

Thomism and the *Nouvelle Théologie*: A Dialogue Renewed?

This issue of the *Josephinum Journal of Theology* offers a collection of essays loosely organized around the theme of “Thomism and the *Nouvelle Théologie*.” It thereby seeks to shed light on one of the most important areas in the last century of Catholic theology, namely the relation between the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and that of the diverse movement of *ressourcement* or “back to the sources” theology that was especially important in the years leading up to the Second Vatican Council, in the deliberations and documents of the council itself, and in subsequent developments.¹ The need to consider carefully the relationship between these two overlapping² threads of the Catholic tradition is especially important in thinking through the legacy of the council upon its fiftieth anniversary, and even more so when doing so through Pope Benedict XVI’s hermeneutic of reform and renewal in continuity.

Regarding the significance of twentieth-century *ressourcement* theology,³ the need for a deepening understanding of its major thinkers, philosophical roots,

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1. For a newly-published and important collection on this movement, see *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a discussion of the relation of the key terms *nouvelle théologie* and *ressourcement*, see the introduction, 11-12. Here they emphasize the often overlooked point that “*ressourcement* is essentially a practical theology engaged in an open, critical, and sometimes militant fashion with the most pressing issues affecting contemporary society;” 12. They discuss how some *nouveaux théologiens* (who were preoccupied with rethinking the supernatural), like Karl Rahner (with his characteristic “supernatural existential”) in his later writings, “did not tend to refer explicitly to the Fathers or to cite them” (11).
 2. This overlap includes not only Scripture and the Fathers but also much of classical philosophy and significant aspects of Thomistic thought. For a discussion of how “[i]t has been argued that no tension existed between the *ressourcement* movement and the thought of St. Thomas,” see “*Ressourcement* and the Retrieval of Thomism for the Contemporary World” by Stephen J. Fields, SJ in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 355-56 (note that, in this volume, the term *nouveaux théologien*, which I will use, is a self-description). Fields argues that the Dominican and Jesuit advocates of *ressourcement* theology saw Thomas himself as much like “the Fathers of the church whom the movement pledged to revive,” precisely because he “‘held theology, spirituality, and pastoral practice in a dynamic and vital unity’ even as he maintained a dialogue with the currents of his time”: thus he served as “a paradigm for the movement’s goal” (355). Fields reiterates the claim of *ressourcement* theologians that they were not opposing Thomas but instead defending him against distortions introduced by commentators like Cajetan, Suárez and Banez.
 3. The opening essay in the *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal* was written by Gemma Simmonds, C.J. and – perhaps surprisingly – is entitled “Jansenism: An Early *Ressourcement* Movement?,” 23-35. Though the question indicated by the title may sound perverse in light of widespread misunderstandings of the nature of Jansenism, Simmonds gives a fascinating account of how “a closer look at seventeenth-century Jansenism reveals a remarkable similarity to key aspects of the later *ressourcement*” (23).

and developments is evident when we remember that both sides of what was arguably the main division among post conciliar thinkers emerged from this same theological movement. The more “progressive” side became especially associated with the new (1965) international journal *Concilium*, the founders of which included Karl Rahner, SJ and Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, whereas the more “conservative” (for lack of a better term) side – which included thinkers like Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger – founded the journal *Communio*, which is published in several languages, including a Polish edition that was founded with the help of then Archbishop Karol Wojtyła.

In recent decades, moreover, the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas – after having fallen out of favor following the Second Vatican Council (thus further undermining a dialogue between these threads of tradition that, as will be discussed below, had already been ruptured after the Second World War) – is once again taking on a central role in Catholic philosophy and theology. In the present context, however, the thought of Aquinas has earned its way back into the discussion primarily through the growing recognition of its intrinsic merits (as can be seen, for example, in the contemporary flourishing of virtue ethics),⁴ and not by ecclesiastical mandate, as was attempted in the preconconciliar era of the antimodernist oath and the twenty-four Thomistic theses that were established to guide philosophical training in the Church.⁵ The unique role of Aquinas’s thought, moreover, has been reaffirmed for our day by the Church in the new *Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies*

These commonalities include, especially, not only the return to Scriptural and Patristic sources but also an emphasis on freedom of conscience and liturgical reforms.

4. For a new text that provides one of many recent illustrations of how St. Thomas’s thought continues to be shown as paradigmatic in achieving the goals sought by *ressourcement* thinkers, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP’s *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas*, tr. Bernhard Blankenhorn, OP (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), which is part of the new *Thomistic Ressourcement* series edited by Thomas Joseph White, OP and Matthew W. Levering. See also Issue 17-2 of the *Josephinum Journal of Theology* (Summer/Fall 2010) on the theme of “Servais Pinckaers and the Renewal of Thomistic Ethics.” Also reflecting recent efforts to illustrate how Thomistic thought achieves the legitimate goals sought by early *ressourcement* thinkers, see *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments and the Moral Life*, eds. Reinhard Hutter and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010).
5. For a brief discussion of modernism and antimodernism, see chapter 1 of *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mystery* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), by Fergus Kerr, OP. See also Gerald Loughlin’s “*Nouvelle Théologie: A Return to Modernism?*” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 36-50. Loughlin discusses how – for former Jesuit and modernist George Tyrell – the dominant concern was a recovery of tradition against neo-scholasticism, especially in its Suarezian form that was the official thought of the Society of Jesus (Tyrell, interestingly, had been removed from his teaching post within the Society due to his preference for Aquinas). Loughlin concludes his worthwhile essay with the following line: “If *nouvelle théologie* was a return to mystery, then it was also a return to modernism.” It is now common for scholars from a variety of perspectives to admit that much of what was condemned as modernism is now mainstream. See also “Modernism a Century on” by Aidan Nichols, OP, available at <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/anichols/modernism.htm>, and accessed on March 7, 2012.

of *Philosophy* (hereafter the *Decree*).⁶ This important new directive specifies his thought as the “exemplary” (though “not exclusive”) representative of the *philosophia perennis* (no. 12), and directs that students in especially the “first cycle” of philosophical (i.e., the BPhil) and theological (i.e., the STB or MDiv) formation gain not just a “a solid and coherent synthesis of [philosophical] doctrine” (no. 15a), but habitual knowledge of it that culminates in a sapiential synthesis (nos. 3-4, 8, 11, 60). The *Decree*, therefore, can be read as a reaffirmation of the fact that Thomism “has long held pride of place as the reliable hermeneutic of Christianity.”⁷

Ressourcement theology, on the other hand, was not just important in leading to and contributing to the documents of the Second Vatican Council but remains in the forefront not only through the writings of Pope Benedict XVI,⁸ but also through those of various thinkers, including especially Balthasar. It seems, therefore, that Catholic intellectual life has begun – and will need to continue – a more thoughtful encounter between these two overlapping streams of the tradition, a dialogue that – as will be discussed below – was unfortunately sidelined when Thomism was widely abandoned in the postwar years and even more in those following the council, at least partially due to a backlash against the official imposition of some aspects of it in the antimodernist era. The main thesis of this introductory essay is, therefore, that the new *Decree* – and also the new document by the International Theological Commission entitled “Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria”⁹ – are especially timely for our day because they can facilitate both

6. This decree was presented by the Prefect and Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education on March 22, 2011; the changes it includes to the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana* had previously been “approved” by Pope Benedict XVI (On the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, January 28, 2011), who at the same time “confirmed” the rest of the text. For a historically-contextualized reading of the *Decree*, see my “The New Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy: Historical Context and Content,” forthcoming in *Seminary Journal*.

7. This citation is from Stephen J. Fields’s previously cited “*Ressourcement* and the Retrieval of Thomism” (358), and is a paraphrase of a statement of Aidan Nichols.

8. For a brief discussion of whether Pope Benedict XVI should be considered a *ressourcement* thinker, see “Benedict XVI: A *Ressourcement* Theologian?” by Lewis Ayers, Patricia Kelly, and Thomas Humphries in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 423-39. Although Benedict does not want to be seen as founding a new school, they affirm that he can be considered a second generation *ressourcement* theologian “at a fundamental level” (423) because of factors such as the following: his early reading of de Lubac; his involvement in the liturgical renewal; his attention to the Fathers; his Augustinianism; his efforts toward a biblical hermeneutic that is not only historical-critical but incorporates the fruits of the theological tradition; and the critique he articulates against certain forms of neo-scholasticism (e.g., the rigid approach of one of his philosophy professors).

9. Unfortunately, the present context allows little more than a few brief references to this new (as of March 8, 2012) document. A first look at it, however, suggests it reflects closely the theme of our present journal issue on the importance of the ongoing dialogue between *ressourcement* and Thomistic thought. The emphasis on the sources is especially evident in the first chapter on “Listening to the Word of God,” and in the second chapter that treats of the theological task within the communion of the Church, which begins with Scripture but asks for it to be studied in fidelity to tradition and adherence to the magisterium. The first chapter is dense with biblical citations, with footnote references to texts like the Second Vatican Council’s *Dei verbum* and the recent apostolic exhorta-

a fruitful encounter between these two overlapping intellectual currents and a reading of the council through a hermeneutic of reform and renewal in continuity.

I would argue that, especially in the American context, the need to understand well the relation between these two schools is crucial for several reasons. First, contemporary students (including seminarians) are coming from a culture marked by relativism and, in contrast to this, are looking for clear and solid teaching. Second, in contrast to the optimistic and sometimes even utopian views of the modern world that were more characteristic of the conciliar era, Catholic seminarians in particular are more likely to see serious problems in contemporary society including widespread threats to human life and freedom of conscience, rampant sexual immorality and the resulting collapse of the family unit, environmental devastation, and massive problems with government debt that threatens the global economy. Although a few of the brightest and best-educated may be especially curious about understanding and responding to more recent thinkers like Martin Heidegger, most students – especially those in first-cycle courses – are not at all prepared to engage seriously with such thinkers. Third, they are aware that the Second Vatican Council was followed by considerable intellectual and ecclesiastical turmoil, and they tend to think it had to do with departure from the tradition and excessive accommodation to the spirit of the age. Thus, in especially their early studies, such seminarians are well-served by studying – and generally want to study – the most central and trustworthy authors of the Catholic tradition like the Scriptures, the Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas. Fourth, contemporary students and especially seminarians are aware of a clear rejection of something called modernism in the preconciliar Church, and of the apparent acceptance of things that look a lot like what was understood to be previously rejected, along with an understanding that such questions relate to the relation between Thomism and the *nouvelle théologie*. In my opinion, the situation I have just described suggests the need to structure philosophy and theology curricula – especially in the first-cycle courses – in a way that grounds students in the fundamental “points of reference” in the tradition, while also giving some indication of the key areas of dialogue among thinkers in the decades surrounding the Second Vatican Council that should be explored through more advanced studies and life-long learning.

For this issue of our journal, the introduction is considerably more developed than usual, which is intended not as an alternative to a close reading of the subsequent essays, but indeed as an encouragement to read them with particular attention, and even to encourage future discussion within this journal. The following

tion *Verbum domini*, with multiple references to St. Augustine and even one to Henri de Lubac's *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988). The second chapter continues to draw heavily on *Dei verbum* and *Verbum domini*, with broader references to the Fathers, to medievals like Bonaventure and Aquinas, and to various magisterial documents. The third chapter, on “Giving an Account of the Truth of God,” addresses questions such as the rationality of theology and its ultimate unity in the Mystery of God, which nevertheless allows one to recognize (within limits) a plurality of theologies. This unity is centered “in a common memory” regarding the “reference points” of the Fathers and “the synthesis of St. Thomas, *Doctor communis*” (no. 79), who is cited ten times in this third chapter, especially in regard to recognizing the sapiential dimension of theology.

remarks will, therefore, introduce and, to some extent, enter into dialogue with the thirteen essays to follow. We begin with two early *ressourcement* pieces from the nineteen-forties (one available for the first time in English) followed by a famous – or, to some, infamous – criticism from a leading Thomist of the day that until recent years has been available only in French, and is provided here in a revised translation. Next is the republication of a valuable 1990 essay on the importance of de Lubac to mid-century Catholic thought, which is followed by four additional essays centered on the contemporary debate surrounding de Lubac’s work, especially as it relates to Aquinas and his interpreters. Also included is a detailed study of the question – especially important to *ressourcement* theology – of the ability, in the life of Grace, to have experiential knowledge the Divine persons of the Trinity, exploring the work of some recent interpreters of St. Thomas, along with Karl Rahner and St. Maximus the Confessor. This is followed by a symposium on an important recent book on twentieth century Catholic theologians, including contributions from four scholars that shed further light on the emerging engagement between Thomists and *ressourcement* theologians.

Internal Causes for the Rise of Atheism

Following this introductory essay, our next contribution, entitled “Internal Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred,”¹⁰ was written in 1942 under the Nazi occupation by the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac, who – as is evident from what we have said above – was in the forefront of *ressourcement* thought. Although he is often seen today as an opponent of St. Thomas, his opposition seems to have been more properly directed against the Suarezian scholasticism that was then taught in the Society of Jesus. Indeed, his opposition to Suarezianism solidified in his philosophical studies under Pedro Descocoq SJ,¹¹ and even resulted in de Lubac being called a “Thomist” within the Society! In fact, however, the early de Lubac was not so much interested in Aquinas – nor in the Patristic studies for which he later became known – as in philosophical questions, and especially in the philosophy of Maurice Blondel,¹² an influence on de Lubac that

10. Originally published in *Bulletin des aumôniers catholiques. Chantiers de la jeunesse*, 31 (August 1942). Cf. *Résistance chrétienne à l’antisémitisme*, 116 [English translation: *Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 110ff], reprinted with permission of Ignatius press.

11. Regarding Descocoq, who was considered the last great representative of Suarezianism, see Peter J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française: The Clash of the Church’s Role in society during the Modernist Era* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), chapter 3.

12. For a comprehensive new introduction to Blondel’s life and work, see Oliva Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel: A Philosophical Life*, *Ressourcement: Retrieval & Renewal in Catholic Thought*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), from which I draw in what follows. In the rationalist and anti-religious intellectual climate of the Sorbonne in late nineteenth-century Paris (3), Blondel wanted to articulate a philosophy of the supernatural (which will be a central theme for de Lubac). Though “recognizing the force of the Thomistic synthesis” (7), Blondel “sees himself as having to steer a course between two philosophies very much in vogue in his day, Thomism and Kantianism” (7), although through his doctoral studies and early years as a professor “it does not seem that he had studied much of St.

is widely recognized.¹³ De Lubac offers in our first essay an “examination of conscience,” proposing a “list of deficiencies” that would help to explain how weaknesses in the internal life of the Church had contributed to the lost sense of the supernatural and corresponding rise of atheism, especially in Europe. De Lubac focuses on the following four internal deficiencies. The first was “an easily observable contrast in many men between their secular knowledge and their religious instruction,” resulting in a dualism between what is taught in school (science, evolution, polygenism) and in their catechetical classes (creation, monogenism). The second internal deficiency was a “poorly balanced doctrinal edifice” whose “dominant concern is less to seek an understanding of faith, to be nourished on mystery, than to respond to heresies”; this doctrinal edifice, as we will see in reference to our last essay by Jared Wicks, SJ, had a limited understanding of “positive” theology (emphasizing doctrinally-weighted theological propositions, backed up with citations from Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium) which was useful but only

Thomas” (130), and what of Thomas he had studied (through his doctorate) was “the kind of scholastic manual prevalent in Catholic seminaries at the end of the nineteenth centuries, supposedly written *ad mentem sancti Thomae*...” (130). To steer his course between Thomism and Kantianism in his later works, Blondel’s approach to “philosophy” is quite distinct, drawing, for example, on thinkers like St. Paul (5), which explains the Christocentric aspect of his thought that will also be decisive for de Lubac. De Lubac’s earliest philosophical formation was also shaped by his private reading of thinkers like Joseph Maréchal, SJ, the founder (along with Pierre Rousselot, SJ) of “Transcendental Thomism,” which – among other things – attempted to harmonize the thought of Aquinas with the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant. Through his private studies, de Lubac was already critical of Suarezianism and strongly committed to Blondel before studying under Descroqs, whose polemic writings gave particular attention to Blondel.

13. See also Michael A. Conway’s “Maurice Blondel and *Ressourcement*” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 65-82. Among many interesting points, he discusses how on the one hand the very nature of Blondel’s work as being philosophy and not theology was questioned from the beginning (e.g., the theological character of his thought proved an immediate obstacle to his obtaining a particular position in teaching philosophy), whereas on the other hand, his work was among the most decisive influences on twentieth century Catholic thought. This basic *ressourcement* understanding of “philosophy” including – as fundamental principles – elements such as St. Paul’s Christocentrism requires careful consideration in light of the new *Decree*, which expects philosophical courses to follow a properly philosophical methodology, meaning that they proceed through natural reason and not through appeal to revelation. I refer to no. 15b of the *Decree*, under the heading of “Philosophical Formation in Faculties of Theology and Seminaries.” It makes clear that although this philosophical formation is “an integral part of theological studies in Faculties of Theology or in seminaries,” it must not lose “its autonomy” (from theology) through an “excessive mixing of philosophical and theological subjects – or, indeed, of subjects of another sort – [that] ends up giving the students a defective formation in the respective intellectual “habitus,” and introduces confusion between the methodologies of the various subjects and their specific epistemological configurations.” It specifies, therefore, that philosophy students develop the habitus (or intellectual virtue) of arguing according to principles accessible to natural reason and to distinguish this from proceeding based on Scripture or Tradition, which will enable them to make informed and effective use of reason within theology; the concerns of the Decree include avoiding the “risk of fideism” in theology and “either a manipulation or fragmentation of philosophy.”

preparatory.¹⁴ The third perceived deficiency – a judgment that was apparently indebted to de Lubac’s reading of Maurice Blondel’s philosophy – was “a duality going so far as to be a kind of separation between nature and the supernatural” that would deny the “intimate relation between them, an ordination, a finality.” Finally, de Lubac perceived a “rationalist spirit of those theologians who...can inventory, arrange, and label everything, and who have answers for all objections – but who have, unfortunately, lost sight of the mystery of the Lord.” With this last point, de Lubac apparently had in mind Suarezianism and the manuals used in dogmatic theology, but he probably also included those neo-Thomists who practiced a more philosophical reading of Aquinas (especially one without attention to historical considerations) that would seem to be in tension with more patristic and biblically-inspired approaches that would highlight the mysterious character of the faith.

Postwar Orientations of Religious Thought

The second essay, “*Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse*” (“Current Orientations of Religious Thought”), was published in the journal *Études* in 1946 by Jean Daniélou, SJ, who was also prominent in preconciliar *ressourcement* theology; he served, for example, with de Lubac as a coeditor of the influential series *Sources chrétiennes*, a primary goal of which was to foster a recovery of the breadth and depth of the tradition.¹⁵ In this somewhat programmatic essay, Daniélou begins with a discussion of the widening audience for theology based on “the renewal of Christian life among the elites and the requirement for a more substantial doctrinal and spiritual nourishment,” along with “the virulence of today’s forms of atheism.” This situation calls for “for theology to be present to the world of thought” (adding, in a not so subtle criticism of scholasticism, that “there can be no doubt that it has been absent”), and a healing of the “rupture between theology and life.” This situation was a result of the modernist crisis, in response to which “Neo-Thomism and the biblical Commission were the guardrails. But obviously guardrails are not answers.” The answers would come from a theology that addressed present day demands.

In response to these perceived demands, Daniélou proceeds to provide an overview of the main emphases of *ressourcement* theology including the following: (i) “a return to the sources” focusing on the recovery of Scripture (not just exegesis but “biblical theology”), of the Fathers and of the liturgy (leading to “the contemplation of the realities hidden behind the sacramental signs”); (ii) atten-

14. While appreciating the merits of this propositional approach of the (primarily) Jesuit manuals, especially for beginning students, its limitations are significant. Although it indicates the doctrinal weight of the theses and indicates relevant biblical and traditional texts, which is helpful, it does not – for example – treat the points of doctrine systematically and within a sapiential synthesis, such as that provided by Aquinas and called for by the new *Decree*. Similarly, the citations from a biblical author like St. Paul, for example, would lose the broader context of how those texts functioned within both the theological perspective of the given letter of the Apostle and the broader Pauline corpus.

15. For a helpful introduction to Daniélou, see “Daniélou and the Twentieth-Century Patristic Renewal” by Bernard Pottier, SJ, in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 250-62.

tion to ongoing contact with contemporary thought; and (iii) a special attention to the relation of theology to the lives of persons living in the world. Besides the above references to Neo-Thomism as a guardrail, the essay does not mention the philosophy or theology of St. Thomas Aquinas as helpful to the current situation; thus, Daniélou implicitly does not see Aquinas's as a present orientation of religious thought, which in its day was a provocative point to imply. Indeed, Joseph Komonchak writes that the editor of the Dominican journal *Revue thomiste*, "Marie-Michel Labourdette, saw Daniélou's article as a 'declaration of war' on Thomism," precisely because it called into question the theological progress made over time, and especially in the thought of Aquinas.¹⁶ Like his *ressourcement* collaborators, Daniélou's primary dissatisfaction was with the Suarezian scholasticism within the Society, and commentators on Aquinas,¹⁷ and was not limited to the previously mentioned Neo-Thomists whom he saw as providing a helpful but inadequate guardrail.

On the contrary, Daniélou thinks a living theology will address contemporary concerns such as "the notion of history" (which "was foreign to Thomism"), and the communal dimension of salvation. Philosophically speaking, Daniélou also sought for theology to be enriched and broadened by contact with the "two abysses" of historicity and subjectivity (both "foreign to scholastic theology") to which it is exposed by modern and contemporary thinkers like K. Marx, F. Nietzsche, F. Dostoyevsky, S. Kierkegaard, C. Darwin, G.W.F. Hegel, J-P Sartre, K. Barth, G. Marcel, and M. Scheler. Indeed, "the Christian mystery is that in which the conflict of modern thought finds its supreme expression." Instead of "showing how concepts are chained together as does Aristotelian logic," an existential and phenomenological path "must now become the basis of all theology that founds itself upon the descriptions of concrete religious realities, between which she then goes on to establish connections." Contemporary theology must not "place itself on a speculative and timeless plain" but must "explain to [men] the meaning of their lives."

16. See Komonchak's "*Humani Generis* and *Nouvelle Théologie*" in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 144-46.

17. Far beyond the scope of this essay is a consideration of the extent to which various Thomistic commentators were guilty of the excess rationalism – linked to univocal predication and a deficient understand of Aquinas's teaching on analogy – of which *ressourcement* thinkers criticized the Suarezians. This also relates to pedagogical considerations according to which more scholastically-inclined thinkers will be more concerned about the philosophical dimensions of a particular subject whereas more *ressourcement* thinkers will tend to be more concerned with a rich grounding in the sources, and helping students to encounter the mystery of which the texts speak. A complexity here is that – as emphasized in the new *Decree* – it is important that students obtain a sapiential and metaphysical horizon and "integrating vision" (see nos. 3, 4, 8, 11, Art. 59 § 1, Art. 60) or synthesis along with the ability to understand complex philosophical topics like "the object of the moral act" (no. 11). Although, for example, the professor should give attention to how Aquinas draws on his sources, thereby making the discussion edifying and applicable to spirituality and pastoral ministry, only so much attention can be given to Scriptural, spiritual and pastoral concerns (at least in theology courses) if one wants also to address also the philosophical points at issue and contribute to the habitual formation of a sapiential, metaphysical and integrating vision. Perhaps some of the much discussed dryness of the preconiliar seminary manuals can be attributed to emphasis on the more philosophical points.

As Joseph Komonchak discusses in his “*Humani Generis* and *Nouvelle Théologie*,” the Dominican Labourdette – who was from the Toulousian school of French Thomism, which also advocated a return to the sources – responded to the perceived “declaration of war” by Daniélou “respectfully and intelligently, as a serious theological critique,” seeking to foster a sober dialogue based on sound arguments. Toward this end, Labourdette also refused – in his role as editor of *Revue thomist* – to publish his confrere Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s “*La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?*.” Unfortunately, as Komonchak notes, the “Jesuits’ response was so vigorous that one can wonder whether any real theological dialogue would have been possible; but all possibility was erased by the almost simultaneous publication early in 1947” of our following essay, which Komonchak describes as an “atomic bomb.”¹⁸ The path sought by Labourdette, therefore, was not taken in the postwar years.

Garrigou-Lagrange against *La nouvelle théologie*

As perhaps the leading representative of pre conciliar neo-Thomism in the wake of Leo XIII’s 1879 encyclical *Aeterni patris*, and as advisor to the Holy Office, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas was convinced that the new theology was a serious threat to Catholic intellectual life. He was especially alarmed by the significant departures of *ressourcement* thinkers from what was seen to be the venerable Thomistic philosophy for alternatives such as that of Maurice Blondel; the Dominican was also alarmed by their more sympathetic dialogue with modern and contemporary thinkers, which was to proceed alongside a growing estrangement from Thomism. Garrigou-Lagrange was, therefore, determined to sound the alarm.

Having been denied publication in *Revue thomist*, his article was published in a (nominally) 1946 issue (actually appearing in early 1947) of the journal *Angelicum* as “*La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?*”; it is provided here in English as “Where is the New Theology Leading Us?” Reflecting the concerns of the antimodernist era in which Catholic theologians were required to declare their adherence to the twenty-four Thomistic theses, Garrigou-Lagrange’s essay calls into question the “new theology” being advanced – apparently as an alternative to the magisterially-specified Thomism – by Jesuits like Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou and Henri Bouillard, by Dominicans including Marie-Dominique Chenu and Yves Congar, by laymen like Blondel,¹⁹ and through the works of the poet Charles Péguy (d. 1914).

18. Komonchak, “*Humani Generis* and *Nouvelle Théologie*,” 144-47. Labourdette’s response to Daniélou had been published as “La théologie et ses sources,” in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 33 (1946): 385-401.

19. Although he considered himself a philosopher, Blondel’s thought is – as already noted – deeply influenced by St. Paul’s Christology, which reflects what might be called a “blurring of the boundaries” between theology and philosophy among *ressourcement* thinkers. Besides Blondel, early *ressourcement* thought was especially influenced by the work of the French Jesuit Pierre Rousselot (1878-1915) and the Belgian Jesuit Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944); these latter two – who were much more grounded in Aquinas than was Blondel – were considered founders of the “transcendental Thomism,” as associated especially with Karl Rahner, SJ and Bernard Lonergan, SJ. Rahner was also deeply

For Garrigou-Lagrange, it was perfectly clear that *la nouvelle théologie* was leading Catholicism to a revitalized modernism through the abandonment of Thomistic philosophy combined with a more sympathetic dialogue with modern and contemporary thought. This is especially true, he thinks, in the way it has discarded the scholastic notion of truth as the *adaequatio rei et intellectus* (adequation, “making equal” or conformity of thing and intellect) for Blondel’s *conformitas mentis et vitae* (the conformity of mind and life).²⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange asks the provocative question: “what is proposed to replace Thomism, as if Leo XIII in the Encyclical *Aeterni patris had been wrong* and as if Pius X, in renewing this same recommendation, had gone down the wrong path? And, where is this ‘new theology’ going, with the new teachers it has inspired? Where but on the road of skepticism, fantasy and heresy?” So Garrigou-Lagrange’s fundamental question concerns which philosophy these new theologians would propose to replace Thomism. Whereas for de Lubac, the philosophy of Blondel was fundamental, as we will see below, later theologians in this tradition like Hans Urs von Balthasar (who also drew extensively from Aquinas, but not in ethics) will – as one of our contributors explains – come to affirm a plurality of philosophies and theologies, precisely because they are seen to be more adequate to the Divine mystery.

Given Garrigou-Lagrange’s respected place as advisor to the Holy Office, such a piece was bound to be taken as a call for authoritative intervention (which would come later, in the 1951 encyclical *Humani generis*). Labourdette, therefore, wrote to Garrigou-Lagrange that “[t]here is one thing that we have absolutely to avoid, or risk losing all credibility: giving the impression that we are appealing, to settle the debates, to Roman authority.” He continued ... [i]t would be catastrophic if Thomism could only defend itself by recourse to authority.”²¹ This catastrophe would include perpetuating the false perception that Thomistic thought was somehow opposed, or inadequate, to a fruitful engagement with Scripture, Patristic or contemporary thought (a perception that became widespread after the Council).

influenced by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, under whom he studied and with whom he maintained an ongoing dialogue.

20. In a provocative statement, Blondel wrote in 1906 that “[The] abstract and fanciful *adaequatio rei et intellectus* [correspondence of reality and intellect] gets replaced by the legitimate methodological investigation, the *adaequatio realis mentis et vitae* [the real correspondence of mind and life],” which is cited by Hans Boersma in his “Analogy of Truth: The Sacramental Epistemology of *Nouvelle Théologie*” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 163. See the index of Blanchette’s, *Blondel: A Philosophical Life* for a further discussion of Blondel’s interaction with the thought of Aquinas. Blanchette writes that “Blondel would later regret the inadequacy of his view of Thomism as expressed in the *Lettre* [his 1896 *The Letter on Apologetics*], and having read more of St. Thomas himself and after seeing how Aquinas could be read in a way that was more in keeping with the modern problematic of religion” (132). Especially after the anti-modernist encyclical *Pascendi* of 1907 (230-31), Blondel makes later uses Aquinas in his teaching and writing, putting this thought into dialogue with moderns like Descartes, though continuing to prefer Augustine to Aquinas and remaining critical of aspects of the latter’s thought (267-72). More generally, Blanchette’s work can be consulted fruitfully for a deeper understanding of this major influence on *ressourcement* thought.
21. As cited by Komonchak, in his “*Humani Generis* and *Nouvelle Théologie*,” 145.

Komonchak continues that “Garrigou-Lagrange’s ‘atomic bomb’ had the effect of so frightening the Jesuit superiors in Rome that they refused to allow the indicted Jesuits to reply to it; and they began to indicate reservations about their French colleagues, in particular the tone and content of their response to Labourdette.” Moreover, “no real theological dialogue was possible because the Jesuits were kept under very tight rein by their superiors.” The debate, moreover, shifted to de Lubac’s book *Surnaturel* (147), which will be discussed below and in subsequent essays. Thus, was squandered the opportunity for a thoughtful consideration of how the “return to the sources” should be understood in relation to Thomistic thought, while also taking into account the risks associated with a more eclectic philosophical approach. Given how *ressourcement* thinkers like de Lubac spent most of the decade before the Second Vatican Council “under a cloud” of suspicion, it is not surprising that there was an over-reaction against Thomistic thought in the conciliar and post conciliar years.

Though a return to the polemical tone on the antimodernist debates is certainly to be avoided, the seriousness with which the issues at stake were taken suggests that they merit careful consideration today, especially since it seems clear that the discussions were prematurely curtailed, and also because they have again risen to the forefront based on a growing recognition of their intrinsic importance. Given our historical distance from the most heated of these debates, we can hope that a more complete and fruitful discussion is now possible. As we will see below, the contemporary interaction between Thomists and *ressourcement* thinkers indeed includes the former claiming that the postconciliar displacement of Aquinas as a standard theology (and philosophy) and common point of reference contributed significantly to a destabilization of Catholic theology. Though such a claim might seem unnecessarily provocative, it should not be treated as a Thomistic “declaration of war” and would seem to be at least analogous to the following statement from the new *Decree* (no. 9), which states “[i]t has rightly been observed that ‘the crisis of postconciliar theology is, in large part, the crisis of philosophical foundations....’”²² Because, therefore, such renewed dialogue will require the participants to have a solid training in the *philosophia perennis* for which Thomas is the exemplary though not exclusive representative, my thesis that the new *Decree* and “Theology Today” are especially apt for facilitating an ongoing conversation between these two vital streams of the Catholic tradition, seems at least plausible if not evident.

22. This is obviously not to say that the *Decree* is calling for a return to Thomistic philosophy as Garrigou-Lagrange presented it in his day, although its emphasis on learning Aquinas as the exemplary thinker in a broader context can be seen as an example of reform and renewal in continuity. The relevant footnote no. 20 from no. 9 of the *Decree* points to a text by Joseph Ratzinger, “L’unità di missione e persona nella figura di Giovanni Paolo II” which was later reprinted in *Giovanni Paolo II. Il mio amato predecessore* (Vatican City: Cinisello Basalmo, 2007), p. 16. See also “Si è identificato con la Chiesa perciò ne può essere la voce” in *L’Osservatore Romano*, May 1, 2011.

De Lubac's Role in Mid-century Thought on Theology and Culture

The fourth essay is “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac” by Joseph Komonchak, Professor Emeritus of The Catholic University of America, which was originally published in *Theological Studies* in 1990. In this essay, Komonchak highlights the work of Henri de Lubac as a theologian whose contributions were central to the mid-twentieth century transition of Catholic thought from what it had been in the preceding antimodernist era in which the Church confronted modernity by forming a distinct subculture. The essay begins by describing what thinkers like de Lubac (clearly in step with Daniélou) saw as a situation of “theology in exile,” in which Christianity was alienated from the surrounding culture for reasons including de Lubac’s four internal ones as summarized above. Among the most important of these causes of alienation was, for de Lubac, a theology based on a theory of “pure nature,” which resulted in “separated” forms of theology and philosophy. Komonchak outlines de Lubac’s efforts in response to this diagnosis or analysis of the problem, a response that focused on efforts to recover the “breadth and depth” of the tradition, including the Scriptures and the Fathers. These were seen as crucial to the articulation of a “redemptive theology,” which would bring the faith to bear more fully on the lives of Christians living in the world. For Komonchak, these debates are complex and require careful study; as the literature here cited indicates, they are now receiving such attention, especially in light of Pope Benedict XVI’s call for reading the Second Vatican Council through a hermeneutic of reform and renewal in continuity, and in light of the fiftieth anniversary of the council, which is stimulating a broad consideration of its legacy. This essay by Komonchak, and his related work, will be invaluable to those seeking to understand these questions.

A Recent Mediation between de Lubac and Garrigou-Lagrange

The fifth essay is entitled “Garrigou and de Lubac on Divine Revelation” and was originally presented at Oxford University in 2010 by Aidan Nichols, OP, who has not only written a recent monograph on Garrigou-Lagrange but has published six books on the late Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), who is at present arguably the most influential theologian coming out of the *ressourcement* movement.²³ Recognizing the need for a thoughtful, contemporary consideration of the key issues at stake in the dialogue between *ressourcement* thinkers and Thomists, Nichols encourages his readers to avoid the temptation to read Garrigou-Lagrange and de Lubac as systematically and antagonistically opposed, an avoidance that will help them to recognize the common ground between these thinkers. Building upon the previous observation that de Lubac’s main targets were Suarezianism (and what he saw as the misreadings of Aquinas that resembled it) and certain thesis-based manuals, we might also note that de Lubac claimed to be seeking in his

23. Though some might point to Pope Benedict XVI, it seems to me that he does not want to be seen as reflecting a particular school of thought.

earthshaking book *Surnaturel* a recovery of the genuine teaching of St. Thomas;²⁴ nonetheless, we must keep in mind that de Lubac's decisive intellectual commitment was to the philosophy of Blondel.

Nichols' essay proceeds by reviewing some characteristic emphases in Garrigou-Lagrange's approach to revelation. These include its relation to the First Vatican Council's *Dei filius*, the way it reflects a particular approach to apologetics, and the way it highlights the truth-bearing capacity of propositional statements. More surprisingly, Nichols explains how Garrigou-Lagrange's approach to revelation (centered on the notion of the *testimonium Christi*) is closer than many would expect to the "Christological concentration" of revelation as found in the writings of Henri de Lubac and in Vatican II's *Dei verbum*. Nichols writes, for example, that although de Lubac indeed thought that later Scholastics were "too unilaterally concerned with the propositions in which the truth-value of revelation comes to expression, de Lubac nevertheless warns against any depreciation of just this propositional aspect." Nichols, in fostering a more fruitful mutual understanding, thus presents a reading of de Lubac that is more congenial to Thomistic interlocutors.

Revisiting de Lubac on The Natural Desire and Twofold End of Man

Having previously noted that the central debate after *Humani generis* shifted to de Lubac's *Surnaturel*, our next two contributions reflect recent Thomistic scholarship that revisits de Lubac's reading of Aquinas and the Thomistic commentators on the natural desire to see God, which was at the very epicenter of twentieth century debate on the relation between nature and grace. Our sixth essay is by Lawrence Feingold of Ave Maria University and is entitled "The Natural Desire to See God, the Twofold End of Man, and Henri de Lubac." In it, Feingold offers an essay developed from his more extensive and much-discussed study on this important topic.²⁵ Reflecting the fruits of his investigation of the primary and secondary literature, Feingold concludes that de Lubac was correct in claiming that Aquinas held that we have a natural desire to see God. He argues, however, that de Lubac was mistaken in several respects: (i) in claiming that Aquinas saw this desire for the vision of God (i.e., in beatific vision) as innate (that is natural) and not elicited (i.e., dependent on a prior judgment of reason that there is a God); (ii) in claiming that Thomas rejected the notion of an imperfect beatitude;²⁶

24. His ongoing appreciation for the thought Aquinas – as distinguished, however, from latter commentators – can be seen, for example, in his correspondence with the influential Thomist Etienne Gilson. *Letters of Etienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988).

25. *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters*, 2nd Edition, Faith and Reason: Studies in Catholic Theology and Philosophy (Naples: Sapientia Press, 2010).

26. De Lubac gives his 1948 interpretation of Aquinas on this topic in his *Duplex Hominis Beatitudo* in *Communio* 35 (Winter 2008): 599-612, which was originally published as "Duplex Hominis Beatitudo (Saint Thomas, Ia 2ae, q. 62, a. D)," in *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948): 290–99. Here (600), in an apparent allusion to Garrigou-Lagrange's

(iii) in provocatively claiming that the Thomistic tradition was radically unfaithful to Thomas on especially the natural desire to see God. In challenging these points, Feingold also challenges (iv) the claim – especially provocative for Thomists – of de Lubac and his followers, that by getting the relation between nature and grace wrong, the Thomistic tradition therefore fostered the growth of naturalism and atheism.²⁷

Feingold laments that an unfortunate consequence of de Lubac's charges – primarily against Aquinas's interpreters – was to contribute significantly to the marginalization of Thomism in the Church after the Second Vatican Council (when it was vulnerable to a counter-reaction after the experience of *Humani generis*), and to facilitate the “loss of a proper understanding of the gratuitousness of grace.” We think here of certain post conciliar developments that seemed to undermine the Church's missionary impetus, including certain understandings of “anonymous Christianity” (not necessarily that of K. Rahner himself) suggesting that everyone was already a Christian, or understandings of grace that led to the belief that everyone was already in a state of sanctifying grace, or certain theories of universal salvation, or certain understandings of liberation theology that undermined the fundamentally soteriological character of the Christian faith. At least as important, it seems to me, is the way the displacement of Thomism corresponded with a generation in which Aquinas's ethics was largely ignored; this occurred, tragically, at the peak of the sexual revolution and in the midst of the controversy surrounding *Humanae vitae*.

famous essay, de Lubac charges that the doctrine of a “purely natural order” is the new doctrine (*la nouvelle doctrine*) tracing not to Aquinas, but to Francisco Suarez, SJ. In a counter-punch to Garrigou-Lagrange's “*La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?*,” de Lubac writes that “more recently [1946], Père Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange has made the new doctrine [of a purely natural order] his own in his latest work, *De Gratia*” (600-601)! Regarding the twofold happiness, de Lubac emphasizes that earthly happiness is an imperfect form of it for Aquinas, which is certainly a correct reading, although it is not clear to me who among his interlocutors had denied this (or instead claimed that earthly happiness was perfectly fulfilling of man). De Lubac and many of his followers seem to think that if one posits a natural order (e.g., to emphasize the gratuity of the supernatural – which gratuity he also held), this grants too much to the natural order, which then allegedly leads many to choose the merely natural happiness, thus undermining the sense of the sacred and thereby fostering atheism.

27. Thomists, not surprisingly, find this charge unconvincing to say the least. They instead tend to see the intellectual roots of modern atheism in modern philosophies which get wrong the relation between the creator and creation, making faith in God unintelligible. See, for example, Cornelio Fabro's *God in Exile: A Study of the Internal Dynamic of Modern Atheism, from its Roots in the Cartesian Cogito to the Present Day*, tr. Arthur Gibson (Westminster: Newman, 1968). As a related and equally significant cause of modern atheism, Thomists will similarly point to the widely-perceived incompatibility between modern science and a classic account of the Christian faith, such as that of Aquinas. This perception traces back to the belief that modern science has disproven the Aristotelian metaphysics on which Aquinas relied. For an extensive effort to demonstrate the ongoing validity of Aristotelian/Thomistic metaphysics in light of modern science, see Benedict M. Ashley, OP. *The Way toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). For a further response to this bold and often repeated charge of de Lubac, see Feingold's *Natural Desire*, 392-395.

Aquinas on the Supernatural: A Recent Exploration of Related Teachings

Our seventh essay, by David Liberto of Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, is entitled “St. Thomas on the Supernatural: Christological, Eschatological, and Anthropological Insights from the Thomistic Corpus.” In it, Liberto reviews a collection of recent essays on the debate surrounding de Lubac’s work on “the supernatural” and the natural desire to see God in the Beatific Vision. This collection was edited by Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, and reflects the previously-noted Toulousian school of French Thomism, which is sympathetic to the concerns of *ressourcement* thinkers with regard to their attention to the historical context in which Thomas wrote; on this basis the authors in this collection seek fruitful dialogue. Liberto focuses his review on three essays: one that parallels Feingold’s study on natural desire, and two that indirectly support its conclusions (regarding the mixed legacy of de Lubac’s interpretations of Aquinas) by studying related areas in Thomas’s thought. One of these latter essays considers the “natural Grace” of Christ. This study indirectly supports a key concern of Thomists in debate with de Lubac regarding the gratuity of habitual grace in humans through an explanation of how the habitual grace enjoyed by Christ was natural to him (as distinguished from others with a human nature) because of the unique situation in which his human nature was united to the Divine Person of the Word from its very creation. For Thomas, therefore, while having been created is a gift in its own way, the supernatural life of Grace is not natural to man but remains utterly gratuitous. Another essay considers Thomas’s account of limbo, which – because it is analogous to the hypothetical question of the state of pure nature – indirectly sheds further light on this important aspect of the debates surrounding de Lubac’s interpretation of Aquinas on the supernatural.

Excursus: Broader Contemporary Dialogue between *Ressourcement* and Thomism

Since the proper goal in theological and philosophical inquiry is not merely what someone like St. Thomas wrote,²⁸ but the truth of things, these recent writings – by authors like Feingold, Bonino and Liberto – that revisit de Lubac’s works from a more Thomistic perspective should be read in dialogue with those that revisit it from a *ressourcement* perspective. Thus, I expand further beyond an introductory essay in light of our contributions to a broader engagement with some contemporary literature. In so doing, I will draw upon some examples from recent writings in moral theology to illustrate a conviction that this field of study is especially in need of the philosophical aspects of Aquinas’s moral theology, and that some of the tendencies of *ressourcement* thought illustrate how that tradition will benefit from interaction with such efforts in Thomistic moral philosophy.

28. In his commentary the Aristotelian text *De Caelo et Mundo* (lib. 1, lectio 22, no. 8), Thomas writes that *Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quid homines senserint, sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum*, which might be translated “the study of philosophy is not meant for discovering what people think, but for discovering what is true.”

The conversation regarding de Lubac's reading of Aquinas is continued through a recent essay by Nicholas J. Healy in the American edition of the international journal *Communio*, of which Healy is a co-editor.²⁹ Healy helpfully advances the discussion regarding several points in the recent debate. For example, he notes the key point that de Lubac reads Thomas as reflecting a broader tradition tracing from the Scriptures through the Fathers, whereas de Lubac's Thomistic critics are more concerned to attain speculatively to the truth of the matter under consideration;³⁰ this emphasis of the Thomists reflects instead their greater confidence in the ability to attain true judgments through propositional statements reflecting Aristotelian/Thomistic concepts.³¹ Healy also indicates areas of increased consensus by affirming, for example, that there is "there is a *penultimate* end, proportionate to our natural capabilities, albeit 'imperfect beatitude,' and one final end, which is *supernatural*." He writes that the differences between Lubacians and what he calls contemporary "Neo-Thomists" (among whom he surprisingly includes Reinhard Hütter) "need not concern the existence of a natural end relatively consistent in its own order. Nevertheless, there would still remain a real difference concerning the force of the adverb 'relatively'" (562). "The real bone of contention," he writes, "between Lubacians and Neo-Thomists is not whether or not there is a relative integrity to nature, but whether or not (at least in the present economy) nature itself is best understood in light of Mary's immaculate divine motherhood and the filial existence of the Son. Our 'Yes' or 'No' to this question pertains not only to theology, but lays bare the philosophical presuppositions about the nature of nature – and the relevance to it of creation as gift –

29. "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace: A Note on Some Recent Contributions to the Debate" in *Communio* 35 (Winter 2008): 535-64. Healy's coeditors at *Communio* include David L. and David C. Schindler, along with Adrian J. Walker. I include this reference to the dialogue in *Communio* to alert readers to authors involved in the conversation from that perspective.

30. Recall also Labourdette's concern that the advances achieved by Aquinas's synthesis in such attainment of truth were at risk of being lost through the privileging of earlier sources; as part of the Toulouse Dominicans who appreciated the return to the sources, he wanted to do so without losing the speculative gains made by Aquinas.

31. Here it might be helpful to develop a bit further the key point regarding how the *ressourcement* tradition tends to emphasize mystery and lessen the value of concepts and propositions; this emphasis follows not only the Patristic emphasis on mystery, but is a reaction against what they considered the excessive rationalism of certain forms of scholasticism (especially the Suarezian form with its univocal understanding of being). Thomists are generally confident in the ability to attain truth through judgments mediated through propositional statements. Regarding knowledge of God, Aquinas maintains a balance between the "three ways": the *via causalitatis* (the knowledge of God available through creatures as an effect of the "first cause"); the *via negationis* (that available by denying of God the imperfections found in creatures); and the *via eminentiae* (that available by predicating creaturely perfections as existing in God in a supreme way). From the doctrine of Divine simplicity, Aquinas rules out *univocal predication* of God, allowing only *analogical predication*. Thus, when we predicate goodness of God ("God is good") and of John Doe, there is a convergence of the *res significata* or "thing signified" (namely goodness) but a divergence in the *modus significandi* or "mode of signifying." Because extensive work on analogy are available in both traditions, this is an important area for further dialogue.

that we bring to the debate about nature and grace” (563). This last citation from Healy’s valuable contribution to the discussion is illustrative of some major points of contemporary discussion between Lubacians and Thomists, especially regarding the philosophical resources employed in moral theology, which I will address below.³²

The above-citation comes in a section where Healy affirms his “common cause with Neo-Thomists in defense of a robust concept of nature, of natural law, and of an action theory grounded in a hylemorphic account of the constitution of the moral object” (562). Although this is not the place for a complete discussion, Healy’s reference to “an action theory grounded in a hylemorphic account of the constitution of the moral object” illustrates an ironic element in the contemporary discussion. The irony concerns the fact that Healy’s remarks on the object allude to the Neo-Thomist action theory of Steven A. Long, as expressed especially in his *The Teleological Grammar of the Moral Act*.³³ Long’s basic thesis is that “the correct understanding of the object and species of the moral act...depends wholly on natural teleology” (137), where “natural teleology” concerns “the normative order of natural ends” or that which the act naturally (i.e., physically) tends toward. This, I would argue, is basically the “physicalism” of the preconciliar manuals,³⁴ with deeper roots in the commentators against whom the *ressourcement* thinkers were so opposed! Regarding its harmony with the commentators, Long writes (xiii) of how a more “complete study” would show the consistency between Aquinas’s

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32. Other areas deserving careful dialogue between these overlapping traditions include epistemology and metaphysics, each of which – traditionally considered properly philosophical disciplines – undergoes a similar (to oversimplify) theological transformation in the *ressourcement* tradition. In the context of present essay, I can do little more than indicate some of the literature. For a brief introduction, see Peter Henrici, SJ “The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar” in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and His Work*, ed. David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 149-167. Regarding metaphysics, see for example Fergus Kerr’s “Balthasar’s Metaphysics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224-38. Regarding Balthasar’s approach to truth, see David C. Schindler “Beauty and the Analogy of Truth: On the Order of the Transcendentals in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Trilogies” in the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85:2 (2011): 297-321. Regarding biblical hermeneutics, see W.T. Dickens, “Balthasar’s Biblical Hermeneutics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 175-186.
33. (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2007), and in prior and subsequent writings. Also favoring a reading Aquinas in light of the “commentatorial tradition,” see Romanus Cessario, OP, “Neo-Neo-Thomism,” *First Things* 173 (May 2007): 48–51.
34. The relation between physical nature (especially bodily existence) and morality is one of the central theoretical disputes in the last generation of moral theology, where the primary applied case in the recent decades has concerned the moral relevance of the procreative dimension of sexual behavior. In my opinion, there has been considerable progress on both the theoretical and applied aspects of these problems based on the retrieval of Thomistic virtue and action theory. For a recent attempt to address this relation, see my “Revisiting Contraception: An Integrated Approach in Light of the Renewal of Thomistic Virtue Ethics,” in *Theological Studies* 72.4 (December 2011): 812-847, and the references cited therein.

texts themselves and the interpretation of them by commentators like Francisco de Vitoria (d. 1546).³⁵

Returning to Healy's reference to his shared ground with Neo-Thomists in matters of moral theory, I would point out the following. For a Thomist, natural law is essentially a matter of natural reason (though, in our fallen condition, we need the help of revelation to learn its precepts more readily and fully); action theory, moreover, is also fundamentally a matter of moral philosophy (though these are certainly located by Thomas within his theological synthesis). For Healy, on the other hand, these more philosophical aspects of ethics are "best understood in light of Mary's immaculate divine motherhood and the filial existence of the Son." Christ, moreover, "reveals the nature of nature as receptive readiness for a surpassing gift" (563-4). Whereas I can see how, for example, the doctrine of creation has inspired and illumined Christian thinkers whose study of the philosophy of nature is not easily detached from their conviction that the cosmos reflects the wisdom of the creator,³⁶ it is not at all clear to me how "Mary's immaculate divine motherhood,"

35. For my attempt to instead encourage the continued recovery of what I would argue is Aquinas's actual teaching as encouraged by *Veritatis splendor*, see my "Developments in Thomistic Action Theory: Progress toward a Greater Consensus," in the *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 8.3 (Autumn 2008): 505-527. In this article, I had pointed out how – after a movement in the directions indicated by *Veritatis splendor* – the return to these physicalist theories was being driven by a growing inclination toward the most rigorous positions on disputed questions, and especially an overreaction against Rhonheimer's "The Truth about Condoms" (the "truth" being that *Humanae vitae* condemned contraceptive acts, not condoms), which had appeared in the British lay periodical *The Tablet* in July 2004; his article was provocative for physicalists like Long because Rhonheimer's approach – rejecting physicalism for a virtue-based explanation and attempting to deal with the fact that Aquinas's account of the "sin against nature" includes argumentation based on mistaken biology – challenged the classical understanding of the inviolability of semination. Long's response to my essay was published as "The False Theory Undergirding Condomitic Exceptionalism: A Response to William F. Murphy Jr. and Rev. Martin Rhonheimer," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 8.4 (Winter 2008): 709–731. From the title, one can see that it resembles Garrigou-Langrange's "*La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?*" in the sense that it was written to solicit a response from ecclesiastical authorities. For my initial reply, see "Thomistic Action Theory Revisited: A Response to Steven A. Long," in the *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9.2 (Summer 2009): 263-75. Many readers will recall that Rhonheimer, and his article "The Truth about Condoms," were again in the news in late 2010, when the Holy Father remarked on the topic in language similar to that found in Rhonheimer's essay (e.g., the language of at least showing a sense of responsibility). The 2008-09 exchange with Long explains the outcry – from those with theoretical commitments like his (both commentatorial Neo-Thomists like Long and *nouveaux théologiens* influenced by Balthasar's understanding of "nuptiality") – for magisterial intervention against Rhonheimer's approach to contraception (which has recently been used to provide an extensive defense of *Humanae vitae* in *Theological Studies*). Such persons were obviously disappointed when, on December 21, 2010, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its clarificatory note "On the Trivialization of Sexuality: Regarding Certain Interpretations of 'Light of the World.'" In light of the calls at the time for a clarification ruling out Rhonheimer's approach, I would summarize the import of the note as clearly allowing such approaches to be further-developed.

36. On the other hand, the religiously inspired study of nature dates back to antiquity.

for example, enters into the more philosophical aspects of Thomistic moral theology regarding which Healy indicates “common cause.” In other words, whereas I can understand how a moral argument can proceed by defining terms (reflecting concepts), by articulating propositional statements reflecting true judgments,³⁷ and by making one’s case through logically valid arguments, it is not clear to me how the above more theological principles pertain to the analysis of human acts.

Such appeal to the more philosophical dimensions of Thomistic ethics by Lubacians has helpfully alerted us to the fact that, whereas none of the great figures in the twentieth-century *ressourcement* movement were moralists, the resulting lack of a native ethic and the urgent need for rational discourse in moral theology is leading contemporary *nouveaux théologiens* to appeal to the “concepts” and philosophical apparatus of Thomistic ethics. As we have seen, however, the tendency is to do so by insisting upon the decisive character of certain (and largely Balthasarian) theological formulations while appealing to natural law and action theory. This is even more evident in the series of essays in *Communio* by David Crawford, which explored a more *ressourcement* approach to various areas of ethics – regarding Thomistic natural law, sexual ethics, action theory and political philosophy – while criticizing the work of the Swiss Philosopher Martin Rhonheimer.³⁸ Although a detailed argument is beyond the scope of this essay, I would argue that these initial critiques have not been successful in showing the decisive character of the theological emphases of *ressourcement* thought on these more philosophical aspects of ethics.³⁹ Besides indicating an ironic alliance between some *nouveaux*

37. Anticipating a typical objection, to say the above is in complete harmony with a recognition that the Divine mystery is not comprehended or captured by such propositions, and with the understanding that our grasp of truth is just a share in that as known by God.

38. As part of what I previously described as a rigorist tendency among some Americans, Crawford weighs-in against Rhonheimer in his “Conjugal Love, Condoms, and HIV/AIDS” *Communio* 33, no. 3 (2006): 505-512. Crawford opens with two mistakes: referring to this philosopher as a “moral theologian” and writing that he has “come out in favor of condoms used to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.” What Rhonheimer actually wrote was that he has always advised that serodiscordant couples abstain from intercourse, and that the Church’s message to fornicators and prostitutes was to repent of such behavior, and to make clear that the teaching of *Humanae vitae* was about the truth of conjugal love and the evil of contraceptive acts, which are defined by HV no. 14 as those chosen precisely to prevent the procreative dimension of conjugal behavior. The root of dispute here, as previously noted, is that Rhonheimer tries to defend the encyclical in a way that avoids both the biological error underlying Aquinas’s approach (to the sin against nature) and the physicalist approach of the manuals. In other words, he offers a “creative retrieval of Aquinas to meet contemporary challenges” (i.e., following the basic inspiration of a *ressourcement* approach) while some American *ressourcement* thinkers attack him presupposing a moral theory based on the scholastic manuals against which they were most fundamentally opposed! Unfortunately, it would take more space than the present context allows to analyze the argumentation.

39. Crawford’s criticism of Rhonheimer’s political philosophy is found in his “Recognizing the Roots of Society in the Family, Foundation of Justice,” in *Communio* 34.3 (Fall 2007): 379-412. He had criticized an essay in which Rhonheimer had both acknowledged helpful features of John Rawls’s book on *Political Liberalism* and argued that Rawls should accept natural law thinking based on his own notion of “public reason”; this, Rhonheimer argued, would allow Rawlsians to recognize the legitimacy of rational arguments

théologiens and Neo-Thomists, my points are that the *ressourcement* tradition needs a moral theology (including a robust moral philosophy) and that it will need to both draw from and be in dialogue with the Thomistic tradition.

Seeking the Delicate Balance between Nature and Grace

Thomas G. Guarino of Seton Hall University continues our reflection on these important matters with an essay entitled “Nature and Grace: Seeking the Delicate Balance.” As indicated by the title, Guarino’s essay – reminiscent of that of Nichols – strives to display balance in discussing this delicate relation. He takes his inspiration from Pope Benedict XVI’s efforts to uphold this equilibrium in the area of Church and state relations, as reflected in the encyclical *Deus caritas est* (no. 28) and in his remarks in France and the United States about the desirability of a positive secularism (*laïcité positive*). Consistent with the axiom of St. Thomas that *Gratia perficit, non destruit naturam*, “Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it” (*ST I*, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2), such a positive secularism would both respect the relative autonomy of secular affairs (see Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes*, no. 36) and insist upon our humanity’s profound dependence on God. “Deeply related to this accent on the quasi-autonomy of nature, of course, is the traditional Catholic accent on natural law, natural virtue, a natural path to God’s existence and a stable human nature,” though keeping in mind that “that nature has only a ‘relative autonomy’ precisely because it is always deeply embedded in the one and only supernatural order of God’s action in history.” In a similar way, Guarino discusses the relative autonomy of reason (including philosophy and the sciences) in relation to faith, as expressed in the encyclical *Fides et ratio*; along the way, he thoughtfully responds to the concerns of those who – especially under the influence of Karl Barth – find such reference to nature disconcerting.⁴⁰

Similar to what we saw in the previously-cited text by Nicholas Healy, we see in Guarino’s essay *both* a recognition of the need for Catholic thought to draw

in defense of human life and the family as a natural institution. In brief, Crawford criticized Rhonheimer for mistakenly adopting a “liberal” understanding of natural law as distinct from theology, and for neglecting in his philosophical argumentation a “familial anthropology” rooted in a Trinitarian-Christological vision. Though located by Aquinas within a broader theological synthesis, he understands natural law as properly a matter of natural reason, which facilitates its use in public discourse, even under a contemporary heading like “public reason.” Similarly, although public confession of doctrines has its place, it seems quite problematic to insist that philosophical discussion of natural law must make explicit its roots in a Trinitarian-Christological vision. For Rhonheimer’s response, see his “Rawlsian Public Reason, Natural Law, and the Foundation of Justice: A Response to David Crawford.” 36, no. 2 (2009): 138-167.

40. Many readers will recall the important twentieth-century debate involving the Jesuit Eric Przywara (who was a major influence on the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar) which followed Barth’s charge that the Catholic understanding of the analogy of being (*analogia entis*), especially as articulated by Przywara, was the “invention of the Antichrist.” The recent revisiting of this debate – involving Protestants, Catholics, Barthians, Thomists and others – demonstrates the ongoing relevance of these questions. See Thomas Joseph White, OP, ed. *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

upon the proven resources of Thomistic ethics – which, though embedded in a theological synthesis, is also articulable philosophically – *and* an insistence that this autonomy is only relative. Granting that the full truth about the moral order includes consideration of a broader theological context, a key point in future discussion between *ressourcement* and Thomistic thinkers will concern whether one can give a philosophical account – using Aristotelian/Thomistic concepts and propositional statements – regarding matters of practical philosophy without recourse to theology; an example would be a consideration of the good or evil of a particular kind of human act. For a Thomist, the moral order is intrinsically intelligible and thus accessible to philosophical reason, although we may benefit from, or need the help of, theology to grasp it; this allows the Thomist to speak cogently in the broader society without appeal to theological principles and formulations. Given the *ressourcement* emphasis on mystery (over the appeal to concepts and propositional statements) and – as will become more clear below – advocacy of philosophical and theological pluralism, along with the typical “blurring of the boundaries” between philosophy and theology, it is unclear to me how contemporary Balthasarians can do the same. It seems to me that they would instead make appeal to particular theological themes.

The Experience of the Trinity in Grace

The ninth essay is by J. Michael McDermott, SJ, and is entitled “Can the Blessed Trinity Be Experienced in Grace? St. Thomas and Some Recent Answers.” As indicated in the title, it explores the question of whether the divine persons can be known only through verbal revelation or also in some way through experience. The exploration is rooted in the conviction that, since God transcends human words, the limitation of Divine revelation to words would rob “God’s mystery of its majesty” and “render historical mediation superfluous.” For the Jesuit Karl Rahner, “unless the Trinity is somehow experienced by men, Christianity risks being reduced to a practical monotheism.”

Before discussing contemporary Thomistic writings on this topic, McDermott locates them in light of a problem he sees in the Thomistic revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; in this revival he describes early neo-Thomists – those he calls conceptualists – as thinking “that reality might be caught in a concept.”⁴¹ While

41. We should be clear that Thomas’s texts leave no doubt that he understands truth to be attained properly in the judgment (the second act of the mind that follows apprehension). To the extent that followers of St. Thomas spoke of truth as attained in a concept without judgment, they departed from their master. In general, followers of Aquinas, are marked by a confidence in the ability to attain the truth of things through Aristotelian/Thomistic “concepts” (e.g., being, nature, form, matter, essence, existence substance, accident), precisely as they are reflected (through what are “terms” logically speaking, and “words” or phrases grammatically speaking) in the propositional statements that correspond to judgments. A more developed discussion would also include topics such as Aquinas’s doctrine of analogy that explains how a concept or “word” such as “good” can be used in propositional statements to affirm, for example, that “God is good” or “God is wise” in a way that helps our minds to make a true judgment about God, while also upholding the fact that we are radically unable to understand the sense in which “good” or “wise” applies to God. Here we touch upon what seems to me a key distinction between those following Aquinas and those more influenced by the Jesuits Pierre Rousselot and

admitting that “the concept of being is analogous,” such thinkers, he writes, including “Dominican Thomists in the tradition of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas and Jesuit Suarezians” thought that “since being is conceptualizable, all of reality is likewise conceptualizable.” Moreover, “[i]nsofar as knowing occurs in concepts which are joined in propositions, revelation likewise is mediated through conceptually formulated propositions.” For these “conceptual Thomists,” all knowledge comes through created things, so the Trinity cannot be known or experienced in itself.

McDermott also prefaces his discussion of contemporary Thomists with one on Transcendental Thomism, which he distinguishes by its locating of truth not in the concept but in the dynamic judgment that provides access to reality. He focuses on the thought of Karl Rahner, who “preserves the distinction between natural and supernatural orders insofar as every judgment contains a universal concept, whose foundation is a concept of being. The concept of being manifests the same structure as the judgment, being innerly mobile, oscillating between the universal horizon of being and the concrete phantasm sensibly perceived.” For Rahner, all are offered “uncreated grace which brings about its own acceptance,” so that God is present in the soul. Moreover, “since the soul is originally self-conscious, it must be conscious of grace within it,” though this knowledge is described as “anonymous” and “implicit” (as distinguished from conceptual) to “avoid Trent’s condemnation.” McDermott then discusses several difficulties in Rahner’s approach including his notions of “quasi-formal causality,” “mode of presence” (or “mode of subsistence”), and his several alternative and undefined notions of “person.”⁴²

The essay proceeds to consider this question of experiencing the Trinity primarily in light of some recent work in Thomistic Trinitarian theology by the Dominicans Jean-Pierre Torrell and Giles Emery. McDermott is more appreciative of these recent scholars, who – in light of more recent scholarly debate – seek to give a Thomistic account of how the divine persons can be experienced in grace by relying on “modes of existence” and “modes of action.” He then proceeds to sketch the approach of St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662), including an understanding of person as a center of action, both in itself and in relation to others. This consideration of Maximus is especially apt for our journal issue because of the prominence given to his thought by *ressourcement* thinkers like Balthasar. McDermott points out how this approach reflects a synthesis of Boethius’ famous account of the person as “an individual substance of a rational nature” with Thomas’ account of the Trinitarian persons as subsistent relations. For Maximus, each divine person can act of Himself, but the unity of love among the persons, who constitute the divine nature, guarantees that they always act in full accord. For McDermott, this approach has distinctive advantages.

Joseph Maréchal (the decisive thinkers at the root of “transcendental Thomism,” which overlaps considerably with *ressourcement* theology). Whereas Thomists (upholding the transcendence of the Divine mystery) will emphasize the ability to make true but limited judgments about God through propositional statements (that include linguistic expressions of concepts), *nouveaux théologiens* will emphasize that the mystery of God cannot be captured in concepts or propositions.

42. The reader is referred to McDermott’s many essays on these matters, such as his “The Methodological Shift in Twentieth Century Thomism,” *Seminarium* 31 (1991): 245-266.

A Symposium: on Fergus Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*

The remainder of this issue – essays ten through thirteen – comprise a symposium on the important and previously-cited 2007 book by Fergus Kerr, OP entitled *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mystery*.⁴³ This work by Kerr has received considerable attention, not only because of its timeliness but also because he is a well-known author of numerous other books and articles, an honorary fellow at the University of Edinburgh, and the editor of *New Blackfriars*. As can be seen from the inside cover, the book has been praised by a variety of notable thinkers, including David Burrell of the University of Notre Dame, John Milbank of the University of Nottingham, Alan Torrance of St. Andrew's University, and David Ferguson of the University of Edinburgh. It includes twelve chapters, the first of which begins with a quotation of Pope John Paul II, who wrote in the 1998 encyclical *Fides et ratio* that the “more distinguished of the Catholic theologians of this century... were all educated in the school of the angelic Doctor” (1). This citation of the Holy Father, in recalling what was – at least according to official magisterial teaching, though to varying extents in actual practice – the common point of reference for preconciliar Catholic philosophy and theology, provides Kerr's point of departure. The reason for this starting point is suggested by the subtitle of the book, *From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mystery*, which indicates, somewhat provocatively, the fundamental question the book explores; this is the question of how – in less than a century – Catholic theology shifted so significantly from the former to the latter enjoying magisterial favor (in different ways). In raising this question, Kerr suggests that this momentous shift requires a thoughtful assessment, one that he would apparently prefer to be done through something like Pope Benedict XVI's hermeneutic of reform and renewal in continuity than through one of discontinuity and rupture in which Thomistic thought goes from preeminent and required to obsolete, or at least secondary or optional. Between a first chapter that introduces the preconciliar intellectual context and a twelfth chapter discussing the postconciliar one, the book proceeds through ten chapters, each devoted to the contributions of a leading twentieth-century theologian, beginning with the Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu – then considering Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hans Kung, and Karol Wojtyła – and ending with Joseph Ratzinger.

A few remarks on the first and second chapter will help us to perceive Kerr's perspective on the ongoing relevance of Aquinas given the developments driven especially by *ressourcement* thinkers (or the overlapping movement of transcendental Thomism) to whom most of the book is dedicated. The first chapter introduces an intellectual context marked by the antimodernist oath and the twenty-four theses in Thomistic philosophy, after which it gives attention to theological modernism itself,⁴⁴ before providing a summary of the leading alternatives to neoscholasticism as exemplified by Karl Adam and Romano Guardini. On this basis, Kerr

43. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

44. On p. 5, Kerr discusses how the former Jesuit George Terrell had initially lost his teaching post in the Society for teaching Thomism rather than the specified Suarezianism.

presents some of the leading figures and works of (primarily Thomistic) neoscholasticism, including that of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, who was considered the model Thomist of his day. Garrigou-Lagrange is introduced as “the somewhat maverick, radically conservative ultramontanist” (10). Kerr renders a mixed verdict on Garrigou-Lagrange’s Thomistic philosophy. On the one hand, he appreciates that Garrigou-Lagrange saw “the main aim of philosophical studies for neophyte theologians” to be the establishment of “a moderate form of metaphysical, epistemological and moral realism” (11) “in harmony with common sense” (12) while including a “rough guide” to modern philosophy that was better informed and “better balanced” than what would have been given by “many philosophers... at the time” (13).⁴⁵ On the other hand, Kerr does not advocate the restoration of a neoscholasticism modeled on that presented by Garrigou-Lagrange in the antimodernist era. That Kerr cannot be dismissed as a simple restorationist is initially signaled in his somewhat detached description of Garrigou-Lagrange’s lack of interest in how Aquinas’s “thought interacted with that of contemporaries” or was shaped by earlier thinkers (11); Kerr’s distance from Garrigou-Lagrange’s approach becomes clearer in his critical remarks on the latter’s primary philosophical text, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*.⁴⁶ Kerr writes that this text “cannot be said to be easy going,” and seems “all too much like the exposition, highly abstract and syllogistic, of a set of quasi-Elucidean theorems,” in which metaphysics is “treated like a kind of mathematics” and “concepts seem to come from nowhere” due to an absence of historical background or context (12).⁴⁷

We get a better sense of the kind of recourse to Aquinas that Kerr sees as more apt for our day in chapter two, where he discusses the work of Marie-Dominique Chenu, OP. Here Kerr traces Chenu’s break from his doctoral director Garrigou-Lagrange’s metaphysically-centered and more ahistorical reading of Aquinas, and his corresponding development of a reading that is explicitly attentive to the sources and to history, thus aligning him with the *ressourcement* movement. Reflecting this fundamental break with his teacher, Kerr writes of how Chenu denied “the need to master Thomistic philosophy before being allowed to enter into Aquinas’s work as a whole” (19), and was consequently “denounced explicitly as a ‘modernist,’ for playing down the role of reason in doing theology” (20).⁴⁸ Chenu’s

45. For the present author, this “main aim” corresponds closely with the new Decree and the thesis of this introductory essay regarding its aptness for our day.

46. St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1952.

47. From the title word “synthesis” we see that this single volume seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the complete corpus of Thomistic philosophy and theology, which is no mean feat. The need to focus on essentials in such a task may account for what Kerr describes as its abstractness. In seeking to understand, however, what the new *Decree* might mean by a sapiential synthesis, the text does seem to be conducive toward that end. Since the text is readily available on multiple websites, the reader is encouraged to get a sense for its structure, style and contents as a resource in considering how best to help contemporary students to achieve a sapiential vision of the whole.

48. There are legitimate pedagogical questions regarding how best to provide a theological and/or philosophical education for the various audiences including the three cycles (bachelor, license, doctor) offered by ecclesiastical faculties in philosophy or theology. From a *ressourcement* perspective, the starting point would be “the mystery of Christ”

approach to philosophy was marked by his repulsion at what he considered the great abuse of imposing the twenty-four philosophical theses upon theologians (21). Without agreeing with Chenu's distancing of himself from Thomistic philosophy, Kerr expresses his appreciation for how this work "by reconstructing the historical context, ...brings out Aquinas's evangelical intention and its actuality for today" (32-33). Kerr assesses Chenu's legacy quite favorably, moreover, including in it the contemporary retrieval of Thomistic Trinitarian theology by Gilles Emery, OP (whose work is also discussed by McDermott), along with a range of recent writers, including Gregory Rocca on analogy and Matthew Levering on a variety of topics. Kerr also highlights the work of Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP (also discussed by McDermott), in whom "Chenu's and Garrigou-Lagrange's versions of Thomism reach a degree of reconciliation." A blending of the *ressourcement* attention to historical context and sources, along with the more philosophical aspects of Aquinas's work can also be seen in the influential corpus of the Dominican moralist Servais Pinckaers, whose doctoral dissertation was supervised by Garrigou-Lagrange, but who was even more closely associated with the approach of Chenu, as can be seen in the latter writing the preface to Pinckaers's first major book.⁴⁹ The kind of Thomism that Kerr appreciates, therefore, is much like that toward which some Dominicans were working, in fruitful dialogue with leading Jesuits, before the postwar fireworks following Daniélou's "declaration of war," Labourdette's failed attempt to prevent its outbreak, Garrigou-Lagrange's "atomic bomb," and the interventions of *Humani generis* and the Jesuit general – which together delayed a conversation that is only now being resumed. Having sketched Kerr's assessment of major trends within twentieth-century Thomism, we proceed to our symposium.

Tracey Rowland on Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*

The first contribution is entitled, "The Wars of Love: A Review of Fergus Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*," and is offered by Tracey Rowland of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Sydney, Australia. Rowland shows appreciation for Kerr's locating of each author in his social context, for his preference for "common room urbanity" over polemics, and

as encountered in the great sources like the Scriptures or the liturgy, which certainly has its advantages, especially for the student whose mind has not developed a desire to acquire the philosophical tools so as to better understand the revealed mysteries; the disadvantages would concern achievement of a comprehensive and integrated education. The more traditional approach, also endorsed by the new *Decree*, has the advantage of providing a sound philosophical education "up front," providing first cycle theology students, for example, the opportunity to build sound philosophical habitus and a sapiential perspective that can be drawn upon and deepened in theological studies. For a very creative blending of perspectives – within however a five year bachelor's program in theology – see the following curriculum from the International Theological Institute in Gaming, Austria. http://www.iti.ac.at/academics/pdfs/Course_Descriptions.pdf

49. For a collection of essays on this topic, see previously-cited issue 17-1 (2010) of the *Josephinum Journal of Theology*, entitled "Servais Pinckaers and the Renewal of Thomistic Ethics."

for not allowing “his theological preferences to get in the way of academic fairness or charity.” In light of her convictions regarding the importance of the transformation effected by *ressourcement* theologians, especially regarding “nuptial theology” (an aspect highlighted by thinkers like Balthasar, and reflected in Pope John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*), Rowland’s review focuses on Kerr’s challenge to especially this latter emphasis among several of the theologians he considers. Perhaps the most provocative line in her essay is the following: “One reading of the work is that it favours some form of a scholastic restoration as well as a laissez-faire policy on contraception – in a nutshell, Garrigou-Lagrange and the pill!” For Rowland, on the other hand, nuptial mysticism is important especially because it is attractive to many young people based on its answer to the questions of our age. She thinks it meets the needs of people of our generation who “need some strong theological reasons” to live chastely, while also helping to uphold – against androgyny – the sexual difference between male and female, and to defend the reservation of ordained priesthood to men. Rowland acknowledges a problematic “marketing” of certain forms of “Theology of the Body,” but hopes that “an unsensationalised nuptial mysticism will form the foundation of a renaissance of Catholic family life in the next two to three generations.” She therefore challenges Kerr with a series of questions on these matters.⁵⁰

Larry Chapp on Kerr’s *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*

The second response to Kerr’s book is by Larry Chapp of DeSales University, and is entitled “Henri de Lubac, Nuptiality, and Catholic Theology: Some Thoughts on Fergus Kerr’s Analysis of Twentieth Century Catholic Theology.” Chapp is especially generous in noting the merits of Kerr’s book, but given his own appreciation for the contributions of *ressourcement* thought to the Second Vatican Council

50. The vigor of Rowland’s response seems to be related to a series of questions that Kerr has raised – in chapter 8 of his *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* – about the need for a critical engagement with various aspects of Balthasar’s thought. These critical questions are indicated especially in his chapter subheadings, which address several points. These include Balthasar’s reaction against Suárezianism, his treatment of “Subjectivity, Language and Truth,” the influence on his thought of the mystic Adrienne von Speyr and Protestant theologian Karl Barth, and his “Alternative Canon” made up of an “intentionally provocative” reading list for Catholic theologians. Also included are Balthasar’s understanding of “philosophy” according to which there is “No Philosophy without Christianity,” his “very adventurous” speculation about “Holy Saturday” (Christ’s descent and psychological suffering after dying on the cross), his emphasis on “Nuptiality,” his understanding of the “Marian Principle” and his seeing “Supersexuality in the Trinity.” Regarding this last point, Kerr writes on p.143 that “the attribution, however analogically, of super-masculine and super-feminine postures into the intra-Trinitarian Persons seems more confusing than enlightening.” Kerr concludes: “With sources as diverse as Karl Barth, ... von Speyr, Greek fathers such as Origen and Maximus the Confessor, and Gustav Siewarth’s Heideggerianized Aquinas, Balthasar’s work is clearly unique, idiosyncratic and inimitable. He is by far the most discussed Catholic theologian at present, as the ever-expanding secondary literature shows, overwhelmingly positive in tenor, which is perhaps surprising – unless critics do not know where to start” (144).

and to post conciliar thought, Chapp challenges several points that Kerr “seems to call into question.” These include the legacy of de Lubac and the corresponding unseating of antimodernist neoscholasticism, the theology of nuptial mysticism as advanced especially by Hans Urs von Balthasar (and reflected in John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*), the Church’s teaching on contraception, and de Lubac’s notion of paradox. Chapp is clear: Kerr “does not argue for a return to the neoscholastic tradition as it was practiced in the immediate aftermath of the modernist crisis.” The point of contention between Kerr and Chapp centers in the concern raised by numerous scholars, including Kerr (and especially Russell Reno), that the shift initiated by *ressourcement* thinkers like de Lubac undermined not just reactionary and ahistorical antimodernists and the forms of “neoscholasticism” that the *ressourcement* sought to overcome (namely, the excessive rationalism as exemplified by Suarezianism and manuals organized by theses and supporting evidence). The shift initiated by *ressourcement* theology also helped to sideline the thought of Aquinas himself, the intrinsic merits of which is finally being recovered; in thereby undermining the prior place of Thomism as a “standard theology” and fixed point of reference,⁵¹ these developments unfortunately contributed (for thinkers including Kerr and Reno) to the intellectual destabilization that was manifest in postconciliar Catholic thought.

Regarding Kerr’s claim that the *ressourcement* theology of especially Balthasar – e.g., his sixteen volume trilogy – is simply too “unwieldy” and unsystematic “to act as a standard theology,” Chapp writes that “it seems to be precisely Kerr’s fear that *it is* becoming the Church’s standard theology, e.g. in the emphasis upon nuptiality in the Magisterium’s current approach to matters of sexuality and John Paul’s elaboration of the theology of the body.”⁵² Like Rowland, Chapp writes of how this nuptial theology has a wide popular audience. Regarding contraception, Kerr does not express personal disagreement with the basic teaching of *Humanae vitae*, but Chapp argues that Kerr “seems to have serious reservations” about it. Kerr indeed describes the situation in which the Church faces the *pastoral challenge* that most Catholics don’t follow *Humanae vitae*, along with the *intellectual challenge* that many scholars don’t find convincing the arguments in support of it (or at least the best known of them). An interesting but unexplored question regarding the positions of Kerr and Chapp on *Humanae vitae* (and regarding John Paul II’s writings on contraception) is whether these teachings are best supported precisely through the contemporary recovery of Thomistic moral philosophy in the wake of *Veritatis splendor*.⁵³ Chapp considers the most serious of Kerr’s theological objections to be that regarding de Lubac’s notion of paradox. De Lubac considers the relation of nature and grace to be paradoxical in the sense that grace is “viewed as both utterly

51. As previously noted, the new document from the International Theological Commission “Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria,” puts it as follows: “There is a common memory in theology, such that certain historical achievements (e.g. the writings of the Fathers of the Church, both East and West, and the synthesis of St Thomas, *Doctor communis* [138]), remain as reference points for theology today” (no. 79).

52. Of course, this “nuptiality” is just one thread in Balthasar’s massively complex corpus.

53. Recall my previously-cited essay, “Revisiting Contraception: An Integrated Approach in Light of the Renewal of Thomistic Virtue Ethics.”

gratuitous and yet somehow ‘intrinsic’ to the proper fulfillment of humanity.”⁵⁴ The reader is referred to the texts of Kerr, Chapp and others involved in the conversation for the details of this important point and for the others sketched here.

Anthony Scigliano on Kerr’s *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*

Next is “Leaving Neo-Scholasticism behind: Aspirations and Anxieties” by Anthony Scigliano of Seton Hall University. In light of the emphasis on the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar, the scope of the essay, and Balthasar’s place as arguably the culminating figure in *ressourcement* theology, I will introduce this essay at greater length. From the title, we see that Scigliano takes as a given that we have moved beyond neo-scholasticism; he sees the resulting situation, moreover, as entailing not only hopes for something better but fears of disorder. In remarking upon the organizing theme of this journal issue, he cautions that while the juxtaposing of Thomism and *nouvelle théologie* entails risks, he suggests that “the underlying issues that these terms designate must be held in careful tension by any theology that calls itself Catholic.” With reference to no. 49 of John Paul II’s *Fides et ratio*, which states that the “Church has no philosophy of her own,” Scigliano reads the 1998 encyclical as sanctioning a theological and philosophical pluralism, while also calling upon philosophy to recover its full metaphysical range.⁵⁵ Regarding the

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54. As we saw above, Feingold might reply that Aquinas and his interpreters recognized a legitimate distinction between the *natural desire* to know the cause of the world and – once we have come to know the existence of God – the *elicited desire* to see Him in Beatific Vision. Without denying the mysterious transcendence of God, they were therefore able to grasp some of the intelligibility of that mystery, and avoid recourse to the language of paradox.
55. Without question, *Fides et ratio* encourages a broad study of philosophy, but it is important to keep in mind nos. 60-61 of *Fides et ratio* where John Paul II discusses the directives of the Second Vatican Council’s *Optatam totius* no. 15 on “study of philosophy required of candidates for the priesthood” whose “recommendations have implications for Christian education as a whole” (no. 60). This cited text reads “The philosophical disciplines should be taught in such a way that students acquire in the first place a solid and harmonious knowledge of the human being, of the world and of God, based upon the philosophical heritage which is enduringly valid, yet taking into account currents of modern philosophy,” and the footnote in *Optatam totius* no. 15 makes clear that the reference is to St. Thomas. In No. 61, John Paul II continues “If it has been necessary from time to time to intervene on this question, to reiterate the value of the Angelic Doctor’s insights and insist on the study of his thought, this has been because the Magisterium’s directives have not always been followed with the readiness one would wish.” This often overlooked teaching of *Fides et ratio* regarding seminary formation is reiterated by the new *Decree*, which also specifies something similar for first cycle (i.e., bachelor’s) students of philosophy and theology. The new and previously cited “Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy” specifies the study of Aquinas as exemplar, especially in the first cycle courses of philosophy and theology, which includes candidates for the priesthood. As already noted, the new ITC document “Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria,” has a strong biblical character, but the culminating third chapter is rich with references to St. Thomas, including in the third part of this chapter, under the heading “Science and Wisdom,” which is reminiscent of the emphasis of the *Decree* on a sapiential perspective.

concerns about post conciliar theological disorder as articulated by Kerr and other contemporary scholars,⁵⁶ Scigliano notes how these concerns align with those previously articulated by neo-scholastics like Garrigou-Lagrange, which amplifies his concern to hold the disputed positions in careful tension.

Scigliano's positive proposal involves the presentation of Hans Urs von Balthasar as a mediating figure who – while critical of neo-scholasticism – provides the grounds “for philosophical and theological pluralism, but also for the unity of truth of concern to Kerr himself.” His presentation follows “DC Schindler's inclusion of Balthasar in the story of modern Thomism.” For Scigliano, therefore, Balthasar's connections with Thomism include especially (i) his metaphysics, which he writes is “largely Thomistic in inspiration,” (ii) his upholding of “the unity of truth,” which “is always an integrative unity-in-difference rather than either identity (unity that cancels difference) or duality (unities that fail to relate or integrate),” (iii) the relation between his Theo-Logic and Thomas' *De veritate*, and perhaps even an appreciation of “Thomas as Catholic philosopher *par excellence*.”

He explains how Balthasar goes beyond neo-scholasticism in various ways,⁵⁷ including an “expansion of the Thomistic view of ‘reason,’” and an understanding of “mystery” that “designates the positive excess of divine glory” which though “transcendent, is not thereby extrinsic to human experience.” Balthasar's thought also provides the resources to respond to current challenges tracing to a range of philosophers from “Hegel and Heidegger to Paul Ricoeur and Gianni Vattimo,” especially those regarding “the relation of conceptual adequation and articulation to Being, historicity, contingency, and hermeneutics”; it thus reflects an “openness to the excess of being over concept” while allowing for a “plural articulation of truth.” Scigliano notes that Balthasar was aware that Aquinas and subsequent neo-scholastics recognized that God was a mystery beyond our rational grasp. Balthasar also thought, however, that neo-scholasticism belied “an accidental capitulation to modern rationalism” in its preference for articulating “Christian and revealed truth in terms of propositions” and in a “foregrounding” of both concepts and “sufficient reasons over an encounter with Christ the Symbol or Form of God's self-revelation.” Rather than the Thomistic understanding of assenting to propositions that spoke of realities (mysteries) that were readily admitted to be beyond our comprehension, Balthasar writes, with allusion to John's Gospel, that Jesus instead demands “that his disciples overcome their blindness and see his glory.” Balthasar's approach, therefore, regulates the place of concepts in light of symbols; in other words, sym-

56. While acknowledging the various distinctions that could be made, the above points remind us again of the previously-cited text from no. 9 of the *Decree* regarding how “the crisis of postconciliar theology is, in large part, the crisis of philosophical foundations.”

57. In his *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* (122), Kerr gives a valuable insight into the depth of Balthasar's reaction against his training in Jesuit scholasticism through the following citation: “My entire period of study in the Society of Jesus was a grim struggle with the dreariness of theology, with what men made out of the glory of revelation...I could have lashed out with the fury of a Samson. I felt like tearing down, with Samson's own strength, the whole temple and burying myself beneath the rubble. But it was like this because, despite my sense of vocation, I wanted to carry out my own plans, and was living in a state of unbounded indignation.”

bols are given priority over concepts (and propositional statements) through the conviction that they better reflect the mystery that exceeds our grasp.⁵⁸

Scigliano highlights various other areas of Balthasar's thought including (i) the way "Christian revelation plays an intrinsic role within [Balthasar's] philosophical thought and even in his phenomenology of knowing," (ii) Balthasar's emphasis on analogy (that challenges the inadequacies of "identity philosophies"), and (iii) his embrace of "philosophical and theological pluralism, as regulated by doxological protocols." This pluralism, for Balthasar, is "to be welcomed as offering to the Church a great variety of vocabularies with which to grasp the ever-greater mystery of divine glory and present it to the world in different times and places." Scigliano's insightful essay, therefore, gives a valuable introduction to some of the reasons why many see Balthasar as a central figure in contemporary Catholic intellectual life.

Although the secondary literature is now substantial and growing rapidly, scholars have only begun to understand and critically assess Balthasar's massive body of work, which spans the whole theological and philosophical tradition. Considering also his emphasis on mystery over concepts and propositional statements, we can get a sense why even those Thomists who admire Balthasar's genius and achievement – and especially moral theologians who need the resources of a robust moral philosophy to deal with the challenges facing the Church in their field – will see the role of his writings as very limited in the first-cycle of theological and philosophical education. Such consideration also gives us a sense of why a thoughtful assessment of this vast corpus, especially in light of a hermeneutic of reform and renewal in dialogue with the Thomistic tradition, will be the work of generations.

Jared Wicks, SJ on Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*

The fourth and final contribution to the symposium is "A Note on 'Neo-Scholastic' Manuals of Theological Instruction, 1900–1960" by Jared Wicks, SJ. In this "note" Wicks sheds light on the theological method to which leading twentieth-century Jesuits like Henri de Lubac, Bernard Lonergan, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar were exposed in their seminary studies of theology. Although contemporary writers often assume this training was based on neo-scholastic and particularly Thomistic manuals, the manuals used in – especially, but not exclusively – Jesuit theological studies were more commonly organized around scholastic "proposi-

58. For a discussion of *ressourcement*, and especially Balthasarian, epistemology, see Boersma's "Analogy of Truth: The Sacramental Epistemology of *Nouvelle Théologie*" in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal*, 157-172. Boersma discusses the precursors of this "sacramental epistemology" in the previously-mentioned work of Maurice Blondel, Pierre Rousselot, SJ and Joseph Maréchal, SJ. Each "limited the absolute character of truth claims. Blondel did so by starting with human action and relating the nature of truth directly to human experience. Rousselot went about it by downplaying the ability of discursive reasoning. And Maréchal did it by insisting on a distinction – allegedly going back to Thomas himself – between affirmations and representations. All three assigned much greater importance to temporal history and human experience than neo-Thomism had done" (164).

tions” or “theses,” according to which the manuals were divided, with each thesis having its exact theological certainty specified (e.g., *De fide, Fides ecclesiastica, Sententia fidei proxima, Theologica certa, Sententia communis, Sententia probabilis, Opinio tolerata*). Each thesis was then supported with texts from Scripture, Tradition, the great theologians, and often included a discussion of how the thesis was fitting according to reason. Because this method started with these propositions expressing current magisterial teaching and then worked backwards to show their grounding in Scripture and Tradition, it came to be called the regressive method.

While this approach had certain merits, for which it was endorsed by *Humani generis* (which further encouraged theologians to immerse themselves in the sources), Wicks observes that this regressive method suffered from fragmentation, and lacked a synthetic center and coherence. In his exposition of the central role of the theses “for both the structure and the content of the theological formation through some widely-used theological textbooks or manuals between the two Vatican Councils,” Wicks explains that these manuals only rarely lived up to “what the First Vatican Council’s *Dei filius* had sketched.” Following instead the approach of Melchior Cano (d. 1560), these manuals also generally failed to achieve “the ideal given to Catholic theology by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), according to which the method and vision of St. Thomas Aquinas should have a major role in the effort of theological reason to gain enriched and enriching insights into God’s revelation.”

Wicks notes how theologians reflected the positivism of their age in amassing evidence in support of the theses or propositions; he then outlines the exposition of Christological doctrine in an influential and representative 1925 manual by Ludwig Lercher, SJ. In so doing, Wicks also draws upon Bernard Lonergan, SJ to explain how this propositional approach was discarded, and how a new era of systematic theology began, when “‘historical scholarship intervene[d] between the dogmatician and these sources,’” a development Wicks sees as reflected in the Second Vatican Council’s *Optatam totius* no. 16.⁵⁹ This approach, therefore, requires careful attention to the relevant biblical texts through exegesis, along with further reflection on the history of doctrine and more systematic considerations.⁶⁰ Wick’s essay – which concludes with a discussion of the need to

59. The key text reads as follows (emphasis added): “Dogmatic theology should be so arranged that these biblical themes are proposed first of all. Next there should be opened up to the students what the Fathers of the Eastern and Western Church have contributed to the faithful transmission and development of the individual truths of revelation. *The further history of dogma should also be presented, account being taken of its relation to the general history of the Church.*” The next line is important for my argument and reads as follows: “Next, in order that they may illumine the mysteries of salvation as completely as possible, the students should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the help of speculation, under the guidance of St. Thomas, and to perceive their interconnections. *Optatam totius* no. 16 is foundational for the new document “Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria” by the International Theological Commission.

60. The transition from exegesis to doctrinal reflection reminds us of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council’s *Dei verbum* (DV) no. 12 on the interpretation of Scripture which includes first (in the second paragraph) exegesis and secondly (in the third paragraph) a more theological task. In his *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week, From the Entrance*

help students gain a unified vision of the whole of God's saving work in Christ – is, therefore, especially valuable in gaining a more adequate understanding of the methodological transitions that have occurred in recent generations of Catholic theology. With this contribution, Wicks brings our symposium on Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* to a fruitful conclusion.

Having introduced the essays included in this issue of our journal, it is hoped that readers can see how they provide an excellent opportunity to grow in the understanding of some of the most important developments in the last century of Catholic intellectual life. As indicated above, such reflection upon the relation between the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas (and the varieties of Thomism that follow in his wake) and the twentieth-century *ressourcement* or “return to the sources” movement – with its explicit attention to history and engagement with modern and contemporary thought – is timely for several reasons. As was also noted, such reflection is especially appropriate, as we seek to better-understand the significance of Second Vatican Council upon its fiftieth anniversary, and as we strive to understand it through what Pope Benedict XVI calls a hermeneutic of reform and renewal in continuity. Just as the council as a whole was often misread – by both “progressives” and “traditionalists” – as a radical break with the past, so too were post conciliar Catholic philosophy and theology too often seen in a radical discontinuity with regard to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, which had previously been given preeminent role, especially through magisterial directives. We have also reviewed some of the unfortunate postwar historical developments that eventually resulted in an anti-Thomistic overreaction in the years surrounding the council. In the subsequent decades, moreover, the thought of Aquinas was often – though certainly not always – dismissed as obsolete, especially by associating it with “the manuals,” the mere mention of which (often, as we have seen, having little to do with the thought of Aquinas) was sufficient to justify the prompt dismissal of the thinker who remained the “common doctor” according to documents ranging from the Code of Canon Law to the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, which governs seminary education.

Into Jerusalem To The Resurrection (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), Pope Benedict XVI locates his book as an attempt at the latter (a theological reading of Scripture), and laments that – in spite of *DV* 12 – it “has scarcely been attempted thus far” (xv; see also 295). In light of the present essay, an important question to be explored is the extent to which the contemporary retrieval of Thomistic thought – with its greater attention to Scripture and history – can contribute to a theology along the lines suggested by Wicks, which would also contribute to the unfulfilled task of *DV* no. 12. Indeed, Pope Benedict himself locates his work in *Jesus of Nazareth* as a contemporary effort along the lines of a key example of Aquinas's biblical theology. He writes on p. xvi that “Closer to my intention is the comparison with the theological treatise on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, presented in its classic form by Saint Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* (S. Th. III, qq. 27-59).” See chapter 2, and especially section 1 and no. 22, of “Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria” for precisely the same emphasis on *DV* no. 12. No. 22 concludes with a citation from *Verbum domini* “Only where both methodological levels, the historico-critical and the theological, are respected, can one speak of a theological exegesis, an exegesis worthy of this book.”

That this post conciliar intellectual landscape is changing, however, seems evident in several ways, including the wealth of scholarship being done in the Thomistic tradition, and the growing dialogue with other schools of thought, including *ressourcement* theology. That such scholarship and dialogue can be expected to increase can be seen especially from the new *Decree*, which was recently published by the Congregation for Catholic Education. Though his association with the *ressourcement* movement might lead some to see Pope Benedict XVI as opposed to the place given to the thought of the Angelic Doctor in initial studies in philosophy and theology, the fact that he chose the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas to approve and confirm the new *Decree* suggests otherwise, as do his favorable references to Aquinas in especially his recent writings.⁶¹ Through its specification of Aquinas as the “exemplary” (though “not exclusive”) representative of the *philosophia perennis* (no. 12), whose thought is to be firmly appropriated in especially the first cycle of philosophy and theology, this new Decree therefore sets a direction through which priests and scholars will obtain – from their intellectual formation – the intellectual tools needed to understand the central issues at stake and thereby better serve the Church in our day. As Pope John Paul II writes in his 1998 encyclical *Fides et ratio*, these will include a “real passion for the search for truth,” a verification of “the human capacity to *know the truth*” (82), a “unified and organic vision of knowledge” (82), and a philosophy that has recovered “its *sapiential dimension*.”

It is, therefore, our hope that this issue of the *Josephinum Journal of Theology* will contribute to a deeper understanding of these central themes in the last century of Catholic intellectual life, which are once again moving to the forefront. To the extent that it does so, our journal can also contribute to the new evangelization in a way marked by what Pope Benedict XVI calls a recovery of reason, in support of the dialogue between faith and reason, thereby helping the Church to appropriate the teachings of the Second Vatican Council so they can more effectively contribute to an authentic renewal within the broad tradition of the Church.

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61. See also what Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in 1995 to Fr. Alfred Lapple, who had been his prefect in College seminary, and had encouraged the future Pontiff to do an exercise in the translation of St. Thomas that the Cardinal identified as having a decisive influence on his growing interest in philosophy and theology, and his appreciation for immersing oneself in the great sources like Thomas. He writes “Thanks to the translation of St. Thomas’ *quaestio disputata* on love, you brought me the knowledge of the sources... you were at the beginning of my philosophical and theological path, and what you taught me has not been in vain.” From Alfred Lapple, *Benedikt XVI und seine Wurzeln: Was den Student Joseph Ratzinger prägte* (Augsburg: St Ulrich Verlag, 2006), p. 56-7.