

## Aquinas on the Object and Evaluation of the Moral Act: Rhonheimer's Approach and Some Recent Interlocutors

**William F. Murphy, Jr.**

***Abstract:** This essay briefly contextualizes Martin Rhonheimer's work in Thomistic action theory in light of the contemporary renewal of Thomistic ethics, while further noting some of interpreters who influenced the development of his thought. The primary goal, however, is to offer an exposition of his approach to the object and evaluation of human acts, and note how its key aspects draw upon Aquinas's texts, and how they relate to alternative readings. Among the key emphases of his approach are (i) an explicit denial that the object is simply a "thing" of the physical order, (ii) a corresponding affirmation that the object is a human act ordered to an end, (iii) an insistence on the contribution of practical reason to the formal constitution of the object, (iv) a further insistence that the rule and measure for human action is reason, and (v) an emphasis on the rational structure of the virtues as reflecting this rule and measure.*

## Aquinas on the Object of the Human Act: A Reading in Light of the Texts and Commentators

**Duarte Sousa-Lara**

***Abstract:** This essay offers a reading of St. Thomas Aquinas's account of the object of the human act by drawing upon primary texts, the classical commentators, and some leading contemporary interpreters. Given the various ways in which Thomas employs the expression *obiectum*, the central task is to determine precisely how he understands the object that specifies – i.e., gives species to or determines the kind of – the human act. This clarity is needed as commentators disagree as to whether this object is a *res physica* (or physical thing), a physically caused effect, the object of a virtue, or a human act. The resulting interpretation will most importantly exclude the proportionalist or revisionist reading of Aquinas. It will further conclude that the latter understanding of the object, as itself a human act, is best supported by Thomas's texts.*

## Aquinas on Interior and Exterior Acts: Clarifying a Key Aspect of His Action Theory

**Duarte Sousa-Lara**

***Abstract:** This essay attempts to clarify an important aspect of St. Thomas Aquinas's action theory, namely his understanding of, and distinction between, interior and exterior acts. The essay proceeds by considering key primary texts, the way they have been understood by classical commentators, and how they have been seen by some leading contemporary interpreters to argue for a new interpretation. Whereas most interpreters have read the distinction between interior and exterior acts in light the distinction between elicited acts of the will (i.e., intending and choosing) and acts commanded by the will of other powers, the author presents a series of arguments that a correct interpretation will understand the interior act as the intention and the exterior act as the choice plus the commanded act. The resulting interpretation further disproves a revisionist reading of Aquinas, and contributes to a more coherent overall theory.*

## Reflections On Moral Theology Prompted By Romanus Cessario's Book, *An Introduction To Moral Theology*

**William E. May**

***Abstract:** This essay summarizes the contents Cessario's Introduction to Moral Theology, notes its strengths, and argues against Cessario's interpretation of St. Thomas's teaching on (1) natural law and (2) the "object" of the moral act. Cessario says it is preferable to consider natural law as "natural inclinations" rather than as "precepts." This essay objects, however, that Cessario cites only 12 texts from St. Thomas, of which only 2 are relevant to his claim, and that he ignores the many texts where St. Thomas shows that the natural law is an ordered set of true propositions of practical reason ordered to action, beginning with the most universal and common, proceeding to "proximate conclusions" from those first and common propositions, which Thomas identifies with the precepts of the Decalogue, and then to more "remote" conclusions. It further argues that Cessario's understanding of "moral object" is incompatible both with St. Thomas and John Paul II who emphasize that one's choice (voluntas eligens) primarily specifies the object of a human act.*

## Abortion and Contraception in Catholic Moral Teaching: A Reply to Recent Objections

**E. Christian Brugger**

**Thomas Berg, LC**

***Abstract.** This essay replies to three serious mischaracterizations of Catholic sexual ethics made by ethicist Christine E. Gudorf. The three include: 1) the claim that in approving deliberate recourse to natural fertility cycles by couples wishing to space pregnancies, the Catholic Church has implicitly approved contraception; 2) the charge that the Church relies on a "physicalist" and "static" conception of human nature in deriving its teaching against contraceptive intercourse; 3) the assertion that the norm against the intentional killing of the unborn has not been clearly and continuously taught by the Church from early Christianity to modern times.*

## The Theology of the Real Presence in Cyril of Jerusalem

**Joseph Torchia, OP**

***Abstract:** This paper explicates Cyril of Jerusalem's interpretation of the Real Presence of the Eucharist, specifically in the context of his Mystagogical Catecheses (AD 383-387). In broader terms, it assesses the impact of this interpretation on the development of eucharistic theology. By the fourth century, the Fathers had produced a series of sophisticated explanations as to how and when the visible elements become the body and blood of Christ. In this respect, an understanding of the Real Presence was closely aligned with accounts of the eucharistic transformation of the bread and wine. While these deliberations assumed a prominence in both the eastern and western Fathers, Cyril is a key contributor to this development, and he can be said to have anticipated the technical formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation by some eight centuries.*

## The Proof of Things Not Seen: Thomas Aquinas on Role of Reason in the Act of Faith

**Roger W. Nutt**

***Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the role and influence that the praeambula fidei have within Aquinas' formal understanding of the life and assent of theological faith. This article seeks to augment the ample body of literature on Aquinas' understanding of the natural capabilities of human reason by presenting how he understands naturally knowable truths in relation to faith and its revealed content. Special emphasis is given to Aquinas' development of the definition of faith offered in Hebrews 11 and the way that he consistently appropriates this biblical theology of faith in his treatment of the interaction between faith and reason. In so doing, this article highlights how and on what grounds the philosophical questions about the rationality of faith raised by such thinkers as Kant, Locke, and Bertrand Russell fail to understand the vision of faith put forward by a thinker like Aquinas.*

## The Message on the Media: Seventy Years of Catholic Social Teaching on Social Communication

**James F. Caccamo**

***Abstract:** Over the course of the twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church has been a prime investigator of the theological and moral implications of the media. Yet few people know anything about Catholic teaching on social communications. This article traces the major documents and themes in the teaching through four phases within its seventy year history (birth, development, institutionalization, and application to new technologies). The article will show that examination of the media is a vital and relevant part of the Catholic tradition that has important insights to offer regarding the shape of the media in the twenty-first century.*

## Canonical and Cultural Developments Culminating in the Ordination of Deaf Men During the Twentieth Century

**Edward N. Peters**

***Abstract:** After nearly two millennia of de facto and even de iure exclusion from holy orders, a handful of deaf men were ordained to priesthood, amid severe ministerial restrictions, in the early to mid twentieth century. Catholic academe took almost no notice of their presence, however, and most of these priests passed from the pastoral landscape before the start of the Second Vatican Council. Shortly after the Council, however, several canonical and cultural developments coalesced to result in a significant number of deaf men entering ordained ministry as permanent deacons and priests. This article outlines the ecclesiastical and social developments that contributed to the emergence of deaf clergy in the United States and abroad, and provides an orientation to clinical deafness in general and Catholic deaf culture in particular as an aid to seminary personnel who might assist in the discernment and development of clerical vocations among deaf Catholics.*