

# Introduction

In our previous issue, we included a symposium of four essays on the 2010 *Decree on the Renewal of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy*, a document seeking to foster the reception of the 1998 encyclical *Fides et ratio*. These essays addressed (i) how a renewal of philosophical studies can be seen as providing a new impulse to evangelization, (ii) how—perhaps surprisingly to some—such studies should be seen as conducive to the spiritual life, (iii) how the work of Aquinas can function as an exemplary but not exclusive philosophical resource, and (iv) how the metaphysical and sapiential dimension of philosophy called for by the *Decree* can be recovered in our contemporary context. The current issue, under the heading of “Aquinas and the Philosophical Training of Theologians,” seeks to further support the reception of *Fides et ratio* and the subsequent *Decree* by gathering a collection of essays in the various areas of philosophy that are to be studied in preparation for courses in theology.

Following a common ordering of courses in systematic philosophy, our first essay is entitled “The Study of Logic for Future Theologians,” by Kevin F. Keiser. In it, Keiser makes a compelling case for the kind of training in logic needed by students of theology, by indicating how that philosophical training might be ordered, by specifying what needs to be learned, and by explaining how such learning is a necessary foundation for the sapiential culmination of philosophical studies in preparation for theology, and also for avoiding the deficiencies of the more relativistic tendencies that characterize our postmodern context. In our second essay, Dennis Q. McInerny provides an overview of a classical or Aristotelian/Thomistic account of “The Philosophy of Nature.” Reflecting the fruits of decades of teaching this topic, the author shows how it builds upon what was learned in the study of logic, how it introduces and deepens the understanding of various key doctrines of classical philosophy, and thereby prepares students for subsequent studies in areas such as metaphysics. Our next contribution is “Divine Action Unlocked: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Science,” by Michael Dodds, O.P. In this piece, Dodds builds upon McInerny’s essay by relating such classical ways of philosophizing about the natural world to contemporary scientific thought. Whereas recent centuries have seen scientific thought alienated from classical philosophy through the modern rejection of formal and final causality, Dodds shows how the discoveries of contemporary science have enabled a rapprochement that even opens new ways to speak of God’s activity in the world. Our next essay is among the last written by the late and esteemed Dominican scholar Benedict Ashley, O.P., and is entitled “Metaphysics (as Metascience).” Echoing what is developed at length in his magnum opus, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, Ashley explains how Aristotelian/

Thomistic metaphysics can contribute greatly to solving one of the primary challenges facing modern universities, namely the fragmentation of knowledge, which is remedied by the sapiential ordering of the diverse fields of study through what might more helpfully be called “metascience.”

Next is Stephen Loughlin’s “Thomistic Anthropology in the Philosophical Formation of Theologians.” This essay makes an argument for the importance of ensuring that future students of theology gain a firm grasp of Thomistic anthropology. Loughlin explains how this will provide a needed antidote to the deficiencies of alternative modern views of the person (especially various forms of materialism and dualism), provide a basis for understanding human affectivity and its subsequent shaping by virtue, and provide a sound foundation for understanding human knowledge (and thus education) in contrast to reductive accounts.

After this, follow three essays in what can be called practical philosophy. In the first, Martin Rhonheimer offers a short essay entitled “Natural Law as ‘Participated Theonomy’: Retrieving a Christian Tradition for the Renewal of Moral Theology.” In this text, Rhonheimer presents a concise and accessible version of an argument he has developed at greater length elsewhere regarding how to properly understand the essence of the natural law theory of Aquinas, regarding which *Veritatis splendor* calls for a recovery. In the next contribution, William Murphy addresses a contemporary debate regarding the recovery of Aquinas’s account of moral action as encouraged by the encyclical *Veritatis splendor* (VS). He does so by responding to a criticism published against his work on this topic in the journal *Theological Studies* by Joseph A. Selling, a professor emeritus of moral theology at what was formerly called the Catholic University of Leuven, and is now called simply KU Leuven. Murphy provides a thorough rebuttal of this leading contemporary revisionist. The essay can also be of use in understanding the deficiencies of revisionist morality more generally, including that of Selling’s disciple Todd A. Salzman, whose book *The Sexual Person* (co-authored with Michael G. Lawler) was the subject of a notification by the USCCB in 2010.<sup>1</sup> Our third essay in practical philosophy is John Hittinger’s “*Gaudium et spes* and the Importance of Political Philosophy.” In it, Hittinger looks at the challenges facing the Church as it makes its way in the modern world of pluralistic and democratic societies, and argues for the importance of seminarians developing a sound understanding of political philosophy and its relation to Catholic social teaching.

Whereas the above essays focus on the various areas of systematic philosophy, our last essay addresses the history of philosophy. In his “Aquinas within the History of Philosophy,” Augustine Ramelow, O.P. helps to locate Aquinas’s philosophy in

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1. “Inadequacies in the Theological Methodology and Conclusions of *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* by Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler.” [http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/Sexual\\_Person\\_2010-09-15.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/Sexual_Person_2010-09-15.pdf) accessed April 12, 2015.

light of what precedes and follows his work. In so doing, Ramelow illustrates how the practice of taking Aquinas as a guiding thinker can help to illumine not only the continuities of thought between the various thinkers in the history of philosophy, but also the differentiations between them, an appreciation of which contributes to the growth in philosophical wisdom that is so conducive to theological studies.

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