (*objectum quo*).

⁵ Cf. Jean de Saint-Thomas, *Cursus theologicus, De Fide*, Ed. Université de Laval, Québec, 1948, n. 64.

La première est ce que nous connaissons, la seconde ce par quoi la chose est rendue connue. C'est pourquoi aussi la raison formelle de connaître si elle est la dernière par laquelle (*qua*) l'objet est rendu cognoscible ou proportionné à un tel savoir, est dite raison formelle *qua*, car c'est à partir d'elle (sous elle, *sub ipsa*) que les autres choses connues le sont".⁵

La raison formelle de l'*appetitus* naturel de voir Dieu est sa causalité. Dieu comme cause première est certes *matériellement* identique au mystère de la Dété. Mais ce n'est pas sous cette formalité précise qu'il est visé. C'est pourquoi il est faux de parler d'un désir naturel du surnaturel pour désigner le désir naturel de voir Dieu.

Apportons une dernière précision: *Naturel* indique que ce désir appartient à l'essence de l'esprit créé. Il indique aussi qu'il s'agit d'un désir spontané. Il est inviscéré dans l'intelligence. C'est pourquoi il est antérieur à toute prise de conscience et à toute réflexion et à toute reprise délibérée par la volonté. Nous sommes au niveau de l'ontologie de l'intelligence.

La confrontation du phénomène de la sécularisation avec l'affirmation métaphysique du désir naturel de voir Dieu paraîtra peut-être inadéquate. Il me semble, au contraire, que cette vue qui touche aux racines de la vie de l'esprit permet de mesurer à sa juste mesure quelle frustration et quelle aliénation constitue une existence vécue, inconsciemment ou plus ou moins consciemment, "comme si Dieu n'existait pas". Elle signifie que l'homme s'éloigne pour autant de sa propre humanité. C'est en ravivant la mémoire de ses sources transcendantes que l'homme trouve son identité.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE AS INCLINATIONS TOWARDS THE SEARCH FOR GLOBAL MEANING

■ GIUSEPPE TANZELLA-NITTI

There is a well-known affirmation of Aquinas according to which, “it is the mind’s natural desire to know the genera and species and capabilities of all things and the whole order of the universe, as is shown by the zeal of mankind in trying to find out all these things”.¹ The human natural inclination to know the whole of reality is certainly related to the spiritual, intellectual nature of our minds, which have the capacity to participate in the universality of being. We are not satisfied in knowing only some parts of reality, no matter how deep the knowledge we have about them: We seek after the whole. Behind this aspiration there is the feeling, or rather the conviction, that the truth lies in the whole and that the search for truth is nothing but a search for global meaning. While in a cosmological context, we wish to know the whole of physical reality and the ultimate causes of its being and becoming, on the anthropological level, the search for ultimate truth seeks after the cause of our personal self and the meaning of our own lives. The concepts of the whole, of truth, and of global meaning are deeply interwoven.

Philosophy and religion on the search for a global meaning

From a philosophical point of view, two main perspectives seem to dominate various approaches to the whole. The first one is the metaphysics of being, which maintains that the universality of the whole is the universality of being and that the intelligibility of reality strongly depends on the intelligibility of being, giving little relevance to time or history. The second one is the idealistic perspective of historicism, according to which the truth is likewise the whole, but here the whole is the global development of history; the fullness of meaning and the final intelligibility of reality will be clear only at the end of time. In fact, both perspectives are present in our search for the truth and both of them have implicitly nurtured human thought throughout the centuries.

¹ “Est autem appetitus naturalis intellectus ut cognoscat omnium rerum genera et species et virtutes, et totum ordinem universi: quod demonstrat humanum studium circa singula praedictorum”. (Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 59).

Philosophy, however, is not the only area of human thought that seeks after global meaning. Two other areas express and interpret the desire for global meaning, namely, myth and religion. Myth aims to offer a complete account of how all things came to be, of why they are the way they are, of how their relationships originated in the beginning, and of what cosmic laws all things must obey in order to fulfill the prescriptions of fate. The answers provided by myth are both cosmological and anthropological, as both contexts are involved in any search for meaning. Precisely because myth conveys a narrative that seeks to explain the whole and embrace all of the parts, it makes use of images and intricate allegories: All gaps in knowledge must be filled, and a complete account of the origin and meaning of things – including nature, humans, and the gods – must be provided.² Religion, too, has its own account of the origin and meaning of the world; however, somewhat differently from myth, religion's main concern is not to offer a complete description of the genesis of things but to focus on the behavioral praxis that stems from the belief in those foundational relationships that link humans to nature, and humans and nature to god (or the gods). Here, the quest for global meaning encounters the belief that all the feelings and needs of human life are entrusted to the care of a god or gods and that the whole of reality is subject to his (or their) power.

For its own part, the Judaeo-Christian Revelation also conveys a message that intends to satisfy the human search for global meaning. Although the fundamental religious experiences of this tradition take place within a strong existential context (that involving a history of liberation and salvation) the Unique God who reveals himself as the Lord of history and Savior of his people is also the God who created the heaven and the earth; he is the God of everyone and everything. His power is extended as far as the extension of being and his Word gave origin to all that exists.³ He is the primary and the

² On the nature of myth and its relationship with the language of philosophy, cf. P. Ricœur, "Mythe. L'interprétation philosophique", in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Paris 1985, vol. 12, 883-90; K. W. Bolle, "Myth: An Overview", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, M. Eliade, ed. in chief, Vol. 10, Macmillan Co., New York 1987, 261-73; P. Ricœur, "Myth: Myth and History", in *ibidem*, 273-82. On the interaction between the language of myth and that of science, cf. I. G. Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms. A Comparative Study in Science & Religion*, Harper & Row, New York 1974; M. Hesse, "Physics, Philosophy and Myth", in R. Russell, W. R. Stoeger, G. V. Coyne (eds.), *Physics, Philosophy and Theology. A Common Quest for Understanding*, LEV and University of Notre Dame Press, Città del Vaticano 1988, 185-202.

³ Cfr. Gen 1:1; Sir 42:17-21; Is 43:11-13; Jn 1:3; Act 4:12; Col 2:3.

final Cause of the world, the ultimate source of its truth and intelligibility, the very reason for why things are, and are the way they are. The appearance of life on earth and the individual life of every human being are not a chance product but receive their meaning from God's creative and loving will.

The universal meaning set forth by the Judaeo-Christian Revelation became engaged in a living, historical dialogue with the analogous claims of universality set forth by philosophy, religion, and also by myth.⁴ The Trinitarian image of God did not change the basic content of the dialogue, since the consubstantiality and the identity of nature among the three divine Persons enabled the Son and the Spirit to be subjects of the same universal attributes associated with the Unity of God. Moreover, theological reflection on the intelligibility and the ultimate meaning of the cosmos benefitted from the development of a theology of the Logos, while in the Eastern Christian arena that same reflection gave rise to a theology of Sophia.

The historical stages that marked the encounter between the global answers provided by the Christian Revelation and the ultimate questions at the core of philosophy and religion, as well as the theoretical apparatus that allowed such a fruitful synthesis, are too well known to give an account of them here. In a certain sense, it is a synthesis still in progress, but one whose milestones were established by the Fathers of the Church and later developed in a more theoretical fashion by medieval authors, Aquinas among them. The only thing I would emphasize here is that the human desire for global meaning, as it was expressed by philosophy and religion, and also partly by myth, was insightfully incorporated into the Christian proclamation of the true God; the search for ultimate answers was interpreted as part of the human search for truth, a truth that the Christian Logos was declared capable of revealing in all of its fullness. The search for global meaning, then, is nothing but a quest for the Absolute; the human desire to know the Cause of all things is nothing other than our desire to know Truth, and the desire to know the Truth is nothing other than the desire to know God. Here is a passage from the *Contra Gentiles* that seems to express in some way what we mean: "The end and good of the intellect is truth; and consequently its last end is the first truth. The last end then of the whole man and of all his activities and desires is to know the first truth, which is God. There is a natural desire in all men of knowing the causes of the things that they see. It was

⁴ Cfr. G. Tanzella-Nitti, Il cristianesimo fra universalità della ragione e universalità della religione, in G. Tanzella-Nitti, G. Maspero (eds.), *La verità della religione. La specificità cristiana in contesto*, Cantagalli, Siena 2007, 173–202.

through wonder at seeing things, the causes of which were unseen, that men first began to philosophize. Nor does enquiry cease until we arrive at the first cause: then we consider our knowledge perfect, when we know the first cause. Man then naturally desires so to know the first cause as his last end. But the first cause is God. To know God, then, is the ultimate end of man. [...] To reach happiness, which is man's ultimate end, intellectual knowledge is not enough, until we have knowledge of God, who satisfies man's natural desire as his ultimate end".⁵ In other words, the natural desire to know the whole, the natural desire to know the truth, and the natural desire to know God are dimensions of a unique, fundamental human inclination.

A further observation is worth mentioning here. Although we search for global meaning, we do not have an experience of the whole. Even our intellectual openness towards the universality of being is not capable of grasping the wholeness of being. We are not the source of meaning, but rather we encounter it. The totality of the world and of history, and the totality of our own lives, is beyond our intellects. We must *entrust ourselves to a source of meaning*. We must be prepared to receive the answer as a gift. For this reason, any acceptance of global meaning implies a kind of faith; any discourse on the whole of reality implies belief in the intelligibility of reality – that is, the belief that reality makes sense – any existential decision implies a self-commitment to a truth.

Is science's claim to reach a global meaning legitimate?

The title of this present talk, "Religion and Science as Inclinations towards the Search for Global Meaning", involves scientific thought as well. If we examine many popular science best sellers and ask people about the image of science they contain, we soon realize that scientific thought shares

⁵ "Finis autem et bonum intellectus est verum: et per consequens ultimus finis primum verum. Est igitur ultimus finis totius hominis, et omnium operationum et desideriorum eius, cognoscere primum verum, quod est Deus. Naturaliter inest omnibus hominibus desiderium cognoscendi causas eorum quae videntur: unde propter admirationem eorum quae videbantur, quorum causae latebant, homines primo philosophari coeperunt, invenientes autem causam quiescebant. Nec sistit inquisitio quousque perveniat ad primam causam: et tunc perfecte nos scire arbitramur quando primam causam cognoscimus. Desiderat igitur homo naturaliter cognoscere primam causam quasi ultimum finem. Prima autem omnium causa Deus est. Est igitur ultimus finis hominis cognoscere Deum. [...] Non sufficit igitur ad felicitatem humanam, quae est ultimus finis, qualiscumque intelligibilis cognitio, nisi divina cognitio adsit, quae terminat naturale desiderium sicut ultimus finis. Est igitur ultimus finis hominis ipsa Dei cognitio" (Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 25).

the same inclination towards a global explanation, one that is capable of embracing the whole of reality; in other words, it seems to be the same as that which characterizes philosophy or religion. Science today is a major source of comprehensive worldviews aimed at presenting the whole of reality within a strong, unified, space-time framework, from the origin of our physical universe far into the past and ahead to the cosmic scenarios matter and life will experience in a distant future.⁶ Physics, chemistry, and biology no longer work in separate fields but are concerned with a unique scientific domain in which the origin and evolution of the cosmos and life are investigated at large. Macrophysics and microphysics are today linked within the framework of strong unified theories, which explore the emergence of the four fundamental forces and reveal the highly symmetric structure of matter and radiation. Cosmic evolution and biologic evolution are no longer two histories but one and the same history, namely, ours: It is a history that tells us all the stages that led from the primeval phases of the universe to the appearance of *Homo sapiens* on earth. Unsurprisingly, the desire of scientists to offer a truly global and all-encompassing view is manifested by the fact that the name “God” appears today in the titles of many popular science books; it has a specific entry in books indexes, and is called into debate when the question of “Origins” (i.e., of the universe, life, and man) is raised. It is less important to discuss now whether God’s existence is legitimated or denied in such a debate: The issue at stake is that currently it would seem science has the capacity to reach this level of questioning, which by its nature is more general and universal in character. The problem that needs to be answered then is the following: Does the desire to reach a global answer and search for global meaning fall within the realm of scientific activity? Is it legitimate for researchers to place the quest for totality, the totality of the physical and biological history of reality, on their scientific agendas?

The answer we instinctively give this question is *no*. It is common to affirm that scientific knowledge, as such, cannot set itself forth as a science of the whole. On the empirical level, seeking to offer an exhaustive explanation of reality leads to forms of neo-mythological, and ultimately ideological, thought, that more or less implicitly clothe scientific data and organize

⁶ I attempt to offer a short account of this new intellectual climate in the “Introduction” to a book of mine, G. Tanzella-Nitti, *Faith, Reason and the Natural Sciences. The Challenge of the Natural Sciences in the Work of Theologians*, Davies Group, Aurora (CO) 2009, vii, xiii. A valuable reflection on how science seems to speak of God today, and how theologians should rightly address this question, is given by J. Buckley, “Religion and Science: Paul Davies and John Paul II,” in *Theological Studies*, 51 (1990) 310–24.

it according to a totalizing worldview. Such worldviews claim to have their roots in some form of neo-positivistic thought, whose revival is always possible in the realm of the natural sciences. The philosopher's task, and especially the theologian's, then, should be first to shed light on the influence of a mythical, ideological, or neo-positivistic thought on scientific language, and second to lead scientific knowledge back within its own boundaries. Aquinas himself seemed to share this view as he affirmed that the search for the ultimate foundation of all things is a task for metaphysics, not for natural philosophy.⁷

This *prima facie* answer is certainly reasonable. The scientific empirical method, as such, does not have the capacity to reach any totality it might strive for; totality remains a philosophical, not an empirical, issue. The scientific method is susceptible to a serious problem of incompleteness on both the ontological and logical levels. When trying to build a complete system of axioms or a full predictable mathematical representation of phenomena, scientific formalisms cope with problems of undecidability and complexity. The scientific method cannot build itself on a self-referential basis. It needs to start with some ontological foundation, it must assume the basic metaphysical nature of material entities, the rules of logic and the knowledge of commonsense. In scientific empirical analysis, final and formal causality are taken for granted. They make science possible, but science does not deal with them, and no inference regarding the whole is possible starting only with efficient causality.

However, answering that scientific activity is no way adequate to search for a global meaning, seems to me unsatisfactory. Any philosophical approach to contemporary science that confines itself to warning the scientific method about its own intrinsic limitations and censuring the scientific search for totality as a neo-positivistic or ideological contamination seems to underestimate two relevant facts. First, the acting subject in "doing" science is not the scientific method but rather the scientist; as a human being, the scientist's mind is an intellectual spirit open to totality, but now able to exploit the experience of his senses, which relies upon the extraordinarily deep knowledge provided by scientific instruments. Second, the high degree of coherence, and the all-encompassing character, of our contemporary scientific view both have an objective basis; for the most part they do not de-

⁷ "Propter quod nec ad naturalem philosophum pertinet huiusmodi rerum originem considerare: sed ad philosophum primum, qui considerat ens commune et ea quae sunt separata a motu" (Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 37).

pend on superimposed idealistic or extra-scientific paradigms. Probably for the first time, science today is on its way to understanding our universe as a single object of intelligibility, one having a strong objective unity, whose historical and global development can actually be comprehended within a single intellectual glance. We now have the ability to study the very first moments of the entire physical universe and reflect upon the reasons that determined the arrow of time. We know the elementary components of matter and the basic interactions that rule all physical and chemical phenomena, interpreting their mutual relationships within a unitary framework. It has been discovered that all living beings share a common language for their genetic code, and that they all originate from a Last Universal Common Ancestor. The roots of the biological phylum that gave rise to the species *Homo sapiens* from the gradual evolution of chordates, mammals, and primates are sufficiently known, including the timing of the main stages in which the arboreal catharrine primates led to the coming of *Homo sapiens*. We know the essentials of man's long progress from an erect posture and bipedal locomotion to the rise of language and up to the appearance of his social behavior. The coherent and highly organized reconstruction of cosmic and biological development provided by science cannot be underestimated: We are no longer in the realm of popular imagination, but rather in that of a shared, evidence-based knowledge.

The scientific enquiry into ultimate questions as part of the subject's personal quest for truth

The deepest reason to consider the quest for global meaning as something intrinsic to scientific activity is that scientific knowledge is a human and personal knowledge.⁸ It participates in the human sphere of passions, motivations, and desires, which drive all human seeking after the truth. Without such an emotional and spiritual dimension, scientific research would no longer be possible. Although based on empirical experience, scientific knowledge is not merely *sense* knowledge but is *intellectual* knowledge. As such, it is joined to the universality of being, it shares in the natural

⁸ On the personal dimensions of scientific knowledge, cfr. M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (1958), Routledge, London 1998; Idem, *The Tacit Dimension*, Doubleday, Garden City (NY) 1967; C. Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", in *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge - London 1995; Idem, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1985. An early examination of the role of intentions and aims in the work of researchers was made by M. Blondel, *L'Action* (1893), esp. chapters III and IV.

desire to know the whole and to search for meaning, as prerogatives of any intellectual spirit. If we investigate the phenomenology of the scientific enterprise starting with the words of researchers themselves, and read the philosophical reflections of many scientists upon their innermost motivations, then the personal and humanistic dimension of scientific research emerges in a clear fashion,⁹ free from any materialistic and reductionist prejudice (a prejudice that is certainly not applicable to the majority of scientists, though the mass media largely portrays it this way).

It is true that the ontological and logical incompleteness intrinsic to the scientific method prevents empirical analysis from addressing any conclusions about the ultimate causes of the whole of reality. It is, however, precisely this same incompleteness that allows researchers to perceive, today much more than in the past, the very foundations of their knowledge.¹⁰ It is an awareness experienced *within scientific analysis and language*, as authors like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Kurt Gödel, Alfred Tarski, and Alan Turing showed decades ago, and current researchers such as Paul Davies, John Barrow, George Ellis, and Francis Collins have discussed at large.¹¹ Though scientific research makes use of efficient causes only, in their *philosophical reflections* scientists realize that formal and final causality are also meaningful, and that it is precisely thanks to them that the scientific picture of the world acquires coherence, intelligibility, and unity. The import of formal and final

⁹ Cfr. M. Bersanelli, M. Gargantini, *From Galileo to Gell-Mann. Wonder that Inspired the Greatest Scientists of All Time in Their Own Words*, Templeton Press, West Conshohocken (PA) 2009; E.H. Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010; N.K. Frankenberry (ed.), *The Faith of Scientists in Their Own Words*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 2008; H. Margenau, R. Varghese (eds.), *Cosmos, Bios, Theos. Scientists Reflect on Science, God, and the Origin of the Universe, Life and Homo Sapiens*, Open Court, La Salle (IL) 1992.

¹⁰ See, in this respect, the works carried out by Alberto Strumia and his research group: A. Strumia (ed.), *I fondamenti logici e ontologici della scienza. Analogia e causalità*, Cantagalli, Siena 2006; Idem (ed.), *Il problema dei fondamenti. Da Aristotele a Tommaso d'Aquino all'ontologia formale*, Cantagalli, Siena 2007; Idem, *Il problema dei fondamenti. Un'avventurosa navigazione dagli insiemi agli enti passando per Gödel e Tommaso d'Aquino*, Cantagalli, Siena 2009.

¹¹ Useful readings, among others, are those provided by J. Barrow, *Theories of everything. The quest for ultimate explanation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990; P.C.W. Davies, *The Mind of God. Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning*, Simon & Schuster, London 1992; J. Barrow, *Impossibility. The Limits of Science and the Science of Limits*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York 1998; F.S. Collins, *The language of God. A scientist presents evidence for belief*, Free Press, London 2006; G. Ellis, "Issues in the Philosophy of Cosmology," in J. Butterfield and J. Earman (eds.), *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science. Philosophy of Physics*, Elsevier, Amsterdam North-Holland 2007, 1183-1285.

causes holds even when popular science emphasizes the role played by chance, indetermination, and unpredictability in the total picture of the physical and biological universe. It must be kept in mind that chance and unpredictability are more linked to our gnoseological limits in describing the causal chain involved in some empirical phenomenon than to an intrinsic indetermination of nature. Moreover, these empirical phenomenon operate on a level of intelligibility less profound and less ground-based than those that correspond to other properties of the physical and biological universe, such as the various principles of unification, the universality of the laws of nature, the presence of symmetry and intrinsic order in the structure of matter, and the cosmic import of an objective fine-tuning between physical and chemical laws and those conditions that make life possible.

It is clear enough that the scientific method remains incapable of answering what we call the “ultimate questions”, but we cannot ignore the fact that today the ultimate questions resound in scientific labs; they arise not only because of the new deeper and more coherent worldview of the physical and biological universe, but also, and in a some way primarily, because scientific activity is performed by a human subject. Just like in other intellectual activities, in science, too, we look for a global understanding, we tend towards a unified view, and we remain unsatisfied with partial and provisional explications.

We will now turn back to the question we asked in the beginning: Are the desire to search for global meaning and the attempt to give a global answer a legitimate aspiration of science?

The unity of truth and its consequences for the dialogue between science and theology

We answer the above question by saying that the quest for global meaning does not belong to the method of the natural science, but it belongs to the human person, to the subject of the scientific enterprise, a subject who desires to know a reality that present-day science presents in an ever greater and coherent unity. Insofar as science is a human, personal endeavor, its philosophical dimensions are highly worthy of being recognized and esteemed. The source of any science lies in sensible knowledge, but science is not confined to the empirical level. The subject of scientific knowledge is the human intellect, which is constitutively open to the universality of being.¹² In this respect, the

¹² It could be useful, in this respect, to consider a passage from a speech of John Paul II to the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat for Non-Believers: “To try to understand

quest for global meaning set forth by the philosophical reflections of scientists can be legitimately understood as part of the human natural desire to know the truth and so as part of the human natural desire to know God. In other words, paraphrasing Aquinas, there is a deep continuity among the natural desire to know the whole order of the universe (*appetitus naturalis intellectus cognoscendi totum ordinem universi*), the natural desire to know the truth (*desiderium naturale cognoscendi veritatis*), and the natural desire to see God (*desiderium naturale videndi Deum*).

The openness to the totality of being, proper to the human intellect, whether experienced in reflecting upon being as being, or upon the global phenomenology of nature, is always, at least implicitly, an openness to acknowledging God and his perfections.¹³ We have mentioned above that all openness towards global meaning implies a subject's intellectual commitment, and then a form of faith, because the whole is far beyond any experience and insight. Does this reasoning also hold in the case of science? I think so. A scientist is asked to commit himself to reality, its order and intelligibility, and believe that there is a truth that deserves to be investigated, even if this requires perseverance and hard work. It is the faith and humbleness of one who accepts that reality, including physical reality, is something found and not posited by the subject, something received as given, not created by one's mind. To be open to the search for global meaning, and to consider this search worthwhile, is nothing but implicitly acknowledging oneself as a creature; it is the faith that a Creator exists and that he represents the ultimate source of meaning.

Recognizing the legitimacy of scientists to search for answers to ultimate questions brings about a number of consequences that philosophers and the-

the totality of reality is a legitimate ambition which honours man and which the believer shares. So there is no opposition [between faith and science] at this level, but rather at the level of mentalities. When these are dominated by a scientific conception, according to which the sphere of truth is identified with what can be known and verified experimentally. This positivistic mentality deeply marks modern culture, which is derived from the philosophy of the Enlightenment. It is the latter, not science itself, that opposes faith, and does it on the ideological plane. On the contrary, passionate pursuit of the 'hows' calls for an answer to the 'whys'". (John Paul II, *Discourse to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat for Non-Believers*, Rome, April 2, 1981, original in French. The English translation published in "Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition", 21 April 1981, 8, has been slightly modified here to make it more consistent with the original).

¹³ "Deus secundum hoc factivus est rerum quod actu est, ut supra ostensum est. Ipse autem sua actualitate et perfectione omnes rerum perfectiones comprehendit, ut in primo probatum est: et sic est virtualiter omnia. Est igitur ipse omnium factivus" (Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15).

ologians, in my opinion, must consider. An effort must be made to better address scientists' quests for the Absolute and to purify the image of the Logos they could envisage when reflecting philosophically upon nature. Refusing such an engagement (maintaining, for instance, that scientists' quests in this regard are always naïve or philosophically poor, always colored by pantheism or deism, and ultimately inadequate for either denying or affirming anything about the Absolute) is an intellectual position that may avoid difficulties, but on a deeper level remains largely unsatisfactory. Philosophers and theologians must lead their dialogue with scientists starting with the epistemological realm (a key area in which it is useful to examine and explain misunderstandings and make methodological clarifications) up to the anthropological realm (which is more apt to address questions that involve the search for truth and the search for meaning). While today the epistemological approach – biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and theories of knowledge – exhibits lively debate, the anthropological one is much less developed; however, it is precisely in the anthropological domain that the ultimate questions and the quest for meaning acquire all their relevance, the relevance they have for a personal subject who searches for the truth.

If scientific, personal knowledge has access to the ultimate questions, and is capable of looking at the whole space-time evolution of the universe within a single, global view, then the scientist can also inquire about the notion of the Logos, understood not only as a source of rationality and order, but also as a Word that the universe embodies, conveys, and reveals. In considering the ontological and logical incompleteness of the scientific method, and the openness of formal, syntactic scientific language to a semantic meta-language responsible for meanings and values, a scientist realizes that there is room for a notion of the Logos; in light of this, even the notion of God cannot be dismissed by the world of science as nonsensical or meaningless. Many reflections of scientists, starting from the wonder and awe experienced in their own work, are clear on this point. Scientific knowledge is open to philosophy of nature, philosophy of nature is open to metaphysics, and metaphysics is ultimately open to theology. This is an extensive but exciting route that scientists have the right to be helped to travel through.

Finally, if scientific, personal knowledge is open to the quest for truth and participates in the search for the Cause of being, then the activity of scientists also has a religious dimension. Actually, the ultimate questions are both philosophical and religious, because they are not confined to an im-personal knowledge of reality but involve the level of life and meaning. It is no wonder, then, that even scientific research flows at times in reverence

toward the Mystery, towards worshipping the Absolute. There is no lack of scientists who bear witness to these kinds of feelings.¹⁴

The task that theologians have before them is certainly new and demanding, but the heritage of Christian thought provides a good amount of inspiration. When pondering how to speak of God to the Greco-Roman world, Augustine suggested referring to the notion of God as used or envisaged by the natural philosophers, namely physicists, whose proper intellectual context was the *cosmos*; instead, the notion of god used in the context of Emperor's authority or the gods of polytheism celebrated by poets, which contexts were the *polis* and the *theater*, respectively, were refused.¹⁵ In a similar fashion, Aquinas encouraged the knowledge of creatures provided by natural philosophy because a better knowledge of creatures brings about a better knowledge of God.¹⁶ As is well known, he greatly emphasized the unity of truth, which could be understood both in terms of listening to physical reality through the instruments of natural philosophy (i.e., science) and by listening to God's revelation in history.¹⁷

The Judaeo-Christian Revelation has always been familiar with discourse on God starting from the *cosmos*. There are several reasons for this: the strong relationship between the word of the Covenant and the word of Creation, the relevance that reflection upon nature and its laws has in the Sapiential books, and the cosmic attributes associated with God since the first baptismal

¹⁴ On the feeling of reverence before reality, as a philosophical, intellectual position, cfr. W. Desmond, "On the Betrayals of Reverence", *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, 65 (2000) 211-30. On the philosophical and religious dimensions of wonder, as experienced by those who are engaged in the natural sciences, cfr. E. Cantore, *Scientific Man. The Humanistic Significance of Science*, ISH Press, New York 1977, esp. ch. 3: "Wonder and Awe: The Scientific Experience of Ultimates", 95-132. Cfr. also O. Pedersen, "Christian Belief and the Fascination of Science", in R. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, G.V. Coyne (eds.) *Physics, Philosophy and Theology*, op. cit., 125-40.

¹⁵ Cfr. Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*, VI, chps. 1-9. Commentary is offered by J. Ratzinger, *The Truth of Christianity*, lecture given at the Conference "2000 Years After What?", University of Sorbonne, Paris, November 27, 1999; eng. text in *30 Days*, n. 1/2000, 33-44.

¹⁶ Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, II, chps. 2-3.

¹⁷ In tune with the thought of Aquinas, John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et ratio* reaffirms such a unity by these words: "The unity of truth is a fundamental premise of human reasoning, as the principle of non-contradiction makes clear. Revelation renders this unity certain, showing that the God of creation is also the God of salvation history. It is the one and the same God who establishes and guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things upon which scientists confidently depend, and who reveals himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Fides et ratio*, n. 34).

Creeds. Revelation had no fear – and this was crucial for its dialogue with science – in presenting the Logos made flesh as the center of the cosmos and of history, that same cosmos and that same history that are also under the eyes of those who study physical reality. In a similar way, we once again face the great challenge of showing that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is *also* the God of philosophers and scientists.¹⁸ This is an extremely sensitive and touchy thesis, but it is also extremely fascinating. We are not dealing with the identity of an image, but we are dealing with the identity of a Subject.¹⁹ This is the very reason why the search for a Foundation and the desire for global meaning experienced by scientists – whether they are more or less aware of it – should also interest theologians. And theologians should accept the challenge of announcing to the scientific world that the Logos came out of silence and revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Cfr. J. Ratzinger, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der theologia naturalis* (1959), ed. by H. Sonnemans, Johannes Verlag, Leutesdorf 2005.

¹⁹ Cfr. G. Tanzella-Nitti, “The Book of Nature and the God of Scientists according to the Encyclical ‘Fides et ratio’”, in *The Human Search for Truth: Philosophy, Science, Faith. The Outlook for the Third Millennium*, St. Joseph’s University Press, Philadelphia 2001, 82-90.

SOCIAL VIRTUES AND THE COMMON GOOD

■ JOHN FINNIS

How should we understand the title proposed to me by the Academy?

I.

“Social Virtues”

St Thomas’s discussions of *virtutes politicae* or *virtutes civiles* – the nearest he gets to articulating the category “social virtues” – never fully depart from the gravitational field of Plato’s Socrates’ dictum that the best place in Hades will belong to those who have, without philosophy or understanding, “practised the popular and social [or: social and civic: *demotikên kai politikên aretên*] virtues (called moderation [temperance] and justice)”; communion with the gods is reserved for those who by philosophy or perhaps the love of learning have completely purified themselves in this life.¹ For it is this thought that dominates Plotinus’s *De Virtutibus* and so gives rise to Macrobius’s engagement with Plotinus in his commentary on *Scipio’s Dream*, the reflective myth of the fate of the dead with which Cicero ended his *De Republica*. And it was this engagement by Macrobius that earned the attention of Aquinas in III *Sent.* d. 36 q. 1 a. 1 and ST I-II q. 61 a. 5 (with echoes in many other passages). Those articles adopt the Macrobian-Plotinian fourfold distinction between *virtutes politicae* and virtues as they exist exemplarily in God, or as the way of purification, or in the purified soul. Macrobius had already vindicated, against unnamed (Platonist) philosophers, the genuineness of the “political” virtues:

Man has political virtues because he is a social [*sociale*] animal. By these virtues upright men devote themselves to their commonwealths [*rei publicae consulunt*], protect cities, revere parents, love their children, and cherish relatives; by these they direct the welfare of the citizens, and by these they safeguard their allies with anxious forethought and bind them with the liberality of their justice...²

After listing the “political” sense of, respectively, *prudentia*, courage and temperance, Macrobius says finally of “political justice”:

To have political justice one must safeguard for each man that which belongs to him. From justice come uprightness, friendship, harmony,

¹ *Phaedo* 82a-c.

² *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius*, c. 8 (trans. W.H. Stahl, Columbia UP, 1990), 121-2.

sense of duty, piety, love and human sympathy. By these virtues [scil. all four cardinal virtues] the good man is made first lord of himself and then ruler of the state [*rei publicae rector*], and is just and prudent in his regard for human welfare, never forgetting his obligations.

After reciting the three non-“political” senses of virtue that Plotinus had linked ambiguously with the “political”, Macrobius concludes by effectively rejecting the view of Plato’s Socrates (which Plotinus considered to be undoubtedly Plato’s view, and allows us to believe is his own),³ by saying:

...if the function of the virtues is to bless, and, moreover, if it is agreed that political virtues do exist, then political virtues do make men blessed. And so Cicero is right in claiming for the rulers of commonwealths [*de rerum publicarum rectoribus*] a place where *they may enjoy a blessed existence for ever...*

Macrobius’s discussion concludes (and is resumed at the beginning of the next section) without explicitly saying whether a place in that divine communion can be attained also by those persons who, without ruling any commonwealth, nonetheless “revere parents, love their children, and cherish relatives”. But the drift of his earlier discussion implies that such persons can.

Aquinas’s discussion of the fourfold “kinds” of the four cardinal virtues, in *ST I-II* q. 61 a. 1, tracks the Macrobian distinctions, with the notable difference that St Thomas removes almost entirely the references to ruling over political communities. Rather, the four virtues [*prudentia, temperantia, fortitudo, iustitia*] that exist as *virtutes exemplares* in God exist as *politicae virtutes* in man *quia homo secundum suam naturam est animal politicum*;⁴ and *homo secundum has virtutes recte se habet in rebus humanis gerendis*. In the ad 4m, Aquinas confronts the objection that only “legal justice” is properly called a political virtue, since political virtues are what good men possess who (as Macrobius had put it) look to the interests of the state [*reipublicae consulunt*] and guard cities. He replies that although only legal justice *directe respicit bonum commune*, all the other virtues are brought to bear on common good *per imperium*:

Est enim considerandum quod ad politicas virtutes, secundum quod hic dicuntur, pertinet non solum bene operari ad commune, sed

³ *Ennead* I tract. 2 (*de Virtutibus*) secs. 2-3.

⁴ “Contrary to what is often supposed, Aquinas’s many statements that we are ‘naturally political animals’ have nothing particularly to do with *political* community.... Strikingly, they do no more than assert our *social* not solitary nature, our need to have interpersonal relationships for necessities such as food and clothing [*ScG* III c. 85 n. 11], for speech [*Peri Herm.* 1.2 n. 2], and in general for getting along together {convivere} [*In Eth.* IX.10 n. 7]...”: Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political & Social Theory* (Oxford UP, 1998), 246.

etiam bene operari ad partes communis, scilicet ad domum, vel aliquam singularem personam.⁵

This last passage makes very clear that *politicae virtutes* should, in many contexts, be translated as “social virtues”, not “political virtues”.

The statement (loc. cit.) that legal, i.e. general justice *per imperium omnes alias virtutes ad bonum commune trahit* puts briefly what had been put more fully in the previous Quaestio:

iustitia quae intendit bonum commune est alia virtus a iustitia quae ordinatur ad bonum privatum alicuius, unde et ius commune distinguitur a iure privato; et Tullius ponit unam specialem virtutem, pietatem, quae ordinat ad bonum patriae. *Sed iustitia ordinans hominem ad bonum commune est generalis per imperium, quia omnes actus virtutum ordinat ad finem suum, scilicet ad bonum commune.* Virtus autem secundum quod a tali iustitia imperatur, etiam iustitiae nomen accipit. Et sic virtus⁶ a iustitia legali non differt nisi ratione, sicut sola ratione differt virtus operans secundum seipsam, et virtus operans ad imperium alterius.⁷

We should not fail to observe that both these passages are proximately related to the classic thesis of the *connexio virtutum*. And that thesis was first discussed and affirmed by St Thomas precisely in relation to the *virtutes politicae*.⁸ But here again, as in many other passages, the phrase denotes the four cardinal virtues that (a) fit us for acting well/rightly this life (*dirigunt in vita civili*) and (b) are *acquired* by appropriate habituation of the virtues inchoately in us by nature (which, as inchoate, can exist in anyone one by one rather than coherently and *omnes simul*), as distinct from (c) the *infused* cardinal virtues, of the same names, that fit us for the heavenly city.⁹ The use and connotation of *vita civilis* or *vita politica* to draw this distinction is

⁵ I-II q. 61 a. un. ad 4. Cf. II-II q. 26 a. 3c: quaelibet enim pars habet inclinationem principalem ad actionem communem utilitati totius. Apparet etiam hoc in *politicis virtutibus, secundum quas cives pro bono communi et dispendia propriarum rerum et personarum interdu[m] sustinent.* Unde multo magis hoc verificatur in amicitia caritatis, quae fundatur super communicatione donorum gratiae. Et ideo ex caritate magis debet homo diligere Deum, qui est bonum commune omnium, quam seipsum, quia beatitudo est in Deo sicut in communi et fontali omnium principio qui beatitudinem participare possunt.

⁶ Scil. *virtus moralis*: see the *Videtur*.

⁷ I-II q. 60 a. 3 ad 2. [The final words mean: one virtue operating at the direction of another virtue].

⁸ III *Sent.* d. 36 q. un. a. 1c. In the parallel discussion of the *connexio virtutum* in ST I-II q. 65 a. 1c, these appear simply as *virtutes morales*.

⁹ III *Sent.* d. 33 q. 1 a. 4c.

quite common,¹⁰ and again has no particular reference to (though it includes) the political in our modern, more specific sense. (But equally it has no particular reference to, though it includes, the social).

Before turning to “the common good”, we should consider one more possible refinement. Timothy McDermott suggests that “the social virtues” are the virtues allied to justice,¹¹ treated in II-II qq. 80–120, virtues such as religious observance, family loyalty, respect, truthfulness, gratitude and retribution, generosity, friendliness and equity.¹² The idea behind the suggestion has some merit. As St Thomas says, although all the objects of the virtues can be referred either to the private good of a particular person (as in courageously defending one’s friend) or *ad bonum commune multitudinis* (as in courageously defending one’s *civitas*), nonetheless the cardinal virtues other than justice bear on the common good (and so become matter for law, human or divine) only insofar as they take on the *ratio iustitiae*.¹³ Still, this cuts both ways: *all* the virtues, though not *all* the acts of all the virtues, bear both mediately and immediately on the wellbeing of all the groups of which we can predicate a common good. So we return to the position assumed in I-II q. 61 a. 5c: all the virtues – at least those known and directed by the natural law – are in important ways social.

II.

“The Common Good”

The phrase “the common good” is often an unsafe English translation of *bonum commune*. The force of what grammarians call the definite article (“the”) in English, unlike its apparent equivalents in many languages (say, French, Italian...), is extremely precise and strong, because one can avoid that precise sense by using either the indefinite article (“a”) or *neither article*. By the last-mentioned usage one can avoid specifying how generic, specific or particular one’s intended reference is. Thus, in relation to *bonum commune*, St Thomas sometimes means “a common good”, sometimes means “common good whether of the family, the university, the priory, the army, the state or mankind or...”, and sometimes means “the common good” but the last translation is not possible (correct) unless the English translator and reader can infer *from the context* which kind or level of common good is intended, for example the common good of

¹⁰ e.g. III *Sent.* d. 33 q. 1 a. 2 sol. 4 ad 2; ST II-II q. 136 a. 3 ad 2.

¹¹ Scil. *de partibus quasi potentialibus scilicet virtutibus adiunctis [iustitiae]*: II-II q. 61 pr; q. 80 pr.

¹² Timothy McDermott (ed.), *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London: 1989), 649.

a political community. To illustrate this a little, and to provide some material for the discourse later today with Profs. Dewan and Hittinger, here are two passages from my *Aquinas*, at pp. 113–115 and 235–239.

A. Fragment out of chap. IV.3 (“Egoism, Self-fulfilment, and Common Good”)

One’s own fulfilment, then, takes its place within – is part of – common fulfilment, *felicitas communis*.¹⁴ This common good, which as an individual’s or group’s end or intention – principle – provides the most satisfactory and fully reasonable direction in choosing and acting, is indeed the good of a complete community, a *communitas perfecta*.¹⁵ What is a ‘complete community’, and which communities are complete? The answers will prove to be much more complex than is often thought (see VII.5–7). Here it is sufficient to observe that any answer must be relative. For many purposes, and in many contexts, the complete community relevant to one’s life of practical reasonableness is the political community within which one lives, with one’s family: ‘complete community = *civitas* {perfecta communitas civitas est}’.¹⁶ But a *civitas*, complete in its own way, may be unable to defend itself; so, beyond family and *civitas*, there rises a third level of community, communities of *civitates* organised for mutual defence {compugnatio}; they may amount to a realm {regnum}¹⁷ or a province {provincia}¹⁸ or simply to a condition of friendship between states {amicitia inter civitates}.¹⁹ But the mind’s eye cannot rest there; *politica* is for the sake of the *civitas*²⁰ but also for ‘human good, that is, the best in human affairs’.²¹ And *politica*’s primacy over all other bodies of practical thought and knowledge ‘comes from the very nature of its end’:

For... if the good for one human being is the same good [i.e. *human good*] as the good for a whole *civitas*, still it is evidently a much greater

¹³ I-II q. 96 a. 3c with q. 100 a. 2c.

¹⁴ I-II q. 90 a. 2c.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; & a. 3 ad 3.

¹⁶ I-II q. 90 a. 2c....

¹⁷ *In Matt.* 12 ad v. 25 [1011]; the Marietti edition (Cai 1951) improbably also calls this a *communitas consummationis*; one may suspect a mistranscription of *compugnationis*.

¹⁸ *Reg.* I.2 (I,1) [14] [748].

¹⁹ *Eth.* VIII.4 n. 9 [1593]. Aristotle’s text here was talking about friendship between citizens {cives}, but the translation used by Aquinas read *civitates* in lieu of *cives*. See also *Eth.* IX.6 n. 7 [1836] (‘the friendship between diverse states {civitates} seems to be the same as *concord*... for it is a political friendship concerned with matters of advantage {utilia} and with things needed for human life’).

²⁰ *Eth.* I.2 n. 11 [29].

²¹ *Ibid.* n. 12 [30].

and more perfect thing to procure and preserve the state of affairs which is the good of a whole *civitas* than the state of affairs which is the good of a single human being. For: it belongs to the love which should exist between human persons that one should seek and preserve the good of even one single human being; but how much better and more godlike that this should be shown for a whole people and *for a plurality of civitates*. Or: it is lovable that this be shown for one single *civitas*, but much more godlike that it be shown for the whole people embracing many *civitates*. (“More godlike” [Aristotle is saying] because more in the likeness of God who is the universal cause of all goods.) This good, *the good common to one or many civitates*, is what the theory, i.e. the ‘art’ which is called ‘civil’, has as its point {intendit}. And so it is this theory, above all – as the most primary {principalissima} of all practical theories – that considers the ultimate end of human life.²²

The supreme practical science of ethics and politics²³ seeks to unfold the directiveness of practical reason. Is Aquinas, in the passage just quoted, track-

²² *Ibid.* nn. 11–12 [29–30]:

Et ideo, si idem est bonum uni homini et toti civitati: multo videtur maius et perfectius suscipere, id est procurare, et salvare, id est conservare, illud quod est bonum totius civitatis, quam id quod est bonum unius hominis. Pertinet quidem enim ad amorem qui debet esse inter homines quod homo quaerat et conservet bonum etiam uni soli homini, sed multo melius est et divinius quod hoc exhibeatur toti genti et civitatibus. Vel aliter: amabile quidem est quod hoc est conservare, illud quod est bonum totius civitatis, quam id quod est bonum unius hominis. Pertinet quidem enim ad amorem qui debet esse inter homines quod homo quaerat et conservet bonum etiam uni soli homini, sed multo melius est et divinius quod hoc exhibeatur toti genti et civitatibus. Vel aliter: amabile quidem est quod hoc exhibeatur uni soli civitati, sed multo divinius est, quod hoc exhibeatur toti genti, in qua multae civitates continentur. Dicit autem hoc esse divinius, eo quod magis pertinet ad dei similitudinem, qui est universalis causa omnium bonorum. Hoc autem bonum, scilicet quod est commune uni vel civitatibus pluribus, intendit methodus quaedam, id est ars, quae vocatur civilis. Unde ad ipsam maxime pertinet considerare ultimum finem humanae vitae: tamquam ad principalissimam.

See also *Eth.* VI.7 n. 7 [1201]; and *Ver.* q. 5 a. 3c, where, having noted that the paterfamilias governs the household and the king governs the *civitas* or *regnum*, Aquinas immediately adds that what is common to both sorts of government is that ‘common good is higher {eminentius} than individual good {singulare}’, and that ‘as is pointed out in the beginning of the *Ethics*, the good of a people {gentis} is higher {divinius} than the good of a city-state or family or individual person {personae}’.

²³ ‘The fundamental principles {principia} of political theory are given here [scil. in the enquiry which embraces both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*]: *Eth.* I.19 n. 2 [225].

ing that directiveness no further than the flourishing of a nation state which, like the France of his friend King Louis IX, integrates many formerly independent political communities? The logic of the passage is not so restricted. If followed through, it points to nothing short of the fulfilment of all human persons and communities²⁴ (what has recently been called ‘integral human fulfilment’).²⁵

B. Fragment out of chap. VII.5 (“Specifically Distinct Responsibilities for Common Good”)

If one is a reasonable individual, one wants to ‘gather together’ with other individuals, households, and associations into political community; and is willing to direct oneself by laws, for the sake of the help that this community, this *congregatio*, can give one in one’s own unrestricted purposes: *beatitudo* at least *imperfecta*, involving ‘general justice’ and love at least of neighbour as oneself. If one is a reasonable parent, one wants one’s family to participate in the political community so that the family may flourish in every practicable way and its members cooperate with a view to that same *beatitudo*. If one is a reasonable citizen-voter or other participant in state government, one wants the law and the government to fulfill – i.e. to act in a way that advances and does not fall short of – these purposes of individuals and families. Thus there is an important sense in which the common good of the political community is all-inclusive, nothing short of the *beatitudo* of its members and the fulfilment of their families. This all-inclusive common good of the state includes the all-round virtue of every member of the state.

But it simply does not follow that law-makers and other participants in state government are responsible for directing and commanding all the choices that need be made if this all-inclusive good is to be attained. It may well be that their responsibility – and thus their authority and right – is more limited, leaving families and individuals with a range of responsibilities whose carrying out, within the requirements of justice and peace, is not directed by government and law. If so, the goods which define the range of law-makers’ and other rulers’

²⁴ Aquinas says that the human community as a whole is a part of the universe as a whole, to which human good stands as part stands to whole (see I-II q. 2 a. 8 ad 2; q. 19 a, 10c); but he also considers the good of sub-rational creatures to be subordinate and instrumental to the good of other components of the universe, notably human beings: I q. 96 a. 1c.

²⁵ Finnis, Boyle, Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism* 1987, 283-4; Grisez, Boyle, Finnis, “Practical, Principles, Moral Truths and Ultimate Ends” 1987 *Am. J. Juris.* at 128, 131-133. Cf. *Mal.* q. 4 a. 1c: ‘the whole multitude of human beings [of all times and places] is to be considered as like one community {quasi unum collegium}’.

responsibility – say, the goods of peace and justice – can be called the common good of, specific to, the political community or state. This is the common good of, or specific to, a type of community which includes individuals and families, but whose successful ordering, while assisting individuals and families to attain fulfilment, does not supersede their responsibility to make good choices and actions on the basis of their own deliberation and judgments. These choices and actions are ‘private’; the political community does not make, perform, or even stipulate them; they can be constitutive of *beatitudo imperfecta* more directly and immediately than any action by or on behalf of the political community can be (precisely as public, political action). There is, then, a specifically political common good whose content is understood in understanding what it is that political community, organization, government, and law can – and cannot – properly contribute towards the *beatitudo* of the state’s members.

Accordingly, the reasonable pursuit of the ‘all-inclusive’ common good is stratified, into three distinct specialisations of responsibility. Individual practical reasonableness (*prudencia*, without trace of selfishness), domestic practical reasonableness, and political practical reasonableness are three irreducibly distinct {diversi}²⁶ species of *prudencia*, three distinct ‘parts’ of moral practical reasonableness.²⁷ Each of these species of *prudencia* is concerned not (like military prudence²⁸) with some special project which can be finished off but with, in a certain sense, ‘the whole of life {tota vita}’.²⁹ The specifically political *prudencia* which is paradigmatically and principally,

²⁶ Cf. the similar use of *diversi* in respect of the irreducibly distinct types of *ordo* and *scientia* discussed in *Eth.* I.1 n. 1 [1-2]: ‘secundum hos diversos ordines ... sunt diversae scientiae’ [2].

²⁷ *ST* II-II q. 48 a. 1c; q. 47 a. 11 (‘the good of individuals, the good of families, and the good of *civitas* or realm are different ends {diversi fines}; so there are necessarily different species of *prudencia* corresponding to this difference in their respective ends: (i) *prudencia* without qualification {simpliciter dicta}, which is directed {ordinat[ur]} towards one’s own good; (ii) domestic prudence directed towards the common good of household or family, and (iii) political prudence directed towards the common good of state or realm’); q. 50 a. 1c (the form of political prudence which is proper to state rulers is the most perfect form of prudence because it extends to more things and attains a further end than the other species of prudence).

²⁸ II-II q. 48 a. 1c; q. 50 a. 4. If military prudence deserves its place as a fourth species of *prudencia*, it is because it shares in the open-endedness of political prudence – is, so to speak, the extension of political prudence into the external hazard of war in which the whole life of the *civitas* and its elements is at stake: see II-II q. 50 a. 4 ad 1 & ad 2.

²⁹ II-II q. 48 a. 1c; ‘*tota vita*’ is short for ‘the common end of the whole of human life’ {communis finis totius humanae vitae} and ‘the good of the whole of life’ {bonum totius vitae}: q. 47 a. 13c & ad 3.

though not exclusively, the viewpoint of legislators³⁰ neither absorbs the other two nor even includes, directly, the whole of their content. Although rulers are in many respects in charge of their subjects, their direct concern as rulers is only, as we have seen, the promotion of *public good*.

Public good is a part or aspect of the all-inclusive common good. It is the part which provides an indispensable context and support for those parts or aspects of the common good which are private (especially individual and familial good). It thus supplements, subserves, and supervises those private aspects, but without superseding them, and without taking overall charge of, or responsibility for them. 'Neither in one's whole being nor in one's belongings is one subordinate to the political community.'³¹ And here we may add Aquinas's partial anticipation of the principle of subsidiarity:³² 'it is contrary to the proper character of the state's government {*contra rationem gubernationis [civitatis]*} to impede people from acting according to their responsibilities {*officia*} – except of course in emergencies'.³³

Still, the justice and peace which rulers must maintain *are* for the sake of individual and familial well-being and cannot be identified and pursued without a sound conception of individual and domestic responsibilities.³⁴ The *politica* which is the highest [principalior, principalissima] practical knowledge³⁵ must be *politica* in the sense that it includes, along with the specifically political, the considerations called by Aquinas *oeconomica* (see VII.6 below) and *monastica* (the individual-centred *Ethics* which precedes³⁶ the society-focused *Politics*). Because the *prudentia* of political rulers must

³⁰ II-II q. 50 a. 2 (note that in the preamble to this *quaestio*, the prudence of rulers {*regnativa*} is called the prudence involved in law-making {*legispositiva*}).

³¹ I-II q. 21 a. 4 ad 3: *homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam secundum se totum, et secundum omnia*; 'and so not all one's acts are meritorious or culpable by virtue of their relationship to that community'.

³² Namely, that it is unjust for more extensive associations to assume functions which can be performed efficiently by individuals or by less extensive associations, since the proper function of instrumental associations is to help their members help themselves: see Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights* (1980), 146, 159.

³³ *ScG* III c. 71 n. 4 [2470]. What are these responsibilities? Marriage is one natural responsibility {*officium naturae humanae*} with which human law is rightly concerned (IV Sent. d. 27 q. 1 a. 3 sol. 1 ad 1; d. 31 q. 1 a. 2c & a. 3 sed contra 2; d. 39 q. 1 a. 2 ad 3) and a community responsibility {*in officium communitatis*} (d. 34 q. 1 a. 1 ad 4).

³⁴ Government and law may leave unprohibited the acts of certain vices (e.g. selling at unfair prices; or sex between unmarried consenting adults) without thereby approving them: *ST* I-II q. 93 a. 3 ad 3; II-II q. 77 a. 1 ad 1.

³⁵ *Eth.* I.2 n. 12-13 [30-31]; Pol. prol. 7 [7]; see IV.3 above.

³⁶ See IV Sent. d. 2 q. 1 a. 3 ad 3.

comprehend, though without replacing, the *prudentia* of individuals and families, it is the most complete {perfectissima},³⁷ and though people who are not good persons can be good citizens (qua *subjects*), they cannot be good rulers.³⁸ The immediate and direct measure of individual and parental responsibility is not the directives of political authority, but remains the practical reasonableness of individuals and of heads of households.

In sum: The common good attainable in political community is thus a complex good attainable only if the state's rulers, its families, and its individual citizens all perform their proper, specialised and stratified roles and responsibilities. This common good, which is in a sense *the* common good of the political community, is *unlimited* (the common good of the whole of human life). But there is also a common good which is 'political' in the more specific sense that it is (i) the good of using government and law to assist individuals and families do well what they should be doing, together with (ii) the good(s) which sound action by and on behalf of the political community can add to the good attainable by individuals and families as such (including the good of repelling and overcoming harms and deficiencies which individuals and families and other 'private' groupings could not adequately deal with). This, and only this, specifically political common good is what the state's rulers are responsible for securing and, by legislation and lawful governmental actions (judicial and administrative, should require their subjects to respect and support. This specifically political common good is *limited* and in a sense *instrumental*.³⁹ It is what Aquinas, as we have seen, calls public good.

Note

Even with the heavy qualification "in a sense", the term "instrumental" here is not satisfactory. The specifically political common good (public good) is not a tool or quasi-tool (like a *servus*). Nor is it any more a means

³⁷ *ST* II-II q. 50 a. 2 ad 1; see also *Eth.* VI.7 n. 7 [1201]. Similarly, general justice is *principaliter* a virtue of rulers {in principe} and *secundario et quasi administrative* in subjects: II-II q. 58 a. 6c. But note that individuals and heads of households are not merely subjects of the state's government and laws. So their justice is not merely administrative.

³⁸ *ST* I-II q. 92 a. 1 ad 3.

³⁹ In other contexts, too, Aquinas will use the term 'common good' to refer to some good which falls short of, and is instrumental to, a more ultimate common good. Thus he will say that 'the army's leader intends a common good, that is to say [not peace and the state's common weal, nor even victory, but rather] the whole army's order {intendit bonum commune, scilicet ordinem totius exercitus}' (I-II q. 9 a. 1c), an order which is obviously only instrumental...).

to the good of individuals or families than it is the end of individuals and families. It is a leading element in that *summa eorum vitae socialis condicionum quae tum coetibus tum singulis membris permittunt ut propriam perfectionem plenius atque expeditius consequantur* of which Vatican II repeatedly speaks.⁴⁰

Concluding reflection

Since there are diverse kinds of *prudencia* to match the diverse essential kinds of association in which one can fulfil one's rational *inclinatio naturalis ad hoc quod in societate vivat*,⁴¹ it must be possible – by the axiom of the *connexio virtutum* – to point to distinguishable (though perhaps almost identically named) sets of social virtues (“*politicae*” *virtutes*) bearing upon the constituting and maintaining of non-political associations as well as political.

⁴⁰ GS 26.1; cf. GS 74.1: *summa earum vitae socialis condicionum quibus homines, familiae et consociationes suam ipsorum perfectionem plenius atque expeditius possint*; cf. DH 6.1: *summa earum vitae socialis condicionum quibus homines suam ipsorum perfectionem possunt plenius atque expeditius consequi*.

⁴¹ I-II q. 94 a. 2c.

THE SECULAR STATE AND RELIGION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GOOD SOCIETY

■ VITTORIO POSSENTI

1. How does religion enter into the theme of this session? It enters quite naturally into the subject at the intersection of two major inclinations that are present in the title: the inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society. As movement that regards the relationship between man and God, religion is something original, and involves both the individual and human groups and communities: therefore it has a social value. Consequently it makes sense to question on religion's contribution to the building of the "good society". But what religion do we want to talk about? Is there a natural religion? While a natural (or physical/philosophical) theology exists as an intellectual discipline distinct from poetic/mythic and political theology, according to the widely reported tripartite division of the Stoics, I doubt that there is a 'natural religion' in its pure state. The different religions, positive, revealed, rational, are always "colored". Perhaps even the God of the philosophers, attained by natural theology, does not establish the perimeter of "natural religion". If we do not know any natural religion in the strict sense, it becomes difficult to determine who or what would be the "God of natural religion". With this in mind, when speaking of religion I will turn to Christianity in particular. The context is that of contemporary society, viewed from the corner of the democratic and secular state and of the link between religion and politics.

The effort to know the truth about God confirms the need of a recovery of metaphysics in order to revitalize the *natural cognition of God*, now excluded from the scope of worldly knowledge. As already noted by Hegel, the Enlightenment means knowing more and more on individual aspects of the world and less and less about God.¹ Since Hegel's time the process has done nothing but accelerate and expand dramatically. There is an acute need for a strong critique of secularism, perhaps similar to that of "radical orthodoxy", addressed to the Kantian account on metaphysics, capable of refuting both the de-divinization of Christianity and the atheistic and nihilistic presuppositions of some regions of sciences, including social ones.

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lezioni di filosofia della religione*, a c. di E. Oberti e G. Borruso, Zanichelli, Bologna 1973, vol. I, p. 64.

In my opinion “modernism” and “post-modernism” share many similar problems, which are rooted in their secularity and the “logic of technique”. This paradigm conceives of the “secular” as an inert, value-free realm of the *factum*, somehow imagined as subsisting outside of any relation to God. We have to recover Aquinas’ metaphysics of participation, which was abandoned in favour of the representational account of language in William of Ockham, and Duns Scotus’ voluntaristic God. The advent of nominalism and voluntarism opened up the horizons of the project of modernity, culminating in the Fichtean *ego*, Gentile’s actualism and his transcendental I, and the textual nihilism of post-structuralism. Christianity and Christendom should be faithful to their own logos, without bending to the increasing pretences of positivism and vitalism.

2. I narrow the topic of my contribution raising two questions

- I) How can religion and the assumption of the existence of God contribute to the good society in the present conditions marked by the progress of secularization, post-metaphysical thought and liberal society that places religion in the private domain? There is an interconnection between social life and the approach to God, at least in the sense that the first can foster or hamper the search for God.
- II) If religious traditions can help in this respect, will their contribution be limited to the *motivation*, or even to the *cognitive plane* which confronts the question of truth?

These questions should be developed on two fronts: a) through a renewed expression of the *theological-political problem*, which includes the questions of the secular State, its foundations, the role of religion in society, in order to attain the good life and good society; b) and in relation to the current condition, that is one of late modernity and post-modernity and of a strong secularization of Western societies.

Many modern thinkers, from Machiavelli to Hobbes and Kant, from Hegel to Marx, have developed a foundation of political order from a human and worldly point of view, making marginal the theological-political problem, which until now was a major nucleus of political science. One of the architects of this revolution was Spinoza, who was at the source of many currents in which politics was freed from religion. Spinozism as the root of modern politics is L. Strauss’ thesis in *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft* (Berlin 1930). This situation persists generally in contemporary thought, in homage to the secularization and contraction of the problems to which contemporary political philosophy is devoted. In

modernity the “Render unto Caesar” was not only separated from the “Give to God”, but the former was given much more than the latter: the Leviathan State swelled up more and more until the horrible outcome of the totalitarian State of the twentieth century.

But like any permanent problem, the theological-political issue is present in the twentieth century in various forms; it is still active and in fact also emerges strongly in recent secular thought (Habermas, Rawls, etc.), which slowly discovers the presence and role of religion in society.²

There are various ways of understanding the theological-political question, but perhaps the most fundamental refers to the relationship between knowledge of God and good social life, and the influence of the first on the second. These issues are more original and primary than those, so often treated, of the relationships and boundaries between civil society and religious society. The theological-political theme takes its existence from the combination of the two fundamental inclinations, already mentioned, to know the truth, especially about God, and to live in society. Proper to the rational nature, they are friends, at least in the sense that knowing the truth about God can hardly happen in a complete isolation of the individual, and moreover as this knowledge influences the fundamental articulation of social and political life.

The link between knowledge of God and social life has now to be thought not only in relation to the process of secularization, but in connection with the various forms of understanding of religion, and the second issue is as important as the first. The theological tradition of Christianity sees the culmination of the religious in the religions of transcendence, so a simple sociological reference to religion, understood only as a mere “ethical force”, is not enough.

3. The current context

Since the end of the Second World War, and then for 65 years, European nations have been affected by a strong process of secularization, which has raised with new intensity the question of the place and role of religion – of Christianity – in them. Ethical and bioethical problems, serious lack of education, mainly of young generations, the crisis of traditions, are important points of this process, which ultimately attaches to the individual's rights of freedom

² I have devoted several books to this topic: *Religione e vita civile. Il cristianesimo nel postmoderno*, Armando, Rome 2001; *Le ragioni della laicità*, Rubbettino, Soveria 2007; *L'uomo postmoderno. Tecnica religione politica*, Marietti, Milan 2009, cap. VI.

a statute higher than that of other fundamental rights and of common good.

Different philosophies are at the origin of this process, which led for a long time to consider religion only as *cultus privatus*. Since several decades something is changing and there are two very different trends, which we should take into account: the spread of naturalistic and scientific doctrines, and the return of religion into the public sphere. The second event involves a criticism toward a post-metaphysical and areligious modernity, which seeks to separate sharply religion and reason, forgetting that for long periods they exhibited a genealogy with many points in common. It is mainly the scientific and positivistic model of reason and rationality that opposes reason and religion.

In the process that led to the success of naturalism and the will to power of technique weigh the limits of the Enlightenment: perhaps the largest one consists in having considered religious traditions an unnecessary burden, and having ascribed the monopoly of the truth to a reason firstly only ethical and finally only scientific. Natural and common human reason, for a long time considered the right epistemological basis to justify the political State and its authority, becomes in fact more and more anemic, and the basis of truth and values needed to live together, progressively more restricted.

But sooner or later the chickens come home to roost. We experience the inability of scientific thinking to steer towards the good life, because it lacks sufficient articulations of exemplary life, which are widespread in the scriptures and religious traditions where a wisdom of life is present that must be safeguarded, for it cannot be produced on command. Nor can it come from the stunted professional expertise of secular experts, who consider dealing with the human and divine meaning of religions and their boundless sediment a waste of time. A mere technical-professional expertise, in the dark about this, is contrary to the good life rather than favorable. Here it would be necessary to heed M. Weber's passionate cry: "Specialists without spirit, hedonists without heart: this nothing guesses that it is ascended to a level of humanity never before achieved".³ It is a cry that implicitly appeals to the reserves of meaning and truth of religion, against instrumental rationality.

This means that deliberative democracy and the secular State have a huge need of a renewed public debate, which cannot be merely an expression of a restricted class of media professionals and opinion makers. The obligation to exchange good reasons in the public sphere, as sought by lib-

³ M. Weber, *L'etica protestante e lo spirito del capitalismo*, BUR, Milan 1991, p. 241.

erals, is necessary but not sufficient, and cannot be the sole task of religion, finally admitted to express its positions in the big media circus. It should be necessary to implement communities' experiences as bearers of a more incisive understanding of the social role of religion.

4. The contribution of religion to democracy

Since nearly a century churches and religious movements have had a positive role in the affirmation of human rights and duties, keeping alive the sense of the other, solidarity and justice. Churches, religious communities and religious citizens in civil society are actors who perform tasks essential to democratic life, and it is not necessary that they be forced to motivate their beliefs in "secular" language. The liberal State should rather encourage the participation of religious voices in the public sphere, *not only for their motivational value but also for their cognitive and truthful significance.*

4.1. Motivation

The great "civil" task of religion is to make man good: through the virtues he becomes master of himself, governor of the polis, legislator, capable of not forgetting his obligations and responsibility towards the common good. This shaping task concerns individuals, groups, the people, political leadership, leading them to flourish in the virtues, especially social ones, including in particular justice that is addressed directly to the common good.⁴

It is clear that the common good of the political society is a very complex good, reachable if and only if individuals, families, associations, government, operate according to ends of justice and freedom, and shared responsibilities: on these aspects the fertilizing influence of a transcendent and humanistic religion is particularly high.⁵ Aiming at the vigour of moral life and virtues, religion reaches society at its nerve centre. In fact, contrary

⁴ The legal justice addresses directly the common good, but it starts off under the influence of every other virtue, I II, q. 61, a. 5, ad 4m. It is the classical thesis on the connection between all virtues (*connexio virtutum*). The justice that concerns the common good is a different virtue from justice which is directed to someone's private good, I II, q. 60, a. 3, ad 2m.

⁵ Cum quilibet homo sit pars civitatis, impossibile est quod aliquis homo sit bonus, nisi sit bene proportionatus bono communi; nec totum potest bene consistere nisi ex partibus sibi proportionatis. Unde impossibile est quod bonum commune civitatis bene se habeat, nisi cives sint virtuosus, ad minus illi quibus convenit principari, I II, q. 92, a. 1, ad 3m. This leads Aquinas to consider the extreme case of the sacrifice of its own life: Virtuosus civis se exponit mortis periculo pro totius reipublicae conservatione, I, q. 60, a. 5.

to the assertion of Marxist historical materialism, *the anatomy of civil life is ethics, not political economy*. Whoever manages to improve people's moral behaviour fulfils the most important task in society. However much may it be endowed by very elaborate institutions, no society can exist in a decent manner and have an acceptable civil life, if its citizens surrender too much to vices and the unchaining of passions. If the State is subject to an excess of hedonistic and eudaemonistic demands, it cannot guarantee its own moral foundations and it must find these bases elsewhere. In other words the secular State cannot, by its own power, create the bases from which it draws nourishment.

The motivational aptitudes of religions, especially of a religion of *agape*, are fundamental in every society, especially if we compare them with the "impotence of duty" reported by Hegel, and so present in the human experience of every age. The democratic State needs solidarity to reach its purpose, and that solidarity is not available on legal control, but it must be assumed at least in the sense that there are communities and social forces that make it available and with their integrity are able to "produce" it. We must take seriously the risk that the constitutional State be unable to renew its own bases and the framework on which it stands.

Moreover, it is worth repeating what everyone knows, but which is frequently forgotten, namely that political virtues are essential to politics, and especially for that demanding kind which is democracy. These virtues become even heroic when one thinks of democracy as developed by Kant, in which citizens are self-legislators, namely the creators of those laws and rules to which they will be submitted. Self-legislation demands something very challenging to citizens, and which cannot be required legally. At least self-legislation requires that the individual actions oriented to success do not overwhelm solidarity completely for the common good.

In any case where can the secularized liberal State find the energy it needs? Responsibility, openness to others, moral resources adequate to achieve a lasting unity, sense of duty and not just rights and claims, are things that cannot be bought on the market. I have no doubt that a strict secular-Kantian ethics is possible, but it will always be a reserve for the few. And what about the idea that only by putting aside God one can develop true ethical life? The latter is the position taken by E. Lecaldano: "Only he who is agnostic or atheist can actually put at the center of his existence the demands of ethics".⁶ It reverses the position, wrongly attributed to the be-

⁶ *Etica senza Dio*, Laterza, Rome 2006, p. XI.

liever, which should argue that only the believer is moral. In fact believers and nonbelievers rely on natural moral law inscribed by the Creator in every human heart.

One might object to Bayle's thesis on the city of atheists that one can opt for atheism, for theism engages the self and its responsibilities more in depth. In addition some knowledge of the ultimate goal of an authentic human existence is necessary for human beings to be able to act with justice in life. The argument should be deepened in the direction of the individual's act of freedom and its relation to good: even those who, adopting an atheist conceptualization, turn to good as rectitude because it is good, are existentially directed toward the ultimate goal and God.⁷ In any case, the personal choice towards the good, virtue and the ultimate goal is primary and fundamental, because many right or wrong social situations originate from it.

To sum up, I would confirm the primary contribution of Christianity to the "good society": the Christian leaven maintains the integrity and the dignity of the person as principle, author and purpose of social life; Christianity with its *agape* knows how to cater for missed lives; it fosters a sense of responsibility towards others.

4.2. Truth and Cognitivism: Democracy is a system that is sensitive to the truth

While the motivational influence of religion is or can be largely understood by those who are not believers or even hostile to religion, the links between democracy and truth and the cognitive religious contribution to democracy are strongly called into question and require greater attention: in fact a widespread view holds that politics and the liberal-secular State should counteract the reference to the truth: Kelsen has made popular the idea that democracy requires a relativistic culture. Here arises the dialectic between the neutral assumption and the revelation of Christianity: the cognitive contribution of the latter should be proposed and put to the test in comparison with competing visions (like the scientific one), being aware of the possible benefits for both Christianity and the secular State. The fact is that the secular State needs a lot of historical, judicial, scientific truths, as well as the most existential ones.⁸

⁷ Cf. J. Maritain, « La dialectique immanente du premier acte de liberté », *OC*, vol. IX, pp. 323-352.

⁸ See M. Nicoletti, "Democrazia e verità", in AA.VV., *Il futuro della democrazia. Annuario di filosofia 2011*, Mimesis, Milan 2011, pp. 164-179. Not only the trial of Jesus but also the death sentence of Socrates show how delicate is the relationship between politics, democracy and truth, and how one-sided the interpretation of Jesus' trial by Kelsen.

I start with an assumption that presently raises less objections in comparison with the past: the secular State cannot generally be the bearer of a secularist vision of life and politics and cannot assign to secular and scientific conceptions precedence over religious ones, if it wants to perpetuate itself. A key sentence of Habermas says: “The religious traditions have a specific effect of articulation for the moral intuitions, especially regarding the sensitive forms of civilized coexistence. This potential makes religious speech, in appropriate policy issues, a serious candidate for possible truth contents, which can later be translated from the lexicon of a particular religious community in a language universally accessible”.⁹ The most important part of this quotation is not in the recognition given to the ethical force of religious traditions, but in admitting that democracies are *sensitive to the truth*, so that public indifference to the truth is a bad deal for liberal democracies. Many years ago an American public philosopher, W. Lippmann, had grasped the nature of the problem: “The defenders of a free way of life fight for the legal guarantees against any repression of opinion. But the town is empty, because public philosophy came out and all that the defenders of freedom have yet to protect, is only public neutrality and public agnosticism”.¹⁰ He added that public philosophy, which advocated the path of human rights in the 18th century and beyond, began to enter a crisis when the highest truths by which it was inspired were understood by liberal philosophers as a private matter: “And so the liberal western democracies were the first great society to consider a totally private affair the set of beliefs which shape the character of citizens” (p. 89). A serious lack of civic-moral education is clearly evoked here, which affects long since liberal societies, and which does not seem solved: the general educational lack is for them a huge ball and chain.¹¹

In my opinion post-metaphysical thought, especially the one heavily dependent on scientism, is an unsuitable terrain for a valid agreement between religion and the fundamentals of good society. Scientism and naturalism weaken the understanding of religious positions by enlightened secularized citizens, who cannot confine themselves to see in the religious traditions only obscurantism and dogmatism, or to consider religious citizens as a species threatened with extinction.

⁹ J. Habermas, *Tra scienza e fede*, Laterza, Rome 2006, p. 34f.

¹⁰ W. Lippmann, *La filosofia pubblica*, Ed. di Comunità, Milan 1957, p. 111.

¹¹ On this matter see my book *L'uomo postmoderno. Tecnica religione politica*, chap. IV, Marietti, Milano 2009.

4.3. The dialectical dialogue between religious conscience and secular conscience currently happens according to intensities which vary widely in relation to different forms of secularism and secular State, ranging from a minimum to a maximum in the way of understanding the civil role of religion.¹²

Starting from the minimum, pure and hard secularism expresses a clear hostility to religion: it should not have any role in inspiring political decisions and in shaping institutions. Such a form of secularism often brings in itself an assessment of truth, in the sense that there is nothing over and above the *saeculum*. At the epistemological level this implies ontological naturalism (nothing exists except natural beings), the postulate of closure of the physical universe, and at the ethical level the assumption that religions are factors of division and intolerance. This last element is still present in the neo-Enlightenment scheme, which in Italy is backed by the supporters of secularism, and not infrequently by some important newspapers. You will be surprised to read by the pen of one of its key players the need to “neutralize the anti-democratic force of truth, to which any religion, especially if monotheistic, is exposed”, which seems to express an aversion to the very idea of truth, and especially to that of theological truth, considered nothing but “dogma”, that is the most problematic and suspect species of truth.¹³

¹² It is not always easy to distinguish between secularism and secularization. Here I refer to secularism in order to understand the doctrines that oppose *saeculum* and religion, and to secularization to allude rather to a process. Secularization which considers religion extrinsic to democracy and confined in the private realm, is “destructive secularization”, of which Habermas has spoken.

¹³ G. Zagrebelsky, *Contro l'etica della verità*, Laterza, Rome 2008, p. 164. The author adds: “the modern State was formed directly on the fundamental premise of religions’ dissolution as the cement of political coexistence, for they showed themselves not joining forces but of division and conflict, so they had to be separated from the political dimension and conducted to the dimension of civil liberties”, p. 17. It is unfortunate that the present ‘neo-enlightenment’ thinkers do not exceed the constant reference to the religious wars between 1500 and 1600 (four centuries ago), because the way they manage the issue of religion in the public sphere, haunted as it is by that past, is of little help in understanding the contemporary world. The greatest tragedies of modernity have emerged from the totalitarian, atheist and anti-humanist option, not from religion. Zagrebelsky raises an opposition between faith and dogma, arguing that it is not faith as such but dogma – its degeneration – which creates problems for democracy (see p. 156). It seems to me that the term dogma is used here in a theologically incorrect way, diverting it from its fundamental theological significance. It is hard to see how the fundamental tenets of Christianity as the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, the Church as the Body of Christ and other truths communicated in the creed can be dangerous for democracy. Kelsen’s dichotomy – which binds dogma and autocracy on the one hand, relativism and democracy on the other, often relaunched by this author –, is scarcely

The question of tolerance cannot lead to relativism and signify acceptance of all forms of life and the parallel relativisation of one's well-considered convictions. It is just and fair that I respect civilly and morally the other, but without being obliged to accept his convictions and to change my meditated persuasions. I willingly admit that in certain respects, tolerance is easier for the relativist that compares values considered interchangeable, than for a citizen convinced after due consideration of the truth that he professes. In any case when truth-claims come into play, two major factors appear: the claim of universality that the truth implies, and the view that there may not only be different lives and values, but also wrong ones. The demand for respect for the other, places a heavier burden on the shoulders of those who believe in truth and better life forms than that laid on the "relativist".

Another form of secularism (and subsequent secular State) I would call "immanent", supports the full self-sufficiency of reason and ethics capable of complete self-legislation, a position which is roughly that of Kant and liberalism (I will return soon about this): it leads to understanding religion as a private fact. Another form is that one of "moderate" secularism, which maintains the diversity of religion and politics, Church and State, but does not deny the possibility of their cooperation for the promotion of man. In this case we encounter *positive secularism* and an *open secular State*.

Even the most severe secularist position has to deal with the permanence of the religious "fact" in the strongly secularized Western societies. Without fear of contradiction it can be argued that the forecast of a part of the Enlightenment that religion would disappear, failed: the outcome is still suspended and open.

4.4. Religion, truth, democracy: Bayle, Vico, Kant

The reference to the truth cannot be completely neutralized in democracy as a political form sensitive to the truth. The question is: how can a deliberative democracy – one in which arguments are exchanged and a political will is formed through "good reasons" – last if the theme of truth is banished from the public sphere? Or must we think that the only form of truth is that which comes from science?

Tocqueville saw clearly what was at stake, fixing his position in a famous phrase about the need to have common foundations and common beliefs in social life: "There is almost no human action, however particular it is,

convincing. On Kelsen's pattern see my book *Le società liberali al bivio. Lineamenti di filosofia della società*, Marietti, Genoa 1991.

which does not spring from a general idea that men have conceived of God, his relationship with humanity, nature of soul and of duties towards their fellows. It is hard to deny that these are not the source from which everything else flows. The men, therefore, have an immense interest to get firm ideas on God, the soul and the general duties toward the Creator and their fellows, since the doubt on those points would abandon all their actions to chance and would condemn them, in a sense, to disorder and impotence. This is, therefore, the matter on which it is necessary that everyone has firm ideas, and unfortunately it is also one where it is more difficult to consolidate their own ideas with the sole effort of reason".¹⁴ In writing so, Tocqueville argued the central role of truth in politics and democracy, and opened a space for the task of religion within the public sphere, as the only recourse to reason is not ultimately decisive. Note that Tocqueville makes specific reference to God, the soul and duties toward others, and this already puts him under suspicion nowadays, when one thinks that these theological issues are to be set aside and that we can get away staying only on a moral immanent plane.

Tocqueville responds positively to the question that we now introduce: is knowledge of God vitally important for the good life and good society? He does not seem to side with the position of P. Bayle, for whom (see *Pensées diverses sur les comètes*, 1682) it can happen and it happened that people without religion could follow an honest and orderly life: thus the atheist is not necessarily immoral, and his personal and social ethics would not need a religious and transcendent support. Raising the question of the relationship between morality and religion, Bayle attempted to show that an honest ethical conduct is possible without religion, and supported the Enlightenment idea that man is corrupted more by idolatry than by the absence of religion.

G.B. Vico criticizes Bayle's position with strong words: "Wherefore, as soon as religion is lost among the people, nothing remains for them to live in society, nor a shield to defend himself, nor means to counsel, nor a support wherever they hold up [...] So Bayle see whether it can be nations in the world without any knowledge of God [...] for only through religions the people do virtuous actions".¹⁵ In these expressions Vico manifests the religious origin of peoples and civilizations. Nowadays J. Ratzinger moves on a similar path. He maintains that, "in all historical known cultures religion is an essential element of culture, or rather its decisive center; it is what

¹⁴ A. de Tocqueville, *La democrazia in America*, I. III, Rizzoli, Milan 1995, p. 437.

¹⁵ G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, Ricciardi, Naples 1953, nn. 1109 e 1110.

defines the structure of values and therefore the internal order of the cultural system".¹⁶

Writing more than a century later, Kant will maintain the autonomy of ethics from religion, in part supporting a position similar to that of Bayle: "Morality, as it is based on the concept of man ... needs neither the idea of another being superior to man, so they know their duty, nor a motive other than the law itself ... Morality therefore in no way needs religion ... but is rather self-sufficient by virtue of pure practical reason".¹⁷ It would seem that for Kant religion has no relevance for ethics, but he then adds that morality necessarily leads to religion, for which it thus extends to the idea of an omnipotent moral legislator (p. 6).

Bayle's answer, like Kant's, expresses something true in the sense that an orientation to good moral behavior and righteous action is conceivable even without the *explicit* idea of God, but is inadequate in various ways and not likely to catch the link between knowledge of God and social life, the relevance of the first on the second, and the link between ethics and religion. Their relations are very complex, and it seems difficult not to opt for a middle way that leaves aside the two poles of ethics fully adequate without any religion and of ethics totally absorbed by religion. The middle way is that we cannot exclude religion's cognitive contribution to the force of moral life and to the best knowledge of man and his destiny, to which a modernization entirely left to the sciences would turn in the sense of a positivist objectification of human being.¹⁸ The cognitive anthropological contribution, that is a more integrated knowledge of human being, is now the area where the religious tradition of Christianity can help projects of good life and good society most effectively.

5. Open society

The characteristics of an open and pluralistic society exist in the secular and constitutional State, where a plurality of moral, philosophical and reli-

¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Fede Verità Tolleranza. Il cristianesimo e le religioni del mondo*, Cantagalli, Siena 2003, p. 61.

¹⁷ *La religione entro i limiti della sola ragione*, Laterza, Bari 1979, p. 3.

¹⁸ In tying together knowledge of God and good political life, we end up, as Thomists and not as Kantians, putting theoretical reason and practical reason more or less consciously in relation. They work in harmony. But here's a question that arose in me and which I point out in passing: admitting the fallibility of human reason, is it easier for speculative reason or for practical reason to be in error? And which of these two errors results in more serious consequences? Just a big problem...

gious conceptions are present and have to coexist. From the multiplicity of views and values does not follow a sort of “break ranks”, for the open society is based on firm values such as respect for others, dignity, freedom, equality, humanitarianism, rule of law, to which Christianity has contributed mightily (as claimed e.g. by Maritain in *Integral Humanism* and Popper in *The Open Society and its Enemies*). The appeal to the idea of open society is fascinating, because nobody would like to live in a closed society, but it is little more than an undifferentiated appeal if you do not clarify its meaning and scope. Now it is true that the free and in-depth comparison between different scientific theories and different philosophical positions is a stimulus for cognitive progress; however a society in which basic moral and personalist values were not stable might not be open but crumbling.

In my opinion, Popper's representation of open society, and perhaps even more that of his disciples, wrongly transposes the epistemological theory of fallibility and the strife between different scientific theories, in a sort of universal method that is always valid, whatever the field of discourse: the extension of fallibilism to any social context is not convincing. In a secular-democratic society the debate should start from some basic “traditional” values, which should be deepened, but which cannot be invented again every morning.

Conclusions

5.1. The cognitive and motivational contribution of religion to State and society, summarized in Böckenförde's famous saying (“the secular liberal State rests on foundations that it cannot guarantee”),¹⁹ shows that the State cannot but have an interest in religion: without an open, amiable and tolerant religion, civil society might break up, declining towards a commercial society of production and exchange. Kant, who started from the abstract assumption of the uselessness of religion for ethics, and of ethics' self-sufficiency, would then recognize that in practice things are different. Without a certain degree of morality prepared by religion, those ethical principles that underpin coexistence and on which political authority must count, would hardly support themselves. This is a reason frequently put forward to show the importance of religion for the good life: and I have no reason

¹⁹ Cfr. W. Böckenförde, “Die Entstehung des Staates als Vorgang der Säkularisation und Utopie”, in *Säkularisation und Utopie. Ebracher Studien. Ernst Forsthoff zum 65. Geburtstag*, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1967, p. 93.

to deny it. I would rather add that religion offers a boost to the person towards love and respect for the other.²⁰

The State therefore cannot be completely secularized in the sense of doing without any ethical and religious inspiration, nor is fundamental political reason totally self-sufficient. A State founded only on reason is a utopia: if we are aware of the limits of reason alone, especially of the scientific one, we are open to complement the *sola ratio*. On the other hand, religion's contribution to civil life needs the help of reason (and vice versa) in a reciprocal control in order to avoid the respective pathologies: that is an outstanding achievement of the Habermas-Ratzinger dialogue in 2004.²¹

This attitude is behind an ethics of doubt, sometimes recommended. When it is systematically adopted, eventually it dries up the sources of life and action: Cartesian methodical doubt did not give a good account of itself, having led to a geometrical *ratio* that leaves out everything that does not agree with its restricted measures. An ethics of doubt invites one to verify the degree of truth of one's own well considered convictions, by establishing their foundations. But the assumption that the real is knowable and inexhaustible does not produce an ethics of doubt, but rather of limits and possibility of cognitive progress.

5.2. The *post-liberal point of view* which I adopt, also asks: can the individualistic tradition ensure a form of civic republicanism with a solidarity that extends beyond the realm of private relationships? The first task of politics is to safeguard basic rights (and duties), without which there is no political society. So it is part of the policy makers' responsibility to safeguard those religions and cultures that consider the human being as a creature endowed with dignity and rights, proceeding from the hand of God. The secular State cannot take a neutral stance before cultures and religions that undermine human dignity.

²⁰ In developing this paper I kept in the background an important question raised by J. Rawls: "How is it possible – or is it – for those of faith, as well as the nonreligious (secular), to endorse a constitutional regime even when their comprehensive doctrines may not prosper under it, and indeed may decline?" ("The Idea of Public Reason Revisited", in *The Law of Peoples*, Harvard University Press 1999, p. 150f.). Rawls' question is directed not only to believers, but also to secular people. Confining myself to the former, I believe that the fundamental truths of Christianity are outside the constitutional system, and that their acceptance by citizens depends on cultural and spiritual factors, which only secondarily can be referred to the constitutional form.

²¹ Cfr. J. Habermas, J. Ratzinger, "Etica, religione e Stato liberale", in *Humanitas*, n. 2, 2004, pp. 232-260.

An open religion, humanistic ethics, a “dignitarian” concept of the human person are in my opinion the best independent foundation of the secular State. In writing “independent foundation”, I refer again to Tocqueville: what he wrote about the Republic of the United States of America, namely that religion is in it the independent foundation of the *res publica*, is universally valid.²² Perhaps we need a trip to Europe, instead of travelling to America, and a new book, *Democracy in Europe*, written by a new Tocqueville, not European but American.

²² “Religion, which in America will never mix directly to the government, must therefore be regarded as the first of the political institutions, because if it does not give the Americans the taste of freedom, it greatly facilitates the use of it”, p. 295. See also I. II, ch. IX.

NATURALEZA E HISTORIA EN LA DETERMINACIÓN DE LA MORALIDAD SOCIAL

■ MARÍA CELESTINA DONADÍO MAGGI DE GANDOLFI

La cuestión permanente y de alta gravitación en la filosofía política,¹ sea cual fuere la orientación del pensador o corriente, e independientemente del papel que se asigne a uno u otro de dichos campos, es la conciliación entre lo natural y lo histórico en la configuración del ser humano y de su conducta, como individuo y en el todo colectivo y, por ende, en la determinación de la moralidad en la vida social y en la de sus miembros. Sin embargo, en el mundo actual, la observación de la vida en las comunidades pareciera minimizar la cuestión hasta hacerla desaparecer, por cuanto el orden moral se lo suele confinar al núcleo íntimo de la conciencia de cada individuo. Más que una ausencia de respuesta es un cambio de semántica de lo moral, fuera del naturalismo político y en el marco del consenso histórico. Tan es así que, en las propuestas de los contractualismos más radicales, se han visto forzadas de acordar (“crear”) ciertas pautas de comportamiento colectivo y postular (nuevamente “crear”) ciertos valores que operen como objetivos que ajusten y ordenen el funcionamiento de las organizaciones sociales. Por otra parte, y si queremos hacer oficio de filósofos realistas, no sólo la ética y la ética política sino la filosofía misma es “proyectiva”, es decir, ha de rastrear lo real que se ha tornado casi un ideal, por cuanto la esfera humana, por desfiguración o trasgresión, no necesariamente concreta sus esencias y valores propios. El oficio del filósofo político, sin desdeñar los hechos, no consiste en limitarse a describirlos – propio del sociólogo o el politólogo –, sino reparar que en las cosas humanas el *ser* siempre ha de devenir en un *deber ser*.

En Tomás de Aquino, si bien no es la intención directa de su obra como un todo sapiencial, encontramos una explícita y sistemática filosofía política por tres razones claramente manifiestas. Primero, por su conocimiento y preocupación por las comunidades de su tiempo, poniéndose en contacto con personalidades y asuntos públicos y observando el discurrir de los fe-

¹ Tomás de Aquino usa sin distingos las expresiones “social” y “político”. Más adelante se discutirá interpretaciones recientes sobre la distinción entre ambas y con diferencias conceptuales muy serias atribuidas a la filosofía tomasiana sobre lo socio-político.

nómenos socio-políticos.² Tan es así que la definición formal de sociedad, como *adunatio hominem ad unum aliquid communiter agendum*, la encontramos formulada por única vez en tren de resolver una disputa en la Universidad de París de si correspondía a los maestros religiosos el formar asociaciones con los maestros seculares. La cita es de “Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem”³ que es un lugar emblemático en su filosofía política porque, en ese contexto, se hace ya manifiesto que para Tomás la tendencia social natural trasciende la mera necesidad de mutua ayuda y se transforma en una tarea moral común, que comprende a todos los miembros del grupo social a condición que, por su natural defectibilidad, se pongan en función parcial. En segundo lugar, la vida social está exigida por la misma ley natural, que ordena al pleno despliegue de la configuración óptica de lo humano, anclando en su acto de ser y desplegándose a través de todos sus niveles existenciales (biológico, sensible y racional). Es el tercer precepto de la ley natural,⁴ en que la expansión natural culmina en su máxima perfección: el conocimiento de la verdad sobre Dios y la confraternidad en la vida social. Enaltece Tomás lo social, al ubicarlo en el ápice de la búsqueda de perfección

² “These considerations indicate that St. Thomas’s social and professional position, if not his inclination, constantly brought him into contact with public men and public affairs. Since his attention to natural phenomena and sense experience is evident in all his works, it is likely, *prima facie*, that he would also use his opportunity to observe political and social phenomena... (p. 5) Both the University of Paris and the Order of Preachers had a highly developed sense of community; but they were merely two instances of the assertion of a communal identity by groups of men in every part of Europe: by towns, guilds, confraternities, by diocesan chapters, by professional groups such as lawyers or physicians. The communal movement was legitimized by the lawyers’ concept of a corporation (*universitas*) which was familiar to the legal profession throughout Europe during the thirteenth century and was implicit in the growing practice of the representation of communities in national and other assemblies. St. Thomas’s experience in Italy, Germany and France, would have brought him into contact with such corporations at every turn. Experience and philosophic ideas came into contact at the point where he was forced to justify his own simultaneous association with two corporate bodies; and at that point, his theory of association was born. (p. 11). Jeremy Catto, *Past & Present*, Oxford University Press, No. 71 (May, 1976), pp. 3-21.

³ *Opúsculo Teológico IX*, cap. III, “An religious licite possit esse de collegio saecularium magistrorum”, n. 55.

⁴ “Tertio modo inest homini inclinatio ad bonum secundum naturam rationis, quae est sibi propria, sicut homo habet naturalem inclinationem ad hoc quod veritatem cognoscat de Deo, et ad hoc quod in societate vivat. Et secundum hoc, ad legem naturalem pertinent ea quae ad huiusmodi inclinationem spectant, utpote quod homo ignorantiam vitet, quod alios non offendat cum quibus debet conversari, et cetera huiusmodi quae ad hoc spectant”. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 94, 2 co.

y del mandato moral,⁵ junto al deseo de conocer y amar a Dios para alcanzar su felicidad en el tiempo y en la eternidad. Por último, y corroborando esta visión tomasiana, su reflexión socio-política se enraíza en su *Ética*, que tiene fuertes bases metafísicas en línea con la influencia aristotélica,⁶ culminando en la *Política* como tal, que tanto para Aristóteles como para Tomás es la pieza “arquitectónica” de todos los saberes prácticos,⁷ al ocuparse del bien humano perfecto existencial, el *bien vivir virtuoso*, el cual sólo puede concretarse como un bien común. Incluso más, la *Política*, al ocuparse de las cosas humanas según la racionalidad práctica, no sólo articula las ciencias morales, sino que salvaguarda a la filosofía misma.⁸

Sin embargo, las tendencias de la naturaleza y el orden normativo que la ley natural representa, son insuficientes en la concreción de la moralidad individual y colectiva, por el carácter hipotético de la puesta en obra del bien moral, en razón del uso defectible de la libertad humana. ¿Es qué entra en colisión el orden de la naturaleza humana y su ley natural con la libertad? ¿Cómo podríamos hablar de una tendencia a la vida social, y más, de una ley como orden moral natural de la multitud, si constatamos grupos sociales infectados de egoísmo, de intereses privados en pugna contra lo público, en fin, de comportamientos ostensiblemente antisociales?

Esta contrariedad, muy recurrente en terreno sociológico, no es ajena a Tomás de Aquino, gran observador del acontecer histórico de las formas políticas. Por ello, el organismo moral normativo por él propuesto, va descendiendo desde la ley natural a través de prescripciones cada vez más explícitas, las cuales van asumiendo el momento histórico, el entorno cultural y las costumbres, que siempre son concretos y variados, conforme a cada idiosincrasia socio-política. De ahí, la especial dedicación que Tomás concede a la ley humana, cuyo marco conceptual es que la política, como la filosofía en general, no es “sólo” descriptiva de hechos políticos, sino que rastrea esencias, valores, ideales, en un tiempo y espacios concretos. Incluso

⁵ “Sub lege rationis continentur omnia ea quae ratione regulari possunt”, *Ibid.*, ad 3.

⁶ Si bien en la filosofía política de Tomás se registran influencias del derecho romano, del agustinismo, y datos exclusivamente cristianos, el resultado fue una síntesis armónica y propia pero bajo una fórmula aristotélica.

⁷ “Si igitur principalior scientia est quae est de nobiliori et perfectiori, necesse est politicam inter omnes scientias practicas esse principaliorem et architectonicam omnium aliarum, utpote considerans ultimum et perfectum bonum in rebus humanis”. *In Politicorum*, Proemium, n. 7.

⁸ “Et propter hoc philosophus dicit in fine decimi Ethicorum quod ad politicam perficitur philosophia, quae est circa res humanas”. *Ibid.*

más, si bien lo específico de la sociabilidad humana implica una suerte de instinto natural como en las formas gregarias, se distancia de ellas porque lo social se concreta en un momento histórico, mediante el compromiso voluntario de todos y cada uno al conformar el todo social. Pero, historia y cultura si bien de alta gravitación, no dejan de ser condiciones, posibilidades y circunstancias, que no inciden sino en cuanto reguladas por la ley humana en consonancia con la ley natural, porque tal entorno situacional no es moralmente neutro, en tanto que la sociabilidad supone el ejercicio de una racionalidad práctica y libre.

1. Necesidad óptica de los otros

Los argumentos que justifican la sociabilidad natural, que partiendo de la indigencia natural de los otros, pasando por la práctica de la amistad social e incardinándose en el mandato de la ley natural que obliga a todos los hombres a la convivencia, son las piezas fundamentales en que se sustenta toda la filosofía y la ética políticas de Tomás de Aquino. El tercer argumento, de índole ético-normativa, no está explícitamente enunciado en la *Política* aristotélica, pero, como se verá, Tomás lo concibe desde una lectura de los elementos morales contenidos en los mismos argumentos de Aristóteles.

El momento originante en que se manifiesta la tendencia social es el apercebimiento del ser humano, en general sin conciencia explícita, que el amor más profundo y motivación de toda tendencia, que es el lograr su plena realización existencial (*sufficiens bonum*), llámese felicidad o bienaventuranza, requiere en lo contingente de una serie de recursos, de fines y bienes parciales, ante los cuales el hombre se encuentra indigente como individuo, porque para su obtención es preciso el concurso de muchos. Entonces, la tendencia a la plenitud que impulsa el desarrollo de la naturaleza de los individuos se hace efectiva en la comunidad, por lo que la necesidad natural originante se hace necesidad social. La argumentación fluye por formas sociales cada vez más complejas pasando por el matrimonio, la familia y los que ayudan al sostén de la misma, el barrio, corporaciones profesionales, empresas comerciales, artes, oficios, etc., hasta arribar a la ciudad y al conjunto de ciudades que es la sociedad política o Estado.⁹

El argumento se sustenta en una concepción práctica de la persona humana, es decir, en el juego entre las perfecciones primeras ópticas y las perfecciones segundas que se concretan en el ejercicio de la racionalidad práctica

⁹ La ciudad (*polis*) aristotélica es lo que ya en Tomás de Aquino corresponde al Estado, porque eran ciudades-estados. En adelante prefiero usar la expresión “sociedad política”.

y de la libertad, éstas de carácter hipotético por contingentes y falibles. En consecuencia, no hace mella a la dignidad humana sino que la sociabilidad es un remedio al pleno despliegue de su dignidad personal. De esta forma, la sociedad se inserta como un todo práctico en el devenir de la naturaleza humana hacia el cumplimiento de sus fines connaturales, donde estriba su plenitud de ser. “La vida social es necesaria para el ejercicio de la perfección, mientras que la soledad se da en los que ya son perfectos”.¹⁰ Al referirse Tomás al “ejercicio de la perfección del hombre” no tiene solamente en la mira bienes que ofrezcan recursos materiales para su autoconservación, o artes y técnicas ventajosas al vivir cotidiano, lo cual es insoslayable; sino también todo lo que contribuye al pleno despliegue humano: lo afectivo, las ciencias, la educación e, incluso, la misma filosofía especulativa, pues suponen un alto grado de civilización.¹¹ En consonancia, entonces, la sociedad política es una comunidad perfecta “pues en ella los hombres pueden vivir con suficiente cobertura, lo cual no ha de entenderse solamente que los hombres vivan sino que vivan moralmente bien [*bene vivere*], en tanto que por las leyes de la sociedad los hombres se ordenan a la práctica de las virtudes”.¹²

ESCOLLO: Interpretaciones más recientes del pensamiento político medieval que incluirían a Tomás de Aquino, sostendrían el influjo de la noción de “natura” de Cicerón¹³ sobre la sociabilidad, sustentado en una cuestión cronológica de haber sido conocida con anterioridad a la de Aristóteles. Según esto, la fórmula tomasiana se alejaría del naturalismo político aristotélico, el cual reconoce un doble análisis de la “polis”, uno más lato, “por las urgencias de la vida” y otro propio, lógico-ontológico, en que se determina “la prioridad por naturaleza de la polis” porque en ella se concreta el ideal de la “vida buena”. Por otra parte, la noción de “natura” ciceroniana, sobre todo con relación al concepto estoico de “apropiación” (*oikeíosis*), sería reformulado por este filósofo solamente en los términos de “conservatio sui”.

De ahí surgirían dos lecturas del pensamiento político medieval. Una clásica, la de W. Ullmann¹⁴ quien sostiene que la incorporación del natura-

¹⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 188, a. 8.

¹¹ “... humane rationi naturale esse videtur ut gradatim ab imperfecto ad perfectum perveniat. Unde videmus in scientiis speculativis quod qui primo philosophati sunt, quedam imperfecta tradiderunt, quae postmodum per posteriores sunt magis perfecta”. *Ibid.* I-II, q. 97, a. 1 co.

¹² *In Polit.* I, lec. 1, n. 23.

¹³ *De officiis*.

¹⁴ Ullmann, W., *Historia del pensamiento político en la Edad Media*, Ariel, España, 1999. *Principios de gobierno y política en la Edad Media*, trad. Castell., Alianza, España, 1985.

lismo político aristotélico produjo una revolución en el ámbito del pensamiento político, cuyas consecuencias habrían sido el tránsito desde una teología política hacia una filosofía política medieval y la inauguración del camino hacia la constitución del estado moderno. La segunda lectura, es de ciertos autores como Oakley, Nederman, Black, Coleman, Miethke, Wieland,¹⁵ quienes sostendrían que cierta formulación del naturalismo político habría influido con anterioridad en el medioevo a través de Cicerón. Acorde a esta segunda interpretación, en el pensamiento político medieval el ámbito privado sería privilegiado sobre el orden público que de aquél derivaría, invirtiendo radicalmente el planteo aristotélico en el cual la “pólis” se definía por su oposición al “oikos”. Por ello, en el pensamiento medieval, al desaparecer esta oposición, se registraría un pasaje conceptual de lo privado a lo público, y la “civitas” resultaría secundaria respecto de la “societas”, porque se sustentaría en las urgencias de subsistencia del ser humano.

La segunda lectura interpretativa se basa principalmente en el *De Regno ad regem Cypri* de Tomás de Aquino, donde el interés del tratado reside en legitimar la necesidad de la relación de “dominium” y la calidad política de la naturaleza humana. Sin embargo, el *De Regno*, sin el *Comentario a la Política de Aristóteles*, que es posterior y con un tratamiento más maduro de toda su filosofía política, no es base suficiente para sostener que en Tomás se desdobra la definición clásica aristotélica del hombre en “socialis” y “politicum”. Esta interpretación avanza en afirmar que la sociabilidad nada agregaría a la especificidad de la naturaleza humana y, lo que fuera, reduciría su aspecto político como tal.

Por su parte Jürgen Habermas en la misma línea, pero forzando aún más la interpretación, coloca a Tomás de Aquino junto a Maquiavelo en el desvío del *zoon politikon* al *animal sociale* de la modernidad, facilitando así – sostiene – el pasaje de Aristóteles a Hobbes, de la política clásica a la moderna filo-

¹⁵ Oakley, Francis, “Natural Law, The Corpus Mysticum and Consent in Conciliar Thought”, *Natural Law, Conciliarism and Consent in the Late Middle Ages*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1984. Nederman, Cary, “Nature, Sin and the Origins of Society: The Ciceronian Tradition in the Medieval Political Thought”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XLIX, 1988. Black, A., *Church, State and Community: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Ashgate Variorum, UK, 2003. Coleman, Janet, *A History of Political Thought, From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Blackwell, USA, 2000. Miethke, J., “La teoría política del medioevo tardío en la vía de la modernidad”, *Patristica et Mediaevalia*, XXI, 2000. Wieland, Georg, “La recepción de la Política aristotélica y el desarrollo del concepto de estado en el medioevo tardío en Tomás de Aquino y Marsilio de Padua”, *Patristica et Mediaevalia*, XXI, 2000.

sofía social. Para Habermas, Tomás de Aquino, si bien mantiene la tradición aristotélica, reconociendo la conexión entre ética y política, “ya no entiende esta comunidad [el Estado] de una forma genuinamente política: la *civitas* se ha convertido subrepticamente en *societas*... falta la distinción, tan decididamente expuesta por su filósofo, entre el poder económico de disposición del señor de la casa y el poder político de dominio en la opinión pública. El poder del déspota del *oikos* era, en efecto, dominio unipersonal (*monarchia*), el ejercicio en la polis, dominio sobre libres e iguales (*politeia*)”. También aquí la referencia central es al *De regno* y por ello la consecuencia a la que arriba Habermas: el orden de la virtud sustentado en la ley natural “saltaría en mil pedazos” y sólo restaría el *dominium* de los principios convertidos en soberanos y la *societas privatizada* bajo la administración del estado-territorial.¹⁶

1. En respuesta a este escollo, propuesto por una hermenéutica forzada por la sola consideración del *De regno*, cabe aclarar, primero, que Tomás de Aquino usa ambos términos y conceptos, “social” y “político”, pero aplica “social” en general, para cualquier “comunidad” (grupo social), reservando “político” para la “sociedad política” (ciudad-Estado). Es respecto de esta última que trata la cuestión de la necesidad de la autoridad (*dominium*) en razón que, si bien la tendencia a convivir con otros es de “derecho natural primario”, debido a la defectibilidad de los individuos¹⁷ se hace necesario que alguien los ordene para la consecución de su plenitud existencial (el bien vivir), motivo del impulso natural. Por eso la autoridad y la obligatoriedad que conlleva, resultan de “derecho natural secundario”. La justificación de la autoridad responde, por una parte, a la necesidad de aunar los juicios de valor (morales) individuales y concretos para asegurar la acción recíproca que lo social exige. Por otra parte, es preciso ordenar obligatoria-

¹⁶ Habermas, J., *Teoría y praxis – Estudios de filosofía social*. Tecnos, Madrid, 1997, pp. 54-7.

¹⁷ “Omnium diversorum ordinatorum ad invicem, ordo eorum ad invicem est propter ordinem eorum ad aliquid unum: sicut ordo partium exercitus ad invicem est propter ordinem totius exercitus ad ducem. Nam quod aliqua diversa in habitudine aliqua uniuntur, non potest esse ex propriis naturis secundum quod sunt diversa: quia ex hoc magis disiungerentur. Nec potest esse ex diversis ordinantibus: quia non posset esse quod unum ordinem intenderent ex seipsis secundum quod sunt diversi. Et sic vel ordo multorum ad invicem est per accidens: vel oportet reducere ad aliquod unum primum ordinans, qui ad finem quem intendit omnia alia ordinat”. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1 cap. 42 n. 7.

mente a los miembros de la sociedad por la insuficiencia de las competencias jurídicas de los individuos.¹⁸

2. Por lo mismo, no sólo el hombre es un “animal político” sino que *la sociedad política es una comunidad natural*. Como ya fue dicho, la tendencia social natural se va concretando en formas comunitarias cada vez más complejas, partiendo de la familia, como célula natural primaria, hasta arribar a la sociedad política que puede hacerse cargo de la suficiencia de bienes de todos y cada uno de los ciudadanos porque tiene a su cargo el bien común. Éstas son las razones que Tomás aduce. “El fin de las cosas naturales es su misma naturaleza... Ahora bien, que la naturaleza sea el fin de las cosas naturales se prueba por esto: que la naturaleza de cualquier cosa es lo que le conviene cuando alcanza su generación perfecta... la cual es el fin de todo lo que se dispone para su generación. Por lo tanto, el fin de los principios naturales desde los que algo es generado, es la misma naturaleza de la cosa. En consecuencia, como la sociedad política es generada de comunidades primarias que son naturales, resulta que la sociedad política también es natural”.¹⁹

3. Como toda tendencia, el impulso a la vida social no es una suerte de idea preformada, sino que es movilizado por fuerzas materiales y psicológicas que se dan en un contexto histórico y geográfico determinados. Es decir, siendo que toda operación es puesta irremediamente por cada individuo humano (no existe propiamente una “acción social”), la adaptación singular y eficaz depende de una serie de condiciones y circunstancias físico-bio-psicológicas particulares que dan razón del querer volitivo social. Ahora bien, dichas fuerzas son la energía eficiente de cualquier operación, pero no dan razón del fin que motiva la tendencia social natural, que es hacia el bien común del bien vivir. Es decir, sin duda que el impulso social brota de la necesidad de subsistencia pero, desde esta “utilidad”, el impulso se proyecta hacia una necesidad ontológica de *ser/vivir con otros (esse in actu commune)*.

4. Por lo anterior, cabe reparar que la tendencia natural a la vida social, como todo principio natural (especialmente en el hombre) no tiene asegurada su encarnación proporcional en la realidad comunitaria, porque está

¹⁸ “Multis enim existentibus hominibus et unoquoque id, quod est sibi congruum, providente, multitudo in diversa dispergeretur, nisi etiam esset aliquis de eo quod ad bonum multitudinis pertinet curam habens; sicut et corpus hominis et cuiuslibet animalis deflueret, nisi esset aliqua vis regitiva communis in corpore, quae ad bonum commune omnium membrorum intenderet... Diversorum autem diversae sunt causae. Oportet igitur, praeter id quod movet ad proprium bonum uniuscuiusque, esse aliquid quod movet ad bonum commune multorum”. *De regno*, lib. 1 cap. 1.

¹⁹ *In Polit.* I, lec. 1, n. 24.

afectada de historicidad y, por ende, de mutabilidad. Un papel muy importante desempeña la idiosincrasia de un pueblo y su cultura, la cual conlleva una serie de elementos consuetudinarios: tradiciones, ethos, formas jurídicas espontáneamente consensuadas e incluso la religión. Tomás de Aquino se ha hecho cargo de esta rica experiencia sociológica que recorre todo su pensamiento político, en especial en el tratamiento de la ley humana (*ST*, I-II, qq. 95-97), por lo que no es contradictorio sostener la universalidad de la ley natural junto al papel que cumplen las costumbres en su aplicación a través de las prescripciones humano-positivas.²⁰

2. Necesidad óptica de la convivencia

El momento inicial del impulso natural de mutuo auxilio se supera sin negarse al buscar al otro como prójimo y así tener una vida en común, porque “todo hombre es por naturaleza familiar y amigo de todo hombre”.²¹ Así, se concreta lo social como “comunidad”, porque se expresa en la “comunicación mutua del amor de amistad”, que no es superación del amor natural, sino trascender el mismo amor natural al nivel de la donación gratuita, benevolente. Y aquí radica el segundo argumento que justifica la sociabilidad natural.

Este segundo momento no se ha de entender como una superación de la naturaleza de la persona singular sino, por el contrario, el lenguaje, como signo de la comunicación humana, expresa desde lo específico de la naturaleza lo propio del fenómeno social que se distancia, por lo mismo, de toda forma gregaria animal. Desde lo específico de la naturaleza humana, desde su espíritu, la razón y la libertad concretan en el devenir histórico el despliegue perfectivo de la naturaleza de la persona singular en comunidad de tarea y de destino con las otras personas singulares. “Siendo que el hombre posee el lenguaje por naturaleza, y como el lenguaje se ordena a que los

²⁰ “Multitudo in qua consuetudo introducitur duplicis conditionis esse potest. Si enim sit libera multitudo, quae possit sibi legem facere, plus est consensus totius multitudinis ad aliquid observandum, quem consuetudo manifestat, quam auctoritas principis, qui non habet potestatem condendi legem, nisi in quantum gerit personam multitudinis. Unde licet singulae personae non possint condere legem, tamen totus populus legem condere potest. Si vero multitudo non habeat liberam potestatem condendi sibi legem, vel legem a superiori potestate positam removendi; tamen ipsa consuetudo in tali multitudine praevalens obtinet vim legis, in quantum per eos toleratur ad quos pertinet multitudini legem imponere, ex hoc enim ipso videntur approbare quod consuetudo induxit”. *ST*, I-II, q. 97 a. 3 ad 3.

²¹ *In VIII Ethic.*, lect 1, n. 1.

hombres se comuniquen entre sí lo que es útil y nocivo, lo justo y lo injusto, en consecuencia, y como la naturaleza nada hace sin sentido, se sigue que naturalmente los hombre conformen una común-uniión”.²²

Por todo ello, vemos que el lenguaje, como instrumento de comunicación en el devenir histórico, intermedia entre la tendencia social de la naturaleza y las formas sociales en que se concreta la comunidad de las personas singulares, en la proyección hacia su realización cabal como seres humanos. De este modo, la historicidad y el lenguaje como instrumento, son vehiculizados como expresión propia de la naturaleza humana y de su perfeccionamiento, a través de la sociedad y de la cultura. En consecuencia y, desde el punto de vista del tratamiento filosófico, una lógica o lingüística de la praxis socio-moral ha de caer bajo la interpretación conceptual de la ética.

ESCOLLO. Jürgen Habermas elucida lo social como el punto de convergencia de la teoría y de la praxis de la misma acción comunicativa, cuya validez se hace efectiva en el discurso práctico de los afectados, a condición de que la comunicación lingüística derogue todos los motivos, excepto aquél que se refiere a una disposición cooperativa para el “acuerdo real”, que sólo puede darse con un consenso racional.²³ “Así, pues, la teoría incluye una doble relación entre teoría y praxis: investiga, por una parte, el contexto histórico de constitución de una situación de intereses a la que aún pertenece la teoría, por así decirlo, a través del acto de conocimiento; y, por otra parte, investiga el contexto histórico de acción sobre el que la teoría puede ejercer una influencia que orienta la acción”.²⁴ “La utilización práctica del conocimiento, su transformación en tecnologías y estrategias, por una parte y en una praxis comunicativa, por otra, puede ser preparada científicamente: ésta es la tarea de una *praxeología* que sólo se halla en los comienzos y a la que también pertenecen las investigaciones sobre la posible interacción entre ciencia y política (por ejemplo, en la forma del consejo político)”.²⁵

Se encuentra en Habermas la forma más paradigmática del historicismo contemporáneo, por cuanto el determinismo del espíritu histórico no es sino la misma acción comunicativa expresada en el uso socio-cultural del lenguaje, en un círculo funcional de la crítica histórico-discursiva, entre las ciencias y la vida social, entendida ésta como el conjunto de las formas vitales socioculturales ligadas al trabajo y al lenguaje. Sin embargo, H. se ve forzado a ordenar

²² *In I Politic.*, lect. 1, n. 34 ss.

²³ *Teoría y praxis*, *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

la acción comunicativa a un “acuerdo real”, el cual es un concepto normativo, lo que supondría un consenso racional y no sólo una mera instrumentación lingüística. “El discurso sirve para la fundamentación de pretensiones problemáticas de validez de opiniones y normas. En esta medida, el sistema de acción y experiencia, remite obligatoriamente a una forma de comunicación en la que los participantes no intercambian ninguna información, ni modulan ni llevan a cabo acciones ni realizan ni proporcionan experiencias, sino que buscan argumentos y dan fundamentaciones”.²⁶

1. Para Tomás de Aquino, el lenguaje se ubica en un plexo significativo junto al concepto y a lo realmente concebido y expresado, por lo que le resulta consecuente e incluso más armónico el descubrir las estructura lógicas del lenguaje como insertas en su uso mismo, en ocasión de tratar los problemas equivalentes que hacen a la praxis libre. Además, siendo lo social un plexo de interacciones libres – porque de eso se trata la comunidad humana –, el lenguaje en que se expresa el discurso humano ha de ser un lenguaje moral.

2. Ahora bien, el lenguaje humano atinente a la praxis libre es expresión de un juicio práctico y, por ello, intrínsecamente normativo. “Diferente es la consideración de la realidad que tiene el intelecto práctico y el especulativo. El intelecto práctico es causa de la realidad, por lo cual es medida de las cosas por él producidas; empero el intelecto especulativo, que procede desde las cosas, en cierto modo es movido por las mismas cosas y, así, las cosas son su medida”.²⁷ No obstante, el intelecto práctico es una “medida mensurada” por la bondad o malicia del objeto y el fin al que se refiere el querer libre, y al que el juicio provee de una idea motriz. Y lo mismo vale para el lenguaje moral. “En todo orden en que debe existir una regla y medida, lo que resulta bien regulado y medido lo es porque se conforma con la regla y medida; malo, empero, por esto que no está regulado ni medido... De modo semejante, las preferencias y demás situaciones humanas son medidas y reguladas conforme a la norma de la razón y a la ley divina”.²⁸

3. Aquella interpretación de lo social reducida a las reglas semánticas del lenguaje, como el punto de convergencia de la teoría y de la praxis de la

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁷ *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 2c.

²⁸ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3c.

misma acción comunicativa, y cuya validez se hace efectiva en el discurso práctico (histórico) de los afectados, sin duda gravita sobre lo que se entienda por *filosofía social*.²⁹ Pues ésta, si se reduce al mero análisis del discurso, el resultado será la negación de la posibilidad de un conocimiento *práctico de lo socio-político* en cuanto objeto operable y, por otra, la negación de una verdadera *especulación filosófica*, por aquella reducción al campo de los hechos históricos y lingüísticos, sin acceso a realidades esenciales que sustenten tales hechos. Si no hay nada más allá del acontecer discursivo, no cabe invocar a la naturaleza ni a la ley natural. Menos aún, fundamentarse en ellas. Vuelve a pensarse, en el fondo, lo social como pacto de voluntades, que evite los conflictos, comenzando por consensuar “qué es bueno y qué no lo es” y de allí “qué está o no permitido o prohibido”. Vuelve a instalarse la forzada oposición entre natural y social; entre natural e histórico; entre natural y cultural; entre ley natural y libertad; en fin, entre naturaleza, sociedad y moralidad.

3. Necesidad moral de la sociedad política

Como se ha visto, el criterio que rige la justificación de la sociabilidad natural es el cumplimiento de las exigencias de la naturaleza humana de lograr su plena realización existencial, llámese felicidad o bienaventuranza, la cual demanda indefectiblemente de la eficiencia articulada y armónica del todo plural, en cuanto tal finalidad es un bien común que excede las capacidades humano-individuales. El impulso social natural, brotando de *la necesidad de ser/vivir con los otros* ha desembocado por requerimientos de la racionalidad práctica en *la necesidad de compartir una amistad de convivencia*. Desde esta convivencia se ha puesto de manifiesto que la misma sólo puede sustentarse en el intercambio mutuo de un mundo de valores, ideales y normas, pues la moralidad se despliega en relaciones interpersonales y al mismo tiempo las nutre y confiere su auténtica dignidad. Así confluimos en lo que dio origen a estas reflexiones: la justificación tomasiana del tercer precepto de la ley natural, en el cual se expresa que “hay en el hombre una inclinación correspondiente a su naturaleza racional, inclinación que es específicamente suya, por la que el hombre tiene una tendencia natural a conocer la verdad sobre Dios y a vivir en sociedad”.³⁰ En este punto la necesidad natural se hace *obligación de vivir en sociedad*.³¹

²⁹ Entiéndase filosofía “social” como filosofía “política”, por ser el Estado (*polis*) la forma social más perfecta, ya que en él se alcanza la suficiencia total de los bienes de la existencia humana.

³⁰ ST, I-II, q. 94, a. 2 co.

³¹ “Mientras que las restantes entidades del mundo visible son guiadas por Dios, al hombre se le ha otorgado con la razón la capacidad de regirse a sí mismo como individuo y como persona. A partir de aquí resulta lo que denominamos, en sentido ético, ley natural, en contraposición a la ley natural en el mundo físico exterior. Así, el conocimiento

Por esta razón, la sociabilidad natural, tanto desde su perspectiva ontológica como práctico-normativa, está incluida en el tercer precepto de la ley natural junto al conocimiento de la verdad sobre Dios, porque implica reconocer, en el mismo orden social, la participación de la razón humana en la razón divina de gobierno y en su ley eterna. Incluso más, ni la misma ley sobrenatural la invalida sino que la confirma por medio del precepto de la caridad. “La ley divina es promulgada como refuerzo de la ley natural. En verdad, es natural a todos los hombres que se amen mutuamente... de forma tal que todo hombre es naturalmente familiar y amigo de todo hombre. Por lo tanto, desde la ley divina se prescribe el amor mutuo entre los hombres. Esto es lo que nos dice Juan (15, 12): *éste es mi precepto, que nos amemos unos a otros*; e incluso más (Ep. I, 4, 21): *éste es el mandato que tenemos de Dios, que quien ame a Dios, ame a sus hermanos*”.³²

La concepción de la ley de inspiración tomasiana, en que la razón práctico-moral juega el papel medular y articulador conforme al bien común de cualquier grupo social, ostenta una conexión insoslayable entre moralidad y politicidad, y entre moralidad y filosofía política. Suponiendo el carácter práctico-normativo de lo socio-político, la filosofía política tomasiana, siguiendo la tradición clásica, griega y romana, considera que cualquier conocimiento político acerca de su objeto no consiste simplemente en lograr una adhesión racional a ciertos juicios en que se comprende el “significado de la realidad política”, sino en alcanzar otra finalidad. Es decir, partiendo de los principios práctico-morales llegar a implementarlos en la conducta libre común, lo cual es tarea de la razón práctico-política.

La afirmación tomasiana del carácter moral-normativo de la razón práctica, es solidaria de una concepción general sobre la razón humana, sus usos y posibilidades operativas, como también de las relaciones entre *valor-ser-deber ser*. De ahí que se pueda admitir un lugar al conocimiento práctico, a la razón práctica y al lenguaje moral, al conceder que el fin y el bien son realidades inteligibles en la misma captación del ser y que lo son, también, las relaciones ordenadas

racional del hombre de que no podrá llegar a ser perfecto sin la sociedad, se transformará en la afirmación de la existencia de una ley eterna que obliga a todos los hombres. Pero esta ley no sólo posee un carácter moral personal, sino a la vez social, esto es, un principio de organización para la multitud a ella sometida... Por tanto, cuando santo Tomás afirma que el hombre es social según la ‘ley natural’, no se refiere sólo a la necesidad física que impulsa a los hombres a la sociedad, sino también a un precepto moral, según el cual existe para el hombre un deber ordenado por Dios: el de buscar su fin en la comunidad con otros”. Utz, A.F., *Ética social*, Herder, Barcelona, 1965, pp. 148-9.

³² III *Contra Gentiles*, c. 117, nn. 6-7.

(“debidas”) entre el ser dado y las perfecciones a darse en la consecución del fin. Por debajo, Tomás de Aquino reafirma que el *ser no es ontológicamente neutro*, sino que el deber ser se sustenta en el ser, como la “debidada” relación entre el ser dado y el ser perfecto, expresada en la tendencia natural hacia su plenitud existencial. Y, como el hombre es indigente para recorrer por sí solo este proceso histórico, en este punto se juntan *sociabilidad, historicidad y moralidad*.

A través del lenguaje, entonces, los hombres se expresan, se comunican y concretan las formas sociales en un tiempo histórico. Por su parte, la historicidad se despliega únicamente mediante el concurso de muchos en simultaneidad y de muchas generaciones en sucesión, pues sólo así se revelan las posibilidades ocultas de la naturaleza humana en su camino a la perfección. Cada individuo, cada pueblo, cada época, no representan más que una parte de la plenitud de lo humano; pero, al mismo tiempo, los individuos, en virtud del retorno completo, tienen ante sí la totalidad de su naturaleza y de su ser. Porque la “procesión” creadora (*exitus*) que termina en las realidades estables que son las naturalezas, es la razón misma del retorno (*reditus*) y funda ontológicamente los recursos y la marcha, de modo tal que al término del movimiento que lo ha engendrado, se liga “naturalmente”, por un movimiento inverso, por una suerte de “conversión” (*regyratio*), a su principio de producción.³³ La sociabilidad natural desde la tendencia natural (*exitus*) se hace ley natural y, así, el orden de la multitud resulta obligatorio por el mismo mandato de la ley natural frente al fin en que se consuma la existencia humana (*reditus*).³⁴ “Siendo el hombre animal político por naturaleza, las virtudes que existen en el hombre conforme a la condición de su naturaleza se llaman *políticas*, por cuanto el hombre con el auxilio de tales virtudes se conduce rectamente en las cosas propiamente humanas”.³⁵

Tanto para Aristóteles como para Tomás de Aquino, no hay incompatibilidad entre la eticidad de la acción, la costumbre y la ley. Por lo contrario, si la política es una doctrina de la vida buena y justa, es continuidad de la ética, o más precisamente, su mejor parte. De ahí que la política es filosofía práctica,³⁶ que se distancia tanto de la técnica como de la ciencia apodíctica,

³³ Chenu, M.-D., *Introduction a l'étude de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Montréal, Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1954, p. 267.

³⁴ “In exitu creaturarum a primo principio attenditur quaedam circulatio vel regyratio, eo quod omnia revertuntur sicut in finem in id a quo sicut principio prodierunt”, *I Sent.*, d. 14, q. 2, a. 2.

³⁵ *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 61, a. 5.

³⁶ Dejo de lado en esta consideración la referencia a la filosofía “social” que incluiría, además, un tratamiento teórico – antropológico y metafísico – de lo social.

porque su objeto es una realidad extremadamente sutil como es la conducta libre y más, acción libre recíproca de una pluralidad de hombres que viven en comunidad. Es filosofía práctica, insisto, cuyo objetivo es estimular, moldear, ordenar y normar, rectamente la acción concreta de los hombres en su devenir histórico, al encarnarse como sabiduría prudencial en la realidad social. Y si el pensamiento práctico es arquitectónico de la acción moral, la última respuesta sobre el lugar de la naturaleza, la historia y la sociabilidad en la vida de los hombres, vendrá dada sobre cuál sea la dirección del intercambio entre interpretación y realidad social.

La filosofía y la ética políticas tomasianas, que constituyen una misma pieza sapiencial, es una propuesta para una razón consciente que puede practicarlo razonablemente desde la misma racionalidad de la ley. Es la auténtica propuesta de conciliación entre lo uno y lo múltiple, pues lo “social dándose en los individuos los trasciende, y trascendiéndolos sólo puede darse en ellos”. Es salvaguarda de la interioridad y la dignidad humanas de todos y cada uno al cumplir su vocación a lo universal en el terreno de las interacciones recíprocas y fecundadas por la justicia y el amor sociales. Bien podemos, al decir de Lachance,³⁷ exaltar el *humanismo político* de Tomás de Aquino.

Sin embargo, la naturaleza y la historia son insuficientes por sí solas para explicar la existencia de la persona humana o de la sociedad, porque lo que el hombre *es* se termina de perfilar con su *poder ser* en vistas al *deber ser*. El hombre se explica desde la *naturaleza*, desplegada por su libertad en la *historia*, hacia la consumación del tiempo. Imposible, entonces, negar la naturaleza, pues no pasaría de ser una negación declamatoria. Sin embargo, si negamos la historia, perderíamos la riqueza de la diversidad y multiplicidad, la cual nos aproxima más a la plenitud de la especie que un individuo solo. Consciente de este necesario equilibrio, Aristóteles habla de la *eudaimonía natural* como el bien común de una ciudad virtuosa, que se da en el acontecer histórico, y Tomás de Aquino la asume y la eleva a la *bienaventuranza sobrenatural* de la Jerusalén Celestial, que se da en la eternidad.

³⁷ Lachance, L., *L'humanisme politique de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Sirey-Lévrier, Paris-Montréal, 1964.

CULTURA E RELIGIONE

■ ANGELO CAMPODONICO

Abstract

Religion and culture

This paper concerns the meaning of culture, the relationship among cultures and between culture and human nature, and the unifying role of what we can call the “religious sense” and of religions in culture. Unlike modern philosophy, characterized by a gap between reason and emotion, on the implicit level of human experience Aquinas’s approach preserves the connection between rationality and desire, quest for good and for happiness on the one hand and desire for truth on the other, criticizing non-theistic metaphysics as well. Furthermore the paper highlights the main role which is played, even in a secular and pluralistic society, not only by religions, but also by the *religious sense* in grounding and motivating the quest for a *common good*.

1. Cultura

Questo contributo non pretende esaurire un argomento vasto e complesso, suscettibile di diverse interpretazioni, ma suggerire alcuni temi che giudico oggi fondamentali, svolgendo quasi una meditazione intorno ad essi. A tal fine partiamo da alcune semplici definizioni. Che cosa significa cultura? Possiamo distinguere fra cultura come *paideia* (*formazione dell'uomo*) e cultura in senso antropologico. In questo secondo senso, sul quale ci soffermiamo, la cultura (parola che deriva da *còlere*, coltivare) è il complesso di tutte quelle scoperte e conquiste che gli individui di un determinato gruppo sono venuti facendo nel corso dei secoli, coltivando, per stare all’etimologia, il campo dell’organizzazione economica, dei rapporti sociali e delle indagini spirituali; tali conquiste, vagliate dal gruppo e dal tempo, diventano patrimonio tradizionale. La cultura, pertanto, può essere definita come quel patrimonio sociale di un gruppo umano, trasmesso di generazione in generazione, che comprende conoscenze, credenze, fantasie, ideologie, simboli, norme, valori, nonché le disposizioni all’azione che da tutti questi fattori derivano e che si concretizzano in schemi e tecniche d’attività tipici di ogni società.

Come concepire il rapporto fra uomini e culture? Si può, com’è stato suggerito, confrontare utilmente la cultura con quella dimensione determi-

nante e costitutiva di ogni cultura umana che è la lingua.¹ Nei termini di Saussure senza *langue* (linguaggio condiviso, contesto culturale) non esiste *parole* (gli atti linguistici-culturali del singolo individuo) e, viceversa, senza *parole* non è possibile innovare la *langue*, ovvero la propria cultura, il proprio vocabolario di valore. Analogamente si può parlare di rapporto fra *spirito soggettivo* e *spirito oggettivo* (Hegel). La cultura si può paragonare pure al *carattere* di un popolo che si manifesta nell'originalità dei singoli individui, quindi nelle virtù e nei vizi naturali e acquisiti (E. Stein).²

La dimensione del mutamento è insita in ogni cultura che è sempre dinamica e interculturale ovvero in movimento, non è mai statica. Ogni cultura è seconda, mai prima. Secondo Rémi Brague soltanto nel caso dell'Occidente questo fatto sarebbe esplicitamente riconosciuto: come Roma ha riconosciuto la sua "secondarietà" rispetto alla cultura greca, così la Chiesa cattolica ha riconosciuto la sua "secondarietà" rispetto ad Israele, resistendo alla tentazione di rifiutare quella tradizione.³ L'Occidente cristiano è "romano", in quanto ha imparato ad aprirsi all'altro (in senso sincronico), proprio riconoscendo il suo debito nei riguardi dell'altro in senso diacronico (ovvero la tradizione greca classica ed ebraica) e confrontandosi con esso nelle numerose "rinascenze" che si sono succedute lungo la sua storia secolare.

Per sua natura la cultura, come la lingua, è, quindi, una realtà dinamica in continua evoluzione, in cui il dato della tradizione viene conservato e riformulato attraverso un continuo lavoro interpretativo. Occorre evitare, perciò, l'alternativa drastica fra una concezione rigida delle culture-civiltà impermeabile alle contaminazioni con altre culture, da un lato, e una concezione che vede l'affollarsi di tante culture in un singolo individuo, senza continuità e gerarchia fra loro e senza possibilità di preservare l'unità e l'identità dell'io, dall'altro.⁴ Così accade che si parli di cultura del calcio, di

¹ C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1992, *Multiculturalismo. La politica del riconoscimento*, Anabasi, Milano 1993, pp. 50-1.

² Cfr. E. Stein, *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, tr. it. *Psicologia e scienze dello spirito. Contributi per una fondazione filosofica*, Città nuova, Roma 1999, parte II.

³ Aderendo per esempio alla posizione "gnostica" di Marcione. Cfr. R. Brague, *Europe. La voie romaine*, Criterion, Paris 1993, tr. it. *Il futuro dell'Occidente. Nel modello romano la salvezza dell'Europa*, Bompiani, Milano 1998.

⁴ Per quanto riguarda una concezione rigida di cultura, cfr. S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996, tr. it. *Lo scontro delle civiltà e il nuovo ordine mondiale*, Garzanti, Milano 2000. Per quanto riguarda una concezione opposta cfr. M. Aime, *Eccessi di culture*, Einaudi, Torino 2004.

cultura delle professioni, di cultura religiosa ecc. L'uomo, tuttavia, tende sempre ad un senso unitario della vita, ad una narrazione capace di donare senso al passato, al presente e al futuro. Il confronto pacifico e l'integrazione fra diverse culture nel singolo e nella società, è possibile in linea di principio, perché ogni cultura, di cui l'uomo è partecipe e protagonista, è da un lato una interpretazione storicamente determinata della realtà, ma, dall'altro, è pur sempre espressione della sua natura biologica e aperta all'essere grazie alla razionalità.⁵ Come è stato osservato:

Ogni cultura è espressione dell'universale culturalità umana, che si dà però solo nelle forme culturali, storicamente determinate che sono sue. E che dunque si danno condizioni antropologicamente strutturali di una cultura che sono universali, nelle sue effettuazioni storiche sempre particolari. A livello di soggetti, di opere, di intere culture, infatti vale il paradosso che quanto più la realizzazione è singolare, tanto più il suo valore è universale: valga per tutti l'esempio dell'opera d'arte che è massimamente partecipabile nella misura del suo essere massimamente irripetibile nella sua singolarità riuscita.⁶

Questa apertura alla totalità a partire da un punto di vista particolare e unico che contraddistingue la cultura si manifesta in maniera precipua nella dimensione della religione che contraddistingue la gran parte delle culture storiche. Una religione svolge un ruolo sintetico all'interno di una cultura, pur non identificandosi necessariamente con quella cultura e potendo essere accolta anche in altre culture. Che cos'è la religione? Più difficile è rispondere a questo interrogativo tanto diverse sono le cosiddette *religioni*, dal Cri-

⁵ Indubbiamente vi sono state e vi sono anche oggi forti differenze fra le culture e fra i modi di pensare e organizzare l'esperienza (per es. fra quella occidentale soprattutto angloamericana e quella cinese), ma ciò non toglie che vi siano elementi tipici dell'una nell'altra (pensiamo, per es., ad un pensatore come Eraclito) e punti di mediazione fra entrambe. Occorre riconoscere che c'è una tensione all'interno dello stesso *logos* occidentale (per es. la polarità fra Parmenide-Eraclito, Platone-Aristotele, Agostino-Tomaso. Cfr., su questa linea, M. Fattal, *Pour un nouveau langage de la raison. Convergences entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Beauchesne, Paris 1987, tr. it. S. Cives, *Per un nuovo linguaggio della ragione. Convergenze tra Oriente e Occidente*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1999). Così pure la cultura mediterranea europea può fare da mediazione fra la cultura angloamericana e quella dell'Estremo Oriente. Sulla notevole diversità fra queste due culture cfr. R.E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought. How Asians and Westerners think differently*, Simon and Schuster, New York 2003, tr. it. *Il tao e Aristotele. Perché asiatici e occidentali pensano in modo diverso*, RCS libri, Milano 2007.

⁶ F. Botturi, *Riconoscimento e cultura*, in J. Prades (a c. di), *All'origine della diversità. Le sfide del multiculturalismo*, Guerini e associati, Milano 2008, p. 82 *passim*.

stianesimo al Buddismo. Possiamo parlare di una relazione-legame (*religio*) dell'uomo con il Mistero che è alla base dell'esistenza umana e del mondo. La cultura si trova in certa misura tra la natura (in basso) e la religione (in alto). La religione non s'identifica totalmente con una cultura, ma s'incarna sempre in una cultura e si comunica sempre attraverso una cultura.

Charles Taylor afferma che tutte le culture sono *prima facie* degne di rispetto, perché espressione dell'uomo e perché è impossibile che una cultura non possieda qualche valore, ma che in un secondo momento non si può fare a meno di giudicare e, quindi, di gerarchizzare fra le culture e anche fra i valori presenti in una determinata cultura.⁷ Ciò presuppone – contro il relativismo – che le culture siano fra loro confrontabili.

Qual è allora l'origine del relativismo culturale? La tendenza delle società moderne ad assumere posizioni relativistiche, a partire dalla constatazione del pluralismo delle credenze, non è senza presupposti, ma è dovuta, secondo Boudon, che si rifa a Tocqueville, al ruolo esorbitante che in esse svolge una erronea interpretazione del *principio d'uguaglianza*:

Questo valore implica che tutti gli individui, tutti i gruppi e tutte le culture siano trattati come uguali, ma poiché gli individui hanno opinioni diverse su ogni sorta di problema, e poiché i gruppi e le culture aderiscono a valori che variano, non si può restare fedeli a questo principio se non ammettendo che non esiste né verità, né oggettività nel caso di valori diversi da quello dell'uguaglianza. Questi valori devono essere considerati come semplici punti di vista, altrimenti bisognerebbe ammettere che i valori degli uni possano essere superiori a quelli degli altri, e ciò sarebbe in contraddizione con il principio d'uguaglianza. Nello stesso tempo, quando un'opinione si diffonde fra il pubblico, tende a imporre all'individuo di conformarvisi, senza magari che questo ci creda: è la tirannia dell'opinione.⁸

Si tratta, tuttavia, di piani radicalmente diversi: quello della uguaglianza degli uomini in dignità, da un lato, quello della diversità sul piano del loro effettivo raggiungimento della verità e del bene dall'altro. Precisa a questo proposito Robert Spaemann: “La dignità della persona non è pregiudicata dalla

⁷ Cfr. J. Habermas, C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”*, Princeton University Press 1992, tr. it. *Multiculturalismo. La politica del riconoscimento*, Princeton University Press, Anabasi, Milano 1993.

⁸ R. Boudon, *Le sens des valeurs*, PUF, Paris 1999, tr. it. *Il senso dei valori*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2000, pp. 192-3.

conoscenza della disuguaglianza, poiché l'uguaglianza degli uomini in quanto persone non è oggetto di conoscenza, ma di apprezzamento".⁹

Fra natura e cultura si dà una certa circolarità.¹⁰ La cultura presuppone sempre la natura umana (i bisogni, le tendenze, l'apertura della ragione e del desiderio all'essere al bene e la libertà) e la natura umana per potersi perfezionare richiede la cultura, cioè la relazione in atto fra diverse libertà. Tommaso d'Aquino fa riferimento giustamente ai primi principi dell'intelletto speculativo e pratico, comuni a tutti gli uomini, i quali si attuano variamente nelle diverse culture umane attraverso la mediazione della ragione discorsiva. In questa prospettiva i primi principi della razionalità pratica sono dati da alcune inclinazioni umane (*natura ut natura*), riconosciute nella loro bontà dalla razionalità nella sua dimensione speculativa, comprese dal movimento della volontà e rese normative dalla razionalità pratica (*natura ut ratio*).¹¹ La cultura non può far scomparire la natura, ma può invece modificare il modo di manifestarla, di soddisfare i suoi bisogni, di relazionarsi per mezzo di essa. Insomma può influire sulla natura, ma non sostituirla. Così alcune acquisizioni umane, universalmente accettate o accettabili, possono essere esito di una cultura determinata, a sua volta influenzata da una fede religiosa e, una volta acquisite, possono valere per tutti gli uomini. Questo può essere il caso, per esempio, del tema dei diritti dell'uomo.

La natura si manifesta attraverso la cultura, ma la natura va oltre la cultura, permettendo la traduzione. La traduzione fra le culture come fra le lingue è sempre possibile, nonostante a volte sia molto difficile.¹² Si può comprendere anche che una traduzione non è riuscita. Una cultura può sostituirsi ad un'altra in un momento di crisi, quando la cultura tradizionale non è più in grado di rispondere alle domande dell'uomo.¹³

2. Senso religioso e religioni

Si può affermare che le religioni e il senso religioso fanno parte della cultura, anzi ne costituiscono il vertice (pensiamo alle tombe degli egizi,

⁹ R. Spaemann, *Personen. Versuche ueber den Unterschied zwischen "etwas" und "jemand"*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1996, tr. it. *Persone. Sulla differenza tra qualcosa e qualcuno*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2005.

¹⁰ Oggi c'è chi mette in discussione la legittimità della stessa distinzione di natura e cultura. Cfr., per es., P. Descola, *Par de là nature et culture*, Gallimard, Paris 2005.

¹¹ Cfr. *ST I-II*, 94, 2.

¹² Cfr. E. Jullien, *De l'universel, de l'uniform, du commun et du dialogue entre les cultures*, Fayard, Paris 2008, tr. it. *L'universale e il comune. Il dialogo tra culture*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2010.

¹³ Cfr. A. Mc Intyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, University of Notre Dame Press 1988, tr. it. *Giustizia e razionalità*, 2 voll., Anabasi, Milano 1995.

alle piramidi azteche, ai templi greci, alle cattedrali medioevali), perché si connettono alla domanda di un senso *ultimo* della vita, di salvezza dell'esistenza.¹⁴ Il problema del bene o senso dell'agire umano diventa domanda radicale di *sensu* o domanda di *salvezza* non appena fa i conti con la situazione metafisica dell'uomo (finitezza, male) alla luce della sua apertura all'essere e all'Assoluto. Il senso religioso si colloca *tra* esperienza etica e esperienza metafisica, tra razionalità pratica e razionalità speculativa. Le religioni storiche sono risposte diverse a questa stessa domanda. La mediazione simbolica propria delle religioni sembra necessaria all'uomo.¹⁵ Ad un'eccessiva lontananza di Dio secondo una trascendenza spazialmente intesa, si oppone l'immanenza del divino nel mondo e viceversa. Tommaso sottolinea che sviluppare la ragione nella condizione umana (possiamo parlare di *sensu religioso* e di *virtù della religione* che rientra nella virtù della giustizia) significa diventare religiosi e aprirsi alla rivelazione religiosa fino ad aderire ad essa (fede). La dimensione religiosa è connessa alla globalità dell'umano, alla dimensione speculativa e pratica della razionalità e al desiderio-amore. La dimensione religiosa assume così un carattere sintetico. Sul finalismo del desiderio come *appetitus rationalis* (Tommaso) più e prima che sulla nozione dell'umanità come *fine in sé* (Kant), si potrebbe fondare adeguatamente la dignità dell'uomo. Ciò che qualifica l'uomo, infatti, non è la sola ragione, ma il plesso di ragione e desiderio che è alla base della sua capacità di libertà e della sua ricerca della "vera" felicità (i due aspetti verità e felicità vanno tenuti insieme), ovvero del *sensu ultimo* della vita. Essa è presente inevitabilmente in tutti gli uomini anche in coloro che non aderiscono ad alcuna religione a motivo dell'apertura interale del desiderio in forza della razionalità che è aperta all'essere. Come afferma Agostino, non posso voler ingannarmi riguardo a ciò in cui consiste la felicità

¹⁴ Cfr. F. Brunner, *Die Religion*, Herder, Freiburg in B. 1956, p. 2ss.: «Dei palazzi dei faraoni non si è conservato praticamente nulla; con quanta imponenza, invece, stanno ancora persino i relativamente scarni resti dei templi che essi hanno costruito! L'uomo ha dedicato quanto aveva di meglio agli dei e non è rifuggito neppure da sacrifici umani se pensava di rendersi così gradito alla divinità, per tacere degli innumerevoli animali offerti in sacrificio agli dei. Ed ora si pensi che tutto questo è dedicato ad uno sconosciuto; solo pochissimi asseriscono, di volta in volta, di averlo visto o udito, o corporealmente incontrato! Tutto questo avviene per un mondo che, commisurato alla misura della quotidianità, di per sé non esiste affatto! E questo è ciò che resta incomprensibile: che cioè l'uomo, mai e in nessun luogo si è fatto bastare ciò che è presente e afferrabile, ciò che è *reale e positivo*».

¹⁵ Per quanto riguarda il tema della necessità della *mediazione* in religione particolarmente significativa è la riflessione di Agostino e, più recentemente, di M. Eliade.

mia e degli altri.¹⁶ La dignità dell'uomo emerge dal fatto che egli ricerca un senso ultimo, anche quando non lo tematizza, e che, ricercandolo, può scegliere *chi essere*. Ciò significa essere *persona*.

Il desiderio religioso a rigore sussiste anche quando non vi sono risposte adeguate ad esso, perché è inevitabile. Non è necessario ricorrere alla statistica e ai sondaggi d'opinione per sapere che l'uomo è un animale religioso; occorre solo individuare come la domanda religiosa si manifesti entro una certa cultura. Essa si può manifestare in modi diversi. Si può parlare di *sensu religioso* che è tematizzato anche da figure come Leopardi o Camus che non aderiscono ad una determinata fede religiosa. È vero però che il contesto culturale-religioso, ovvero la risposta al desiderio, incoraggia o meno la domanda religiosa a svilupparsi. Questo dipende anche dal fatto che le cosiddette religioni sono assai diverse fra loro. Si potrebbe giungere a discutere talora l'opportunità di adottare il termine unificante di *religioni*. Così Rémi Brague sottolinea perfino la notevole diversità fra i tre monoteismi e, in particolare, fra Cristianesimo e Islam.¹⁷ Altre *religioni* come il buddismo originario sembrano ridursi ad un'etica che permette di affrontare i mali dell'esistenza, *immunizzandosi* nei loro confronti. Alcuni autori contemporanei come Peter Sloterdijk considerano sulla scorta di Nietzsche, le religioni in quanto tali come *immunizzazioni* di fronte al reale nella sua drammaticità, trascurando la dimensione intenzionale dell'atteggiamento religioso.¹⁸ In realtà i cristiani credono che la Rivelazione ebraico-cristiana favorisca ed incoraggi l'emergere in tutta la sua purezza della domanda religiosa che è strutturale all'uomo. Essa sollecita quell'*assenso realistico* di fronte al contenuto della Rivelazione di cui tratta John Henry Newman.

Molto spesso lungo la storia le religioni si trovano all'interno di una tradizione che non è messa in discussione, ma accettata passivamente.¹⁹ Lo stesso Cristianesimo, che difficilmente può considerarsi una *tradizione*, in quanto richiede una risposta personale, talvolta lo è stato. Oggi in Occidente

¹⁶ Significativamente secondo Agostino l'uomo non può desiderare la felicità (*beatitudo*) senza desiderare pure la verità (non ci si può voler ingannare riguardo alla felicità) e, insieme, l'eternità (non si può volere una felicità che non duri). Cfr. A. Agostino, *Confessioni* X, 20, 29; *De Trinitate* XIII, 7, 10; *La città di Dio* XIV, 25.

¹⁷ Cfr. R. Brague, *Du Dieu des chrétiens. Et d'un ou deux autres*, Paris, Flammarion, 2008, tr. it. *Il Dio dei cristiani. L'unico Dio?*, Cortina, Milano 2010.

¹⁸ Cfr. P. Sloterdijk, *Du müsst dein Leben ändern. Über Anthropotechnik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 2009, tr. it. *Devi cambiare la tua vita*, Cortina, Milano 2010.

¹⁹ Cfr. C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, The Belknap Press, Harvard 2009, tr. it. *L'età della secolarizzazione*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2010.

la situazione appare assai diversa e per certi aspetti ambivalente. Charles Taylor sottolinea che nell'epoca della secolarizzazione ci si ferma spesso "sulla soglia" senza scegliere fra le grandi alternative di senso che anziché sul piano della *fede* si pongono ormai sul piano dell' *opinione*.²⁰ Esse non si collocano per lo più su un piano umanamente significativo che favorisca un assenso *realistico*, ma su un piano *nozionistico* (astratto) o, meglio, virtuale. Tutto è uniformato e appiattito. Ci si trova di fronte ad un' *estetizzazione* della vita che diventa spesso un *anestetico* di fronte alle contraddizioni di cui la vita è intessuta.²¹ La dimensione estetica sostituisce, così, la religione. Un certo naturalismo-materialismo cela il Mistero dell'esistenza, la domanda di senso dell'uomo, riducendola alla radice e impoverendo così la sua cultura.²²

Di fronte a questa situazione il pensiero di Tommaso d'Aquino appare ancora insostituibile per la sua capacità di *proteggere* la dimensione religiosa dell'uomo. E questo su due piani. In primo luogo mostrando la sinergia di desiderio e razionalità per cui esiste una logica del desiderio di Dio, che non si riduce a mero sentimento irrazionale.²³ Il desiderio religioso è intessuto di

²⁰ Cfr. W. Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief: The Difference between Them*, Oneworld Oxford, 1998.

²¹ Cfr. M. Magatti, *Libertà immaginaria. Le illusioni del capitalismo tecno-nichilista*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2009.

²² La critica naturalistica alla religione sembra assurda, perché presuppone implicitamente un punto di vista metafisico materialistico e una razionalità capace di metafisica. Il punto di vista naturalistico, in quanto metafisico, presuppone nell'uomo un'apertura metafisica della sua ragione.

²³ Cfr. *ST I-II*, 3, 8: "[...] ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae. Ad cuius evidentiam, duo consideranda sunt. Primo quidem, quod homo non est perfecte beatus, quandiu restat sibi aliquid desiderandum et quaerendum. Secundum est, quod uniuscuiusque potentiae perfectio attenditur secundum rationem sui obiecti. Obiectum autem intellectus est quod quid est, idest essentia rei, ut dicitur in III de anima. Unde intantum procedit perfectio intellectus, inquantum cognoscit essentiam alicuius rei. Si ergo intellectus aliquis cognoscat essentiam alicuius effectus, per quam non possit cognosci essentia causae, ut scilicet sciatur de causa quid est; non dicitur intellectus attingere ad causam simpliciter, quamvis per effectum cognoscere possit de causa an sit. Et ideo remanet naturaliter homini desiderium, cum cognoscit effectum, et scit eum habere causam, ut etiam sciatur de causa quid est. Et illud desiderium est admirationis, et causat inquisitionem, ut dicitur in principio *Metaphys.* Puta si aliquis cognoscens eclipsim solis, considerat quod ex aliqua causa procedit, de qua, quia nescit quid sit, admiratur, et admirando inquit. Nec ista inquisitio quiescit quousque perveniat ad cognoscendum essentiam causae. Si igitur intellectus humanus, cognoscens essentiam alicuius effectus creati, non cognoscat de Deo nisi an est; nondum perfectio eius attingit simpliciter ad causam primam, sed remanet ei adhuc naturale desiderium inquirendi causam. Unde nondum est perfecte beatus. Ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae

razionalità. La razionalità metafisica agisce già in *actu exercito* e non solo in *actu signato* e mostra i limiti degli investimenti parziali di senso. L'uomo, in quanto tale, e non solo il filosofo, tende a “conoscere la verità su Dio”.²⁴ In secondo luogo, sul piano strettamente filosofico-metafisico (*in actu signato*), il discorso di Tommaso è rilevante per la sua capacità di criticare quelle concezioni religiose e non che negano il teismo, monistiche, materialistiche, dualistiche ecc.²⁵ Se la critica alle corruzioni della religione non si riduce al solo piano metafisico, ma ha anche dimensioni antropologiche ed etiche, il piano della metafisica e della teologia naturale è pur sempre fondamentale.

D'altro lato, tornando alla situazione culturale contemporanea, occorre notare che la domanda religiosa potrebbe forse emergere in forme nuove e radicali paradossalmente proprio quando non ci si vuole illudere a tutti i costi e si vuole fare i conti con la realtà nella sua contraddittorietà e durezza (Nietzsche). In questo senso si potrebbe anche discutere la convinzione diffusa che la nostra epoca non sia strutturalmente aperta alla religione. Come osserva Joshua Heschel:

È consueto incolpare la scienza secolare e la filosofia antireligiosa dell'eclisse della religione nella società moderna, ma sarebbe più onesto incolpare la religione delle sue stesse sconfitte. La religione è declinata non perché è stata confutata, ma perché è divenuta priva di rilevanza, monotona, oppressiva e insipida.²⁶

3. Problemi aperti

La cultura contemporanea, soprattutto quella occidentale, esito del processo di secolarizzazione, sembra risentire della mancanza del respiro e della profondità che la religione, invece, suggerisce e alimenta. Se qualcuno “scoprì” la nostra cultura non vedrebbe per lo più importanti e originali architetture espressioni di una religione. La difficoltà a costruire opere d'arte originali come chiese che manifestino il nesso vivente fra religione e cultura appare significativa. Sembrerebbe talora che scarseggino grandi personalità che aderiscono ad una determinata religione e che siano in grado di tradurla attraverso originali espressioni culturali. Ma una cultura e una società possono sussistere a lungo senza religione?

causae. Et sic perfectionem suam habebit per unionem ad Deum sicut ad obiectum, in quo solo beatitudo hominis consistit [...].”

²⁴ ST I-II, 94, 2.

²⁵ Cfr. di Tommaso le *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, in particolare I-III.

²⁶ J. Heschel, *To Grow in Wisdom: An Anthology of Abraham Joshua Heschel*, Madison Books, New York, London 1990, tr. it. *Crescere in saggezza*, Gribaudi, Milano 2001, p. 157.

Così pure il nesso politica-religione è sempre stato fondamentale. La religione è sempre stata un fattore d'unità sociale. Nella contemporanea società pluralistica si pone, quindi, drammaticamente il problema di come preservare il nesso imprescindibile fra domanda radicale di senso, radicalmente motivante, e legame sociale (*bene comune*) fra gli uomini. Ricordiamo, per esempio, le risposte significative di Taylor, Rawls e Habermas. Ma c'è contraddizione fra la ricerca dell'autenticità in senso estetizzante (esaltazione della libertà di scelta fine a se stessa) da un lato, e legame sociale, esigenza di solidarietà dall'altro. Oggi, perciò, si dovrebbe pensare ad una maggiore valorizzazione del ruolo del senso religioso e delle religioni storiche nel giustificare e motivare l'impegno per il bene comune. Non si tratta di escludere le dottrine comprensive (spesso di natura religiosa) dallo spazio pubblico, ma di esplicitare gli incroci e le sovrapposizioni fra le rispettive semantiche del bene.²⁷

Ricercando le ragioni e le motivazioni adeguate della convivenza politica e i fondamenti del bene comune, non si può escludere ciò che più qualifica l'uomo. Se egli è strutturalmente un animale sociale, bisognoso di ricevere e dare riconoscimento, la sfera sociale non può escludere ciò che lo qualifica nel modo più radicale. Altrimenti la convivenza e il legame sociale ne risentono perché perdono in ragioni e in motivazioni. L'interesse per l'altro uomo, la stima per lui nasce e si sviluppa dalla stima per la sua ricerca di un senso ultimo anche quando non si condivide per nulla l'oggetto in cui si ripone il senso. In ogni caso ci può essere almeno curiosità, desiderio di capire se quel determinato oggetto del desiderio possa bastare a soddisfare il desiderio, se da lui ho qualcosa da imparare nella mia ricerca del senso ultimo, se la sua ricerca di fatto mi mette in discussione.

La sfida sul senso radicale della vita è, quindi, alla base della socialità e del bene comune. Trovare il punto d'incontro fra gli uomini innanzitutto sulla base di quel *bene comune* che è la ricerca-desiderio del vero bene anziché soltanto sulle risposte in genere "religiose" passivamente e conformisticamente accettate (come avveniva spesso nelle società tradizionali) o su una *dignità* intesa astrattamente, univocamente e staticamente (come spesso nella modernità), può permettere di pensare una convivenza dinamica, ma rispettosa e non conflittuale. Altrimenti il rischio opposto della modernità secolarizzata è quello di un abbassamento degli ideali di vita che si traduce in un edonismo generalizzato (Tocqueville, Fortin)²⁸ e in una forma di ri-

²⁷ Cfr. N. Genghini, *Fonti del bene comune. Cristianesimo e società aperta*, Fazzini, Rimini 2008.

²⁸ Cfr. E. Fortin, *Human Rights, Virtue and the Common Good, Untimely Meditations on Religion and Politics*, edited by Brian Benestad, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham 1996.

spetto che nasconde estraneità e che, in ultima analisi, genera risentimento. Come afferma Michael Sandel:

[...] abbiamo bisogno di una vita civile più sostanziale e più impegnata di quella cui siamo ormai abituati. Negli ultimi decenni siamo arrivati a pensare che rispettare le convinzioni etiche e religiose dei nostri concittadini significhi ignorarle [...]. Ma questo non vuol dire evitare il dissenso, bensì sopprimerlo nel nome di una forma molto ambigua di rispetto, e ciò può suscitare reazioni negative e risentimento. Può anche derivarne un impoverimento del discorso pubblico, che oscilla da un ciclo di notizie al successivo concentrandosi su quanto serve a creare scandalo, sensazionalismo, banalità [...]. Non ci sono garanzie che dedicandosi a discutere in pubblico gravi questioni etiche si possa arrivare, in qualunque situazione, a concordare sulle opinioni etiche e religiose altrui, anche solo ad apprezzarle. Ma, finché non avremo provato, non avremo modo di saperlo.²⁹

²⁹ Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, tr. it. *Giustizia. Il nostro bene comune*, Feltrinelli, Milano, p. 275.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN A SECULARIZED AGE: HOW DO WE SHARPEN THE “BLUNTNES” OF THE NATURAL LAW?

■ PETER B. WELLS

1. Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, it was presumed that the natural law would effectively serve as a common reference point for dialogue between the Catholic Church, other religions, and all men and women of good will about how to build a more just society and promote greater respect for the dignity and rights of the human person. This strategic use of the natural law began to take shape during the reign of Pope Leo XIII as a way of delineating the origin and limits of civil authority.¹ Blessed John XXIII continued in the same vein with *Pacem in Terris* (1963), this time using the natural law as a basis for a common understanding of human rights and duties. Pope Paul VI took this teaching a step further by emphasizing the role of the natural law in establishing a just political order on both the national and international levels.

A paradigmatic expression of the Magisterium’s use of the natural law can be found in Blessed John Paul II’s 2003 address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, in which he made the following appeal: “we must *rediscover* within States and between States *the paramount value of the natural law*, which was the source of inspiration for the rights of nations and for the first formulations of international law. Even if today some people question its validity”, he continued, “I am convinced that its general and universal principles can still help us to understand more clearly the unity of the human race and to foster the development of the consciences both of those who govern and of those who are governed”.²

Given the confident tone of the former Pontiff, it is rather surprising that, in a 2004 conversation with Jürgen Habermas about the pre-political

¹ See esp. the encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum* (1888).

² John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, in *Osservatore Romano*, 13-14 January 2003, 6. The *International Theological Commission* has, of course, not given up hope on the force of the natural law in circles of dialogue, though the tone is more reserved. See par. 52 of *Alla ricerca di un’etica universale: nuovo sguardo sulla legge naturale*, 2008.

foundations of the democratic constitutional state,³ the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger deliberately *avoided* recourse to the natural law, claiming that, even though it “remained (especially in the Catholic Church) the key issue in dialogues with the secular society and with other communities of faith in order to appeal to the reason we share in common and to seek the basis for a consensus about the ethical principles of law in a secular, pluralistic society”, it unfortunately has become a “blunt” instrument.⁴

Other scholars have expressed similar reservations over the last forty years. In 1972, Elizabeth Anscombe famously lamented that the natural law is too glibly connected with the prohibition against contraception rather than with other parts of the law. “Any type of wrong action is ‘against the natural law’”, she insisted. “‘Natural law’ is simply a way of speaking about the whole of morality”.⁵

Jean Porter identifies what she believes to be a “sharp decline” in the credibility of the natural law as an “independent and rational system”. “In its earlier forms”, she writes, “the modern Catholic account of the natural law was grounded in an account of the aims, and the overall order, manifested in prerational nature”.⁶ This account, however, presupposed “specific philosophical and theological views of nature, which – unsurprisingly – were not in fact rationally compelling to all persons of good will”. In Porter’s opinion, this put more pressure on Catholic theorists to choose between “the naturalness of the natural law and its rational character”.⁷

³ *Dialectics of Secularization* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007). Reprinted in *Europe Today and Tomorrow: Addressing the Fundamental Issues* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 67–81. The original German text, together with responses printed in major European newspapers, appears as *Vöropolitische moralische Grundlagen eines freiheitlichen Staates* in *Zur Debatte: Themen der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern*, vol. 34. Jahrgang, München 1/2004, 1–12.

⁴ *Dialectics of Secularization*, 69. “Das Naturrecht ist – besonders in der katholischen Kirche – die Argumentationsfigur geblieben, mit der sie in den Gesprächen mit der säkularen Gesellschaft und mit anderen Glaubensgemeinschaften an die gemeinsame Vernunft appelliert und die Grundlagen für eine Verständigung über die ethischen Prinzipien des Rechts in einer säkularen pluralistischen Gesellschaft sucht. Aber dieses Instrument ist leider stumpf geworden, und ich möchte mich daher in diesem Gespräch nicht darauf stützen”. *Vöropolitische moralische Grundlagen eines freiheitlichen Staates*, 6.

⁵ “Contraception and Chastity”, in *Faith in a Hard Ground: Essays on Religion, Philosophy and Ethics* by G.E.M. Anscombe, eds. Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008), 179.

⁶ Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 32.

⁷ Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 33–34.

Another contemporary scholar, Tracey Rowland, has criticized the late scholastic manuals for placing “an emphasis on natural-law-based casuistry whose appeal was limited to those with a positivist or legalistic mindset or those who were simply fearful of committing sin and looking for moral certitude”.⁸

Among the more extreme critics of the Church’s use of natural law in ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue is Scottish ethicist Michael Keeling, who believes that “the very idea of natural law has been appropriated by the Roman Catholic Church, or anyway by the Vatican, in such a way that it is now a useless concept in any conceivable attempt to work out basic principles of a morality which adherents of various religious traditions would endorse”.⁹ Finally, Canadian scholar Shadia Drury, in a book entitled *Aquinas and Modernity: The Lost Promise of Natural Law*, defends a “minimalist version” of the natural law which would be more “compatible with the cultural variety and plurality of human life”. In her opinion, the natural law cannot “deliver detailed legal directives that would be conducive to human flourishing in all times and places”.¹⁰

I do not mean to place the former Cardinal Ratzinger – now Pope Benedict XVI – *sic et simpliciter* in the same camp as these theorists. His Holiness, of course, would agree neither with Keeling that the natural law is a “useless concept” nor with Drury that the natural law must be “minimized” to be more effective. His suggestion in 2004 was simply that the natural law has become a dull instrument – but that it remains an instrument nonetheless. Perhaps he is leaving it up to the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas to sharpen it.

Today, I would simply like to offer some thoughts about how Thomas’s theology of wisdom might help to sharpen the natural law. An attentive reading of *Summa Theologiae* I-II, question 94, article 2, and a comparison of it with other sections of the Thomistic corpus can be useful for sharpening the concept of natural law and clarifying the role of religion in society in a secularized age. Wisdom allows us to capture the inextricable link between *finis* and *bonum* as found in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, question 94, article

⁸ Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70.

⁹ Fergus Kerr, “Natural Law: Incommensurable Readings”, in *Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae: Critical Essays*. Ed. Brian Davies (Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006), 247.

¹⁰ *Aquinas and Modernity: The Lost Promise of Natural Law*, 138.

2. Recognizing and understanding this link is a hallmark of wisdom (*sapientia*). Moreover, it is precisely a re-appreciation of this link that will help to strengthen the role of religion in forums of dialogue in a secularized age.

2. The bluntness of the natural law according to Ratzinger

First of all, let us take a closer look at Cardinal Ratzinger’s reasons for asserting that the natural law has become a blunt instrument: “The idea of the natural law”, he explained, “presupposed a concept of nature in which nature and reason overlap, since nature itself is rational. With the victory of the theory of evolution, this view of nature has capsized: nowadays, we think that nature as such is not rational, even if there is rational behavior in nature”.¹¹ In other words, whereas we once believed that the growth and functioning of living organisms is directed chiefly by internal organizing principles, some schools of evolutionary theory have challenged this idea by highlighting the factor of chance and introducing the idea of a seamless continuity between the inorganic and organic. This is particularly characteristic of Neo-Darwinism, according to which, as Cardinal Christoph Schönborn has pointed out, evolution is “an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection”.¹² It is for a similar reason that Ratzinger asserted that, when it comes to dialogue, Ulpian’s definition of the law of nature as *quod natura omnia animalia docet* is insufficient. “We are interested not in that which concerns all the *animalia*”, he said, “but in those specifically human tasks that the reason of man has created and that cannot

¹¹ *Dialectics of Secularization*, 69–70. “Die Idee des Naturrechts setzte einen Begriff von Natur voraus, in dem Natur und Vernunft ineinander greifen, die Natur selbst vernünftig ist. Diese Sicht von Natur ist mit dem Sieg der Evolutionstheorie zu Bruche gegangen. Die Natur als solche sei nicht vernünftig, auch wenn es in ihr vernünftiges Verhalten gibt: Das ist die Diagnose, die uns von dort gestellt wird und die heute weithin unwidersprechlich scheint”. *Vörlpolitische moralische Grundlagen eines freiheitlichen Staates*. Stellungnahme Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger. In *Zur Debatte: Themen der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern*, vol. 34. Jahrgang, München 1/2004, 6.

¹² See his op-ed pieces in the *New York Times* (7 July 2005, A27 and 7 September 2007, A1). The “randomness” of evolution does not mean that the process itself is “unguided” and “unplanned”. Werner Arber, for example, states that “from a scientific point of view, biological evolution can be seen as a slow, although effective, self-organized process”. It “appears as a wonderful natural system” that Arber is “tempted to call ‘divine’, perfect for its purpose”. Werner Arber, “The Inherent Potency to Evolve Reflects a Natural Law that is Pertinent to All Living Organisms”, in *Doctor Communis*, Fasc. 1–2, *L’Animale Umano: Procreazione, Educazione e le Basi della Società*. Proceedings of the X Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 46.

be resolved without the reason (*sic*).¹³ Reason is the origin of these tasks and the means of their resolution.

Traces of Ratzinger's approach can be detected in paragraphs 70 and 71 of the document recently issued by the International Theological Commission entitled *Alla ricerca di un'etica universale: nuovo sguardo sulla legge naturale*. There we read that every creature participates in its own way in the *Logos*. Man, because he is defined by his reason or *logos*, participates in the *Logos* in a preeminent way. In fact, with his reason, he is able to interiorize freely the divine intentions manifested in the nature of things. Man formulates them for himself under the form of a moral law which inspires and directs his actions. In this way, man is not just another run-of-the-mill "nature" existing among other natures.

The reasons Cardinal Ratzinger gave for not appealing to the natural law take us to the heart of *Summa Theologiae* I-II, question 94, article 2 and its various interpretations – not all of which are mutually exclusive. The structure of Aquinas's argument lends itself to both a genus/species and a *pros hen* reading.¹⁴ Man is akin to other creatures insofar as he shares inclinations with them related in a species/genus way, but his rationality bears upon those same generic inclinations.¹⁵ In view of Ratzinger's reasons for not appealing to natural law, we could say that Ratzinger believes it advantageous to stress that human inclinations – although they broadly fall within the genus of inclinations found in nature at large – insofar as they are inexorably "rational", should be made the focal point for dialogue about the human good in a secularized age. Recognizing a rupture in nature's overlap with reason, Ratzinger prefers not to move from general inclinations to specifically

¹³ *Dialectics of Secularization*, 70-71. "Aber das gerade reicht für unsere Fragen nicht aus, in denen es eben nicht um das geht, was alle 'animalia' betrifft, sondern um spezifisch menschliche Aufgaben, die die Vernunft des Menschen geschaffen hat und die ohne Vernunft nicht beantwortet werden können". *Vörlpolitische moralische Grundlagen eines freiheitlichen Staates*, 6.

¹⁴ See Kevin L. Flannery, S.J., "Natural Law as the Law of Survival: An Exegesis of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* 1-2.94.2", in *Doctor Communis*, Fasc. 1-2, *L'Animale Umano: Procreazione, Educazione e le Basi della Società*. Proceedings of the X Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 142-162.

¹⁵ "The lower inclinations are referred to reason as something distinct from themselves; they are in a *pros hen* relationship with it. But, again, this does not mean that other orderings of the same inclinations (such as a species-genus ordering) are to be ruled out". Kevin L. Flannery, S.J., "Natural Law as the Law of Survival: An Exegesis of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* 1-2.94.2", 144. Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 3; I, q. 81, a. 3, ad 2; I-II, q. 24, a. 1, ad 1.

human inclinations, but rather to begin with the human intellect’s capacity to know its own inclinations in order to disclose its unique dignity and grandeur. In short, he believes that in a secularized age, we are better off placing the accent on man’s reason rather than nature’s reasonableness.

Habermas expressed a similar interest. In their 2004 dialogue, both Habermas and Ratzinger were desirous of a more robust notion of reason as arising from interpersonal communication. However, whereas Habermas located rationality precisely within interpersonal communication (i.e., “communicative reason”), Ratzinger considered interpersonal communication as a privileged *locus* through which reason (i.e., *logos*) is disclosed. They share the conviction that the dialectical nature of reason implies that it is accessible to everyone, yet Ratzinger has reservations about Habermas’s position that interpersonal communication is a sufficient ground for reason’s attainment of truth. Ratzinger agrees that there *is* such a ground, but he maintains that human reason, because of its inherent limits (even within interpersonal communication), cannot be the ultimate ground of its own certainty.

In Ratzinger’s estimation, this is precisely what led Christianity to view itself as the religion of reason or “*logos*” and to develop a theology of the *Logos*. Early Christians believed that “reason” or (the) *Logos* is accessible to everyone regardless of intellectual acumen or interest. Christianity’s embrace of philosophical wisdom was not merely a historical accident, but an intrinsic necessity for the universality of its message. Moreover, Christianity surprisingly did not draw its identity from preexisting religions, but rather from a “philosophical illumination” that cleared the path of tradition to search for the true and the good beyond the multiplicity of the gods or the Platonic ideas.¹⁶

As Pope Benedict, Ratzinger would later argue that Christianity is both a purification of reason and a radical reorientation of reason’s concerns. He would point out that during the Roman Empire, philosophical rationalism confined the pagan gods to the realm of unreality and thereby relegated them to the irrational to make room for the rational.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “The Subiaco Address”, delivered at the Convent of Saint Scholastica, Subiaco (1 April 2005), republished by Tracey Rowland in *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 156–165.

¹⁷ *Spe Salvi*, no. 5.

3. The self-evidence of natural law principles

Enhancing the power of the natural law in forums of dialogue begins with a better grasp of what is meant by the “self-evidence” of its principles. The issue is obvious: if the first principles are self-evident, why is there so much disagreement about them, the principles that derive from them, and their concrete application?

Paragraph 52 of *Alla ricerca di un’etica universale* explains that it is possible for the precepts and values of the natural law to become obscured in the human heart due to sin and the cultural and historical conditions that exert a negative influence on one’s moral development. The document accordingly calls for prudence and humility before appealing to “evidence” for the natural law’s precepts. Nonetheless, it also asserts that we must consider these precepts a common basis for dialogue aimed at a “universal ethic”. Those who take part in this dialogue must learn to refrain from immediately appealing to private interests so that they might be more open to the needs of others and allow common moral values to sink in. In a pluralistic society where it is difficult for people to understand one another solely on the basis of shared philosophical paradigms, such dialogue is absolutely necessary.

In Aquinas’s terminology, the answer to the question why there is so much disagreement about the natural law has to do with the fact that only the wise are able to grasp its principles as principles. The fact that they *are* principles emerges, of course, from his comparison of the first precepts of natural law to the first principles of demonstration insofar as both are *per se notum*. Here he recalls the two meanings of “self-evidence” which he introduced in the *Prima Pars* (a. 1, q. 2): *secundum se* and *quoad nos*. A proposition is self-evident *secundum se* when the predicate is contained within the intelligibility (*ratio*) of the subject, and self-evident *quoad nos* when it is not only self-evident in itself but manifestly so to us. Similarly, contemporary philosophy defines a self-evident proposition as one that someone would be justified in affirming if he or she adequately understood it.¹⁸ It is in question 94 of the *prima secundae* that Thomas lists a third type of self-evidence: *per se notum sapientibus*, or those propositions that are self-evident only to those equipped to grasp their truth immediately.

A survey of the Thomistic corpus reveals that Thomas used the notion of “self-evidence” with considerable flexibility.¹⁹ It occurs most often in

¹⁸ Bruce Russell, “Self-evidence”, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 826.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive study of *per se notum* in Aquinas, see Luca F. Tuninetti, “*Per se notum*”: *Die logische Beschaffenheit des Selbstverständlichen im Denken des Thomas von Aquin* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

passages that address the question “*an Deus sit*”. Rather than reviewing all these occurrences, I wish simply to highlight five particular loci that bear on the present discussion: (1) book 1, distinction 3, article 2 of the *Commentary on the Sentences*; (2) question 10 of the *De Veritate*; (3) book 3, chapter 38 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*; (4) article 1, question 2 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*; and, of course, (5) the classic passage in the *prima secundae* that deals with the number of precepts of the natural law.

In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Thomas notes that we can speak of knowledge in two ways: according to the thing itself (*secundum ipsam rem*) and according to the thing as it relates to us (*quoad nos*). When we speak of God in the sense of how he exists in himself, his being is *per se notum*, and he himself is understood *per se*. In other words, it is not we who render God intelligible to us. This is unlike our knowledge of material things which are intelligible to us insofar as they are intelligible in act.

Thomas makes a further distinction with respect to our knowledge of God with reference to ourselves (*per comparationem ad nos*):

First of all, God can be known according to similitude and participation. But God’s being can also be known *per se* since a thing is known only by means of its truth, and the truth of a thing is patterned (*exemplata*) after God. Thomas accordingly notes that “to be” (*esse*) is *per se notum*.

The second way we speak about God with reference to ourselves is *qua suppositum*: in other words, by considering God directly in his incorporeal nature. In this way, God is not *per se notum*. We only need to consider how many people actually deny his existence. Conversely, things *per se nota* are known immediately through the senses in such a way that as soon as we perceive any whole and its corresponding parts, we know immediately that every whole is greater than any of its individual parts, and there is no need to investigate the matter any further.

In the *De Veritate*, Thomas again compares knowledge of God’s existence to the first principles of demonstration. He distinguishes between *secundum se* and *quoad nos* self-evidence. The only thing required for a proposition to be self-evident *secundum se* is that its predicate fall within the *ratio* of the subject in such a way that it would be impossible to think of the subject apart from the predicate as one of its constitutive elements. It is impossible to think “man” without thinking “rationality”. However, a *per se notum secundum se* proposition becomes *per se notum quoad nos* only when the *ratio* of the subject in which the predicate consists is known to us. So, whenever the *ratio* of a subject is known to everyone, the proposition is self-evident to everyone. “Every whole is greater than its part” is given as an example of such a proposition. Other things appear self-evident only to those able to grasp the *rationes*

of the proposition's respective terms. Thomas notes that the unlearned cannot understand that incorporeal beings are not located in space since they cannot transcend the level of imagination. Anything which is "being" itself (i.e., God) cannot be grasped by a rational creature, for the being of any creature is other than its *quidditas*. Hence no creature is *per se notum secundum se*. Conversely, since God's being is contained within the very *ratio* of his essence, he is *per se notum*, even though his *quidditas* is not known to us in such a way that the proposition "God exists" is self-evident to us.

In chapter 38 of *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas discusses the kind of knowledge that is constitutive of perfect human happiness. All people share a kind of confused knowledge of God. The question is whether such a confused knowledge is akin to the knowledge of the principles of demonstration, or whether it simply indicates an ability to reach some initial, imperfect knowledge of God (*aliqualem Dei cognitionem*) by natural reason. Aquinas favors the latter. He says that everyone must admit that natural things are arranged in an orderly way. Since they cannot be arranged in this way without someone to order them, everyone must be capable of perceiving that there is someone who arranges them into this order (n.b.: this is precisely the point that Ratzinger may find highly questionable). Nevertheless – and here is where knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of first principles – who the "arranger" is, and even whether there is one or several "arrangers", is not part of the *aliqualis Dei cognitio* referred to above. Thomas compares this confused knowledge of God to our preliminary knowledge of the soul based on the phenomenon that humans and other living organisms appear to be the originators of their own movement. One does not need to know that the soul is immaterial to have such preliminary knowledge.

Given the intended audience of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, it is not surprising that Aquinas aims low here. He reduces our common knowledge of God to the least common denominator. To recognize God, we need nothing more than to perceive the world's order by natural reason, regardless of how imperfect that knowledge might be.

There are no major changes to Thomas's position on self-evidence in the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*. There he writes that since we do not know what God is (*de Deo quid est*), the proposition "God exists" is not self-evident *quoad nos*, and therefore needs to be demonstrated through things better known to us, adding that since these things are effects, they are "less known (to us) as far as concerns their nature" (*minus nota quoad naturam*). We should note that, using an argument similar to that found in the passage from the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas closely ties the issue of human happiness to the issue of how we know that God exists. He writes that

knowledge of God’s existence is implanted in us in a general and confused way inasmuch as God is man’s beatitude. We naturally desire happiness, and whatever is naturally desired by us must be known by us naturally. This, however, does not mean that we know clearly that God exists, just as to know that someone is approaching does not mean we know for sure that it is Peter, even though it is indeed Peter.²⁰

Turning to the passage in the *prima secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, we read that the proposition “man is rational” is *per se notum secundum se* insofar as whenever I utter “man”, I necessarily imply rationality. Yet the proposition’s self-evidence is not manifest to someone who does not know what a “man” is. Thomas points to the principle of identity and the maxim “every whole is greater than each of its constitutive parts” as examples of propositions that are both self-evident *per se* and *quoad nos*. To this he adds a third type. Some propositions are self-evident only to the wise (*sapientibus*) insofar as the wise alone can grasp their truth immediately. Whereas the proposition “an angel is not located in space” is self-evident to anyone who understands that an angel is an incorporeal being, it is not self-evident to anyone who does not know what an angel is.

To summarize these five classic loci: in the *Sentences*, Thomas teaches that the terminology *per se notum* refers not only to the knower, but to the thing known. Something can be knowable in itself even if it is known by no one (except God). In the *De Veritate*, Thomas teaches that a proposition is self-evident whenever its predicate falls within the *ratio* of the subject. Again, this can occur even if no one (except God) is in a position to grasp the connection between predicate and subject. Thomas also teaches, however, that there *are* propositions whose self-evidence is known by *everyone* (e.g., “every whole is greater than its part”). In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, he goes further by stating that everyone knows God, even though this knowledge is not akin to the knowledge of the principles of demonstration. Just as in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, so in the *prima pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas connects knowledge of God to the desire for happiness. Finally, in the *prima secundae*, he teaches that some propositions are known only to the wise.

²⁰ “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod cognoscere Deum esse in aliquo communi, sub quadam confusione, est nobis naturaliter insertum, in quantum scilicet Deus est hominis beatitudo, homo enim naturaliter desiderat beatitudinem, et quod naturaliter desideratur ab homine, naturaliter cognoscitur ab eodem. Sed hoc non est simpliciter cognoscere Deum esse; sicut cognoscere venientem, non est cognoscere Petrum, quamvis sit Petrus veniens, multi enim perfectum hominis bonum, quod est beatitudo, existimant divitias; quidam vero voluptates; quidam autem aliquid aliud”. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1.

4. Wisdom

With regard to wisdom, Thomas boasts a rich and varied teaching that escapes curt summary.²¹ Generally speaking, wisdom is the habit by which our minds are perfected to know the highest realities.²² Wisdom is the contemplation of the highest causes and knowledge of how the various sciences are interrelated.²³ Most significantly, wisdom is knowledge of the *ratio* that connects principles to conclusions²⁴ and the “whole” that unites its respective parts.²⁵ Wisdom is different from science (*scientia*) and understanding (*intellectus*) in that understanding is limited to the habitual knowledge of first principles and science to the knowledge of conclusions derived from lower causes.²⁶ Wisdom is greater than understanding insofar as the latter only uses indemonstrable principles to draw conclusions, whereas the former judges the principles and knows how to defend them.²⁷ In short, it belongs to wisdom to know the *ratio* of being and non-being, whole and part, and similar things that follow upon being and constitute the terms of indemonstrable principles.²⁸

Of the copious texts that deal with wisdom, I must limit myself to two that may help to shed light on the relationship between wisdom and our knowledge of the precepts of natural law.

In the *Summa Theologiae* I-II, question 100, article 11, Thomas asks whether it is fitting to have any moral precepts in addition to those given in the Decalogue. He distinguishes between three levels of moral precepts: those so evi-

²¹ Among the more notable twentieth-century studies of Thomistic philosophy’s sapiential dimension, see Etienne Gilson, *Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1951). See also *Fides et Ratio*, pars. 81–83.

²² *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 12; *In De Trinitate*, VI, 4.

²³ *Super Sententias*, lib. 1 q. 1 a. 3; *In De Trinitate*, 1, q. 2, a. 2 ad 1.

²⁴ *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 1 l. 44 n. 11.

²⁵ Thomas calls such a man *sapiens simpliciter*. Cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 6 l. 5 n. 7. See also Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 78–87.

²⁶ *In I Meta.*, lect. 1, n. 34. See also *In I Post. Anal.*, lect. 44; *In De Trinitate*, 1, q. 2, a. 2 ad 1 and 3, q. 5, a. 1.

²⁷ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 66, a. 5, ad 4: “Cognoscere autem rationem entis et non entis, et totius et partis, et aliorum quae consequuntur ad ens, ex quibus sicut ex terminis constituuntur principia indemonstrabilia, pertinet ad sapientiam, quia ens commune est proprius effectus causae altissimae, scilicet Dei. Et ideo sapientia non solum utitur principiis indemonstrabilibus, quorum est intellectus, concludendo ex eis, sicut aliae scientiae; sed etiam iudicando de eis, et disputando contra negantes. Unde sequitur quod sapientia sit maior virtus quam intellectus”. Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, ad. 1; *De Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 2; *In XI Meta.*, lect. 1, n. 2151; *In III Sent.*, 35, q. 2, a. 1.

²⁸ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 66, a. 5, ad 4.

dent that they do not need to be promulgated inasmuch as they are the “ends of the precepts” (*finis praeceptorum*); hence, no one can be mistaken about them. Other precepts are commonly known because the reason (*ratio*) underlying them is accessible to all. These are the precepts of the Decalogue. Still other moral precepts have a *ratio* that is evident to no one except the wise. These are the precepts added to the Decalogue. Thomas teaches that since that which is evident is the principle of cognition for that which is not evident, the other moral precepts added to the Decalogue are traceable back to the precepts of the Decalogue in the sense that they are a sort of “addition” to them. For example, the first precept of the Decalogue prohibits the worship of strange gods, and to this are added precepts that prohibit anything *ordered* toward the worship of idols, such as having a son or daughter “pass through the fire”, consulting fortune-tellers, necromancy, and so on.²⁹

Most interesting in this article is Thomas’s use of the expression “*finis praeceptorum*”. What makes the most obvious precepts so obvious is that their “end” is plainly visible to all.³⁰ The moral precepts added to the Decalogue are more obscure – and therefore in need of promulgation – precisely because the “end” is buried more deeply within their respective *rationes*. To see the end, one must either rely on divine revelation and/or the cultivation of wisdom. These two, in fact – as I shall suggest later – copiously overlap.

In the *De Malo*, question 15, article 2, Thomas fleshes out a specific *finis praecepti* by turning to the sin of adultery. He notes that even though anyone can recognize immediately by the light of natural reason that adultery is a sin, the precept against adultery is nonetheless included in the Decalogue. Furthermore, more specific prohibitions against fornication (in addition to the Decalogue) were promulgated to the people through Moses and Aaron since the disorder of fornication, insofar as it does not *manifestly* contain an injury against nature, is not manifest to everyone, but only to the wise through whom it needs to be brought to the attention of others.³¹

²⁹ “Nam in primo praecepto Decalogi prohibetur cultus alienorum deorum, cui superadduntur alia praecepta prohibitiva eorum quae ordinantur in cultum idolorum; sicut habetur Deut. XVIII, *non inveniatur in te qui lustret filium suum aut filiam, ducens per ignem, nec sit maleficus atque incantator, nec Pythones consulat neque divinos, et quaerat a mortuis veritatem*”. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

³⁰ “Nam quaedam sunt certissima, et adeo manifesta quod editione non indigent; sicut mandata de dilectione Dei et proximi, et alia huiusmodi, ut supra dictum est, quae sunt quasi fines praeceptorum, unde in eis nullus potest errare secundum iudicium rationis”. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

³¹ Saint Thomas considers the ability to help others to see and live according to the law as an *essential* characteristic of the wise person. Cf. *In I Meta.*, lect. 2, n. 43.

5. Wisdom as the knowledge of the ratio boni as the ratio finis

In both of these *loci*, as in question 94, article 2, Thomas moves back and forth between the general and the specific, the better known and less known, metaphysics and ethics. He suggests a hierarchical ordering of things knowable and things known. What is first grasped – “being” – is grasped by all insofar as it is necessary for the understanding of anything at all. Such is the basis for the first indemonstrable principle (“one ought not at the same time to affirm and deny”), which in contemporary philosophical terms might be formulated as: “it is not possible to affirm and deny the same thing at the same time in the same respect”.³² This principle is rooted in the very *ratio* of being. Everything known is based on this principle, and without it knowledge is impossible.

It is Thomas’s next move in question 94, article 2 that most interests me. At this point, he introduces a sort of transcendental interchangeability: just as being is first to be apprehended simply, so the good is first to fall within the grasp of practical reason, which, of course, is ordered to operation (*opus*). Furthermore, every acting thing acts for an end, and an end (*finis*) has the *ratio* of the good. Hence the first principle of practical reason is founded upon the *ratio* of the good, which, in turn, is defined as “that which all things desire”. This gives rise to the first precept: “good is to be done and pursued, evil to be avoided”. All other precepts of the natural law are founded upon this principle, in such a way that all those things to be done or avoided which practical reason naturally apprehends as human goods will pertain to the precepts of the law of nature. Since the good has the *ratio* of an end, all things toward which man is naturally inclined are naturally apprehended as “goods” and needing to be pursued. Father Stephen Brock explains that there is an ordering of the precepts of the natural law according to the order of the natural inclinations.³³ For there is, above all, an inclination of man to the good according to the nature in which he communicates with all substances; such as, for example, that any substance desires the preservation of its being according to its nature.

At the same time, this is precisely the line of argumentation *for* the natural law that, Ratzinger suggested, has been dimmed by evolutionary think-

³² “Et ideo primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare”... I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

³³ As the following order of commonality with all things, with animals, and with reason makes clear, Thomas is offering “a metaphysical vision of practical reason itself”. Stephen L. Brock, “Natural Inclination and the Intelligibility of the Good in Thomistic Natural Law”, *Vera Lex*, VI.1-2 (Winter 2005), 76.

ing. Our ability to perceive ends in the natural world has been attenuated. We are no longer accustomed to recognizing naturally existing “goods”, let alone identifying them with “ends”.

As Pope Benedict, the former-Cardinal Ratzinger has suggested that what we need to do is to recognize and articulate how “truth” leads us to the knowledge ends. The knowledge of the truth has knowledge of the good as its scope. When perceived as intrinsically rooted in – and disclosed through – being, the true and the good convince those who seek them that they are not only worth knowing but are also worth “living towards” and “acting for”.³⁴ They undergird the idea that the speculative life has intrinsic value and that such a life cannot be severed from the moral life (and hence from political life);³⁵ the speculative rather flows from and nourishes the moral life, all the while existing as the apex of its perfection. The transcendentals are therefore useful for recapturing a metaphysical worldview that sees being not merely as a “fact” but as an end.³⁶

Since Ratzinger’s election to the papacy, this line of thinking is most conspicuous in the lecture he intended to give at *La Sapienza* University. There he argues that “truth is never purely theoretical. . . truth means more than knowledge: the purpose of knowing the truth is to know the good”. He explains that Christian faith makes this passage from the true to the good possible since it has been granted the vision of the *Logos*, revealed by God in the incarnation as “the Good”.³⁷

To move from the realm of truth to the realm of ends (i.e., the good), it is necessary to see that factuality hides within itself the *actuality* of being, and that this actuality is “good” precisely because it is an end. This is the

³⁴ Compare Robert Sokolowski’s distinction between classical and modern political philosophy: “modern thought subtracts the issue of truth from the domain of politics, but a republic acknowledges both practical and theoretical truth and the human person’s ability to attain it”. “The Human Person and Political Life”, in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding: Studies on the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 193.

³⁵ See Aristotle’s *Politics*, book 7, chapters 2-3, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 10.

³⁶ Cf. Kenneth Schmitz, *Person and Psyche*, 8. “In our search for understanding, the transcendental properties of being serve as beacons of intelligible light that illuminate our path, shining in the mixture of light and dark, of being and non-being, that makes up the reality we encounter on our journey through life”. They are “great luminaries in the texture of being” and an “infallible guide to our progress”.

³⁷ Hence the urgency of proclaiming the faith (rather than merely adhering to it), given that faith cannot penetrate the human heart “automatically”. See Pope Benedict’s speech at the opening of the *Convegno Ecclesiale della Diocesi di Roma*, 13 June 2011.

basis for Thomas's hierarchical "stacking", if you will, of the *rationes* in the *prima pars*, question 16, and thus of what falls under the intellect's grasp.³⁸ The intellect primarily apprehends being, then that it understands being, and finally that it desires being. This leads Thomas to place the *ratio* of being first, the *ratio* of the true second, and the *ratio* of the good third.

However, it seems that in Ratzinger's mind it would be a serious mistake to construe this hierarchical ordering as successive steps in a sort of one-dimensional mental process. On the other hand, this hierarchical ordering does help to explain how disagreement over the principles of the natural law is possible. The "good" must be teased out of "being" by means of "truth". One way of teasing it out – at least as Aquinas implies in question 94 – is by recognizing that the end has the *ratio* of the good, and the good has the *ratio* of an end. The *finis* and *bonum* are so closely interconnected in Thomas's discussion that they are virtually inextricable.³⁹ "End" does not simply designate a destination, but a guiding principle and a force intrinsic to the act of being. The very notion of an end contains within itself the notion of the good, whose *ratio* in turn is "that which all things desire." And since the good is that which all things desire, it has the *ratio* of an end. "*Manifestum est quod bonum rationem finis importat*".⁴⁰

In the case of the natural law, wisdom confers a capacity to recognize ends. Everyone grasps *ens* and everyone experiences desire.⁴¹ Few, however, are able to articulate being as good and the good as an end. Metaphysically speaking, the good adds nothing to being except the *rationes* of desirable and perfect (i.e., an end) which are proper to being *wherever* being is found. The good understood as "*ens* desired" is the basis for the first precept of the natural law: the good is to be done and pursued, evil avoided. Aquinas here takes it as axiomatic that every agent acts for an end⁴² and that the end has the *ratio* of the good. Earlier in the response to question 94, article 2, he makes it clear that a self-evident proposition is one in which the *ratio* of

³⁸ *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 16, a. 4 ad 2.

³⁹ This also holds true for Aristotle. To order according to science (*episteme*), we not only need to be aware of causes, but of the final cause: the end, or the good. "Judged by all the tests we have mentioned, the name in question (i.e., wisdom) falls to the same science; this must be a science that investigates the first principles and causes; for the good, i.e., the end, is one of the causes". *Metaphysics*, I, 2 (982 b 7-10).

⁴⁰ *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 5, a. 4. Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 103, a. 2.

⁴¹ Everyone grasps *ens* (find a text) and everyone experiences desire (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 3).

⁴² Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 1, a. 1.

the predicate is contained within the subject. Hence, insofar as a wise person is the one who sees that the predicate is contained within the *ratio* of the subject, it is he who sees the good as end.⁴³ This is a benchmark of wisdom.⁴⁴ It is such a person who sees that the predicate “end” is included in the very *ratio* of the good, and who disposes himself to pursue it accordingly.

Moreover, seeing the end as good and the good as end means not only that I see that I should pursue it, but that it is not I who establish it as something to be pursued – it is already “there” as “to-be-pursued”. This is why it is an “end” and not a “purpose”. I have not constituted it as an end; I know that I am free either to pursue it or not to pursue it, and I know that I *should* pursue it. Something will inevitably be missing if any part of this threefold dynamic is not kept in focus. As Stephen Brock has argued, true rational knowledge of something as good “serves to make the desire itself intelligible”. It shows that the desire is “right” and “makes sense” precisely because the object desired is an *end*.⁴⁵

However, I do not want to suggest that knowing the good as end will inexorably lead to doing what is right. Just as knowledge of the good does not lead automatically to the performance of the good, neither will teasing out the good from “being” with the help of truth lead automatically to doing the good. Created in the image of God, man is not only an intellectual and free being, he is also the originator and master of his own actions.⁴⁶ Human beings are responsible for moving themselves to their proper end. To do so, they must exercise *liberum arbitrium*, a faculty not only of reason but of will.⁴⁷ Virtues need to be acquired and cultivated, wisdom needs to be possessed both as a natural virtue and as a divinely infused *habitus*.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the will needs to be strengthened by grace.⁴⁹

⁴³ To see the good as end means to see it as cause. “Ille sapiens dicatur, qui scit omnia etiam difficillima per certitudinem et causam”. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Meta.*, lect. 2, n. 43.

⁴⁴ Knowledge of the ultimate end (i.e., God) is precisely what allows the wise man to order (*ordinare*) all things: “Ordinatio enim aliquorum fieri non potest nisi per cognitionem habitudinis et proportionis ordinatorum ad invicem, et ad aliquid altius eius, quod est finis eorum; ordo enim aliquorum ad invicem est propter ordinem eorum ad finem”. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2 cap. 24, n. 4.

⁴⁵ Stephen L. Brock, “Natural Inclination and the Intelligibility of the Good in Thomistic Natural Law”, 59.

⁴⁶ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, *prooemium*.

⁴⁷ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 1, a. 2.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 51, a. 4.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 113, a. 3.

6. Conclusion

If the foregoing analysis is accurate, we would do a great service to the natural law by sharpening the definition of ends. One way of accomplishing this is by effectively distinguishing “ends” from “purposes”.⁵⁰ The American philosopher Francis Slade offers an invaluable contribution in this regard.⁵¹ He defines the natural law as “the ontological priority of ends over purposes”.⁵² The natural law is made manifest whenever we recognize that there are ends in things and that our purposes and choices must – and implicitly *do* – respect their priority. As Ratzinger implied in his conversation with Habermas, the precedence of ends over purposes occurs especially with regard to the ends proper to human nature and its unique powers. This is why Ratzinger suggested that Ulpian’s definition of the law of nature is inadequate for genuine progress in contemporary dialogue. As his lecture at *La Sapienza* indicates, Benedict believes that the natural law can be sharpened by focusing on the specifically human tasks that reason has created, tasks that cannot be resolved apart from “the reason” (*sic*) – both in the sense of *ratio* and *Logos*.⁵³

It is for this reason that Benedict reminds the Church that she has never envisioned the “natural law” in *exclusively* “natural” terms. Take, for example, *Mater et Magistra*, whose fiftieth anniversary of publication we celebrate this year, in which John XXIII reiterated his predecessor’s teaching that the Church enjoys “the indisputable competence” to “decide whether the bases of a given social system are in accord with the unchangeable order which God our Creator and Redeemer has shown us through the Natural Law and Revelation”,⁵⁴ thereby suggesting that the connection between divine Revelation and the natural law is what allows the Church to pass judgment on the foundational values of any social system. Similarly, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* teaches that the Ten Commandments “contain a privileged expression of the natural law”.⁵⁵ We read in *Veritatis*

⁵⁰ See Robert Sokolowski, “What is Natural Law? Human Purposes and Natural Ends”, in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding: Studies on the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 215–218.

⁵¹ Francis Slade, “Ends and Purposes”, in *Final Causality in Nature and Human Affairs*, ed. Richard Hassing (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 83–85; and “On the Ontological Priority of Ends and Its Relevance to the Narrative Arts”, in *Beauty, Art, and the Polis*, edited by Alice Ramos (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 58–69.

⁵² Francis Slade as quoted by Robert Sokolowski in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding*, 226.

⁵³ Cf. *Dialectics of Secularization*, 70–71.

⁵⁴ *Mater et Magistra*, 42; cf. AAS 33 (1941), 196.

⁵⁵ n. 22.

Splendor that man’s authentic good is established both by the eternal law as known by natural reason, and, “in an integral and perfect way”, by supernatural Revelation.⁵⁶ All this, of course, accords with Aquinas’s teaching that the natural law “is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation”.⁵⁷

A re-appropriation of this vision of the natural law may help to thwart the temptation to think of it as a sort of static code or a closed set of imperatives that could be formulated in a purely theoretic and deductive systematization, identifiable and arguable apart from any particular moral tradition.⁵⁸ Particular moral traditions are, in fact, indispensable for cultivating the wisdom that allows us to recognize and follow the law. This indeed is the specific contribution religion makes in a secularized age. In fact, after discussing the importance of Thomas Aquinas, *Alla ricerca di un’etica universale* turns immediately to the role of society and culture, stating that one begins to recognize certain modes of behavior and ways of thinking as values to be pursued, laws to be observed, examples to be imitated, and worldviews to be embraced, precisely in the context of a family and through the acquisition of language.

Therefore, to conceive the natural law as purely derivative from *theoria* leaves little room to escape the aforementioned dilemma: namely, if the precepts of natural law are so lucid and rational, why is there so much disagreement and so much obscurity about them? Why does everyone not agree that man has a natural inclination to know God, nor even that man has a natural inclination to live in society? In a sense, the very fact of moral controversy and the need it creates for forums of dialogue gainsays the “codex” strategy.

⁵⁶ N. 72.

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *In Duo Praecepta Caritatis et in Decem Legis Praecepta. Prologus: Opuscula Theologica*, II, No. 1129, Ed. Taurinen (1954), 245; cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

⁵⁸ The codex view of the natural law indeed seems incompatible with Aristotle’s *phusis*: “Even in Aristotle nature takes on the meaning of moral law, but not because it controls anything but because, for Aristotle, morals aim at ensuring happiness and happiness is not possible without satisfying natural inclinations”. Enrico Berti, “The Historical Basis of S.T. I-II, q. 94, art. 2: the Aristotelian Notion of Nature as a Generation Principle”, in *Doctor Communis*, Fasc. 1-2, *L’Animale Umano: Procreazione, Educazione e le Basi della Società*. Proceedings of the X Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 40.

If, on the other hand, we recognize that not everyone – either because of impulsiveness, obtuseness, immaturity, or viciousness⁵⁹ – has cultivated the wisdom to have a clear vision of the ends that are metaphysically embedded in things, and if “we see such ends not as grasped beforehand but as differentiating themselves from our purposes and our conventions”,⁶⁰ then we will be in a better position to argue that *this* kind of natural law inevitably plays a role in our moral thinking and in the way we evaluate situations and agents. Presenting the natural law in this way may help to sharpen it. It may make it more realistic and more persuasive. It may help to explain why the *per se notum* is not always so self-evident.

⁵⁹ See Robert Sokolowski, “What is Natural Law? Human Purposes and Natural Ends”, in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding: Studies on the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 220–223. Compare *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 94, a. 4: “et hoc propter hoc quod aliqui habent depravatam rationem ex passione, seu ex mala consuetudine, seu ex mala habitudine naturae”.

⁶⁰ Robert Sokolowski, *Christian Faith and Human Understanding: Studies on the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person*, 227.

ATEISMO E MODERNITÀ. LA CRITICA DI AUGUSTO DEL NOCE

■ UMBERTO GALEAZZI

Abstract

Del Noce investigates modern philosophy, starting from its origins with Descartes, refusing to consider it a unitary and irreversible process towards atheism. To his knowledge, there are two irreducible directions of thinking in modern philosophy and one of them leads to the recognition of the transcendence of God. Atheism, instead, in its most radical version, which is Marxism, derives from Hegel its organicist assumption: the denial of the individual, considered as something negative, and as a consequence the dissolution of morality into politics. But those desires for a promethean humanism have revealed themselves as disastrous and have been disproved by history itself; that is the criterion invoked by Marxist philosophy. On the contrary, religion, which was to be overcome according to Marxism, is still effective.

1. Ateismo e interpretazione della filosofia moderna

La ricerca di Del Noce, uno dei pensatori più interessanti del Novecento, intende problematizzare il “*fenomeno dell’ateismo, come dato primo dell’attualità storica*”, considerandolo come l’esito ultimo del razionalismo (PA, p. 9, corsivo dall’autore).¹ Ciò implica la critica della visione della storia della filosofia come processo di laicizzazione (cf. *ivi*, p. 71) e, giacché egli ritiene che “pensare filosoficamente è sempre rispondere ad un avversario storico” (*ivi*, p. 78), non deve sorprendere che per lui la questione teoretica prioritaria, in quanto con-

¹ Si tenga presente l’elenco delle sigle, secondo cui sono citati i libri e i saggi di Augusto Del Noce:

- PA = Del Noce Augusto, *Il problema dell’ateismo*, Bologna 1964, Il Mulino; cito dalla IV ed., che contiene l’importante *Introduzione* di Nicola Matteucci, *ivi* 1990. Recentemente è uscita una nuova edizione di quest’opera, *ivi*, 2010.
- CAR = Del Noce Augusto, *Riforma cattolica e filosofia moderna*, vol. I, *Cartesio*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1965.
- GIL = Del Noce Augusto, *La riscoperta del tomismo in Étienne Gilson e il suo significato presente*, in AA.VV., *Studi di filosofia in onore di Gustavo Contadini*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1975, Vol. II°, pp. 454–474.
- MOD = DEL NOCE Augusto, *L’idea di modernità*, in AA.VV., *Modernità. Storia e valore di un’idea*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1982, pp. 26–43.

dizionante gli sviluppi ulteriori, è la messa in discussione dell'interpretazione ordinaria della storia della filosofia. Perciò, egli ritiene che “la domanda filosofica prima per il pensiero filosofico di oggi” è la seguente: “è vero che la filosofia moderna non può essere pensata altrimenti che come un processo verso un totale immanentismo, che non può non prendere la forma di un radicale ateismo?” (*ivi*, p. 74). In realtà quella interpretazione ordinaria, o abituale, è quella sostenuta dal razionalismo, inteso come un “pensiero condizionato all'inizio da una negazione *senza prove* della possibilità del soprannaturale” (*ivi*, p. 356, corsivo dell'autore).² Ora, proprio in base al suo presupposto originario, al suo atto di fede iniziale (cf. *ivi*, pp. 91, 569), che è rifiuto di Dio trascendente, il razionalismo è condotto a una certa visione della storia e, in essa, della storia del pensiero: “la certezza del processo storico irreversibile verso l'immanentismo radicale ha sostituito nel razionalista quella che nel pensiero medievale era la fede nella Rivelazione” (MOD, p. 28). Da ciò consegue il significato assiologico conferito alla modernità, la quale è intesa non semplicemente come un periodo storico, uno sviluppo di fatti, ma come un valore, in quanto è considerata come implicante quel processo irreversibile, in quanto l'inizio del pensiero moderno è ritenuto il “passaggio dall'infanzia alla maturità, dal mito alla critica” (*ivi*, p. 27). Di fronte a queste certezze, legate al presupposto iniziale e fatte valere quasi come ovvietà non discutibili, il compito della riflessione filosofica è proprio quello di suscitare ed alimentare il dubbio critico, che da sempre ha caratterizzato l'amore del sapere e la ricerca della verità e che oggi, ad avviso di Del Noce, implica il considerare “la storia della filosofia come problema”, mettendone in discussione non solo la visione modernistica, che la considera come il processo “verso una liberazione totale dalla mentalità mitica, ma altresì la posizione che ordinariamente viene detta antimodernistica e che vede nel corso dei secoli dell'età moderna un processo verso la catastrofe. A questo proposito è facile osservare come l'opposizione fra le due interpretazioni stia soltanto nel giudizio di valore” (*ivi*, p. 31). Infatti esse convengono nell'individuazione del significato e della direzione del processo.

La modernità, quindi, non è, per Del Noce, solo un cumulo di errori teorici e pratici, perché per lui non tutto è negativo in essa, nella cui tem-

² Per chiarire il senso del razionalismo Del Noce cita (cf. PA, pp. 17-18) il seguente passo del Laporte: “decisiva... è la posizione nei riguardi della religione. Il razionalista accetta la religione, purché si tratti di una religione razionale, traducendo in linguaggio simbolico le affermazioni della ragione, o limitandosi alla coscienza stessa che noi abbiamo della ragione, in quanto principio di comunione universale tra gli uomini. Egli rifiuta ogni trascendenza. Egli si chiude nell'immanenza [...]” (J. Laporte, *Le rationalisme de Descartes*, P.U.F. Paris 1945, p. XIX).

perie si tratta di riconoscere, come vedremo, due filoni di pensiero, dei quali uno è certamente positivo. Inoltre, egli pensa che “la verità maggiore del mondo moderno” sia “il liberalismo nel suo senso etico” (PA, p. 541), che ha le sue radici nel cristianesimo, specie con l’idea del libero arbitrio, e che è importante come difesa della libertà contro le possibili involuzioni totalitarie della democrazia (cf. *ivi*, pp. 540–541). Come si vede, qualche interpretazione frettolosa e superficiale, che attribuisce a Del Noce una visione catastrofica della modernità, è fuorviante in quanto misconosce uno degli aspetti principali del suo peculiare contributo storico-teoretico.

Dunque, la riflessione critica mette in discussione sia l’idea di un processo unitario del pensiero moderno verso l’immanentismo radicale, sia il significato assiologico della modernità, fino ad arrivare “a scorgere nella filosofia dei secoli dell’età che si vuol chiamare moderna, il delinarsi di due irriducibili direzioni di pensiero, l’una da Cartesio a Nietzsche, l’altra da Cartesio a Rosmini, destinata questa seconda a raggiungere e ad affinare il pensiero metafisico tradizionale” (MOD, p. 29). Quando parla di affinamento del pensiero metafisico e religioso tradizionale, Del Noce l’intende nel senso di un recupero (cf. *ivi*, p. 37) e di una purificazione, “perché l’ateismo è l’avversario dialogico che permette il processo di purificazione del pensiero religioso, il suo sottrarsi al pericolo dell’inaridimento nelle formule” (*ivi*, p. 40). In questo recupero arriva fino a riscoprire il pensiero di Tommaso d’Aquino: “la verità del tomismo appare *dopo* le filosofie di Cartesio o di Kant, di Hegel o di Marx o di Heidegger, non nel senso che ne includa la loro verità, ma in quello che risulta verificata e illuminata meglio dopo le loro sconfitte” (GIL, p. 455). Questa riscoperta avviene in seguito all’incontro con il pensiero di Étienne Gilson, in quanto “per il laico di oggi non può esserci introduttore migliore al tomismo di lui; perché è stato uno dei rarissimi filosofi che sia diventato tomista non già per aver studiato in un seminario o in un’università cattolica, ma attraverso la storia e i metodi di ricerca che venivano insegnati in una Sorbona in cui allora nessuno parlava di san Tommaso [...] È opinione diffusa, qui in Italia, che sia uno storico della filosofia, piuttosto che un filosofo; in realtà è un “filosofo attraverso la storia” che scoprì la verità e la presente attualità del tomismo attraverso l’accertamento di quel che il Dottor Angelico aveva realmente pensato” (*ibidem*). Cerchiamo di capire le ragioni della prospettiva storico-critica del nostro autore.

L’idealismo immanentistico – e Del Noce riserva una particolare attenzione al pensiero di Giovanni Gentile – ha come criterio della validità storica di una filosofia “quello di oltrepassare e integrare, spiegandole nella loro genesi, le precedenti posizioni di pensiero” (MOD, p. 30) e così “si mantiene

fedele alle parole conclusive della storia della filosofia di Hegel, ‘fin qui era giunto lo spirito del mondo. La filosofia ultima è il risultato di tutte le precedenti; niente è perduto, tutti i principi sono mantenuti’” (*ivi*, p. 35). In tal modo questa filosofia pretende di conservare la verità delle opposte posizioni – quella teista e quella atea – e, insieme, di negarle in una sintesi superiore, che sostiene l’immanenza del divino, sulla base dell’interpretazione, secondo cui “un comune naturalismo unirebbe gli assertori della trascendenza di Dio e i suoi negatori materialistici, così che il superamento delle due posizioni sarebbe una filosofia che appunto non neghi il divino, ma la trascendenza del divino” (*Ibidem*). Questo passaggio dalla trascendenza del divino alla sua immanenza non sarebbe la negazione dell’idea di Dio, ma la sua purificazione, in cui le due opposte posizioni in merito sarebbero superate e, come tali, non più proponibili (cf. *ivi*, p. 28).

Ma in realtà la presenza, dopo l’idealismo, sia dell’ateismo che del teismo manifesta l’aporia dell’interpretazione idealistica del processo unitario verso il divino immanente che dovrebbe inglobare, inverare e superare gli opposti, negandoli in quanto tali, senza che nulla vada perduto.

In particolare proprio l’insorgere dell’ateismo dopo l’immanentismo e come suo esito confuta quella interpretazione, facendo vedere che l’immanentismo, che scaturisce dal razionalismo, non ricomprende in sé le opposte posizioni, in quanto il suo è un percorso, tutt’altro che unitario, che dal suo presupposto iniziale conduce all’ateismo, una posizione irriducibile al teismo, alla metafisica della creazione che riconosce Dio trascendente, anche se più intimo all’uomo che l’uomo a se stesso. Inoltre è tutt’altro che trascurabile il rilievo secondo cui un filosofo come Kant (come, del resto, altri), spesso incluso, sommariamente e contro le sue intenzioni – basti citare in proposito, in questa sede, la *Prefazione* alla seconda edizione (1787) della *Critica della ragion pura* – nel processo di pensiero conducente alla laicizzazione, per giustificare il senso assiologico della modernità, difficilmente si può adattare nel letto di Procuste di questa interpretazione.³ Quindi, in base all’analisi critica, che scardina la visione del processo unitario della filosofia moderna, il giudizio di Del Noce è che il pensatore immanentista,

³ Scrive, infatti, Del Noce: “un’altra critica del senso assiologico dell’idea di modernità potremmo trovarla se portiamo la riflessione su Kant, sull’imprescindibilità per lui delle idee di Dio e dell’anima come fondamento della vita morale, sullo spazio aperto alla trascendenza; più in generale ancora sulla filosofia dei limiti dell’uomo contro quelle soluzioni radicali che, nella varietà delle loro forme, specificano l’immanentismo assoluto. Al Kant critico dello scientismo, che critica la metafisica per salvare la verità che essa contiene nei riguardi di Dio, della libertà e dell’anima” (MOD, p. 42).

dopo la caduta della sua “ultima ragione su cui la sua certezza si fondava, la capacità di intendere e dispiegare la storia, si trovi costretto alla confessione che il suo pensiero è insuscettibile di qualsiasi prova” (*ivi*, p. 29). L’esito di questo riconoscimento è la confutazione della pretesa del razionalista, che così si trova messo davanti al *pari* pascaliano: “Beninteso potrà riaffermare la sua tesi ma dovrà convenire che con ciò compie una scelta, non obbedisce a una costrizione incontrovertibile della ragione” (*ivi*, p. 30).

Se tutto il processo, che dal razionalismo porta all’immanentismo e, quindi, all’ateismo, parte da un presupposto ingiustificato, allora è ragionevole metterlo radicalmente in questione facendo vedere che, con piena legittimità critica, c’è, come alternativa globale sul piano metafisico, etico e religioso, un pensiero della trascendenza, che riconosce il Dio vivente. Agli inizi del pensiero hegeliano, negli scritti giovanili, troviamo l’esplicita ammissione che il punto di partenza è un presupposto – saputo e presentato come tale –, simile, secondo Del Noce, a quello presente nel mito di Anasimandro (cf. PA, pp. 27 e p. 561), di cui si dirà, che conduce alla valutazione negativa e al disprezzo del finito.

Comunque, quando Del Noce rivendica l’attualità e l’importanza della scelta, della scommessa pascaliana, o *pari*, non vuole certo intendere che si tratta di un’opzione per cui una scelta vale quanto la sua opposta, affidata totalmente all’arbitrio soggettivo. Al contrario egli ritiene che ci siano delle ragioni, soprattutto delle prove storiche sul tipo di quelle pascaliane, che conducono a riconoscere la validità di quella teistica e a confutare quella atea.

2. Cartesio e l’inizio del pensiero moderno

Ma torniamo all’interpretazione della filosofia moderna, per la quale bisogna riconoscere l’imprescindibilità dell’inizio cartesiano (cf. Del Noce, 1982, p. 38; Del Noce, 1990, p. 76). Scrive in proposito Jean Laporte: “Tutti i temi diversi che svilupperanno rispettivamente [...] le filosofie postcartesiane, quelle che abitualmente vengono dette razionaliste e quelle che vengono dette irrazionaliste, si leggono già in Cartesio...” (J. Laporte, op. cit., 1945, pp. 475-476). Per Del Noce la posizione di Cartesio nella storia del pensiero è caratterizzata da una singolarità senza analoghi, perché appartiene ad ogni filosofia che si professi moderna in senso assiologico “il riferimento a Cartesio come *iniziatore*, distinguendo per conseguenza nel suo pensiero due aspetti di cui uno solo sarebbe vero. Ciò avviene per le filosofie più opposte perché si trovano nel pensiero cartesiano i germi di tutta la vicenda dello spiritualismo francese, da Malebranche alla *Philosophie de l’Esprit*, e in pari tempo il materialismo e il pensiero rivoluzionario” (MOD, p. 38, corsivo dell’autore; cf. PA, pp. 403-404). Né si può dire che l’inizio della filosofia moderna sia da indi-

viduare facendo riferimento esclusivamente alla nuova scienza, perché non è il Cartesio scienziato, bensì il Cartesio filosofo quello che suscita una continuità nelle varie forme del pensiero successivo (cf. *ibidem*).

Ora, riconoscendo che Cartesio si separa sia dagli scolastici che dai libertini, per intendere il senso dei vari momenti del suo pensiero bisogna chiedersi qual è l'avversario primo con cui egli intende confrontarsi, quello che suscita, come risposta critica, l'articolarsi della sua filosofia. L'idealismo immanentistico vede l'avversario primo di Cartesio "nella Scolastica, non nella dissoluzione del rinascimentalismo" (PA, p. 83), per cui, nella ricostruzione del suo pensiero, è portato a porre l'accento sul *cogito* e sulla matematizzazione della fisica, considerati come i motivi principali. Ma in questo schema interpretativo sembra non esserci posto per un'opera di rilievo primario come le *Meditazioni metafisiche*, le quali, se tenute nella dovuta considerazione, lo metterebbero in discussione, fino a condurlo ad un ripensamento radicale. Sicché il mantenere quello schema comporta un prezzo notevole, sottolineato dalla critica delnoceana, perché implica che "il processo delle *Meditazioni*" sia visto "come l'elencò delle infedeltà di Cartesio al "cartesianismo", diventato un'entità "di diritto", una specie di essenza normativa, nota non a Cartesio, ma al suo storico" (*ibidem*). Evidentemente se ci si sente autorizzati ad espungere ciò che l'autore dice nella sua opera, in nome di un "cartesianismo", "noto non a Cartesio, ma al suo storico", siamo all'arbitrio interpretativo, perché con questo criterio, l'interprete pretende di sapere più dell'autore (al di là dei suoi intenti e dei suoi testi) qual è il suo vero pensiero, in nome del quale può, perciò, fargli dire qualsiasi cosa. Ma questo arbitrio interpretativo – frutto, in realtà di un monologo dell'interprete con se stesso, incapace di ascoltare l'autore considerato – rende superflua la stessa interpretazione, perché per intendere una posizione "nota non a Cartesio, ma al suo storico", basta leggere lo storico e non c'è bisogno di leggere Cartesio e di impegnarsi nell'arduo compito della comprensione.

L'evidente aporia di questa prospettiva interpretativa corrobora la convinzione di Del Noce, che vede nel pensiero libertino l'avversario primo contro cui si sono formate le tesi filosofiche essenziali di Cartesio, riuscendo così a intendere e a rendere conto dell'ambiguità religiosa del suo pensiero. In primo luogo non bisogna sottovalutare il pensiero libertino per capire la genesi dell'ateismo nella storia della filosofia e così ci si accorge che "il dubbio cartesiano è l'esatto rovescio del dubbio libertino in cui sono riuniti l'ateismo e lo scetticismo. Il dubbio libertino è un dubbio che si *produce*, espressione in me della necessità della natura, o di una storia risolta anch'essa nella necessità della natura" (MOD, p. 39, corsivo dell'autore). Invece, all'opposto, proprio considerando le *Meditazioni*, per Cartesio "la prima

certezza è quella di un *io* che *liberamente* dubita della realtà naturale, (cioè la de-realizza); che in quanto dubita liberamente è un soggetto personale e concreto, non un intelletto in generale; che, in quanto è certo di essere mentre la realtà naturale è dubbia, esiste per suo conto, cioè è una sostanza (*res cogitans*)” (*ibidem*, corsivo dell’autore). Ciò implica una prospettiva ontologica di grande rilievo, che permette di escludere non solo ogni possibilità di assolutizzare la realtà naturale, ponendola come non dipendente da altro, ma anche ogni confusione con l’aseità divina, riconosciuta nella sua trascendenza: “Questa “derealizzazione” è stata la negazione dell’aseità della realtà naturale; la dichiarazione che la realtà naturale non è l’Essere è stata possibile in ultima analisi, perché la *res cogitans* è una *res cogitans Deum*” (*ivi*, pp. 39–40). Questo non vuol dire, però, che nel filosofo francese ci sia una sola linea di pensiero; al contrario le due linee di pensiero che da lui scaturiscono hanno le loro radici nell’ambiguità religiosa, rinvenibile – come fa vedere Del Noce nel suo libro su Cartesio (cf. CAR, Parte seconda) – nel suo modo di affrontare le posizioni dei libertini: “Ambiguità conseguente alla sua critica del pensiero libertino nella formula del semplice rovesciamento, così da concedere troppo all’avversario attraverso l’implicito riconoscimento che una filosofia che parte dal sensibile, così naturale come storico, non possa concludere altrimenti che a quella forma di pensiero; con la conseguenza di un separatismo per cui l’uomo è posto come esistente a parte e in presenza di idee che sono soltanto le sue idee” (MOD, p. 40). Per effetto di questa impostazione, in Cartesio coesistono “l’esperienza della libertà, che è il suo motivo religioso, e un separatismo che coincide a ben guardare con quel principio di immanenza che avrà poi tanto svolgimento nella filosofia moderna” (*ibidem*). Dunque l’ambiguità cartesiana è data dalla compresenza, in una “singolarissima unità”, del momento religioso e del momento laico, cosicché fin dagli inizi del pensiero moderno si manifestano queste due linee di pensiero, che smentiscono la tesi di un processo unitario verso l’immanentismo (cf. *ibidem*).

Del Noce sottolinea il fatto che la lettura laica non può sopprimere la lettura religiosa – con le sue validissime ragioni – di Cartesio, ritenendo, tra l’altro, indubbio che il filosofo francese “abbia potuto in buona coscienza sentire di essere rimasto fedele a quel cattolicesimo di tipo molinista, da cui era partito” (PA, p. 443). In effetti una dimensione genuinamente religiosa è costitutiva del pensiero cartesiano: “nel “grande cristiano” Cartesio, la trascendenza dell’uomo alla natura si trova connessa nel processo stesso della meditazione con l’affermazione della realtà e della trascendenza di Dio come sua condizione” (*ivi*, p. 313). E la teoria della creazione libera delle verità eterne vuole sancire il riconoscimento di Dio che è sempre trascen-

dente rispetto a ciò che noi possiamo pensare e dire, sempre al di là rispetto alle nostre possibilità di com-prensione, nel senso che non possiamo afferarlo, possederlo, dominarlo, giudicarlo sottoponendolo ai nostri criteri, onde verso di Lui l'atteggiamento corretto è quello dello stupore ammirato e dell'adorazione, in quanto se ne intravede la grandezza, considerando il creato. È quanto sottolinea Del Noce (*ivi*, pp. 313-314, nota), citando un passo che è al termine della terza *Meditazione* cartesiana, dopo la prima prova dell'esistenza di Dio: “ma prima che esaminati questo più accuratamente, e che passi alla contemplazione delle altre verità che possono venirne derivate, mi sembra massimamente conveniente di fermarmi qualche tempo alla contemplazione di questo Dio perfettissimo, di ponderare a mio agio i suoi meravigliosi attributi, di considerare, ammirare e adorare l'incomparabile bellezza di questa immensa luce, almeno per quanto la forza del mio spirito, che ne resta in qualche modo abbagliato, me lo potrà permettere”.⁴

Questa ricerca su Cartesio coinvolge quella sulla filosofia del '600 e, quindi, sul concetto controverso di Controriforma, come mera reazione difensiva, che Del Noce, in sintonia con altri storici, critica, proponendo di sostituire ad esso, per caratterizzare questo momento della storia, “quello di Riforma Cattolica che ne sottolinea invece l'aspetto di iniziativa e di innovazione” (PA, p. 408). Per dimostrare questa tesi dell'autonomo rinnovamento di fronte al mutare dei tempi e delle circostanze, pur nella fedeltà alla verità non subordinata alla cronolatria, non basta, anche se è importante, farlo vedere operante in tanti campi: da quello dogmatico a quello morale, dal fiorire della santità e dell'attività missionaria alle opere di carità – a servizio delle persone, specie di quelle più bisognose – che contribuiscono

⁴ Descartes René, *Méditations sur la philosophie première dans la quelle est démontrée l'existence de Dieu et l'immortalité de l'âme*, Paris 1641 (in latino), Amsterdam 1642 (in latino), Paris 1947 (traduzione francese riveduta, corretta e modificata da Descartes); trad. it. Di A. Tilgher, riv. Da F. Adorno: Cartesio, *Discorso sul metodo e Meditazioni metafisiche con le obiezioni e risposte*, due tomi, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1978, p. 103. Mi sono discostato leggermente dalla citata traduzione italiana. In proposito è notevole anche questo altro passo all'inizio delle *Meditazioni*, nella *Prefazione dell'autore al lettore*: “tutto quel che dicono gli atei per impugnare l'esistenza di Dio dipende sempre, o dal fingere in Dio affezioni umane, o dall'aver attribuito ai nostri spiriti tanta forza e saggezza da farci presumere di determinare e comprendere ciò che Dio può e deve fare; di guisa che tutto quello che essi dicono non ci farà nessuna difficoltà, purché soltanto ci ricordiamo che dobbiamo considerare i nostri spiriti come cose finite e limitate, e Dio come un essere infinito e incomprendibile” (*ivi*, p. 65). Qui Cartesio riecheggia la classica distinzione tommasiana: Dio è sempre al di là di ogni nostra possibilità di com-prenderlo, afferrarlo, possederlo, imprigionarlo nei nostri schemi, anche se si può conoscere a partire dall'esperienza.

a umanizzare la società facendo scoprire alcuni fondamentali diritti umani, come il diritto all'assistenza sanitaria e quello all'istruzione.

Si tratta anche di mostrare, nella Riforma cattolica, “come quella che ne è l'intuizione prima da cui muovono tutte le sue manifestazioni, pur nel contrasto delle correnti teologiche – la correlatività tra la negazione protestante dell'uomo, della sua libertà e dei suoi meriti e la degradazione di Dio a pura potenza irrazionale – sia una vera idea e non la copertura ideologica di una volontà pratica e di compromesso” (*ivi*, pp. 408–409). Per far vedere questo basta attenersi allo stesso criterio metodologico usato da Gilson onde far emergere la dimensione specificamente filosofica del pensiero medievale. Bisogna chiedersi, cioè, se quella idea sia stata o no generatrice di valori razionali. Questa domanda dischiude ampi e fecondi spazi (alcuni dei quali sono stati esplorati fruttuosamente da Del Noce) di una ricerca, che delimita cronologicamente la Riforma cattolica “come il periodo in cui il cattolicesimo ha quali essenziali avversari il protestantesimo e le propaggini del naturalismo rinascimentale, e non ancora l'Illuminismo” (*ivi*, p. 409). Ebbene, la risposta a questa domanda non può che essere inequivocabilmente positiva: “contro la vecchia opinione che opponeva filosofia moderna e “Controriforma” penso invece che proprio all'interno della Riforma cattolica abbiano preso inizio i motivi critici della filosofia moderna” (*ivi*, p. 103). E ciò soprattutto perché alla Riforma cattolica “appartengono per la loro fede quattro filosofi di prima grandezza che vengono pure ascritti alla filosofia moderna: appunto Cartesio, Pascal, Malebranche e Vico” (*ibidem*). Questi filosofi costituiscono dei momenti non secondari di una delle due linee di pensiero, che Del Noce individua nella modernità, quella che va da Cartesio a Rosmini. Non possiamo qui seguire il nostro autore nell'indagine analitica che fa di questa linea di pensiero, ma consideriamo almeno un'obiezione che gli può essere rivolta da parte di chi è abituato a certi schemi storiografici e di chi considera i motivi di diversità e perfino di opposizione tra questi filosofi: ma Pascal non è da considerarsi in opposizione piuttosto che in continuità con Cartesio?

La risposta generale, valida anche per i rapporti tra gli altri filosofi citati, è che, al di là di innegabili divergenze e perfino di opposizioni su determinate questioni, ciò che li accomuna è ben più importante e permette di considerarli nella continuità di una medesima linea di pensiero che si sviluppa dinamicamente e non come se uno riproponesse semplicemente le tesi dell'altro.

La ricerca delnoceiana si sofferma a lungo, e vi ritorna a più riprese, su questo nodo centrale del rapporto tra Cartesio e Pascal, non sottovalutando l'opposizione tra il primo, considerato un molinista tendente al razional-

ismo, e il secondo, visto come il più intransigente dei portorealisti (cf. *ivi*, p. 449), e parte da un'ipotesi di lavoro in cui si chiede "se il pensiero di Pascal non rappresenti l'anticartesianismo *sic et simpliciter*, ma la continuazione del pensiero di Cartesio separato totalmente dal *molinismo presupposto* in cui la novità di Cartesio si trovava inserita" (*ibidem*). Non possiamo qui ripercorrere nemmeno le tappe principali della verifica – puntuale, approfondita e complessa nei suoi aspetti storici e teoretici – di questa ipotesi. Basti dire che Del Noce arriva a concludere che l'opposizione tra Cartesio e Pascal "si inserisce in una continuità" (*ibidem*) e che uno dei motivi non secondari, che avvicina i due filosofi, è costituito dall'idea dell'Infinito,⁵ presente con un ruolo di rilievo nell'itinerario razionale delle due posizioni di pensiero.

3. Ateismo postulatorio e marxismo

Dunque, l'indagine critica sulla filosofia moderna confuta l'idea che essa sia un processo, unico e irreversibile, "di progressiva laicizzazione" (*ivi*, p. 86), "di liberazione dalla trascendenza" (*ivi*, p. 83), perché in essa ci sono due linee di pensiero, di cui una è aperta alla trascendenza. In tal modo, confutata l'interpretazione della modernità, che doveva giustificare il razionalismo (con i suoi sviluppi idealistici), si evidenzia che quest'ultimo è "condizionato da un atto di fede iniziale, da una scelta originaria che esclude il soprannaturale" (*ivi*, p. 569), così come il suo esito ultimo, l'ateismo, manifesta il suo "carattere postulatorio" (*ibidem*) nel mondo contemporaneo, riconoscendolo apertamente (cf. *ivi*, p. 17). Ora, proprio questo carattere

⁵ Si veda in proposito questo passo, citato da Del Noce (PA, pp. 415-416), in cui il Laporte sostiene efficacemente la tesi della vicinanza tra Cartesio e Pascal: "Noi domandavamo quale sia il valore della Ragione. L'idea dell'Infinito ce ne fornisce la risposta. Questa idea è la chiave di volta della nostra conoscenza razionale. Essa è, tra le nostre idee chiare e distinte, quella su cui tutte le altre devono prendere appoggio per dar luogo a una "vera e certa scienza" e metterci in possesso di verità immutabili. Ma nello stesso tempo essa ci insegna che queste verità sono, come tutto ciò che ha dell'essere, l'opera di una ragione che le domina e che non è sottomessa alle loro leggi; che la nostra ragione, per conseguenza trae la sua luce da un principio in cui conoscere e agire coincidono e che è Ragione, ancora, se si vuole, ma Ragione eterogenea e irriducibile alla nostra. Così è la nostra Ragione che, riflettendo su se stessa, conosce i suoi propri limiti. E Cartesio potrebbe far sua la frase di Pascal: "l'ultimo passo della ragione è di riconoscere che c'è un'infinità di cose che la superano". Nella "prima e principale delle sue idee" essa ha la percezione non problematica ma positiva di un ambito di realtà di cui dimostra insieme che esiste e che ci sfugge – cioè il *Dio vivente*. Ora, per un singolare incontro, questo al di là della nostra Ragione costituisce tutto l'oggetto della Religione" (J. Laporte, op. cit., p. 297, corsivo dell'autore).

postulatorio dell'ateismo ha, a giudizio di Del Noce “la funzione di mettere in chiaro l'opzione prima che sta a fondamento del razionalismo [...] e di permetterne la critica interna” (*ibidem*, corsivo dell'autore), consistente nel rilavarne la contraddizione insanabile: in quanto quella posizione, la quale esige che tutto sia rischiarato dai lumi della ragione, ha a suo fondamento un presupposto non affermato in base a una ricerca razionale.

Così si comincia a capire che cosa vuol dire Del Noce quando insiste sul carattere postulatorio dell'ateismo. Intende che esso non è sostenuto da ragioni atte a giustificarlo, ma è frutto di una scelta previa, precedente cioè ogni indagine mirante a conoscere la realtà per quella che è. Sicché, nell'argomentare della posizione atea, l'ateismo gioca il ruolo di presupposto indiscutibile. Si tratta di una “postulazione arbitraria” (*ivi*, p. 16), che non nasce da un'evidenza razionale, ma dalla pretesa dell'uomo di non essere quell'essere finito, che è, e/o di essere l'assoluto o di essere in grado di autoassolutizzarsi nel futuro. Come ha visto S. Kierkegaard, in questa pretesa si esprime la “malattia mortale”, che è la vera alienazione dell'uomo, in quanto disperazione dell'uomo che non vuole essere se stesso, quell'io che egli è, per essere quell'io che egli stesso ha escogitato, un io che si immagina assoluto, autosufficiente e che, contro la realtà del suo essere, “vuole separare il suo io dalla potenza che l'ha posto”:⁶ è il rifiuto della condizione creaturale e, quindi, della dipendenza dal Creatore. Sartre ha avuto l'onestà intellettuale di ammettere l'esito fallimentare della pretesa impossibile (“una passione inutile”) dell'uomo di essere o farsi assoluto, riconoscendo che l'uomo non si è creato da solo.

Del Noce dedica gran parte della sua indagine al marxismo (di cui è uno dei maggiori studiosi), che si presenta come la forma più radicale e rigorosa di ateismo (cf. PA, pp. 120-121), in quanto non si sofferma principalmente sulla negazione, di fronte alla quale sussiste pur sempre l'affermazione, ma vuole essere ateismo positivo, “deciso superamento positivo della religione” (FIELD, p. 197),⁷ impegnato per la “sostituzione della politica

⁶ S. Kierkegaard, *La malattia mortale*, trad. it. a cura di C. Fabro, Sansoni, Firenze 1965, p. 283.

⁷ Si tenga presente l'elenco delle sigle, con le quali sono citate le opere di Marx:

- ECPOLE = K. Marx, *Per la critica dell'economia politica. Prefazione*, trad. it. Editori Riuniti, Roma 1957.
- CAP = K. Marx, *Il capitale*, trad. it. a cura di Cantimori D., Editori Riuniti, Roma 1964.
- MAN = K. Marx, *Manoscritti economico-filosofici del 1844*, trad. it. a cura di N. Bobbio, Einaudi, Torino 1968.
- QE = K. Marx, *Sulla questione ebraica*, in OC, pp. 158-189.

alla religione nella liberazione dal male” (PA, p. 119), con una “trasformazione totale della realtà, come deificazione dell’uomo” (*ivi*, p. 560). Ebbene, Del Noce non può non rilevare che in seguito alla teoria e alla prassi marxiste il male è tutt’altro che vinto, il finito non può diventare l’Infinito, surrogando Dio trascendente.

Il carattere postulatorio è proprio dell’ateismo di Marx, il quale sostiene la “generazione dell’uomo mediante il lavoro umano”, per cui ritiene “praticamente improponibile il problema... di un essere superiore” (MAN, p. 125). È come dire: giacché voglio che l’uomo si crei nel futuro (si tratta, insieme, di una pretesa e di una profezia, che richiedono un’adesione fideistica) come uomo perfetto, attraverso il lavoro e la prassi politica rivoluzionaria, dando vita ad una società perfetta, rifiuto di porre il problema del Creatore; giacché voglio che l’uomo sia creatore di sé, faccio l’opzione di rifiutare il Creatore. Ma questa opzione ha un fondamento nella realtà della condizione umana, oppure è una pura escogitazione al di fuori di ogni possibilità concreta, come dimostrano le dure smentite della storia al mito della società perfetta?

In Marx “si afferma il *pari* su un avvenire che la nostra azione ha da creare” (PA, p. 382), cioè una scommessa fideistica sul futuro, sull’avvenire storico, che certamente non è dato, né ci sono ragioni probanti per sostenere che verrà nei termini prefigurati dalla speranza rivoluzionaria. Per cui il suo avvento può essere sostenuto non per una previsione scientifica, ma solo per una profezia, basata su una speranza infondata e addirittura smentita dalla storia. Onde oggi si manifesta sempre più chiaramente l’opzione fideistica come caratteristica di fondo di questa posizione, la quale pretende di essere “la soluzione dell’enigma della storia” (MAN, p. 111), nel senso che “l’odissea della storia deve portare a quell’“uomo totale” che è l’uomo soltanto grandezza, l’uomo divinizzato, l’uomo ormai padrone del suo destino” (PA, p. 374), secondo il sogno di coloro che sostengono, come fa Marx fin dalla sua tesi di laurea, l’umanesimo prometeico.⁸ Questo sogno svanisce di fronte agli aspetti inequiv-

– FILD = K. Marx, *Per la critica della filosofia del diritto di Hegel. Introduzione*, in OC, pp. 190-204.

– OC = K. Marx – F. Engels Friedrich (1976 ed.), *Opere complete*, vol. III, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1976.

⁸ Su questo sogno è illuminante questo passo di Carrouges citato da Del Noce (PA, pp. 559-560): “per i prometeici il dispiegamento della libertà quaggiù non avrà limiti; essi sognano che l’universo diventerà assolutamente plastico ai loro desideri; certo, essi sanno bene che oggi questa libertà non si esercita come un’onnipotenza sul nulla, ma in modo drammatico contro un mondo antagonista, tuttavia essi sognano un’epoca in cui

ocabili dell'umana finitezza come la morte: "Marx ha capito che non c'è che una via per colpire la religione, quella di sopprimerne effettivamente le radici. Cioè non la via metafisica, e neppure quella storica o scientifica, ma la via *politica* [...] Ma come la realizzazione del comunismo avrà a suo "risultato" l'ateismo? forse che in regime comunista sarà scomparsa la morte? e come la morte può non suscitare, anche ammessa una società perfettamente giusta, i problemi che tradizionalmente ha suscitato? e forse che non c'è un diritto alla speranza in una riparazione per le centinaia di milioni di vittime innocenti che il processo storico ha travolto nel suo corso? Non mi pare sia possibile che una risposta" (PA, p. 566).

Quindi, questo sogno è mistificante, è un'evasione nei mondi di una fantasia boriosa, che impedisce di vedere la realtà per quella che è, come emerge dal fatto che non riesce a intendere l'indipendenza, l'autonoma consistenza e dignità del finito senza pretendere che ciò implichi la sua assolutizzazione. Con ciò rivela di avere la sua fonte nell'"odio razionalista per l'individualità finita" (*ivi*, p. 541), per cui il finito di per sé non ha alcun valore se non è l'assoluto o un momento dell'assoluto, che "è debitore a se stesso della propria *esistenza*".⁹ Infatti Marx pensa l'uomo liberato dall'alienazione, in quanto "successivo alla realizzazione del comunismo", come una sorta di "essere soprannaturale", che dovrebbe andare, nel sogno prometeico, oltre la reale condizione umana, oltre rispetto "ai caratteri dell'individualità finita" (PA, p. 561, n.), la quale, come tale, è considerata alienata, mutilata, non vera.

Ma questa dimensione mistificante del sogno si coniuga con la confusione tra lavoro umano e autocreazione dell'uomo. Infatti Marx scrive: "per l'uomo socialista, *tutta la cosiddetta storia del mondo* non è altro che la generazione dell'uomo mediante il lavoro umano, che è il divenire della natura per l'uomo,

queste ostilità cesseranno attraverso il trionfo radicale delle libertà umane. È in ciò che consiste la *fede* su cui si fonda la loro falsa religione" (M. Carrouges, *La mystique du surhomme*, Gallimard, Paris 1948, p. 359, corsivo dell'autore).

⁹ MAN, p. 123, corsivo dell'autore. Ma si veda tutto questo passo marxiano che manifesta l'incapacità di vedere l'autonoma dignità del finito: "Un *essere* si considera indipendente soltanto quando è padrone di sé, ed è padrone di sé soltanto quando è debitore a se stesso della propria *esistenza*" (*ivi*, corsivo dell'autore). Certo, l'uomo non è radicalmente padrone di se stesso perché non si è creato da solo (come emerge incontrovertibilmente dall'esperienza, se letta correttamente, e dalla rigorosa argomentazione tommasiana, a cui stiamo per far riferimento), ma ciò non vuol dire che non abbia un'esistenza distinta e non confusa con quella di altri esseri, né che non sia padrone dei propri atti, in virtù della libertà di autogovernarsi. In altri termini quella dell'uomo non è una libertà assoluta, ma è una libertà finita, "situata" – come direbbe Taylor –, che si esercita, cioè, a partire da certe condizioni date, che non dipendono da lui.

egli ha la prova evidente, irrefutabile, della sua *nascita* mediante se stesso, del processo della sua *origine*” (MAN, p. 125, corsivo dell’autore) In realtà questa prova non è né evidente, né irrefutabile, perché dire che l’uomo si crea attraverso il lavoro umano implica necessariamente che l’uomo debba esistere per poter lavorare, il lavoro presuppone l’essere dell’uomo e quindi è impossibile che lo crei. Se questa “creazione” è intesa da Marx come un “processo”, vuol dire che essa è trasformazione, sviluppo e che al suo inizio c’è una realtà che non è frutto del processo, il quale presuppone un dato iniziale, che lo rende possibile. Quindi, il lavoro non è autogenerazione, o autocreazione dell’uomo, ma crescita, sviluppo, perfezionamento a partire da ciò che l’uomo è e che non crea. Lo stesso linguaggio di Marx non riesce a censurare la realtà per quella che effettivamente è, nel tentativo di negarla, implicitamente la riafferma. Come ha ben visto Aristotele, una delle caratteristiche principali di ciò che è vero (quando riusciamo a scoprirlo) è la sua incontrovertibilità, in quanto i tentativi di negarlo non possono costituirsi come significanti se non implicitamente affermandolo (cf. il IV libro della *Metafisica*).

Il lavoro è, dunque, un aspetto della crescita, dell’autoperfezionamento dell’uomo, che però si esercita innegabilmente sulla base di ciò (la sua esistenza, le sue doti, la natura che lo circonda, ecc.), che l’uomo non crea. Tommaso d’Aquino con rigorosa argomentazione mostra l’assurdità in cui incorre chi sostiene che un essere sia il creatore di stesso: “non è possibile che una realtà sia causa efficiente di sé medesima, ché altrimenti sarebbe prima di se stessa (cioè prima di essere), e ciò è impossibile”,¹⁰ per cui anche altrove precisa: “niente [...] è causa di se stesso”.¹¹

4. Fraintendimento della trascendenza e sacrificio dell’individuo nella visione della società dell’ateismo organicista

Se si considera la formazione hegeliana di Marx si capisce come il suo umanesimo ateo nasca dallo stesso fraintendimento del filosofo di Stoccarda. Infatti le motivazioni di Marx si potrebbero sintetizzare nella frase: “Quante più cose l’uomo trasferisce in Dio, tanto meno egli ne ritiene in se stesso” (MAN, p. 72). Qui è espresso il fraintendimento radicale della posizione teista e creazionista. Perché la partecipazione creaturale salvaguarda la

¹⁰ Tommaso d’Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, testo latino dell’ed. leonina, Roma 1888-1906, trad. it. a cura dei Domenicani italiani, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 1985², I, q. 2, a. 3.

¹¹ Tommaso d’Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, testo latino dell’ed. leonina, Roma 1918-1930, trad. it. a cura di T.S. Centi, UTET, Torino 1970, I, c. 49.

trascendenza del Creatore e l'intrinseca positività della creatura. Nella prospettiva tommasiana, per esempio, la creatura ha una positività non apparente, ma reale e sua propria; è una positività partecipata, donata, ma, una volta donata, è propria dell'essere creato, inalienabile, incancellabile: "ogni realtà si dice buona per una somiglianza sua propria della divina bontà (cioè del Bene che è Dio) ad essa inerente, che è formalmente la sua bontà (o positività) e dalla quale si denomina (Tommaso d'Aquino, *Summa theol.*, cit., I, q. 6, a. 4). Certamente Dio creatore non è da confondere con il creato, ma Egli non è separato dall'uomo in quanto gli dona l'essere ed è, quindi, più intimo a lui che lui a se stesso, né è rivale dell'uomo, come se, riconoscendo le perfezioni di Dio, l'uomo perdesse qualcosa. È del tutto fuorviante immaginare che Dio voglia togliere o tolga qualcosa all'uomo, giacché Egli, nel crearlo, dona all'uomo tutto ciò che è e che ha. Dio decide liberamente di donare l'essere alle creature e certamente lo fa non perché ne abbia bisogno, in quanto in Lui non c'è indigenza (cf. *ivi*, I, q. 44, a. 4, ad 1), giacché "non può mancare nessuna delle perfezioni dell'essere a Colui che è l'essere stesso per sé sussistente" (*ivi*, I, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3). Perciò Egli è il solo capace di completa gratuità donativa, "Egli solo è massimamente generoso: perché non agisce per propria utilità, ma solo per la sua bontà" (*ivi*, I, q. 44, a. 4, ad 1), nel senso che, nel creare, non agisce "per l'acquisizione di qualche fine, ma mira solo a comunicare la sua perfezione, che è la sua bontà (o il bene che Egli è)" (*ivi*, I, q. 44, a. 4). Ora, se si tiene conto di tutto questo – che qui abbiamo potuto richiamare solo brevemente – e di ciò che rileva Del Noce, e cioè che "è caratteristico dell'ateismo il presentare la trascendenza come separazione" (PA, p. 95), si intende ancora più chiaramente che la posizione atea nasce da un radicale fraintendimento.

Sulla base di questo fraintendimento il marxismo si pone come "la radicale antitesi del cristianesimo", poiché ne trascrive "le figure in senso immanentistico" (*ivi*, 1990, p. 123), distorcendone completamente il messaggio, in quanto pretende di sostituire a Dio l'avvenire storico (cf. *ivi*, p. 381). Così si arriva a una posizione che si può denominare con un'espressione, *prima facie*, contraddittoria, come "religione secolare" (*ivi*, p. 112), o atea, ma che a ben vedere allude alla pretesa di surrogare l'insostituibile. Per capire l'articolarsi di questa trascrizione immanentistica come itinerario aporetico è efficace questo passo di Löwith: "la lotta finale dei due campi ostili della borghesia e del proletariato corrisponde alla fede cristiana in una lotta finale tra Cristo e l'Anticristo nell'ultima epoca della storia, il compito del proletariato corrisponde alla missione storica del popolo eletto, la funzione re-dentrice universale della classe più degradata è concepita sul modello religioso della Croce e della Risurrezione, la trasformazione ultima del

regno della necessità nel regno della libertà corrisponde alla trasformazione della città terrena nella città di Dio, e l'intero processo della storia come è delineato dal *Manifesto dei comunisti* corrisponde allo schema generale dell'interpretazione ebraico-cristiana della storia come processo diretto dalla Provvidenza verso uno scopo finale".¹²

La critica della religione, per Marx, deve culminare nell'affermazione secondo cui "l'uomo è per l'uomo l'essenza suprema" (FIELD, p. 197, corsivo dell'autore). Ma allora, il discorso di Marx sembra fortemente aporetico, caratterizzato, cioè, da una intrinseca contraddizione. Da un lato, infatti, egli critica la religione perché considererebbe l'uomo inessenziale, non ritenendolo l'essenza suprema; dall'altro, rimprovera la religione, ed il cristianesimo in particolare, per il motivo opposto, perché considera l'uomo come "essere sovrano, essere supremo". Infatti, leggiamo nel saggio *Sulla questione ebraica*: "La democrazia politica è cristiana perché in essa l'uomo, non soltanto un uomo, ma ogni uomo, vale come essere *sovrano*, come essere supremo..." (QE, p. 172, corsivo dell'autore). Rimprovero che può apparire per lo meno strano, se non si tiene conto che per Marx l'uomo singolo – la singola persona concreta in carne ed ossa – ha un valore trascurabile se "non è ancora un *reale* ente generico" (*ibidem*, corsivo dell'autore). Di per sé, infatti, il singolo uomo non è altro che l'"uomo nella sua forma fenomenica incivile ed asociale, l'uomo nella sua esistenza casuale, l'uomo così come si trova, l'uomo corrotto, perduto e alienato a se stesso, assoggettato a rapporti ed elementi disumani ad opera dell'organizzazione della società nel suo insieme [...]" (*ibidem*). Quindi, anche per Marx il singolo uomo concreto ha davanti a sé un essere supremo, un assoluto, nel senso di fine supremo a cui tutto è subordinato. Questo assoluto è l'essere generico (*Gattungswesen*), la vita della specie, la società umana, rispetto a cui l'individuo ha la stessa accidentalità che aveva nei confronti dello Stato hegeliano. Per Hegel, l'individuo in quanto tale, cioè in quanto distinto ed autonomo, è accidentale rispetto allo spirito che si oggettiva nell'eticità dello Stato: "Lo spirito ha realtà, e gli accidenti della medesima sono gli individui", per cui "se l'individuo sia è indifferente per l'eticità oggettiva".¹³

¹² K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1949, pp. 44-45.

¹³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lineamenti di filosofia del diritto*, trad. it. a cura di F. Messineo, Laterza, Bari 1978, pp. 401 e 399.

5. Hegel: il presupposto organicista e il disprezzo per l'individualità finita

Hegel, in cui si deve vedere il punto di arrivo del razionalismo (cf. PA, p. 190), fin dagli scritti giovanili dichiara esplicitamente il presupposto da cui muove tutto il suo sistema: "Presupposta, fissata la vita indivisa, possiamo considerare i viventi come estrinsecazioni e presentazioni della vita [...]".¹⁴ Per cui l'assoluto è, per lui, spirito, inteso come "la legge vivificante in unione con il molteplice che ne è vivificato. Se l'uomo pone questa molteplicità vivificata come una grande massa di molti, congiunti pur tuttavia con il vivificante, queste vite diventano organi e l'intero infinito diviene un infinito tutto della vita [...] (*ivi*, p. 475). Si ha, così, un monismo organicista, che pone come assoluto l'Uno-Tutto nel quale ogni distinzione ontologica è vista come scissione intollerabile e da ricomprendere null'unità dell'organismo, per cui non ammette nessuna autonoma e distinta consistenza del finito né la trascendenza dell'infinito.

Ora lo spirito hegeliano, che ha la sua logica premessa nell'io trascendentale kantiano, è concepito come il sé di tutti e di ciascuno, come una sorta di ragione superindividuale che dovrebbe superare, negare, relativizzare a sé e, quindi, liquidare gli individui umani, considerati spregiativamente come empirici e accidentali.

Ma la contraddizione insanabile di questa posizione consiste nel fatto che si risolve in una astrazione che pretende di negare ciò su cui si fonda, cioè gli individui concreti, constatabili nella nostra esperienza. Infatti, solo in quanto ci sono i singoli uomini con le loro coscienze individuali, si può in esse cogliere delle strutture comuni, universali, si può astrarre la dimensione universale della ragione, ma non si può pretendere di farne una realtà, addirittura assoluta, che dovrebbe fagocitare gli enti concreti da cui è ricavata. Negare il proprio fondamento non equivale, forse, all'autonegazione? Ma per un'adeguata considerazione di questa critica a Hegel va approfondito il pensiero adorno, a cui siamo debitori: "Mentre quel concetto di spirito cerca di elevarsi al di sopra dell'individuazione e dell'essere individuale, contiene nondimeno delle determinazioni che non solo sono astratte dalla coscienza individuale, ma che per loro natura non possono essere affatto pensate altrimenti che come determinazioni di una coscienza individuale".¹⁵

¹⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Scritti teologici giovanili*, trad. it. a cura di E. Mirri, Guida, Napoli 1977², p. 474.

¹⁵ Th.W. Adorno, *Terminologia filosofica*, trad. it. a cura di A. Solmi, Einaudi, Torino 1975, p. 264.

Del Noce, che mostra grande interesse per il pensiero dei Francofortesi, sottolinea lo stretto collegamento che c'è tra la concezione dell'individualità finita e la visione del problema del male, di cui, "ci sono due fondamentali spiegazioni [...], quella della Genesi e quella contenuta nel mito di Anassimandro" (PA., p. 27). Ora, al di là di discussioni filologiche sul significato di quest'ultimo – che identificherebbe il male con il distacco del finito dall'infinito –, il nostro autore vede un ritorno ad esso nel razionalismo, in quanto "il male viene posto nella finitezza stessa dell'esistente, cioè la colpa diventa ontologica, scritta nell'esistenza stessa dell'ente finito [...] Alla spiegazione della Bibbia per cui il male è stato introdotto da noi nel mondo per un atto di libertà, se ne sostituisce un'altra per cui il nesso di finitezza e di morte viene considerato come necessario. Col che si ritorna alla spiegazione del male contenuta nel frammento di Anassimandro" (*ivi*, p. 192). Non a caso Del Noce parla di "mito di Anassimandro" (*ivi*, p. 27 e p. 561), non dissimulando una sua valutazione critica: giacché in nome di un mito vengono sacrificati gli uomini concreti in carne ed ossa. Si pensi all'esaltazione che Hegel fa della guerra, proprio per l'avversione all'individualità finita degli uomini,¹⁶ o alla considerazione marxiana della mortalità degli individui umani.¹⁷ La critica delnociana risulta dalla lucida individuazione dell'articolarsi della posizione razionalista: "Il razionalismo è caratterizzato in ogni sua forma da un odio per l'individuo e dalla confusione della spiritualità religiosa con questa negazione dell'individualità. Perciò il punto di partenza della filosofia è visto nell'elevazione dell'uomo attraverso il pensiero a una tale universalità che gli diventi indifferente la sua esistenza nella vita finita [...] Per la metafisica razionalista l'individualità finita viene risolta come momento nel processo dell'essere" (PA, p. 191).

Ora, questo disprezzo per l'individualità finita è ereditato da Marx, conducendo al sacrificio degli uomini concreti.

6. Ateismo positivo e società: l'*homo faber*, l'uomo collettivo e la risoluzione dell'etica nella politica

Marx identifica l'essenza umana con il genere, per cui ogni individuo non ha una propria essenza e dignità, ma esiste una sola "essenza comune"

¹⁶ Cfr. U. Galeazzi, *Sulla discutibile necessità dell'amicizia. Antropologia organicista e antropologia personalista*, "Aquinus. Rivista internazionale di filosofia", LIII (2010), 1, pp. 32-35.

¹⁷ Cfr. U. Galeazzi, *Morte e risurrezione della carne nel pensiero di Horkheimer e Adorno*, in A. Molinaro – F. De Macedo (edd.), *E dopo la vita? L'uomo e il suo destino*, Edizioni Pro Sanctitate, Roma 2006, pp. 44-51.

(*Gemeinwesen*), per cui la dignità del singolo viene trasferita nel genere. L'obiettivo di Marx, pertanto, è che l'individuo identifichi la propria vita con la vita del genere, riconoscendo la propria sostanzialità nella società. In questa posizione, secondo Del Noce, "quel che è veramente essenziale è la predicazione di una forma di morale ascetica, del sacrificio che il soggetto "dell'Universale" deve fare dell'inferiore soggettività dei bisogni e delle passioni" (*ivi*, p. 220). Di conseguenza la rivoluzione marxiana "deve sostituire il noi all'io, l'uomo collettivo – che vive nella partecipazione alla specie rappresentante l'unica realtà – all'uomo individuale, trasferendo la personalità dall'individuo alla collettività" (*ivi*, p. 27, corsivo dell'autore).

Quindi la collettività, che dovrebbe diventare la futura società perfetta, è il vero idolo per il cui conseguimento tutto deve essere sacrificato, anche i singoli individui, dal momento che, per Marx, non hanno un autonomo valore ontologico, giacché tutto il valore (la sostanzialità, direbbe Hegel, o l'essenza, dice il giovane Marx) è trasferito nella specie o organismo sociale che deve raggiungere la sua perfezione. Del Noce, rifacendosi a Rosmini, critica questo "perfettismo", che crede possibile il perfetto nelle cose umane e che sacrifica il bene presente alla immaginata futura perfezione (*ivi*, p. 520). Anche se ciò non significa che egli aderisca "alla concezione atomistica degli individui, propria del liberalismo classico, perché con ciò si negherebbe [...] la natura dell'individuo come riferimento ad altro" (*ibidem*). Contrariamente a quanto pretende l'organicismo (cioè la visione del tutto come un unico organismo, di cui i singoli individui umani non sarebbero altro che degli organi accidentali) di Hegel e di Marx, non è vero che il riconoscimento della dignità di ogni individuo umano e dei suoi diritti implichi necessariamente il considerarlo separato dagli altri ed egoista. Del Noce ritiene tutt'altro che evidente la riduzione a egoismo della rivendicazione dell'autonomia consistenza dell'individuo umano e dei suoi diritti (cf. *ivi*, p. 514).

Il culto di questo mito della società perfetta comporta un costo umano molto elevato, perché implica che la collettività sia l'unico soggetto del diritto, per cui gli individui di per sé non hanno diritti. Infatti, Marx parla sprezzantemente dei "cosiddetti diritti dell'uomo" (QE, pp. 173, 174) e ritiene che chi rivendica i diritti di sé come individuo autonomo non fa che pretendere la "conservazione" della "persona egoistica" (*ivi*, p. 178). La mistificazione falsificante di questa posizione sta nel fatto che non si ammette altra possibilità: o l'annegamento del singolo nella "vita del genere" (*ivi*, p. 172), il suo sacrificio per il mito della società perfetta, oppure asocialità, egoismo, antagonismo. Infatti nella concezione organicista le differenze non possono sussistere come tali, debbono essere inverte e negate nell'intero. Marx, identificando "distinzione" con "separazione", la giudica opposta alla

“comunità” (cf. *ivi*, p. 168), facendo capire che il suo modello di società non ammette la diversità, che invece caratterizza ogni individuo umano, in quanto essere irripetibile. Con ciò si realizza in Marx, come già in Hegel, ciò che Maritain ha chiamato “l’immolazione dialettica della persona”,¹⁸ preludio all’immolazione reale di milioni di uomini a cui abbiamo assistito nel XX secolo. Esito significativamente contraddittorio con l’intento originario di esaltazione dell’uomo. Esito, però, che non sorprende, perché quell’esaltazione è stata mediata da un radicale ateismo. Chi non riconosce il Padre, come può conoscere i figli?

È un onore, dunque, per il cristianesimo, l’accusa di “egoismo” rivoltagli da Marx (veramente singolare questa accusa a quell’evento che ha manifestato nella storia umana il senso dell’*ἀγάπη!*), perché essa è il prezzo pagato per l’affermazione della dignità inalienabile di ogni uomo, perché ogni uomo, in qualsiasi situazione sociale si trovi, di qualsiasi razza, nazione, classe, ecc., esiste davanti a Dio, che liberamente lo crea, perché lo vuole, lo ama e lo costituisce nella sua dignità e positività. Sicché la dignità e i diritti fondamentali non dipendono – alla radice – dal riconoscimento sociale, statale o del potere. Si tratta, allora, di un “egoismo”, che non accetta di sacrificare la singola persona concreta al tutto sociale, alle ragioni del potere totalitario, e che, solo, ci può risparmiare la disumanizzazione, di cui avvertiamo i sintomi sempre più gravi. In altri termini l’accusa marxiana va considerata in base al presupposto da cui nasce, che ritiene l’individualità finita come il male, presupposto non solo non vero, ma rivelatosi, altresì, esiziale lungo la storia del comunismo realizzato. Come dice Del Noce riferendosi alla posizione di Marx, “Il cristianesimo viene [...] criticato come individualista, in ragione [...] di quella connessione tra individualità finita e male, che è il presupposto necessario del razionalismo, in quanto negazione della Creazione e della caduta” (PA, p. 514). Ora, la Creazione fonda la positività inalienabile di ogni individuo umano e il ricondurre il male a un atto di libertà significa che il finito non è il male, che il male non è irrimediabile e può essere vinto non eliminando il finito, ma con la redenzione del finito non senza l’impegno della sua libertà.

È significativo in proposito quanto Horkheimer – rovesciando le giovanili posizioni marxiane, alla luce degli eventi del XX secolo – afferma inequivocabilmente: “[...]il concetto della dignità dell’individuo è una delle

¹⁸ J. Maritain, *La filosofia morale. Esame storico e critico dei grandi sistemi*, trad. it. a cura di A. Pavan, Morcelliana, Brescia 1973, p. 183.

idee che definiscono un'organizzazione *umana* della società".¹⁹ Altrimenti abbiamo le disumanizzanti involuzioni totalitarie. Se si pretende che l'assoluto si realizzi nella storia, non resta nessuna possibilità morale o giuridica per il diritto o per il dissenso del singolo, specie se questi, com'è nella concezione organicistica, non è riconosciuto nella sua autonoma dignità. Che cosa è bene e che cosa è male non può arrogarsi di scoprirlo l'individuo singolo, ma lo dice lo Stato o l'avanguardia cosciente del proletariato, avanguardia che si ritiene illuminata dalla scienza marxista.

Si realizza così una sorta di teocrazia laicista, nel senso che il potere è usato per imporre non solo un certo assetto socio-politico, ma anche una certa visione del mondo: "la più grave critica anticomunista non è oggi quella che si appunta sul carattere di "teocrazia atea", col conseguente totalitarismo, del regime sovietico?" (PA, p. 222). L'assorbimento della morale nella politica, o in ciò che dice lo Stato, è l'annegamento del singolo nel tutto, il suo essere stritolato dal potere. Ecco la differenza essenziale: mentre l'Assoluto trascendente, il Dio vivente della Bibbia, della Rivelazione ebraico-cristiana, non solo rispetta la persona ma ne fonda la dignità inalienabile e la libertà; invece, l'assoluto immanente, proprio del laicismo, è un moloch che non rispetta i singoli e li sacrifica a sé.

Del Noce evidenzia il "carattere di assoluta novità della storia contemporanea, in quanto essa è *storia filosofica*" (*ivi*, p. 76, corsivo dell'autore), perché in essa si è attuato il tentativo di realizzare idee filosofiche, come il progetto dell'umanesimo ateo di Marx, che ha lanciato a tutti i credenti una sfida decisiva (*ivi*, p. 570): noi costruiremo una società perfetta, proprio in quanto atea, che eliminerà alla radice la religione, costruendo una sorta di paradiso in terra. Quest'ultimo dovrebbe scaturire dal comunismo, o socialismo, realizzato, rispetto a cui "l'alternativa è pensata come barbarie radicale" (*ivi*, p. 566). Ma, all'opposto, questa costruzione ha comportato costi umani molto elevati, dimensioni gravissime e inaudite di barbarie: invece della società perfetta dall'esperimento è scaturita la patria della disumanizzazione nei suoi molteplici aspetti. Fino al punto che molto prima del "crollo del muro di Berlino" Del Noce può scrivere lucidamente: "L'ateismo positivo ha storicamente vinto nella sua forma marxista, ma questa vittoria ha coinciso con la sua sconfitta" (*ibidem*), perché, lungi dall'essere liberante, "il materialismo dialettico è diventato strumento della volontà di potenza" (*ivi*, pp. 566-567). Quindi, non è semplicemente crollato un muro, ma tutta una visione dell'uomo, della realtà

¹⁹ M. Horkheimer, *Eclisse della ragione*, trad. it. a cura di E. Vaccari Spagnol, Einaudi, Torino 1969, p. 152-153, corsivo dell'autore.

e della storia. Per una filosofia che aveva posto nella verifica storica il criterio di verità, la confutazione è clamorosa e ineludibile. Ciò che doveva confutare la religione è stato confutato e non si può far finta che non sia successo niente, è ragionevole trarne tutte le conseguenze: se il tentativo di confutazione e di eliminazione è fallito, ciò che si intendeva confutare ed eliminare (la religione, il cristianesimo) risulta corroborato.

Ma per capire le ragioni del fallimento del progetto ateo conviene ancora seguire le indagini lungimiranti di Del Noce sulla filosofia e, in particolare, sull'antropologia di Marx, che intende la propria posizione come radicale sovvertimento di tutte le precedenti prospettive di pensiero. Su queste indagini abbiamo già detto sinteticamente nei limiti di questo intervento; aggiungiamo qualche altro elemento di rilievo non secondario.

Il rovesciamento marxista dell'uomo platonico-cristiano (cf. *ivi*, p. 248) implica una "radicale *ateologizzazione della ragione*", che considera "non più l'uomo misurato dalla ragione, dalla presenza dell'universale, del valore, dell'idea di Dio, ecc. con le categorie gnoseologiche ed etiche dipendenti (interiorità, e la sua traduzione pratica nella categoria del "privato"), ma *l'uomo misura della ragione*. E in rapporto alla critica dell'interiorità, anche la caduta dell'antecedenza dell'essenza uomo all'uomo esistente" (*ivi*, p. 244, corsivo dell'autore). L'uomo, la cui identità sarebbe totalmente risolta nell'appartenenza a una determinata situazione storico-sociale – "l'uomo sociale" (*ivi*, p. 245), "l'uomo collettivo" (*ivi*, p. 27) – penserebbe solo in base a questa appartenenza e non per la partecipazione a una ragione o a un'essenza universale. Ma in tal modo "con la caduta dell'idea di partecipazione il pensiero perde ogni carattere rivelativo per diventare attività trasformatrice del reale [...] non reagisco al mondo per l'idea presente in me, ma le mie idee sono l'articolarsi del mio senso di reazione al mondo" (*ivi*, p. 245). Così, misconoscendo la dimensione rivelativa, riflessiva e critica dell'umana ragione, l'idea marxiana dell'*homo faber* cancella la distinzione tra l'uomo e l'animale, "vedendo nell'uomo un animale che si serve di un particolare sistema di segni (il linguaggio), che lo rende capace di adattarsi attivamente alle situazioni nuove" (*ivi*, p. 567). Sicché la posizione marxiana vuole essere un passaggio da un concetto di filosofia come comprensione a un concetto di filosofia come rivoluzione (cf. *ivi*, p. 138), attività trasformatrice della realtà, una sorta di non-filosofia, o superamento della filosofia, che, però, deve essere anche la sua realizzazione: "La filosofia non si esprimerà più nella forma di libro o di sistema (comprensione, autocoscienza [...] di una totalità realizzata) ma nella *realizzazione di una totalità*. Nella costruzione di una società senza classi in cui l'universalità del pensiero sarà il risultato della soppressione delle classi" (*ivi*, pp. 247-248, corsivo dell'autore). Il materialismo storico, dunque, riduce il

pensiero ad attività trasformatrice del mondo e, prima ancora, a rispecchiamento della particolare situazione storica, sociale ed economica, in cui ciascun uomo si trova: per Marx “non è la coscienza degli uomini che determina il loro essere, ma è, al contrario, il loro essere sociale che determina la loro coscienza” (ECPOL, pp. 10-11), per cui “l’elemento ideale non è altro che l’elemento materiale trasferito e tradotto nel cervello degli uomini” (CAP, p. 44); tutte le idee, le diverse espressioni dello spirito, che costituiscono l’umana cultura e civiltà, vengono qualificate come “riflessi ed echi ideologici” (*ibidem*) del processo reale di vita. In tal modo tutto il pensiero sarebbe l’ambito dell’ideologia, cioè della menzogna e della mistificazione perché si manifesta in termini generali e propugna ideali universali, mentre non sarebbe capace di esprimere se non situazioni ed interessi particolari. Questa concezione dell’uomo e di ciò che specificamente lo caratterizza, cioè la ragione, il pensiero, da un lato spiega perché la critica filosofica, per Marx, coincide con la rivoluzione (vedi A, p. 249), ma dall’altro va incontro a una insanabile contraddizione, che manifesta l’insostenibilità del materialismo storico, criticato con acuta ironia da Del Noce, come pretesa riduzione del pensiero a ideologia. Vediamo brevemente questi due aspetti.

Se il pensiero è considerato da Marx una mera sovrastruttura ideologica, in quanto rispecchiamento di una determinata situazione storica, ne consegue che “criticare vorrà dire mutare la situazione storica [...] La critica filosofica coincide con la rivoluzione [...] Si può dire, in senso rigoroso, che il marxismo è l’*assunzione della politica a linguaggio della filosofia*. O che nella prospettiva di pensiero di Marx il partito è l’equivalente filosofico del sistema” (PA, p. 249, corsivo dell’autore). Quindi si tratta non di una proposta teorica aperta al confronto – peculiare dell’umana ricerca – con altre posizioni, ma di una prassi che intende realizzare una posizione filosofica, per cui “non è possibile pensare coerentemente gli elementi della prassi politica del comunismo nel loro rapporto sistematico senza riferimento all’idea marxista dell’uomo” (*ibidem*). È una prassi che addirittura intende realizzare l’assoluto nella storia e perciò non ammette pluralismo o dissenso, né tollera ostacoli sul suo cammino, configurandosi, così, in caso di successo, come totalitarismo, “aspetto che un regime comunista deve necessariamente assumere, se vuole presentarsi come portatore dell’“unica vera filosofia”” (*ivi*, p. 222).

Per quanto riguarda l’altro punto, chi sostiene la tesi, secondo cui tutto il pensiero si ridurrebbe a sovrastruttura ideologica falsificante, in tanto può affermare questo in quanto pretende di dire come stanno effettivamente le cose, in quanto presuppone che il proprio pensiero non sia ideologico ma veritativo. Ciò implica necessariamente che non si può sostenere il possibile uso ideologico del pensiero, senza con ciò riconoscere che c’è un possibile

uso veritativo. Del Noce esprime così, in modo ironico, questa critica al marxismo, nel quale “sembra esserci posto per il miracolo e la grazia: come Marx ed Engels si sarebbero elevati al di là della loro classe per fondare il socialismo scientifico se non per la mediazione di un pensiero non determinato dalla condizione sociale, se non dunque rompendo, appunto miracolosamente, le leggi del materialismo storico?” (*ivi*, pp. 112-113).

Convieni non lasciarsi sfuggire la profondità del rilievo critico delnoceano. Chi, partendo dal presupposto di un rifiuto senza prove del soprannaturale, pretende di avere un sapere scientifico e, quindi, non ideologico, ma che dice veramente come stanno le cose, ritenendo di avere scoperto le leggi necessarie della storia (tra le quali quella secondo cui ogni pensiero sarebbe ideologico, in quanto determinato dalla condizione sociale), deve ammettere qualcosa di impossibile in base alla sua teoria (qualcosa, che supera le asserite leggi naturali e storiche) e che la contraddice, falsificandola: cioè che si dà almeno un pensiero non ideologico, non determinato dalla condizione sociale, vale a dire il proprio che pretende di possedere quel sapere scientifico. In altri termini, la posizione marxiana va incontro a una situazione dilemmatica senza vie d'uscita, quando se ne va ad indagare il suo statuto epistemologico: o essa stessa, in base a quanto afferma, è ideologica, come ogni altra forma di pensiero, ed allora è solo un'espressione mistificante della situazione, da non prendere per vera, ma da considerare solo con sospetto; oppure pretende di essere non ideologica, di essere vera, di dire come stanno le cose, ma con ciò essa stessa costituisce la smentita di quanto intende sostenere, che cioè non si dia manifestazione se non ideologica del pensiero.

Ma c'è un altro aspetto da non trascurare nel pensiero marxiano e nella prassi che propugna, cioè la risoluzione e dissoluzione dell'etica nella politica. Questo aspetto è strettamente legato con gli altri aspetti del suo pensiero – talché non si può intendere e accettare l'uno senza l'altro – già menzionati: la negazione della sostanzialità e personalità dell'individuo, la riduzione dell'uomo a *homo faber* e a “uomo sociale” (*ivi*, p. 245), “uomo collettivo” (*ivi*, p. 27), il messianismo secolarizzato, mirante a realizzare l'assoluto nella storia, ecc. Mentre nel “pensiero platonico-cristiano l'uomo è in rapporto necessario con Dio, contingente con la società (è il rapporto necessario con Dio che fonda la sua trascendenza alla società [...])” (*ivi*, p. 251), in quanto egli ha un'origine e una meta che superano, vanno al di là rispetto alla sua appartenenza reale, ma non esaustiva, alla città terrena, invece per “l'ateismo marxista il rapporto con la società diventa necessario e costitutivo. Quindi alla subordinazione cristiana di politica a etica deve sostituirsi nel marxismo l'assorbimento dell'etica nella politica” (*ibidem*). Questo assorbimento, o inclusione, dell'etica nella politica conduce al machiavel-

lismo (cf. *ivi*, p. 252) fino alle sue estreme conseguenze, a una politica spregiudicata, che tutto subordina al successo della prassi rivoluzionaria, che considera “l’universalità umana” come “un *futuro* rispetto a cui bisogna ‘far servire il presente’” (*ivi*, p. 253, corsivo dell’autore). Tale risoluzione totale dell’etica nella politica, in base al messianismo terreno, che pone come assoluto la comunità umana da realizzare, implicando l’eliminazione dell’individuo come soggetto autonomo e sfociante nel potere totalitario, si trova sinteticamente espressa, per esempio, nella “celebre frase di Lenin: moralità è ciò che serve alla rivoluzione proletaria” (*ibidem*). Ciò vuol dire che qualsiasi atto è giustificato e, addirittura, doveroso, per quanto aberrante per la comune coscienza morale e la tradizione etica plurisecolare, se può giovare alla causa rivoluzionaria, o almeno se così appare a chi guida la lotta. Ma ciò può essere sostenuto solo da chi nega all’uomo, ad ogni uomo, una dignità e un valore primari, non riconoscendo alla propria prassi nessun limite nel rispetto di questo valore. Qui è teorizzata non solo la coercizione esteriore, ma anche quella interiore: il povero uomo che cade vittima di questa prospettiva non ha nemmeno gli elementi teorici per contestare il potere, giacché la teoria sedicente scientifica gli dice che il potere ha sempre ragione, purché sia quello del partito rivoluzionario o dello stato in cui questo partito ha preso il potere. In altri termini: questa risoluzione dell’etica nella politica si può chiamare e intendere come etica del progresso o del senso della storia, la quale dovrebbe condurre alla palingenesi rivoluzionaria, in modo che “l’etica non può altrimenti definirsi che come partecipazione alla marcia del progresso” e “il progresso ha il diritto di spazzare via coloro che gli si oppongono” (*ivi*, pp. 535-536). Ma questa “morale del “senso della storia” presuppone la riduzione marxista dell’uomo all’insieme dei rapporti sociali” e “perde ogni significato quando si ammetta la realtà dell’individuo” (*ivi*, p. 536). Comunque un punto essenziale dell’ateismo “sta nel totale cambiamento della nozione di morale” (*ivi*, p. 563) e in altra sede si potrebbe far vedere²⁰ che questo cambiamento è un tentativo di distruzione dell’etica, perché il misconoscimento del fine ultimo, nel caso che sia coerente fino alle estreme conseguenze, implica la distruzione dell’ordine che conduce ad esso, cioè dell’ordine etico. L’esperienza ci mostra che questa distruzione non è indolore, ma comporta dei costi umani molto elevati. La questione

²⁰ Per un approfondimento di questo tema mi permetto di rinviare al testo tommasiano e al *Saggio introduttivo*, contenuti nel libro Tommaso d’Aquino, *La felicità*, testo latino a fronte, saggio introduttivo, traduzione, note e apparati a cura di U. Galeazzi, Bompiani, Milano 2010.

del teismo e dell'ateismo non è puramente teorica, ma coinvolge l'agire umano e incide sulla concretezza dell'esistenza: "il *patri*, per o contro Dio, si impone in ogni minimo atto della vita quotidiana" (*ivi*, p. 13).

In conclusione, nei limiti dei temi affrontati in questo intervento, Del Noce ci ha insegnato che l'esito disumanizzante dell'esperimento marxista dipende dall'opzione atea, almeno per due ragioni emerse da questa ricerca: 1) il rifiuto ateo è anche rifiuto di un ordine morale superiore all'arbitrio umano, se a ciò si aggiunge il messianismo secolarizzato che pone come assoluto la futura società perfetta da realizzare, ci si ritiene legittimati a usare qualsiasi mezzo per conseguire la meta agognata; si ha, così, la totale risoluzione e dissoluzione dell'etica nella politica, che diventa spregiudicata e tende a dar vita al potere totalitario; 2) il rifiuto ateo è rifiuto di quel riconoscimento originario con cui Dio crea *ogni* essere umano, costituendolo nella sua inalienabile dignità, che esige, prima di tutto, rispetto; così quel rifiuto conduce all'annegamento del singolo uomo, considerato accidentale, nella vita del genere umano, al suo sacrificio per il mito della società perfetta, in quanto ridotto a mero "momento del processo della prassi" (*ivi*, p. 279), perché l'organicismo marxiano risolve l'uomo nei rapporti sociali, identifica l'essenza umana con il genere, negandola ai singoli uomini, la cui dignità viene trasferita nella società.

Sicché, anche a coloro che sono lontani da ardue indagini speculative, tendendo a verificare le teorie nella storia, Del Noce ritiene si possa "mostrare la correlazione tra la negazione di Dio e la negazione dell'uomo" (*ivi*, p. 551). Una constatazione che dà da pensare, pur nel disorientamento del nostro tempo.