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**Hope for the Doctrine of the Divine Ideas**  
A Study on the Habit of Thinking Theologically in the *Summa  
Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas

By

Benjamin R. DeSpain

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at the

University of Durham  
Department of Theology and Religion

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## Abstract

This thesis offers a reconstructive reading of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, and its contribution to his pedagogical efforts in the *Summa Theologiae* to train its readers in the habit of thinking theologically. I argue that through a series of primary and peripheral gestures, Thomas appropriates the doctrine of the divine ideas to help guide his readers from the confession of faith to the understanding of humanity's creational and soteriological dependence on God. Accordingly, Thomas's multilevel integration of the divine ideas into the *Summa* typifies the convergence of faith and reason that defines the nature of theological discourse in his exposition of *sacra doctrina*. More specifically, this integration reflects Thomas's understanding of the theological task as the contemplative process of discerning the fittingness (*convenientia*) of God's actions revealed in the mysteries of faith. Following the pedagogical structure of the *Summa*, then, Thomas uses the doctrine of the divine ideas to help discern the mysteries of creation and salvation. Corresponding to this pedagogical repurposing of the divine ideas, Thomas's intimations and subtle references to the divine ideas throughout the *Summa* are designed to direct the reader's attention to the goal of theological inquiry, which is the contemplative vision of God. He does this by utilizing the divine ideas both to prepare his readers for his theological exposition on God's creational activity and providential oversight of all that exists and supplement their understanding of these issues. Thomas's theological appropriation of the divine ideas is, therefore, grounded in the unity of his exposition on the trinitarian life of God, which demonstrates that his integration and elevation of the doctrine is rooted in his understanding of theological inquiry as a pedagogical response to God's self-disclosure in scripture. This process of appropriating and elevating the doctrine of the divine ideas into dialogue with the mysteries of faith culminates when Thomas extends the grammar of the divine ideas into his theological reflections on Christ's salvific work and humanity's response.

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## **Declaration**

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and no part of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or in any other university for a degree.

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Ben DeSpain  
Durham, 26 September, 2015

## Abbreviations

### I. Works by Thomas Aquinas

BDH	<i>Expositio libri Boetii De hebdomadibus</i>
BDT	<i>Super Boetium De Trinitate</i>
<i>Compend. Theol.</i>	<i>Compendium Theologiae seu brevis compilation theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum</i>
DDN	<i>Super librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus</i>
<i>De ente</i>	<i>De ente et essentia</i>
<i>De pot.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae De potentia</i>
<i>De spir. creat.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae De spiritualibus creaturis</i>
<i>De sub. sep.</i>	<i>De substantiis separatis ad fratrem Raynaldum</i>
<i>De ver.</i>	<i>Quaestiones Disputatae De veritate</i>
<i>Expos. Iob</i>	<i>Expositio super Iob ad litteram</i>
<i>Expos. Isa.</i>	<i>Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram</i>
<i>In Rom., etc.</i>	<i>Expositio et Lectura super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli</i>
<i>Lect. Ioan.</i>	<i>Lectura super Ioannem</i>
<i>Quod.</i>	<i>Quaestiones de Quodlibet I-XII</i>
SCG	<i>Summa contra Gentiles</i>
SDC	<i>Super librum De causis</i>
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum</i>
<i>Sent. de Anima</i>	<i>Sententia libri De anima</i>
<i>Sent. Metaph.</i>	<i>Sententia super Metaphysicam</i>
<i>Sent. Phys.</i>	<i>Sententia super Physicam</i>
SLE	<i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i>
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>Sup. Ps.</i>	<i>Postilla super Psalmos</i>

### II. Works by Ancient, Patristic, and Medieval Authors (arranged alphabetically by author)

<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Augustine, Confessionum libri XIII</i>
<i>De civ. dei</i>	<i>Augustine, De civitate Dei</i>
<i>De Gen. ad litt.</i>	<i>Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram libri XII</i>
<i>De div. quaest.</i>	<i>Augustine, De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>
<i>De Trin.</i>	<i>Augustine, De Trinitate</i>
<i>De ver. rel.</i>	<i>Augustine, De vera religione</i>
<i>Trac. in Io.</i>	<i>Augustine, In Iobannis Evangelium tractatus</i>
<i>Monol.</i>	<i>Anselm, Monologion</i>
<i>Meta.</i>	<i>Aristotle, Metaphysica</i>
<i>Nic. Eth.</i>	<i>Aristotle, Ethica Nicomachea</i>
<i>Po. An.</i>	<i>Aristotle, Analytica Posteriora</i>
<i>Coll. in Hex</i>	<i>Bonaventure, Collationes in Hexaemeron</i>
<i>Comm. in Evang.</i>	<i>Bonaventure, Commentarius in Evangelium S. Ioannis</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Cassian, De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium uitiorum remediis</i>
<i>Hom. in prol. Io.</i>	<i>Eriugena, Homilia in prologum Sancti Evangelii secundum Ioannem</i>
<i>Periphy.</i>	<i>Eriugena, Periphyseon</i>
<i>De prin.</i>	<i>Origen, De Principiis</i>

*For Jo,  
Yer Jalan Atbirari Anni*

## 1. Introduction: Making a Case for Rereading Thomas's Doctrine of the Divine Ideas

*Thomas is a challenging thinker who hides himself in the light, and he never reveals his entire thought all at once.*<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Problematic Methodologies: Interpreting Thomas's Doctrine of the Divine Ideas

How should Thomas Aquinas's doctrine of the divine ideas be read today? While the argument presented in this study has undergone many alterations and passed through many incarnations, this question has remained something of the impetus behind its development. Modern scholarship has had a long and complex reaction to Thomas's inclusion of this doctrine within the canons of his theological and philosophical reflections. The nineteenth century saw a number of works arguing for the doctrine's essential role in Thomas's thought, but these positive evaluations eventually gave way to more harsh criticisms and dismissive interpretations of his doctrine of the divine ideas.<sup>2</sup> In the early to mid-twentieth century, a general assumption emerged among scholars working on Thomas's metaphysics and epistemology that the doctrine of the divine ideas was in fact superfluous to his thought, and that Thomas had only included it out of respect for tradition.<sup>3</sup> Since the late twentieth century, however, a number of studies have been completed that attempt to overturn this scholarly conjecture by emphasizing aspects of Thomas's discussions on the divine ideas that they believe confirm the genuinely Thomist character of the doctrine's formulation in his works.<sup>4</sup> Although many of these works offered

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, *Philosophia Negativa: Zwei Versuche Über Thomas von Aquin* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1953), 16: "Thomas ist ein schwieriger Denker, der sich im Licht verbirgt und niemals seinen ganzen Gedanken auf einmal sagt."

<sup>2</sup> For examples of positive assessments of the doctrine from the nineteenth century, See, Engelbertus Antonius Josephus Vignier, *De Ideis Divinis. Commentatio Philosophica Etc.* (Münster: Ex typographia Iosephi Krick, 1869); Constantius Van den Berg, O.P., *De ideis divinis, seu de divina essentia, prout est omnium rerum idea et primum exemplar, juxta doctrinam doctoris Angelici, Divi Thomae Aquinatis, contra pantheismum praesertim idealisticum, aliosque errores modernos* (Prostat Buscoduci, 1872); Alfonso Maria Vespignani, *Dell'esemplarismo Divino. Saggio Teoretico Secondo i Principi Scientifici dell'Aquinate* (Parma, 1887); Victor Lipperheide, *Thomas von Aquino und die Platonische Ideenlehre. Eine Kritische Abhandlung von Dr. Victor Lipperheide* (München: M.Riefer'sche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1890); Ern Dubois, *De Exemplarismo Divino Seu Doctrina De Trino Ordine Exemplari Et De Trino Rerum Omnium Ordine Exemplato* (Rome, 1897).

<sup>3</sup> A. G. Sertillanges, *S. Thomas d'Aquin: Somme Théologique, traduction française*, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions de la Revue des Jeunes, 1926), 403–5; Edgar de Bruyne, *S. Thomas d'Aquin Le Milieu.-l'Homme.-La Vision Du Monde.* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1928), 158; Étienne Gilson, *Introduction à La Philosophie Chrétienne* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1960), 174–5; Étienne Gilson, *Le Thomisme: Introduction à La Philosophie de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 6th ed., *Etudes de Philosophie Médiévale* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1965), 146–8; Julius R. Weinberg, *Short History of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 206–7.

<sup>4</sup>For examples of this turn in the scholarship on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, see L. -B. Geiger, "Les Idées Divines Dans L'oeuvre de S. Thomas," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 175–209; Mark D. Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984): 17–32; Alice Ramos, "The Divine Ideas and the Intelligibility of Creation: A Way Toward Universal Signification in Aquinas," *Doctor Communis* 43 (1991): 250–65; J. F. Wippel, *Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, The Étienne Gilson Series 16 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993); Vivian Boland, O.P., *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought* 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in Our

exceptional insight into Thomas's understanding of the divine ideas, they also, perhaps inadvertently, revived a number of uncertainties about the arguments for the existence of eternal archetypal forms, which relate to a series of debates in Thomist studies that currently dominate the interpretive landscape of the doctrine in Thomas's works. These debates are the result of questions over the theological and/or philosophical character of Thomas's writings, the extent to which he is Aristotelian and/or Neoplatonic, and issues related to his understanding of natural and supernatural ends.

The majority of studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas adopt an atomistic interpretive approach to the doctrine, enabled by modern hermeneutical beliefs that meaning can be derived from categorical systematization.<sup>5</sup> In other words, these studies have tended to focus on either a single explicit account of the doctrine within one of Thomas's many works, or they have examined every section on the doctrine in chronological order. Thomas devotes sections to the divine ideas in most of his major works: the earliest being his discussion on the doctrine in his commentary (1254-1256) on Lombard's *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* book 1, distinction 36; followed by, *Disputatae de Veritate* 3 (1256-1257); Chapter 5, lect. 3 of *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* (1261-1265 or 1265-1268); and *Summa theologiae* 1a.15 and 1a.84.5 (1266-1268).<sup>6</sup> Vivian Boland notes that the tendency toward atomistic readings of the doctrine is marked by a failure "to explore the wider contexts in which the doctrine of the divine ideas is situated," which makes it nearly impossible to avoid the trap created by those studies that

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Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology," *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 25–46; James Stone, "The Foundation of Universal and Necessary Propositions in Select Writings of St Thomas Aquinas" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 2008); Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008); John Hughes, "Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas: How Fair Is Bulgakov's Critique?," *Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 124–37.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the character of these hermeneutical practices in Thomist studies, see Fergus Kerr, O.P., "The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 27–40. On the general persistence and problems with these practices, see John Montag, S.J., "Revelation: The False Legacy of Suárez," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 39–41; Thomas G. Guarino, *Foundations of Systematic Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 2–37. The evolution of these practices is discussed by Stephen Toulmin in *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1–44; and Louis Dupré in *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> On the redacted section for the divine ideas in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 214–25. Thomas also discusses the doctrine of the divine ideas in a number of other works, including: *De pot.* 3.16 ad.12, 7.1 ad.8; *Sent Metaph.* I, lect. 15, no.233; *Quodlibet* 4, which is perhaps Thomas's final explicit interaction with the doctrine. There are also numerous references to the divine ideas scattered throughout Thomas's commentaries on scripture. For example, *Expos. Isa.* 38, §20-29; *Expos. Iob* 33, §28-32; *Sup. Ps.* 39, no.4; *In Eph.* 3, lect. 3, no.160; *In Col.* 2, lect. 1, no.80, ch. 3, lect. 1, no.139; *In Heb.* 9, lect. 1, no.422, ch. 11, lect.2, no.564-5; *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 1, no.34-65, ch. 1, lect. 2, no.77-90. Unless otherwise stated, the dating of Thomas's works follows Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, trans. R. Royal, Revised edition, vol. 1 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 330–61; French original, *L'Initiation à Saint Thomas d'Aquin: sa personne et son oeuvre* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1993).

question whether the doctrine is even genuinely Thomist.<sup>7</sup> Even Boland's formidable study on the theological character of Thomas's doctrine cannot escape the gravitational pull of this question as he stacks up explicit references to the divine ideas throughout Thomas's theological and philosophical works in order to prove that the doctrine is authentically Thomist.<sup>8</sup> Yet, it seems reasonable to ask whether this is even a legitimate question to pose in the first place. There is nothing in Thomas's discussions on the doctrine that indicates what he says about the divine ideas is not to be read as a genuine expression of his thought. Instead, the suspicions that surround the doctrine arise not from what Thomas actually says about the divine ideas, but from interpretive assumptions about the nature of his overall project.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, these assumptions are principally limited to philosophical concerns related to either particular metaphysical questions about the existence of nonexistent possibles, universals, and the ontological status of the divine ideas as exemplar causes, or to epistemological issues dealing with humanity's knowledge of truth in the world.<sup>10</sup> While all of these issues are certainly

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<sup>7</sup> Boland, *Ideas in God*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> It seems that this question of whether the doctrine of divine ideas is genuinely Thomist might have been what actually prompted Boland's whole study. In an article published sometime after his monograph on the divine ideas, Boland recounts a lecture he heard by Herbert McCabe in which McCabe remarked about *ST* 1a.15, "It must have been written by Saint Thomas on a platonic off day." He says in response to this remark that it was "a comment that remained with the present writer to stimulate research in directions that might not have overly pleased Herbert." For Boland's account of this exchange, see "Thinking About Good—Thomas Aquinas on *Nicomachean Ethics* I, *Divine Names* IV-V and *de Ebdomadibus*," *New Blackfriars* 83 (2002): 384.

<sup>9</sup> The persistence of this question exposes a tendency in contemporary receptions of Thomas to exclude or isolate aspects of his thought that do not fit within constructed interpretive frameworks, rather than to question the validity of these frameworks, which intentionally devalue facets of his thought that do not conform. Doolan identifies a number of the authors and interpretive assertions that first created doubts about the authenticity of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, although he appears to overlook the possibility that there is, in fact, no real basis for even asking the question. See his, "Is Thomas's Doctrine of the Ideas Thomistic?" in *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 111–7.

<sup>10</sup> On the metaphysical qualities of the doctrine, see Vincent P. Branick, "The Unity of the Divine Ideas," *The New Scholasticism* 42 (1968): 171–201; W. Norris Clarke, "The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 109–127; Jeffrey. Coombs, "John Poinsett on How To Be, Know, and Love a Non-Existent Possible," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994): 321–335; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the Possibles," *The New Scholasticism* 53 (1979): 76–85; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, James Ross, and Exemplarism: A Reply," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 221–34; Antoine Dondaine, "Exemplars De La Summa Contra Gentiles," in *Miscellanea Codicologica F Masai Dicata*, 2 (Ghent, Belgium: E Story-Scientia, 1979), 287–299; Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008); John Lee Farthing, "The Problem of Divine Exemplarity in St. Thomas," *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 183–222; Geiger, "Les Idées Divines"; Roger Miller Jones, "The Ideas as the Thoughts of God," *Classical Philology* 21 (October 1, 1926): 317–326; Theodore J. Kondoleon, "Exemplary Causality in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1967); Aaron Martin, "Reckoning with Ross: Possibles, Divine Ideas, and Virtual Practical Knowledge," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (2004): 193–208; Armand A. Maurer, "James Ross on the Divine Ideas: A Reply," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 213–20; James F. Ross, "God, Creator of Kinds and Possibilities," in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 315–34; James F. Ross, "Aquinas's Exemplarism; Aquinas's Voluntarism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1990): 171–198; James F. Ross, "Response to Maurer and Dewan," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 213–20; John F. Wippel, "The Reality of Nonexisting Possibles According to Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines," *The Review of Metaphysics* 34 (June 1, 1981): 729–758; John F. Wippel, *Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, The Étienne Gilson Series 16 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of

relevant to Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, their limited scope also means studies that are concerned with them are less likely to see the doctrine's place in, as Josef Pieper says, "those basic assumptions, which, remaining unexpressed, nevertheless permeate all that is actually stated."<sup>11</sup> In other words the standard pattern of atomistic readings and philosophical inquiries in studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas might find ways to satisfy contemporary questions or concerns about the divine ideas, but it is harder for them to both identify and explain the contribution of the doctrine's more subtle gestures to Thomas's works. What has been too often overlooked or, at least, unacknowledged, then, is that the current state of the doctrine's interpretation in Thomist studies is largely determined by a distinctly modern tradition of the divine ideas, which is significantly different from what Thomas inherited, and it is this more recent tradition that has conditioned the contemporary reaction to the doctrine of the divine ideas in its historical contexts.<sup>12</sup>

In an effort to offer a hermeneutical framework for Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas wherein, as Boland states, "he becomes accessible beyond his natural constituency and yet in a way that is faithful to the intention of his work," this study will follow primary and peripheral gestures of the doctrine at key points of reciprocal exchange between the micro- and macro-arguments of Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>13</sup> There are a number of reasons for adopting this approach, chief among them being that it gives us the opportunity to reflect upon the

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Mediaeval Studies, 1993); B. Zedler, "Why Are the Possibles Possible?," *New Scholasticism* 55 (1981): 113–131. On the epistemological qualities of the doctrine, see Wendy Petersen Boring, "Revising Our Approach to 'Augustinian Illumination': A Reconsideration of Bonaventure's *Quaestiones Disputatae De Scientia Christi* IV, Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* Ia.84, 1-8, and Henry of Ghent's, *Summa Quaestionum Ordinarum*, Q. 2, Art. 1, 2," *Franciscan Studies* 68 (2010): 39–81; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge," *Dialogue* 18 (1979): 392–404; Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in Our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology," *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 25–46; Mark D. Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984): 17–32; John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, Radical Orthodoxy (London: Routledge, 2000); Robert Pasnau, "Henry of Ghent and the Twilight of Divine Illumination," *The Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1995): 49–75; Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a 75-89* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 302–9; Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 154–80; James Stone, "The Foundation of Universal and Necessary Propositions in select writings of St Thomas Aquinas" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Fordham University, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Josef Pieper, "The Negative Element in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O'Connor, 3rd Revised ed. (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 45; German original, *Philosophia Negativa: Zwei Versuche Über Thomas von Aquin* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1953); Later published, with minor alterations, as *Unaustrinkbares Licht: Das Negative Element in Der Weltansicht Des Thomas von Aquin* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> For more on this modern tradition of the divine ideas, see §7.1.

<sup>13</sup> Vivian Boland, O.P., *St. Thomas Aquinas* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 130. For a discussion on the interpretive importance of maintaining an eye on both the micro- and macro-arguments of a text, see David Kelsey's stimulating work on the reception of scripture in modern theology *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999; the revised edition of his 1975 work *Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*), 130–44. Kelsey remarks, citing a fairly well-known passage from Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 94, that macro-arguments provide a "gross anatomical structure" for theological proposals, which are comprised of more specific "physiological" micro-arguments" (130). I am grateful to Robbie Griggs for alerting me to this proposal.

methods of reception and reading of texts from epochs quite distant from our own. With the changing tides in the tradition of the divine ideas from premodern favor to modern distrust juxtaposed by the recent growth of interest in Patristic and Medieval formulations of the doctrine, Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas provides a unique context for theologians to reconsider the way historical texts are received and read today.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, our interest in the subtle or peripheral gestures of the doctrine within the *Summa* will hopefully highlight new lines of inquiry, which future studies on the doctrine of the divine ideas can explore. The divine ideas have a long and prominent history within the theological and philosophical works of premodern figures, and even with the increased interest in the doctrine, a considerable amount of work still remains to be done before scholars have a good grasp of its overall significance in premodern thought. Additionally, by situating Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas within the pedagogical vision of the *Summa*'s theological project, our approach will confront some aspects of the modern stigma still attached to the divine ideas. Because the modern position on the divine ideas is drastically different than its premodern predecessor, the doctrine will remain elusive to contemporary thought until the assumptions that inform the modern tradition are addressed. In order to reach these goals, however, it is necessary to clarify further the argument that guides the structure of this study.

## 1.2 An Argument for the Fitting Gestures of the Divine Ideas in the *Summa Theologiae*

The basis for this study, as indicated above, is Thomas's pedagogical efforts in the *Summa* to guide his readers toward the contemplative vision of God, with our final goal being to locate the place of the doctrine of the divine ideas in Thomas's theological instruction on the relation

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<sup>14</sup> For examples of the growing interest in premodern formulations of the doctrine of the divine ideas, see T. Kondoleon, "Divine Exemplarism in Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970): 181–95; Ignatius Brady, "St. Bonaventure's Doctrine of Illumination: Reactions Medieval and Modern," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1974): 27–37; Leonard J. Bowman, "Cosmic Exemplarism of Bonaventure," *Journal of Religion* 55 (1975): 181–98; M. J. F. M. Hoenen, *Marsilius of Inghen: Divine Knowledge in Late Medieval Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 121–56; Joost van Rossum, "The Lógoi of Creation and the Divine 'Energies' in Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 27 (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 213–17; Rega Wood, "Distinct Ideas and Perfect Solitude: Alexander of Hales, Richard Rufus, and Odo Rigaldus," *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 7–31; Katherin A. Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 1997); Timothy V. Noone, "Scotus on Divine Ideas: The Order of Intelligibles," in *Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, 1998; Timothy B. Noone, "Scotus on Divine Ideas: Rep. Paris. I-A, D. 36," *Medioevo: Rivista Di Storia Della Filosofia* 24 (1998): 359–453; Alessandro D. Conti, "Divine Ideas and Exemplar Causality in Auriol," *Vivarium* 38 (2000): 99–116; Gábor Kendeffy, "Augustine on Divine Ideas as Epistemological Criteria," *Acta Antiqua* 42 (2002): 181–93; Wendy Petersen Boring, "Seeking Ecstasy: St. Bonaventure's Epistemology" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 2004); Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21–137; Christina Van Dyke, "An Aristotelian Theory of Divine Illumination: Robert Grosseteste's Commentary on the Posterior Analytics," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009): 685–704; Andrew Louth, "St Maximus' Doctrine of the Logoi of Creation," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 48 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010), 77–84; Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*; Mark McIntosh, "The Maker's Meaning: Divine Ideas and Salvation," *Modern Theology* 28 (2012): 365–84.



between the Trinitarian life of God and human existence.<sup>15</sup> The benefit of positioning our study at these points is that it places us at the center of the *Summa*'s macro-arguments, as indicated by, first, Thomas's insistence that the fullness of theological wisdom culminates in teaching, which is expressed in a remark about the superiority of the mixed life, "For just as it is better to illumine than merely to shine, so it is better to give to others the things contemplated than simply to contemplate."<sup>16</sup> Second, Gilles Emery notes, "Reflecting on the Trinitarian faith is the theologian's primary task and this is where the heart of St. Thomas' teaching rests."<sup>17</sup> Third, in his study on Thomas's anthropology, Reinhard Hütter asserts, "[T]he fulcrum on which theology is balanced is an answer to the question . . . What is the human being?"<sup>18</sup> However, because it would be nearly impossible for a single study to encompass Thomas's thought on the Trinitarian character of theology and his understanding of human existence, successfully identifying the intersection of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas with the *Summa*'s macro-arguments will rely on locating various micro-arguments within the *Summa* where the gestures of the doctrine clearly contribute to Thomas's pedagogical efforts.

It is therefore the intention of this study to argue that the primary and peripheral movements of the divine ideas within the *Summa* are gestures of contemplative fittingness (*speculativa convenientia*) designed to support Thomas's theological exposition of humanity's creational and soteriological dependence on God. Accordingly, the doctrine of the divine ideas will be read primarily as a type of grammar that Thomas theologially codifies to serve the *Summa*'s pedagogical efforts to guide readers from the confession of faith to the wisdom of *sacra doctrina*.

To secure our direction in this argument, the notion of *convenientia* (fittingness) requires further attention since it is, for Thomas, a technical term integral to the economy of his theological project in the *Summa*.<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Narcisse aptly identifies the theological function of

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. A. N. Williams, "Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*," *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 56.

<sup>16</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.188.6: "Sicut enim majus est illuminare quam lucere solum, ita majus est contemplata aliis tradere quam solum contemplari." The pedagogical fruition of theology is, for Thomas, an expression of humanity's creational formation after the image of God: *ST* 1a.103.6; 1a.106.4. For a good overview of the traditions, substance, and motivations informing Thomas's pedagogical concerns, see Boland, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 75–101. On the superiority of the mixed life, in which contemplation culminates in teaching and preaching, see Thomas S. Hibbs, *Virtue's Splendor: Wisdom, Prudence, and the Human Good* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 22–4 and 199–200.

<sup>17</sup> Gilles Emery, O.P., *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2; French original, *La Théologie Trinitaire de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 209.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Narcisse's statistical analysis of Thomas's *corpus* reveals that there are nearly nine thousand uses of *convenientia* vocabulary in his works (*Les Raisons de Dieu: Argument de Convenance et Esthétique Théologique Selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* [Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1997], 24–35). Aidan Nicholas remarks

*convenientia* in his observation, “Fittingness denotes, among various possibilities, the significance of the chosen means, and the best reasons by which God, in his wisdom, has actually realized and revealed, gratuitously, through his love, the mystery of salvation and human glorification . . . [which] is a reality, a way of being, characteristic of the relationship between God and humanity.”<sup>20</sup> *Convenientia* signifies, for Thomas, the aesthetic harmony in the orderliness of creation and salvation.<sup>21</sup> Arguments from fittingness (*ex convenientia*), then, follow a type of aesthetic logic that searches for the best way to explain the *convenientia* of God’s decisions and actions in creation and salvation, or, as Nicholas Healy describes it, “One is to show the *convenientia* of things in relation to their exemplary source.”<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, *convenientia* is both a type of reasoning and a subject in theological reflection, which means, given the argument laid out above, that the gestures of the divine ideas throughout the *Summa* are being thought of as fitting movements in the aesthetic logic of Thomas’s theological exposition of the fittingness in the mysteries of faith revealed by God. There is, in fact, a twofold benefit to reading the divine ideas and *convenientia* as mutually reinforcing concepts. First, as Healy’s comment demonstrates, the fittingness of things in creation is the result of imitating the exemplary causes, i.e. the divine ideas.<sup>23</sup> The second relates

that, “These computations establish that Narcisse is surely correct to say that appeal to *convenientia* constitutes for Thomas an intrinsic aspect of the ‘habit’ of theology” (*Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* [Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007], 15). *Convenientia*, however, was not only vital to the thought of Thomas, but also the whole Medieval period, and the failure to properly appreciate its significance, as Michael Waddell notes, “risks distorting our understanding of medieval thought” (“Wisdom, Fittingness and the Relational Transcendentals,” in *Was Ist Philosophie Im Mittelalter? Qu’est-Ce Que La Philosophie Au Moyen Âge? What Is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998], 538).

<sup>20</sup> Narcisse, *Les Raisons de Dieu*, 572 (translation mine): “La convenance désigne, parmi les possibles, la signification des moyens et des raisons les meilleurs, par lesquels Dieu, en sa sagesse, a effectivement réalisé et révélé, gratuitement et par amour, le mystère de salut et de la glorification de l’homme . . . [qui] est une réalité, un mode d’être, caractéristique de la relation entre Dieu et l’homme.” The important role of *convenientia* in Thomas’s thought has also been discussed in, Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 60–72; Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 144–6; Nicholas M. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 36–40; Adam Johnson, “A Fuller Account: The Role of ‘Fittingness’ in Thomas Aquinas’ Development of the Doctrine of the Atonement,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010): 302–18.

<sup>21</sup> *ST* 1a.25.6 ad.2; 1a.39.8; 1a.43.7; 1a.46.1 ad.6; 1a.61.4; 1a.96.3 ad.3; 1a.108.5 ad.5. While, comparatively, Thomas rarely refers directly to beauty (*pulchrum*), its connection with *convenientia* suggests that there is an aesthetic characteristic to his thought that is suffused throughout his entire *corpus*. See Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian*, 39. See *ST* 2a2ae.1.5 ad.2. Kevin Vanhoozer once remarked that Nicholas Wolterstorff’s description of the artist as a “worker in fittingness” “is a fine description of the theologian too,” which is an apt summary of what is being suggested here. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 257. Cf. Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 161.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas also makes these connections in his remarks on Dionysius’s account of creation’s ontological illumination by God’s “divine rays,” which is one way that Dionysius refers to the divine ideas. In *DDN* IV, lect. 5, Thomas says: “Quomodo autem Deus sit causa claritatis, ostendit subdens, quod Deus immitit omnibus creaturis, cum quodam fulgore, traditionem sui radii luminosi, qui est fons omnis luminis; quae quidem traditiones fulgidae divini radii, secundum participationem similitudinis sunt intelligendae et istae traditiones sunt pulchricifae, idest facientes pulchritudinem in rebus.” For the connection in Dionysius’s writings between the divine rays and the divine ideas, see Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages*

to Marie-Dominique Chenu's claim, "[The] fullness of intelligibility leads us actually to the realm of the divine ideas, the real spiritual and scientific home of theology . . . This doctrine, in fact, is both the principle of the architecture of the *Summa* and the unqualified reason for the oneness of theological science."<sup>24</sup> In short the fittingness of all that we experience and know in creation and salvation is a reflection of the means chosen by God in his wisdom to reveal himself, and the doctrine of the divine ideas gives us a grammar to describe the individual and communal realization of this fittingness. Theology, it may be said, is a search for fittingness, and the doctrine of the divine ideas is, in the *Summa*, vital to the intelligibility of this fittingness; yet the apparent importance of the divine ideas depicted here does not jibe with the anxieties represented by W. Norris Clarke's claim, that there is one doctrine of Neoplatonism "that stubbornly resists coherent assimilation (into Christian thought): this is the doctrine of the realism of ideas," or R. J. Henle's comment, related specifically to Thomas, that there is an "awkwardness" in how the doctrine fits within his thought.<sup>25</sup> These anxieties strain the prospect of resourcing the doctrine for contemporary theology and highlight the tensions in the process of resourcing itself, which requires us to say more about the method, audience, and scope of this project.

### 1.3 Notes on Method, Audience, and Scope

Interpreting the *Summa Theologiae* is a difficult task. Upon finding a way into the world created within its pages, one discovers a theological edifice too great to be comprehended, or as Turner playfully describes it, in his recent introduction to Thomas's thought, "The main danger (in writing on Thomas) is that of supposing that the thing to do is get a mind on the scale of Thomas's into your head, a task of compression that will be achieved only at your head's peril . . . The only safe thing to do is to find a way of getting your mind into his, wherein yours has room to expand and grow, and explore the worlds his contains."<sup>26</sup> While this clever anecdote is certainly an accurate depiction of reading the *Summa*, it also exposes the likelihood, in the current

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 118; Benjamin DeSpain, "Seeing One's Own Face in the Face of God: The Doctrine of the Divine Ideas in the Mystical Theologies of Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa," in *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, ed. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 38–9.

<sup>24</sup> M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. M.-D. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), 312; French original, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1950).

<sup>25</sup> Clarke, "The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity," 126; Robert John Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism. A Study of the Plato and Platonic Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956), 360.

<sup>26</sup> Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 2. John Milbank makes a similar point when he asserts, "One discovers (in writings of Thomas) . . . the intense light of Naples and Paris which is ultimately invisible in its very radiance – rendering the wisest of us, for Aquinas after Aristotle, like owls blinking in the noonday" (*Truth in Aquinas*, 20). Cf. Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, *Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters* 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), ix–xiv.

age of consumption and production, that our reading practices will stifle the growth or development of our interpretations of Thomas, since the model of reading typically encouraged nowadays resembles the method that, as Turner warns, we embark on only at our own peril.<sup>27</sup>

With the *Summa*, this danger is further exacerbated because the literary format of Thomas's scholastic method lends itself to atomistic or compartmentalized interpretations, which tend to stagnate the development of our readings by rehearsing the same questions and addressing the same problems. This can be seen in the successions of studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas published, particularly in English, over the last fifty or so years. Yet, as the second chapter of this project demonstrates, the pedagogical design of the *Summa* encourages a different model of reading altogether, a model which is used to guide the evolution of our argument. Consequently, while questions of authenticity, multiplicity, universals, and the existence of possibles are addressed, it is not our primary purpose to bring definitive resolution to these problems. Instead, it will be assumed that everything Thomas says about the divine ideas in the *Summa* is intended for the pedagogical formation of his readers in the habit of thinking theologically, but by taking this step, we are obligated to be transparent about the stance taken on the doctrine's role in his thought.

Although the doctrine of the divine ideas takes center stage in this study, it is not the focal point of Thomas's work. Too often, our methods of reception are dictated by attempts to discover the hidden or overlooked ideas or doctrines that entire theological or intellectual edifices hang from, but, in most cases, these things work like pieces in a puzzle, which is certainly the case with Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas. One of the dangers, then, with the systematization of ideas and doctrines from historical texts is the possibility of elevating them to places where they lose touch with their context in the author's work. Yet it is difficult to escape this practice in the process of interpretation and composition, which is why we have opted to

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<sup>27</sup> Paul Griffiths discusses the problems with contemporary models of reading in his stimulating study on the practices on religious reading. He writes:

[There is] a widespread tendency, especially evident among professional readers in western institutions of higher education, to assimilate all forms of reading to a single standard model, which is through and through consumerist . . . Consumers treat what they read only as objects for consumption . . . Consider, as an illustration of this attitude, the consumerist reading done by professional academics in Europe and America at the end of the twentieth century: the attitude toward works implied in their practice is based on metaphors of production, consumption, use, and control. Academic readers consume the works of others and produce their own; they are defined and given status by the body of literature they control and upon which they are accredited to give authoritative voice for proper reward; they cite and mention, and are in turn judged largely by the extent to which the works they produce are cited and mentioned. *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 40 and 42.

There is an irony here in noting Griffiths's criticism of current reading practices that should be acknowledged because it inversely condemns many of the standards that have determined the shape this project; however, these are the very parameters of composition we are trying to be mindful of at the outset of this study.

categorize Thomas's discussions on, and use of, the divine ideas as a series of gestures that belong to a larger argument.

Thus, while it is argued that the doctrine is vital to the theological vision of the *Summa*, the divine ideas have what could be called 'a peripheral centrality' in Thomas's theological argumentation, by which I mean that the doctrine typically sits at the edges of his arguments in various sections, questions, and articles of the *Summa* helping to direct the reader's attention to the focal point of the work in these areas. Just like the piece of a puzzle, then, identifying the movements of the divine ideas as gestures contributing to Thomas's theological vision shows that this doctrine fits within the *Summa* in such a way that its place only becomes clear once the focal point actually comes into focus while, without it, the vision itself would remain incomplete. In this way we should be able to open up new lines of reasoning on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas as well as, and perhaps more importantly, offering some direction on ways to reconsider our methods of reception. These implications nevertheless raise the question of who this study is intended to help.

Though mindful of those few scholars that have a special interest in the divine ideas, this study is primarily intended for, first, those working in the fields of historical and constructive theology, and, second, Thomists, or, to be more specific, those with a special interest in the reception and interpretation of Thomas's works. With the cacophony of Thomisms that exist, each vying for interpretive accuracy, this prioritization might appear strange, since the literary world of Thomist studies can often feel like it is being steadily restricted to ever more specialized readers;<sup>28</sup> nevertheless, it is important to remember that Thomas's presence can be seen throughout western intellectual history and thus belongs to the received traditions of both Catholics and Protestants alike although in notably different ways.<sup>29</sup> Despite the, at times, staggering differences in reception, Thomas's work has something valuable to say about how we read and do theology that crosses ecclesial traditions and theological party lines, and with the

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<sup>28</sup> For surveys of the multitude of Thomisms that exist, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 58–81; Thomas F O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 152–200; Wayne J. Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London: Routledge, 1998), 139–84; Brian J. Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition*, *Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002), 1–20.

<sup>29</sup> While the prominence of Thomas in Catholic theology is obviously expected, there is a growing appreciation for his presence in or compatibility with the thought of various Reformation and Post-Reformation Protestants. For examples, see Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013); Charles Raith II, *Aquinas and Calvin on Romans: God's Justification and Our Participation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Nathaniel A. Warne, "The Call to Happiness: An Investigation of Happiness, Virtues, Commands and the Common Good in the Doctrine of Calling, through the Work of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century English Puritans" (Unpublished Dissertation, Durham University, 2015). Marcus Plested has also shown the unique ways in which Eastern Orthodoxy has interacted with Thomas's works in his book *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2012).

increasing pressure on theology both in England and in North America to verify its academic qualifications, there has hardly been a time when it was more important for theologians to pay attention to what the authors that helped form our field are doing and the ways in which their works are read today.<sup>30</sup>

As for the Thomists that might have an interest in another study on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, this project is designed to reflect how some recent trends in English-speaking Thomist studies have set the stage for a more thorough rethinking of Thomas's theological application of the divine ideas. If one reviews a bibliography of works published on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas beginning around the time of L.-B. Geiger's pivotal essay from 1974, there is a distinct rise in the number of studies in English, which coincides with the increased philosophical fascination with Thomas both in England and in North America.<sup>31</sup> This correlation is represented in studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas by the distinctly philosophical questions, outlined above, that have engulfed the doctrine's reception; yet, the absence of any clear consensus in these studies, and the persistence of the same entrenched responses, is consistent with Serge-Thomas Bonino's observation that there is a "hermeneutic conflict" in Thomist studies that has gone generally unnoticed by most interpreters of Thomas.<sup>32</sup> Through the work of scholars such as Fergus Kerr, David Burrell, and others, however, the English-

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<sup>30</sup> There is ample evidence in the growing body of literature on Thomas by Protestants that his works might serve as a point for ecumenical dialogue, as seen in the essays from Bruce L. McCormack and Thomas Joseph White's *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: An Unofficial Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2013). Hans Boersma outlines the value of Thomas's ecclesiology for ecumenical dialogue in "Ressourcement of Mystery: The Ecclesiology of Thomas Aquinas and the Letter to the Romans," in *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 52–74. John Bowlin outlines the growth of Protestant interest in Thomas in, "Contemporary Protestant Thomism," in *Aquinas as Authority*, ed. Paul van Geest, Harm Goris, and Carlo Leget (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 235–52. For discussions on the pressures that theology is currently facing in academic circles, see the essays in Darlene L. Bird and Simon G. Smith, eds., *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2009); Christopher Craig Brittain and Francesca Aran Murphy, eds., *Theology, University, Humanities: Initium Sapientiae Timor Domini* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011). It is worth making clear at this point that as an Anglican educated in both England and North America the issues of reception, reading, and theological methodology that I am concerned with are related to this context. This is not to say that theologians and scholars from other backgrounds will not find anything of value here, but to help the reader understand the audiences I had in mind while composing this work.

<sup>31</sup> Many of these studies are noted above in n.10, but for a more thorough description, see Vivian Boland, O.P., "Does God Think? Recent Work on Aquinas' Doctrine of Divine Ideas," in *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher and Scholar*, ed. James McEvoy, Michael Dunne, and Julia Hynes, vol. 2, *The Aquinas Lectures at Maynooth, 2002-2010* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 120–34. On the evolution of institutional preoccupation with philosophical questions about Thomas's metaphysics, theistic proofs, and ethics in England and North America, about which John Haldane wrote, "The greatest institutional contributions to Catholic philosophy in the modern English-speaking world have been made in the United States" ("Thomistic Ethics in America," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 3 [2000]: 150), see Wayne J. Hankey, "From Metaphysics to History, From Exodus to Neoplatonism, From Scholasticism to Pluralism: The Fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-Speaking North America," *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 157–88; Fergus Kerr, O.P., "Thomas Aquinas: Conflicting Interpretations in Recent Anglophone Literature," in *Aquinas as Authority*, ed. Paul van Geest, Harm Goris, and Carlo Leget (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 165–81; Robert Miner, "Recent Work on St Thomas in North America: Language, Anthropology, Christology," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 137–56.

<sup>32</sup> Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P., "Thomistica," *Revue Thomiste* 97 (1997): 563.

speaking world has been alerted to the fundamental disagreements in interpretive approaches to Thomas, and there are signs that a more stable interpretive framework is emerging in English Thomist studies, which offers the opportunity to ask different questions and explore new answers to a variety of topics in Thomas's *corpus*, including the divine ideas. In England these developments can be seen in the works of, for example, Kerr, Anna Williams, Lydia Schumacher, and those scholars affiliated with Radical Orthodoxy while, in North America, Thomist studies have been deeply impacted by the works of Burrell, Eugene Rogers, Stanley Hauerwas, and those identified with what has been dubbed "biblical Thomism."<sup>33</sup> These authors and movements have created an atmosphere in Thomist studies that is primed for a theological retrieval of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, but before we can proceed, there are a couple of questions about the scope of this project that must be addressed.

There are two questions that emerge about the scope of this study because of the methodological practices outlined above, which, to restate briefly, essentially consist of close textual analyses of certain primary and peripheral gestures of the divine ideas in the *Summa Theologiae* that demonstrate how the doctrine functions within Thomas's pedagogical efforts to train his readers in the habit of thinking theologically. First, why focus primarily on the *Summa*? Second, why are we concentrating on Thomas given that the theological heritage of the divine ideas remains relatively unexamined?<sup>34</sup> To answer the second question first, the primary reason for not focusing on situating Thomas's doctrine within the history of his theological tradition is that it would require an entirely different style of study altogether, and while this project certainly

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<sup>33</sup> For examples of these developments, see A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Although Lydia Schumacher is American, her work has been primarily carried out in England and reflects that context. See her *Divine Illumination*, 154–80. On the interpretation of Thomas in Radical Orthodoxy, see Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*; and Adrian Pabst's more recent, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 201–71. Good examples of these developments from David Burrell's rather extensive body of work are, *Aquinas: God & Action* (Routledge & Kegan, London, 1979); *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). For Eugene Rogers, see *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God*, New edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999). Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001). As for biblical Thomism, it was Thomas O'Meara who coined this term in his description of Servais Pinckaers Thomistic ethics (Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P., "Interpreting Thomas Aquinas: Aspects of the Dominican School of Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope [Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002], 363–6). Biblical Thomism, which is broadly described by Tracey Rowland as "not a 'Thomism of strict observance,' since the study of scripture and the early Church Fathers sets the tone . . . It does not try to synthesize Aquinas with Kant, Locke, Hegel, Heidegger, or Adam Smith, and it involves an insistent critique of the nominalist shift in Scotus and Ockham" (*Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* [Oxford University Press, 2008], 27), is largely represented by an ever-expanding collection of works by English-speaking Thomists, with Matthew Levering's already immense *corpus* leading the way. For discussions on the concerns and prospects of biblical Thomism, see the essays in Piotr Roszak and Jürgen Vijgen, eds., *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas: Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives* (Barcelona - Madrid: Brepols, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> In his original introduction to the fourth volume of the Blackfriars translation of the *Summa*, Thomas Gornall wrote about the divine ideas, "The full history of the doctrine remains to be written" (*Knowledge in God* (1a, 14-18) [London and New York, 1964], xxii), and in many respect this observation is still true.

needs to be done, there are some reasons for arguing that the type of work we are doing here should be completed beforehand.

The traditions of the divine ideas have a complex history of interaction because there is a great deal of variation and flexibility in the doctrine's reception and application by a multitude of authors found throughout both the East and West, and situating Thomas's reflections on the divine ideas within this doctrinal lineage is further complicated by his general place in the development of Western intellectual history.<sup>35</sup> Henri de Lubac describes Thomas as "a transitional writer," whose works remain faithful to the past while anticipating the future, and the interpretive tension created by his historical position between epochs is keenly exhibited in his doctrine of the divine ideas.<sup>36</sup> Kerr identifies this tension in his remark, "In the end, there will always be room for disagreement, depending on whether one sees his (Thomas's) theological terminology in continuity with his inheritance or as a new departure, anticipating developments to come centuries later."<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, although Thomas clearly upholds the traditions of the divine ideas handed down by Augustine, Dionysius, and others, in certain ways he also anticipates the more radical

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<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps better to speak of a plurality of traditions for the doctrine of the divine ideas than of one monolithic theory because the variations in interpretation and application of the divine ideas often developed independent of other formulations. For examples of these variations and, at times, unexpected applications of the doctrine in premodern theology, see the works of Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 7, and John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 2.2, who, following Dionysius, speak of the divine ideas as God's "volitional thoughts" (θελητικά ἔννοια), which deeply influences later Eastern Orthodox formulations of the doctrine. On this point, see Paul L. Gavriluk, "Georges Florovsky's Reading of Maximus: Anti-Bulgakov or Pro-Bulgakov?," in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection: Proceeding of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor*, ed. M. Vasiljević (Alhambra: Sabastian Press and University of Belgrade Press, 2013), 407–15. There is also the work of Eustratius of Nicaea, who, in his *In Ethica Nicomachea commentaria*, equates Aristotle's universals with Plato's theory of the Forms, which Thomas may have been, at least, indirectly aware of since Albert the Great draws on this work in his second commentary on the *Ethics*. Maarten Hoenen discusses this connection in *Marsilius of Inghen*, 149. For more on Eustratius's doctrine of the divine ideas, see Kimon Giocarinis, "Eustratius of Nicaea's Defense of the Doctrine of Ideas," *Franciscan Studies* 24 (1964): 159–204. In the West John Wyclif utilizes the divine ideas in his *De Ideis* ch. 5 to answer questions about the insolubles and God's knowledge of sin. See Stephen Lahey, "Of Divine Ideas and Insolubles: Wyclif's Explanation of God's Understanding of Sin," *The Modern Schoolman* 86 (2008/2009): 211–32. There is also Peter Martyr Vermigli's commentary on Aristotle's *Ethica Nicomachea* Bk. 1, ch.6, which associates the divine ideas with the doctrine of double predestination.

<sup>36</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études Historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 435: "un auteur de transition." While it is still lamentable that there is no complete translation of this work into English, de Lubac's argument is substantially represented in: *The Mystery of The Supernatural*, trans. Sheed Rosemary (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967); *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969). The importance of de Lubac's description of Thomas as a "transitional writer" should not be underestimated because it is directly related to the debate he provoked over Thomas's thought on the "natural desire for God," about which Kerr says, "In retrospect, the controversy set off by de Lubac did more than anything else to reveal how deeply readers of Thomas could differ" ("The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas," 29). The details of this controversy and its impact on Thomist studies are discussed in Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P., ed., *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, trans. Robert Williams rev. by Matthew Levering (Naples: Sapientia Press, 2009); French original, *Actes du colloque organisé par l'Institut Saint-Thomas d'Aquin les 26-27 mai 2000 à Toulouse* (Toulouse: Revue thomiste, 2001). For a briefer, albeit somewhat overly Bulgakovian, introduction to de Lubac's work and influence, see John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (London: SCM Press, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Fergus Kerr, O.P., *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 46.



articulations of the doctrine in the work of figures such as Nicholas of Cusa.<sup>38</sup> Situating Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas on this path consequently involves more than simply comparing what various authors say about the divine ideas, but understanding the theological and philosophical concerns, questions, and debates that shape not only Thomas's, but each author's formulation of the doctrine. This type of approach requires having more points of connection for analyzing the lines of convergence and divergence in the history of the divine ideas before, in, and after Thomas than the standard questions about metaphysics and epistemology offer. Thus, while being aware of the various formulations of the doctrine before and after Thomas is certainly necessary, by focusing on his work, our assessment can avoid being unduly influenced by variations in the doctrine produced by others that could easily distract us from what Thomas is doing with the divine ideas in the *Summa*, which leads us back to the first question we asked about the scope of this project.

In his article on Thomas's apophaticism, Kevin Hector makes an excellent point, which I alter slightly to emphasize its relevance to this project, about the reason for concentrating on the *Summa*. He writes, "If the following argument is correct, then Thomas's use of [the divine ideas] can only be properly understood within the context of the particular argument that Thomas is developing. A thematic approach would accordingly have to follow upon strict attention to the strategy employed in each of the individual texts."<sup>39</sup> Since our objective is to determine how the divine ideas fit within Thomas's pedagogical commitments, there is good reason to focus on the *Summa*, where his educational system is most thoroughly worked out, and, as Boland notes, for Thomas, "questions of pedagogy cannot be separated from doctrinal positions."<sup>40</sup> There will be recourse throughout this study to interact with a number of Thomas's other works, but, typically, only in as much as they offer clarification or support for what we find in the *Summa*. The collection of works outside the *Summa* that we engage with more substantively is Thomas's

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<sup>38</sup> Boland discusses Thomas's adherence to and synthesis of the traditions he inherited in *Ideas in God*, 274–314. Mark Jordan notes that Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas anticipates Cusanus's formulation of the doctrine, which diverges in some significant ways from earlier articulations ("The Intelligibility of the World," 30). For more on Cusanus's doctrine of the divine ideas, see my essay "Seeing One's Own Face," 33–44.

<sup>39</sup> Kevin W. Hector, "Apophaticism in Thomas Aquinas: A Re-Reformulation and Recommendation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (2007): 380 n.12.

<sup>40</sup> Boland, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 67. John Jenkins recounts Tolomeo of Lucca's description of the occasion that led Thomas to compose the *Summa*. He notes, "Aquinas began the *Summa* after beginning a revision of his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. If this is so, then it is likely that he began the *Summa* after becoming dissatisfied with the limitations a commentary on the *Sentences* imposed" (*Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 87). A copy of the work on the *Sentences* that Thomas began while he was in Rome (1265-1266) is held in Lincoln College, Oxford manuscript 95. For evaluations and comparison of this text with the *Summa*, see Leonard E. Boyle, "Alia lectura fratris Thome," *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1983): 418–29; Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 116–25. Thomas's decision to break with the pedagogical model of the *Sentences* is the primary reason that we will not often deal with his *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon* is one medieval resource that offers a pedagogical vision worth comparing with Thomas's pedagogical efforts in the *Summa*. See Thomas C. O'Brien, "'Sacra Doctrina' Revisited: The Context of Medieval Education," *The Thomist* 41 (1977): 480–1 n.19.

commentaries on scripture. Thomas asserts in the opening question of the *Summa* that theological inquiry is a matter of the best way to read scripture (*ST* 1.1.8), so it is, as Daniel Keating argues, in keeping with “Aquinas’s own pedagogy” to read the *Summa* alongside or in conjunction with his biblical commentaries.<sup>41</sup> With these guidelines now in place, we may proceed to a discussion of the outline for this project.

## 1.4 Outline

The chapters of this study are organized around a selection of the primary and peripheral gestures of the divine ideas that demonstrate some of the ways the doctrine contributes to Thomas’s pedagogical efforts in the *Summa*, but in order to properly ground our work in these pedagogical efforts, it is necessary to examine, in more detail, what Thomas is doing in the *Summa* and how it affects our reception of this work. Chapter Two, therefore, evaluates the pedagogical design of the *Summa*, and its relation to Thomas’s understanding of *sacra doctrina*. In the chapter we consider the audience and structure of the *Summa*. Particular attention is given to the nature of faith and the role of theological discourse in humanity’s knowledge of God. The discussions on Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas offered in the subsequent chapters are rooted in the argument of this chapter, and, therefore, it serves, in many respects, as the frame of reference for our analysis of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas. Because many of the gestures that we examine are subtle references to the divine ideas, identifying the patterns in Thomas’s theologically informed pedagogical design of the *Summa* helps keep the later chapters on track.

Chapter Three makes a case for the theological validity of the divine ideas. The chapter opens with an examination of the theological gestures in Thomas’s formal or *ex professo* remarks on the doctrine of the divine ideas in the *Summa*, which position the divine ideas within the pedagogical framework of his theological vision within this work. In addition to providing a summary of *ST* 1a.15, where Thomas formally introduces the divine ideas in the *Summa*, this chapter includes some thoughts on why the doctrine’s development in the *Summa* can be difficult to follow. It also considers how Thomas explicitly reorders the doctrine of the divine ideas to fit

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<sup>41</sup> Daniel A. Keating, “Justification, Sanctification and Divinization in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 139. Keating proceeds to say, “The *Summa* is often incorrectly depicted as a largely philosophical treatise which touches only lightly (and incidentally) on biblical revelation for its conclusions. Commentators often miss the profound biblical basis of his systematic presentation in the *Summa*.” Anna Williams offers a similar observation when she writes, “Thomas seek[s] to write theology. This apparently banal point is important because it has so often been overlooked, or even obscured, in the secondary literature. Even today, Thomas is frequently treated essentially as a philosopher, not only on the basis of the works that are clearly philosophical . . . but also on the basis of the *Summa theologiae* itself” (*The Ground of Union*, 167).

within his theological vision of *sacra doctrina* given the doctrine's philosophical origin and development. Lastly, Chapter Three responds to the criticism that the divine ideas distort the distinction between God and the world, by examining Thomas's application of the divine ideas in his argument for creation's twofold sense of existence.

In Chapter Four we explore grounds for a trinitarian rereading of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, and, more specifically, how he utilizes the doctrine's grammar to fittingly delineate between God's inter-trinitarian self-communication and the Father's knowledge of the different ways the eternal trinitarian relations can be imitated. Since, however, this chapter marks the beginning of a prolonged period of engagement with various peripheral gestures of the divine ideas in the *Summa*, we first examine the distinctions between Thomas's formal and applied grammars for the divine ideas.<sup>42</sup> Following this discussion, we elaborate on Thomas's understanding of theological fittingness and its methodological significance in the *Summa*. Finally, before turning to a discussion on the fittingness of Thomas's claim that the eternal processions are exemplars for creation, we examine the unity of the *Summa's consideratio de Deo*. The purpose of this chapter is to show that Thomas's theological appropriation of the divine ideas adheres to the pedagogical development of the *Summa* because the doctrine finds fuller expression in his exposition on the trinitarian act of creation.

Chapter Five explicitly challenges the hermeneutical conjecture that Thomas's thought on the doctrine of the divine ideas can be split along the distinction between the *scientiae* of philosophy and theology, and that from this division an exclusively philosophical doctrine can be extracted from the theological context of the *Summa* and used in the reconstruction of Thomas's metaphysical thought. In an effort to establish that this pattern of hermeneutical bifurcation exists in the interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, this chapter opens with an analysis of this pattern in various scholarly responses to Thomas's dual affirmations that there is only one divine exemplar and that a plurality of exemplar forms exist in the divine mind. The majority of the chapter is, however, devoted to an evaluation of Thomas's fourth and fifth proofs for the existence of God in *ST* 1a.2.3 because they provide examples of what the doctrine should look like if this type of reconstructive partitioning was consistently worked out. These assessments deal with the question how the intimations to the divine ideas in the Five Ways fit within Thomas's depiction of theological discourse, and the limitations placed on the doctrine if it is restricted to a purely philosophical notion. After identifying the subtle gestures of the divine ideas in the five ways, this chapter argues that these gestures are intended to prepare the reader

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<sup>42</sup> By this distinction I have in mind the differences between Thomas's lexical descriptions for the divine ideas in his formal discussion on the doctrine and his use of the same terms, as well as others, in ways that do not follow the formal locutions.

for the theological shift to the doctrine of divine providence and the theological reformulation of the divine ideas in Thomas's discussion on the eternal law. This transition further substantiates the peripheral pattern in Thomas's broader application of the doctrine, and the need to approach the doctrine of the divine ideas within the context of his pedagogical efforts in the *Summa*.

Chapter Six rounds out our study on the peripheral gestures of the divine ideas by analyzing the presence of the divine ideas in Thomas's reflections on the theological virtue of hope and its contrary vice, spiritual despair. Thomas's treatise on hope (*ST* 2a2ae.17-22) provides one of the clearest examples of Thomas's peripheral integration of the divine ideas into his theological vision. This chapter argues that the peripheral presence of the divine ideas in Thomas's treatise on hope is an example of the doctrine serving as a theologically codified grammar for the language implicit in the experience of the christian life. This chapter also relies more on the dialogical exchange between Thomas's work in the *Summa* and his exegetical efforts to clarify humanity's eschatological fulfillment, christological orientation, and existential encounter with God. By identifying the subtle gestures of the divine ideas that sit at the edges of Thomas's reflections on the theological virtue of hope and the vice of spiritual despair, this chapter demonstrates that Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas supplement his theological efforts to provide a fitting account of personal experience in the life of faith.

Since this study will not only highlight various avenues for future research into Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, but also expose some of the ways his theological appropriation of the divine ideas might open up doors for contemporary theologians and scholars to reclaim the doctrine in ongoing theological discussions, the final chapter discusses some of the challenges we face in the process of theological ressourcement. After reflecting on the positive and negative implications of inquires into intellectual history, we will bring this study to a close with some final remarks on why reclaiming the doctrine of the divine ideas is theologically important.

## 2. The Habit of Thinking Theologically: Faith seeking Understanding in the *Summa Theologiae*

*If we really think of God as a Who and not a What – in other words, if we think of him as a Someone capable of speech, then there is no “security” against revelation. And man’s only meaningful response to revelation is faith!<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

Sergei Bulgakov’s critique of Thomas’s approach to the doctrine of the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15 – a critique that is, incidentally, reinforced by many of the standard interpretations of the doctrine – aptly expresses many of the problems that contemporary theologians have with the divine ideas. In a couple of rather forthright passages, Bulgakov comments:

[Thomas] first expounds this doctrine [of the divine ideas] in the context of the general doctrine of God, after the doctrine of *scientia Dei*, as its development. The doctrine of ideas is therefore *not* brought into a connection with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, does not belong to the trinitarian doctrine, but refers, so to speak, to the pre-trinitarian or extra-trinitarian (more Aristotelian than Christian) doctrine of God as mind, *noesis* . . . [T]he world that is created by God is understood here not as unique in its design and perfect . . . Rather, it is understood as imperfect, as only one of many possible types of worlds, so to speak. This supposition not only shakes the principles of healthy cosmology and anthropology (including christology) but also introduces an element of irrational accident and arbitrariness in the relation of the Creator to creation. In any case, we get a quantitative noncorrespondence of ideas and things. The domain of ideas is larger than the domain of things . . . In Aquinas we have a Platonism that is supplemented by Aristotelianism, and this combination is mechanically, inorganically, brought into Christian theology.<sup>2</sup>

Putting aside Bulgakov’s rather sophisticated sophiological approach to these issues, this paragraph highlights at least three common criticisms of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas. First, Bulgakov criticizes Thomas’s doctrine for relying on a Hellenistic metaphysic that is irreconcilable with theological discourse because it is insufficiently trinitarian.<sup>3</sup> Second, the overly metaphysical character of the doctrine imposes an apparent “arbitrariness in the relation of Creator to creation” that is implicitly contrasted with a doctrine of creation that, in Thomist

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, “The Problem of Faith Today,” in *Problems of Modern Faith: Essays and Addresses*, trans. Jan van Heurck (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), 7–8; translated from the German, *Über die Schwierigkeit Heute zu Glauben* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 24 and 26; Russian original, posthumously published, *Nevesta Agntsa* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1945). This work is the final volume of Bulgakov’s great trilogy *On Divine Humanity* (*O bogoschelovechestve*), which also includes *The Lamb of God* (1933) and *The Comforter* (1936). My understanding of Bulgakov’s critique is greatly indebted to John Hughes, “*Creatio Ex Nihilo* and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas: How Fair Is Bulgakov’s Critique?,” *Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 124–37.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning that Bulgakov’s interpretation here rests on Théodore de Régnon’s outdated theory of Western trinitarianism (Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 27), which has been definitively demolished by Michel René Barnes, “De Régnon Reconsidered,” *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 51–79. For more on de Régnon, see §4.3.2.

terms, identifies the realm of the divine ideas with God's practical knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Third, because the Thomist approach supposedly prioritizes the philosophical origins of the divine ideas over the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of the divine ideas is divorced from humanity's existential relationship to God as the personal triune Creator.<sup>5</sup>

Each of these critiques raises important questions about Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, which the following chapters will address in more detail, but they also expose a more basic problem with the reception of the doctrine in later interpretations of Thomas that must be dealt with first. The argument presented here, therefore, is that the interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas in the *Summa Theologiae* should be determined by the work's theological pedagogy, which we will define according to the pattern of faith seeking understanding, because this is the context in which Thomas intended the whole work to be read. In other words this chapter proposes that Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas should be read within the paradigm of theological discourse outlined in *ST* 1a.1.8 ad.2, where he writes:

*Sacra doctrina* also uses human reasoning, not indeed to prove the faith, for that would take away from the merit of believing, but to make manifest some implications of its message. Since grace does not scrap nature but brings it to perfection, so also natural reason should assist faith as the natural loving bent of the will yields to charity. St Paul speaks of *bringing into captivity every understanding unto the service of Christ*.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, I will suggest, in keeping with the insights of this passage, the theological formation Thomas describes in the *Summa* indicates that the doctrine's contact with the principles of faith,

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<sup>4</sup> This concern over the possibility of the divine ideas supporting a form of arbitrariness in creation is the direct result of debates over Thomas's thought on the existence of possibles. Hughes concludes that Thomas's doctrine may indeed open the door for just this type of arbitrariness to enter his exposition of creation ("*Creatio Ex Nihilo* and the Divine Ideas, 137). However, David Burrell is certain that Thomas was aware of this danger and corrected for it, albeit insufficiently. See David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 34–5 and 63–4; "Book Review of Gregory Doolan's *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*," *Nova et Vetera (English)* 7 (2009): 753.

<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in his comments on the doctrine of creation presented in the *Summa*, Thomas Gilby worries that if the divine ideas are taken too seriously, the doctrine will diminish the existential character of Thomas's thought. See, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), xxv.

<sup>6</sup> "Utitur sacra doctrina etiam ratione humana, non quidem ad probandum fidem, quia per hoc tolleretur meritum fidei; sed ad manifestandum aliqua alia quae traduntur in hac doctrina. Cum enim gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat, oportet quod naturalis ratio subserviat fidei; sicut et naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati. Unde et apostolus dicit, II ad Cor. 10, in captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi." While Thomas's Latin is relatively simple, some of his key terms and phrases are notoriously difficult to translate because of changes in the semantic range of certain words. His use of *sacra doctrina* is an example of a phrase that can prove challenging to convey its meaning accurately in translation. Because of *sacra doctrina*'s importance for the current discussion, I will typically retain the Latin in references and translations although, at times, I will refer to it as "holy teaching," which I believe best captures Thomas's intention behind the phrase. For a fuller discussion on *sacra doctrina*'s range of meaning, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal, Revised edition, vol. 2 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 1-4; French original, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, Maître Spirituel* (Paris: Cerf, 1996).

as in other cases where he utilizes philosophically born concepts, alters its frame of reference in the light of God's self-disclosure through scripture.<sup>7</sup>

The previous chapter has already discussed how the common atomistic approach to Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas perpetuates many of the interpretive problems we still face (§1.1). Consequently, in order to develop a more contextually conditioned portrait of the doctrine's function in the *Summa*, we must first establish some parameters that will guide us through this complex work. However, since it seems best not to arbitrarily define our parameters but draw them directly from Thomas himself, the majority of this chapter is devoted to identifying the pattern of Thomas's theological pedagogy as it is expressed in his description of *sacra doctrina*. By taking the time to properly set off on the pedagogical journey that Thomas constructs in the *Summa*, the parallels will emerge between the form of his theological discourse and the pattern of theological education that both informs and reforms his doctrine of the divine ideas.

With this in mind, the present chapter is divided into four sections. The first section considers how Thomas instills the habit of theological thinking in his readers through the form of theological inquiry adopted by the *Summa*. In addition to reflections on the *Summa*'s pattern of theological discourse, this section includes discussions on the trinitarian basis for Thomas's theological pedagogy and the possibility of rupturing the relation between reception and intention by ignoring the *Summa*'s grounding in *sacra doctrina*. The second and fourth sections address some of the *Summa*'s formal characteristics, such as its audience and structure. Section three addresses Thomas's description of humanity's knowledge of God in *sacra doctrina*. While this section includes a discussion on a shift in recent Thomist studies on this topic, the primary focus is Thomas's thought on the nature and role of faith in the science of *sacra doctrina*. This chapter will serve as a type of backbone for the rest of the study and, as we branch off of it and examine in the subsequent chapters some of the primary and peripheral gestures of the divine ideas throughout the *Summa*, the principles of *sacra doctrina* and characteristics of the *Summa* discussed below will guide our analysis of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas.

## 2.1 There and back again: from Pedagogy to Reception

In the opening of the *Summa*, Thomas describes the responsibility of the Christian teacher and his approach to the task of fulfilling it. He writes, "Since the teacher of Catholic truth has not only to build up those who are advanced but also to shape those who are

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<sup>7</sup> For more on God's self-disclosure in and through *sacra doctrina*, see Brian J. Shanley, O.P., "Sacra Doctrina and the Theology of Disclosure," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 163–87; Anthony J. Kelly, C.Ss.R., "A Multidimensional Disclosure: Aspects of Aquinas's Theological Intentionality," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 335–74.

beginning . . . the purpose we have set before us in this work is to convey the things which belong to the Christian religion in a style serviceable for the training of beginners.”<sup>8</sup> Many scholars have noted and discussed the importance of Thomas’s pedagogical convictions, which are aptly summarized by Vivian Boland’s observation, “[P]edagogy is at the heart of Aquinas’s writing projects; he always has his readers in mind, and his intention is to persuade them to certain convictions about the truth and about the best ways to search for it.”<sup>9</sup> Thomas explains the nature of this pedagogical persuasion when, in response to the objection that one man cannot teach another, he says: “[The teacher] moves the learner by his teaching so that the latter forms intelligible concepts by the power of his own mind, when the signs of these concepts are put before him from outside.”<sup>10</sup> We will follow this description of the pedagogical task as the pattern for theological discourse in the form of faith seeking understanding.

### 2.1.1 *Setting up the Pedagogical Parameters: The Pattern of Theological Discourse*

In keeping with this assessment of teaching, Thomas’s description of the *Summa*’s purpose in the opening prologue reveals that his goal is to communicate the truth of *sacra doctrina* to his readers in such a way that, through the cumulative progression of the work itself, they are taught how to inhabit the noetic journey from faith to wisdom – faith seeking understanding – so that they may discover its truth for themselves.<sup>11</sup> He accomplishes this goal, following Patrick Quinn’s insightful observation that “communicating how to think constitutes for Aquinas the essence of what is taught,” by instilling in his readers, through each question of the *Summa*, the full journey of faith seeking understanding as a certain habit of thought.<sup>12</sup> Each question, then,

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<sup>8</sup> *ST* 1a.1, prol.: “Quia catholicae veritatis doctor non solum provecos debet instruere sed ad eum pertinet etiam incipientes erudire . . . propositum nostrae intentionis in hoc opera est ea quae ad christianam religionem pertinent eo modo tradere secundum quod congruit ad eruditionem incipientium.”

<sup>9</sup> Vivian Boland, O.P., “Truth, Knowledge and Communication: Thomas Aquinas on the Mystery of Teaching,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006): 296.

<sup>10</sup> *ST* 1a.117.1 ad.3: “Sed movet discipulum per suam doctrinam ad hoc, quod ipse per virtutem sui intellectus formet intelligibiles conceptiones, quarum signa sibi proponit exterius.” Pieper beautifully captures the importance of teaching for Thomas when he writes: “To lead a man from error to truth – this he considered the greatest service which one man can render another . . . Teaching, for Thomas, is something other and greater than to impart by one method or another the ‘findings of research’; something other and greater than the report of a thinker on the results of his inquiry, not to mention the ways and by-ways of his search.” He continues, “Teaching is a process that goes on between living men. The teacher looks not only at the truth of things; at the same time he looks at the faces of living men who desire to know this truth. Love of truth and love of men – only the two together constitute a teacher.” Josef Pieper, “On Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O’Connor, 3rd Revised ed. (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Candler’s work provides an excellent analysis on the theological character of being lead to truth. See *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, Or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 90–107. In this way the *Summa* becomes a contemplative journey for the reader. On this point, see A. N. Williams, “Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*,” *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 53–74; Anselm K. Min, *Paths to the Triune God: An Encounter Between Aquinas and Recent Theologies* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 144–57.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Quinn, “Aquinas’s Views on Teaching,” *New Blackfriars* 82 (2001): 110.



recreates the pedagogical movement of the whole work through an isomorphic recursive pattern that takes the readers from the confession of faith to an understanding of that confession only to conclude by returning them to the position of faith so that the process may begin again in the following question, but now from a place of understanding what has come before; thus, moving the reader ever closer to the contemplative vision of God.

Since Thomas's theological praxis is educationally orientated, he intentionally leaves gaps in the unfolding of his discourse so that as his readers are taught the proper habit of theological thinking they can begin to see the truth for themselves and fill in the holes he leaves behind.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while the *Summa* does not present a closed system, it does possess a pedagogical unity as each element of the work is directed to a common end, which some might easily confuse for a stable system.<sup>14</sup> As Josef Pieper states on this matter, "This surely indicates that its fragmentary character belongs to the total implication of the *Summa Theologiae*," and in a comment on Thomas's affirmation that "the essential principles of things are concealed from us," he continues this earlier reflection by saying, "Such a proposition is not only far removed from the neat, well-rounded perfection of a rationalistic system, it also paraphrases a notion of philosophy that formally excludes the idea of a closed system."<sup>15</sup>

Even though it lies well beyond the scope of this study to trace the formation of the habit of theological thinking in the mind of the reader step-by-step, it will be helpful to locate the source of Thomas's pedagogical pattern for *sacra doctrina*. Thomas provides a clue to this source in one of his main pedagogical principles: "Now the truth of knowledge is the same in disciple as in master. The disciple's knowledge is, in effect, a reproduction of that in the master."<sup>16</sup> Not only does this passage reveal Thomas's intention, as a teacher, to guide his

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<sup>13</sup> We return to the intentionally fragmented character of the *Summa* in §3.1 and §3.2.

<sup>14</sup> The myth that Thomas offered a grand unified system has long been dead. Nevertheless, some have attempted to resurrect it under different conditions. This shift away from reading the *Summa* as a stable system is documented in Fergus Kerr, O.P., "The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 30. Robert Pasnau covertly attempts to resuscitate this idea in his *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a 75-89* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6. For other examples, see Paul J. DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 2012), 126, 197ff; Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed., Faith and Reason: Studies in Catholic Theology and Philosophy (Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010); Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 44–71, 80–99; Steven A. Long, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End for Man," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 211–37; Ralph McNerny, *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 175 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Josef Pieper, "The Timeliness of Thomism," in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O'Connor, 3rd Revised ed. (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 89; German original, *Actualidad del Tomismo*, ed. Florentino Perez Embid, Colección "O Crece O Muere" (Madrid: Ateneo, 1952). Reference is to Thomas's *Sent. de Anima* I.1.15: "Principia essentialia rerum sunt nobis ignota." Cf. *De spir. creat.* 11 ad.3; *De pot.* 7.5 ad.14; *De Ver.* 4.1 ad.8; 10.1; *SCG Bk. 4*, ch.1.

<sup>16</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.171.6: "Veritas autem est eadem cognitionis in discipulo et in docente, quia cognitio addiscentis est similitudo cognitionis docentis." Cf. Otto Bird, "How to Read an Article of the *Summa*," *New Scholasticism* 27

readers in reproducing his knowledge in their own minds, but the correspondence between his description of the educational relation between teachers and students and the content of *sacra doctrina* described in *ST* 1.1.3 ad.2, where it says, “*sacra doctrina* is like an imprint on us of God’s own knowledge, which is the single and simple vision of everything,” also discloses the divine reality after which his pedagogical vision is patterned.<sup>17</sup>

In the first lecture from his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Thomas situates *sacra doctrina*’s pedagogical reality within creation’s hierarchical imitation of the divine life in itself and as it is expressed in the incarnation. There he states:

Since the word *principium* implies a certain order of one thing to another, one can find a *principium* in all those things which have an order . . . [O]rder is found in learning; and this in two ways: as to nature, and as to ourselves . . . As to nature, in Christian doctrine the beginning and principle of our wisdom is Christ, inasmuch as he is the Wisdom and Word of God., i.e., in his divinity. But as to ourselves, the beginning is Christ himself inasmuch as the Word has become flesh, i.e., by his Incarnation.<sup>18</sup>

For Thomas, then, the relational subsistence of God’s sapiential self-knowledge and the expression of that knowledge in the incarnation form the providential pattern of knowledge in creation and salvation. This pattern is, consequently, expressed in the intersection between master and disciple in the pedagogy of *sacra doctrina* such that what disciples encounter through the natural correspondence of knowledge and love from their master is the disclosure of salvation’s reality in the inter-personal relations of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.1.2 *The Trinitarian Basis for Thomas’s Pedagogical Paradigm*

God’s sapiential self-knowledge, according to Thomas, is eternally expressed in the generation of the Son as he says: “[T]he notion of generation does apply to the procession of the Word in God . . . since what the intellect conceives is the likeness of what is understood; and it

(1953): 150. For more on the pedagogical importance of this passage, see David Whidden, “The Theology of Light in Thomas Aquinas” (Dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 2011), 19.

<sup>17</sup> *ST* 1a.1.3 ad.2: “*sacra doctrina sit velut quaedam impressio divinae scientiae, quae est una et simplex omnium.*”

<sup>18</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 1, no.34: “Cum enim principium importet ordinem quemdam ad alia, necesse est invenire principium in omnibus, in quibus est ordo . . . Invenitur ordo in disciplinis, et hic est duplex: secundum naturam, et quoad nos . . . Et hoc modo, secundum naturam quidem, in disciplina Christiana initium et principium sapientiae nostrae est Christus, in quantum est sapientia et verbum Dei, idest secundum divinitatem. Quoad nos vero principium est ipse Christus, in quantum verbum caro factum est, idest secundum eius incarnationem.”

<sup>19</sup> *ST* 1a.16.1; 1a.27.4; 1a.62.7; 1a.82.3; 1a.108.6 ad.3. Although it is not discussed in the following section, the master’s love for the disciple, which is what entices the master to teach, imitates the Holy Spirit’s activity in the relational exchange between the Father and the Son, and is reflected in the description of the Holy Spirit as the internal teacher. See *ST* 1a.36.2; 1a.37.1 ad.2; 1a.38.1; 1a.38.2; 1a.43.2; 1a.43.5 ad.2; 1a-2ae.68.4; *Lect. Ioan.* 14, lect. 6. Cf. Kieran Conley, O.S.B., *A Theology of Wisdom: A Study in St. Thomas* (Dubuque: The Priory Press, 1963), 137–8; Michael Sherwin, O.P., “Christ the Teacher in Commentary on the Gospel of John,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2005), 188–90.

exists in the same nature, because to be and to understand are identical in God. Hence the procession of the Word in God is called ‘generation,’ and the Word itself proceeding is called ‘Son’.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the eternal reality of the divine mind is realized in God’s perfect understanding of himself, which is the Word of God. However, in God’s perfect understanding of himself, he not only knows himself but all of creation, as Thomas writes, “The name ‘Word’ connotes a reference to creatures. The reason: in knowing himself God knows every creature . . . Because with God by the one act he understands both himself and all else, his single Word expresses not only the Father but creatures as well.”<sup>21</sup> Since Thomas proposes that the pedagogical structure of *sacra doctrina* is grounded on the inter-trinitarian reality of the Son’s eternal generation, the theological affirmation of the Word as God’s sapiential self-understanding depicts the Father in the role of the divine educator and the Son as the substantive reality of divine pedagogy, which establishes the unity of *sacra doctrina* in the revelation of the Word through the incarnation of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, when Thomas claims, “The different classes of objects separately treated by the diverse philosophical sciences can be combined by *sacra doctrina*,” or “Whereas some among the philosophical sciences are theoretical and others are practical, *sacra doctrina* takes over both functions,” or, again, “Now all things are dealt with in *sacra doctrina* in terms of God,” he is simply reiterating that the wisdom of *sacra doctrina* flows directly from God; however, now it should be clear that this unity in the pedagogical vision of *sacra doctrina* is rooted in the Word of God as the subsisting sapiential expression of the Father’s self-knowledge.<sup>23</sup> By fashioning his description of *sacra doctrina*’s unity after the pattern of God’s sapiential self-knowledge, Thomas attaches *sacra doctrina*’s unitary structure to the originating source of theological reflection in the trinitarian life of God, which suggests that Thomas is attempting to emphasize that this unitive quality is essential to the task of faith seeking understanding and, therefore, crucial for the reader’s understanding of the text. In other words if a reader fails to identify, in the reading of

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<sup>20</sup> *ST* 1a.27.2: “[P]rocessio verbi in divinis habet rationem generationis . . . secundum rationem similitudinis, quia conceptio intellectus est similitudo rei intellectae; et in eadem natura existens, quia in Deo idem est intelligere et esse. Unde processio verbi in divinis dicitur generatio et ipsum verbum procedens dicitur Filius.”

<sup>21</sup> *ST* 1a.34.3: “Dicendum quod in Verbo importatur respectus ad creaturam. Deus enim cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam . . . quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum verbum ejus est expressivum non solum Patris, sed etiam creaturarum.”

<sup>22</sup> For more on the relation between the pedagogical pattern of *sacra doctrina* and Thomas’s understanding of God’s pedagogical expression through the Son, see the excellent dissertation by Michael A. Dauphinais, “Christ the Teacher: The Pedagogy of the Incarnation According to Saint Thomas Aquinas” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2000), esp. 33–49.

<sup>23</sup> *ST* 1a.1.3 ad.2: “Ea quae in diversis scientiis philosophicis tractantur potest *sacra doctrina*”; *ST* 1a.1.4: “Unde licet in scientiis philosophicis alia sit speculative et alia practica, *sacra tamen doctrina* comprehendit sub se utramque”; *ST* 1a.1.7: “Omnia autem tractantur in *sacra doctrina* sub ratione Dei.”

the whole work or a particular loci, *sacra doctrina*'s pedagogical imitation of the trinitarian life, there will inevitably be a fundamental rupture between the reception and intention of the text.

### 2.1.3 Rupture in the Reception of Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*

Mark Jordan explains that this rupture between reception and intention occurred in the earliest reception of the *Summa* by Thomas's own Dominican order. Jordan writes, "How interesting to note, then, that the medieval Dominican reception of the *Summa* repeatedly ignores the work's structure by rewriting it."<sup>24</sup> He continues, through an examination of the *Summa*'s manuscript tradition, to show how early Dominicans stripped Thomas's moral thought from its theological context by only copying the *prima secundae* and the *secunda secundae* while also seriously altering the structure and complexity of these sections.<sup>25</sup> Although Jordan believes that contemporary readings of the *Summa* are not liable to make the same errors that the early Dominicans did, he, nevertheless, worries that "the modern regime of Thomistic authority [might] produce more bizarre misreadings."<sup>26</sup> Jordan suggests that contemporary readers are likely to "miss the *Summa*'s immanent pedagogical program" because of a modern inclination to read the *Summa* "as a foundational encyclopedia of Catholic philosophy and theology."<sup>27</sup> What Jordan's examination of the *Summa*'s reception persuasively demonstrates is that, from its earliest readings until today, serious misunderstandings of the work have occurred because of a failure to adequately grasp Thomas's pedagogical achievement. To avoid this pitfall, it will be helpful to fill out our picture of Thomas's pedagogical objective by examining in more detail the nature of *sacra doctrina*'s knowledge, but first it will be beneficial to discuss the *Summa*'s audience.

## 2.2 The First question, the Oldest Question . . . A Note on the *Summa*'s Audience

If one accepts the premise that Thomas's theological project is expressed through the *Summa*'s pedagogical formation, it would be quite natural to ask the ever-present question of Thomas's intended audience since this might bear directly on the work's applicability for today.

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<sup>24</sup> Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 8.

<sup>25</sup> Jordan's discussions on this topic can be found in *Rewritten Theology*, 7-12. For more discussions on the number, character, and redactions of the *Summa*, see Leonard E. Boyle, "The *Summa Confessorum* of John of Freiburg and the Popularization of the Moral Teaching of St. Thomas and of Some of His Contemporaries," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), esp. 258ff.; James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works*, Augmented (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 260-1; Thomas Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 1 (Louvain-la-neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> Mark D. Jordan, "The Summa's Reform of Moral Teaching – and Its Failure," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Jordan, "The Summa's Reform of Moral Teaching," 52 and 53. In a similar vein, Pieper writes, "The majestic elaboration of thought manifested in St. Thomas's work is . . . a structure of the highest intellectual order, but not in any way a closed system of school propositions" ("The Timeliness of Thomism," 82).

Thomas's somewhat ambiguous reference to beginners (*novitii*) in the opening prologue (*ST* 1a.1, prol.) has generated a fair number of attempts to identify the audience he had in mind while composing the *Summa*. There are currently three or four major arguments, depending on how one divides them, circulating in contemporary scholarship, and while it could be profitable to examine how each explanation might influence the reading of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, this would be an unnecessary diversion. Instead, it is enough to note that while there are variances in the details, the arguments generally propose that Thomas wrote the *Summa* for students or as an aid for teachers.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of the specific position one adopts, then, the common consensus is that the *Summa* was written to educate students, either directly or indirectly, and this broad level of agreement guides the search for the basis of Thomas's theological synthesis to his pedagogical purposes in the *Summa*. Even though the variety of positions on Thomas's audience all point in the same general direction, Mark Jordan's research into Thomas's audience is quickly gaining favor. His reflections on the audience provide a compelling explanation for the unique character of the *Summa* in comparison with other thirteenth-century texts as well as providing helpful insights into how it may be received by today's reader.

Thomas readily admits that he composed the *Summa* to overcome what he believed to be deficiencies in thirteenth-century pedagogical practices; as he explains, "newcomers to this teaching are greatly hindered by various writings on the subject" because they do not teach according to "a sound educational method" ordered by the subject matter of *sacra doctrina* itself.<sup>29</sup> Yet the identity of Thomas's audience remains somewhat nebulous. Jordan has, however, convincingly argued that the structure of the *Summa* suggests that it is "Thomas's remedy for a defect of Dominican education."<sup>30</sup> According to Jordan, Thomas's unique integration of moral teaching into the structure of his theological vision is an attempt "to reform the Dominican tendency to separate moral manuals from theological or scriptural treatises."<sup>31</sup> In an effort to overturn the tendencies in his own order to dissociate from each other the moral/mystical, the theological/speculative, and the biblical dimensions of *sacra doctrina*, Thomas conceives of a

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<sup>28</sup> For an overview of the explanations, see John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 79–85. Jenkins proceeds to offer his own suggestion that Thomas wrote the *Summa* for students "aspiring to be a *Magister in sacra pagina*, or for someone at a comparable level" (p. 85). The standard argument that the *Summa* was intended for beginners to theological education can be found in Leonard E. Boyle, *The Setting of the "Summa Theologiae" of Saint Thomas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982). Mark Johnson attempts to construct a *via media* between Boyle and Jenkins by arguing that the *Summa* was written "for the teachers of beginners" in his, "Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* as Pedagogy," in *Medieval Education*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J. and Ronald Begley (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2005), 140.

<sup>29</sup> *ST* 1a.1, prol.: ". . . huius doctrinae novitios in his quae a diversis conscripta sunt plurimum impediri . . . non traduntur secundum ordinem disciplinae."

<sup>30</sup> Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 118.

<sup>31</sup> Jordan, "The *Summa*'s Reform of Moral Teaching," 43.

theological synthesis designed to reform their educational practices, by inviting readers “to study morals through a clarifying reminder of arguments about God as creator and governor.”<sup>32</sup>

With the evidence culled by Jordan, which indicates that Thomas designed the *Summa* to encourage educational reform in his own order, the lack of specific details on or references to Dominicans might simply be described as a curious omission; however, Jordan identifies some trends in Thomas’s works that offer another reason for this absence. It appears that Thomas decided to be less direct about the audience that prompted him to write the *Summa* because he did not want it to be limited to his own order, and this decision is important for the reception of the *Summa* today. Jordan argues that, “Thomas had a habit of conceiving occasions for writing in the widest terms.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, while the defects in Dominican educational practices prompted him to write the *Summa*, he, nevertheless, designs it, as Jordan says, “with a kind of universality to all ‘beginners’ in ‘Christian religion’,” which explains “why Thomas chose not to be more explicitly Dominican in his prologue, his rhetoric, and his acknowledged sources.”<sup>34</sup>

What this all means for the contemporary reception of the *Summa* is, as Jordan proposes, that Thomas “invented it [the *Summa*] as a curricular ideal” that could be received and pedagogically enacted by any community, regardless of time and location, as “a single, continuous solicitation to acquire and exercise the habit of theology in all of its parts.”<sup>35</sup> Whether or not today’s theologians and scholars accept Thomas’s pedagogical schema is another matter, which does not detract from his intention to formulate an ideal theological pedagogy that could be received for generations by anyone and everyone that desired to be taught the habit of theological thinking. Even though modern scholars may profitably seek answers to a variety of questions that Thomas never considered asking in the *Summa* or apply an array of approaches designed to improve our understanding of his historical, political, social, and intellectual contexts, there is, nevertheless, something fitting, and in keeping with Thomas’s own purposes, to approach the *Summa* as a work that treats even the modern reader as its disciple in theology. The *Summa*’s applicability to readers regardless of generation or century is rooted in its communication of knowledge through faith seeking understanding, which is the timeless form of theological inquiry, but it employs distinct practices to complete this task, to which we turn now.

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<sup>32</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 120. Jordan’s argument that Thomas’s pedagogical vision for the *Summa* encompasses the speculative, scriptural, and mystical/moral dimensions reflects, following Torrell, the inclusive character of *sacra doctrina*, which encompasses all forms of Christian education. See, Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, 2–3; Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., “St. Thomas Aquinas: Theologian and Mystic,” in *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Bernhard Blankenhorn, O.P. (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 3–4; French original, “Théologien et Mystique: Le Cas de Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue Des Sciences Religieuses* 77 (2003): 350–65.

<sup>33</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 118.

<sup>34</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 119–20.

<sup>35</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 120.

### 2.3 Knowing the Unknown God through Faith

Recently, there has been a shift in Thomist studies away from the overtly rationalistic approach to Thomas's thought on the knowledge of God that once governed the interpretation of these issues in the *Summa*. It was, at one time, commonly held that the early part of the *prima pars*, specifically questions 2-26, provided a type of natural or pre-theological description of the knowledge humanity could obtain of God independent of grace and scripture.<sup>36</sup> This way of reading the early part of the *Summa*, coincidentally, follows the same problematic division between metaphysics and theology found in Bulgakov's criticism of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas. While there were a number of works produced in the early twentieth century that pressed against the traditional reading of these questions, it was not until the publication of Henri de Lubac's groundbreaking works that the door was finally pushed open for substantial reformulations of Thomas's thought on humanity's knowledge of God to take root in Thomist studies.<sup>37</sup> One of the more significant examples of this development is the apophatic turn in Thomist interpretation, which emphasizes Thomas's statements on the radical incomprehensibility of the divine essence and stands in direct opposition to the earlier rationalistic formulation of humanity's ability to know God.

#### 2.3.1 *The Apophatic Turn in Thomist Studies and the Question of Real Knowledge*

Victor Preller offers such a reformulation when he argues that, for Thomas, "In this life God is and remains *ignotum* – the Unknown God whom we cannot grasp or control in terms of the forms of intelligibility created by our intellects."<sup>38</sup> Preller's reasoning here is based on certain claims found throughout Thomas's works, which are similar to the argument he presents in his commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, where he states, "We are said to know God as unknown

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<sup>36</sup> Kerr documents the various manifestations of this interpretive position in his *After Aquinas*, 35–96. A classic example of this approach is Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange's *Dieu, Son Existence et Sa Nature. Solution Thomiste Des Antinomies Agnostiques*, which was first published in 1915, but went through eighteen editions in three decades; thus, confirming its enormous influence on later generations. While this type of reading is not nearly as prominent as it once was, its methods and principles are still alive today. For examples, see Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1990); Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*; Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven*.

<sup>37</sup> For a description of de Lubac's work and the controversy it sparked, see §1.3 n.36. Examples of others that challenged, to varying degrees, the traditional readings of Thomas prior to the publication of de Lubac's *Surnaturel* are: Pierre Rousselot, *L'intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*, 1st ed. (Paris, 1908); A.D. Sertillanges, *Agnosticisme Ou Anthropomorphisme* (Paris: Bloud, 1908); Martin Grabmann, *Thomas von Aquin: eine Einführung in seine Persönlichkeit und Gedankenwelt* (Kempten: Kösel, 1912); Joseph Maréchal, *Le Point de Départ de La Métaphysique. Leçons Sur Le Développement Historique et Théorique Du Problème de La Connaissance*. (Paris: Desclée, 1926).

<sup>38</sup> Victor Preller, *Divine Science and The Science of God: A Reformulation of Thomas Aquinas*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 265. Despite this work being one of only a few things Preller ever published, it has had a tremendous impact on English Thomist studies. See, for examples of this influence, the essays in Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain, eds., *Grammar and Grace: Reformulations of Aquinas and Wittgenstein* (London: SCM Press, 2004). Sr. Louise-Marie Antonioti provides a critical but, nonetheless, charitable review of Preller's book in *Revue Thomiste* 69 (1969): 651–56.

at the highest point of our knowledge because we find that the mind has made the greatest advance in knowledge when it knows that his essence transcends everything it can apprehend in the present life. Thus, although what he is remains unknown, that he is nonetheless known.”<sup>39</sup> Many scholars, like Preller, have chosen to dwell in the apophatic space created by Thomas’s commitment to the incomprehensibility of the divine essence described in this passage and substantiated throughout his *corpus*.<sup>40</sup> A. D. Sertillanges provides, in an early expression of this position, an astute summary of the conviction that lies at the heart of the apophatic reading: “We do not know God in any way, in any thing, in any degree?”<sup>41</sup>

Others are, however, convinced that Thomas’s apophaticism supplies us with only one chapter in his story on humanity’s knowledge of God.<sup>42</sup> Although Thomas is quite clear that in this life it is impossible for the human intellect to obtain quidditative knowledge of the divine, he does, nevertheless, appear to leave room, contrary to a strict apophaticism, for the possibility of a real knowledge of God (*ST* 2a2ae.1.2 ad.2). In his response to the objection that we cannot use words to signify the divine essence because we do not have knowledge of God’s essence, he states quite emphatically, “In this life we cannot understand the essence of God as he is in himself, we can however understand it as it is represented by the perfections of his creatures; and this is how the words we use can signify it.”<sup>43</sup> While Thomas, again, repeats his conviction concerning our knowledge of the divine essence, his argument does not conclude with this negation. Instead, he suggests that the perfections we find in creatures form the created space

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<sup>39</sup> *BDT* 1.2 ad.1: “Secundum hoc dicimus in fine nostrae cognitionis Deum tamquam ignotum cognoscere, quia tunc maxime mens in cognitione profecisse invenitur, quando cognoscit eius essentiam esse supra omne quod apprehendere potest in statu viae, et sic quamvis maneat ignotum quid est, scitur tamen quia est.” For Preller’s comments on this passage, see *Divine Science and The Science of God*, 28. Cf. *ST* 2a2ae.8.7.

<sup>40</sup> Other scholars that have exhibited in their works a similar commitment to an apophatic reading of Thomas are: Sertillanges, *Agnosticisme Ou Anthropomorphisme*; Victor White, *God the Unknown* (London: Harvill Press, 1956); David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Aquinas: God & Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1979); *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Brian Davies, “Aquinas on What God Is Not,” in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 227–42; Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,” *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 432–45; “Aquinas, the Trinity and the Limits of Understanding,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (2005): 414–27; “Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010): 65–77.

<sup>41</sup> Sertillanges, *Agnosticisme Ou Anthropomorphisme*, 60; cited in Fergus Kerr, O.P., “‘Real Knowledge’ or ‘Enlightened Ignorance’: Eric Mascall on the Apophatic Thomisms of Victor Preller and Victor White,” in *Grammar and Grace: Reformulation in Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, ed. Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain (London: SCM Press, 2004), 116.

<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, the works of Eric L. Mascall, *He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism* (London: Longmans, Green, 1943); Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, 34–45; Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2004); Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 72–7; Kevin W. Hector, “Apophaticism in Thomas Aquinas: A Re-Reformulation and Recommendation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (2007): 377–93; Matthew Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 (2007): 39–54.

<sup>43</sup> *ST* 1a.13.2 ad.3: “Essentiam Dei in hac vita cognoscere non possumus secundum quod in se est, sed cognoscimus eam secundum quod repraesentatur in perfectionibus creaturarum; et sic nomina a nobis imposita eam significant.” Cf. *ST* 2a2ae.8.2.



where, what Rudi te Velde calls, “the metaphysical continuity-in-difference between the world and God”<sup>44</sup> encounters the intelligibility of God in the divine act of self-disclosure as a fitting knowledge of God’s incomprehensibility finally expressed in our, as David Burrell notes, theological “grammar of divinity.”<sup>45</sup> To start parsing out the substance of Thomas’s argument in this passage, and how it inevitably affects his formulation of the divine ideas, we need to begin our analysis here with a discussion on the type of knowledge that belongs to *sacra doctrina*.

### 2.3.2 *The Character of Knowledge in Sacra Doctrina*

Thomas opens his discussion on the knowledge of *sacra doctrina* by noting that there are two types of sciences.<sup>46</sup> The first type of science, as te Velde usefully summarizes, “may proceed from principles immediately known as true in the natural light of the intellect.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast the second type, according to Thomas, “works from premises recognized in the light of a higher science.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, a higher science provides the basis for a lower one’s principles and everything that may be rightly concluded from them. Thomas proposes that it is according to this second type or subaltern science that *sacra doctrina* may be considered a *scientia* because, as he says: “*Sacra doctrina* . . . flows from the founts recognized in the light of a higher science, namely God’s very own which he shares with the blessed . . . so *sacra doctrina* takes on faith its principles revealed by God.”<sup>49</sup> It is important to take note that Thomas uses the Aristotelian category of subaltern science to formally clarify what he finds intrinsic to the nature of theological inquiry as a pedagogical response to God’s self-revelation, rather than to forge a space for the notion of

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<sup>44</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 97. Te Velde is here discussing the function of the *analogia entis* in Thomas’s thought. He proceeds to say, “the theory of analogy – especially the so-called *analogia entis* . . . is largely a product of the Thomistic school, which, by its baroque and proliferated interpretations of analogy, has contributed much to obscuring what seems to be a less theory-loaded, more contextual and intuitive way in which Thomas himself employs the notion of analogy.” Cf. Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 86–88; D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 212–3.

<sup>45</sup> Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God*, 2. Burrell elaborates on this point in many of his other works. See *God & Action*, 86–89; *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 31–3; *Friendship and Ways to Truth* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 53–4; *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 31–2.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Aristotle *Post. An.* 71b8–72a8 and 75b16. See, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 115–6 and 122.

<sup>47</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> *ST* 1a.1.2: “. . . procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae.”

<sup>49</sup> *ST* 1a.1.2: “*Sacra doctrina* . . . procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est Dei et beatorum . . . ita *sacra doctrina* credit principia revelata sibi a Deo.” *Scientia* is another word whose meaning can be tricky to satisfactorily convey in English because of a narrowing in the semantic range of its cognate “science.” Since the etymological structure of “science” still supports the larger cognitive framework Thomas has in mind when using *scientia*, I will often retain this more direct translation; however, I will, at times, either leave *scientia* untranslated or refer to it as “knowledge.” For more on the meaning and translation of *scientia*, see Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 241–2.

theological reflection on the spectrum of *scientiae*.<sup>50</sup> With that, let us direct our attention to two points on this matter that warrant further consideration.

First, while Thomas clearly identifies the higher science that grounds and guarantees the science of *sacra doctrina* with God's own knowledge, it is not the case that this is God's "perfectly comprehensive knowledge of himself," since elsewhere in the *Summa*, he writes, "No created mind can attain the perfect sort of understanding that is intrinsically possible of God's essence."<sup>51</sup> Thus, Thomas's qualification that the science of *sacra doctrina* is not only grounded in God's knowledge, but also in the knowledge that the blessed have of him through the beatific vision, situates the awareness of him in this life within the context of God as creator since the relation between God and the blessed expresses a mutual affirmation of creation's existence.<sup>52</sup>

Accordingly, the correlation between Thomas's statement that *sacra doctrina* is like an imprint of God's own knowledge and his argument in *ST* 1a.1.7, which claims that *sacra doctrina* addresses God and everything else in relation to him, is not simply creating space for theologians to discuss things like bees; rather, he is making the far more pivotal claim that the knowledge shared by God and the blessed, which directs the science of *sacra doctrina*, is specifically a knowledge of God and everything in relation to him.<sup>53</sup> The difference, therefore, between the knowledge of God possessed by the blessed in heaven and those who remain in this life is not one of kind or substance but one of relation and transmission. While the blessed in heaven receive this knowledge of God and everything else by directly gazing upon the divine essence (*ST* 1a.12.2), in this life it is learned through revelation, transmitted through teaching, and accepted by faith (*ST* 2a2ae.1.1), which leads to our second point of consideration.

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<sup>50</sup> Many studies on Thomas have been preoccupied with the question of whether or not *sacra doctrina* actually qualifies as an Aristotelian subaltern *scientia*. While much has been gleaned about the nature of *sacra doctrina* from these studies, especially from the thoughtful analysis of Jenkins (*Knowledge and Faith*, 51-77) we do not need to be overly distracted by this question for a number of reasons; the chief among them being that we are not particularly concerned with how faithful Thomas was to Aristotle. For an argument that departs from Jenkins conclusions, see Richard A. Lee, Jr, *Science, the Singular, and the Question of Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 33–57. Mark Jordan has an excellent discussion on why scholars should not be overly preoccupied with Thomas's faithfulness to Aristotle in Chapter Four of *Rewritten Theology*. Also see Pieper's discussion on this point in Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 43–5; German original, *Hinführung Zu Thomas von Aquin* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1986). Cf. Conley, *A Theology of Wisdom*, 74–5.

<sup>51</sup> *ST* 1a.14.3: “. . . perfecte comprehendit seipsum.” *ST* 1a.12.7: “Nullus autem intellectus creates pertingere potest ad illum perfectum modum cognitionis divinae essentiae quo cognoscibilis est.” Cf. *ST* 1a.13.7; *DDN* I, lect.1.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion on the nature of our knowledge of God being rooted in him as creator, see Burrell, *Freedom and Creation*, 111–8; Burrell, “The Act of Creation with Its Theological Consequences,” in *Creation and the God of Abraham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 44.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ST* 2a2ae.9.4 ad.3; 2a2a3.26.1 ad.2. Also see the brilliant study by A. N. Williams, “What Is Systematic Theology?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 40–55.

### 2.3.3 The Knowledge of Faith in *Sacra Doctrina*

The science of *sacra doctrina* begins, as every *scientia* does, with its principles; however, as Thomas repeats in various ways throughout the *Summa*, the principles of *sacra doctrina* are not self-evident to the human mind because they surpass the natural reach of human reasoning. Thus, *sacra doctrina* “takes its principles directly from God through revelation.”<sup>54</sup> Although these principles do not appear self-evident to us in this life, they are, according to Thomas, nevertheless, objectively speaking, more certain than the principles of other sciences.<sup>55</sup> They only escape our grasp because of the human intellect’s weakness, which explains why, in the passage cited above, Thomas insists that these principles are accepted by faith.<sup>56</sup> Since the certainty of these principles is beyond the grasp of natural reasoning, the practice of *sacra doctrina* must begin with humanity’s faith in God. Faith is, therefore, as Thomas explains, “a sort of knowledge in that it makes the mind assent to something. The assent is not due to what is seen by the believer but to what is seen by him who is believed. In that it lacks the element of seeing, faith fails to be genuine knowledge.”<sup>57</sup> What the human intellect fails to see, even in the light of faith (*lumen fidei*), is the essence of God. Thomas is, nonetheless, quite clear that even though the human intellect is bound to knowledge gained from the corporeal world (*ST* 1a.1.9; 1a.12.11; 1a.84.7; 1a.88.1), faith reaches through the sensible to touch realities beyond the natural order such that, as te Velde concludes, “it is an inchoate beginning of the final and perfect knowledge which consists in the vision of God.”<sup>58</sup> Faith reaches these heights not directly but by encountering them in God’s act of self-disclosure, which bears the incomprehensible reality of the beatific vision into the world of sense and image; therefore, as Thomas says, “No one can attain to this vision of God except by being a learner with God as his teacher . . . Thus in order that a person come to the full, beatific vision, the first requisite is that he believe God, as a learner believing the master teaching him.”<sup>59</sup>

In *ST*. 1a.111.1 ad.1 Thomas explains that since faith cannot assent to the incomprehensible realities of God directly, no one is convinced of these realities through rational proofs; hence, faith accepts them through an orientation of the human will to believe the truths

<sup>54</sup> *ST* 1a.1.5 ad.2: “Accipit sua principia . . . immediate a Deo per revelationem.”

<sup>55</sup> On the certainty of faith over the other sciences, see *ST* 2a2ae.4.8; 2a2ae.6.1; *Lect. Ioan.* 4, lect. 5, no.662.

<sup>56</sup> *ST* 1a.1.5 ad.1; 2a2ae.7.2 ad.3.

<sup>57</sup> *ST* 1a.12.13 ad.3: “Fides cognitio quaedam est, in quantum intellectus determinatur per fidem ad aliquod cognoscibile. Sed haec determinatio ad unum non procedit ex visione credentis, sed a visione eius cui creditur. Et sic in quantum deest visio deficit a ratione cognitionis quae est in scientia.”

<sup>58</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 21. See, for instance, *ST* 2a2ae.1.8, where Thomas writes: “Illa per se pertinent ad fidem quorum visione in vita aeterna perfruemur, et per quae ducemur ad vitam aeternam.” Cf. *ST* 2a2ae.1.6 ad.1.

<sup>59</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.2.3: “Ad quam quidem visionem homo pertingere non potest nisi per modum addiscentis a Deo doctore . . . Unde ad hoc quod homo perveniat ad perfectam visionem beatitudinis praeexigitur quod credat Deo tanquam discipulus magistro docenti.” Cf. *ST* 1a.18.3.

revealed by God. Still, the assent of faith is an intellectual act – one of *cogitatio* rather than *intellectus* or *scientia* – that may be described, following Thomas, as “the mind searching before reaching its term in the full vision of truth.”<sup>60</sup> Yet, for faith to be able to search or think with assent (*cogitare assensu*) it is necessary for, as Thomas says, “the objects of faith to be made known to the believer,” which is accomplished through the articles of faith.<sup>61</sup> For Thomas the articles of faith are the principles of *sacra doctrina* since they guide and govern the unfolding of humanity’s teaching on God.<sup>62</sup>

What Thomas specifically has in mind while discussing the articles of faith are the fourteen articles of the Apostle’s Creed, but the articles may also, more broadly, pertain to the totality of God’s self-disclosure in scripture.<sup>63</sup> He also adds, in a fascinating comment on Hebrews 11.6, that all of the articles, as Mark Johnson helpfully summarizes, “can be ordered in such a way that their collective intelligibility is reducible to two things: God’s existence, and his having providence.”<sup>64</sup> It is notable that Thomas specifically acknowledges in the common use of the name “God” what people mean is a being that exists and has providence over creation; yet, according to him, what is signified in this common use and in faith do not mean the same thing because in the case of the former these assertions are not made “under the conditions determined by faith.”<sup>65</sup> Before the face of God, then, the human intellect, even in the light of faith, falls silent because it cannot extend beyond itself to see God directly; however, under the conditions of faith, God exposes, through his use of sense and image to reveal himself and the reality that all things are related to him as their creator, how the knowledge we have gathered from the world around us relates to who and what he is.<sup>66</sup> In other words, faith is humanity’s acknowledgment that in his revelation God speaks about himself meaningfully by augmenting our knowledge of his presence within creation despite the fact that the reality he discloses surpasses our understanding.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, it is following this awareness, that by faith God augments our knowledge of him through revelation, that the science of *sacra doctrina* begins its search for understanding.

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<sup>60</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.2.1: “Motus animi deliberantis nondum perfecti per plenam visionem veritatis.” Cf. James F. Ross, “Aquinas on Belief and Knowledge,” in *Essays Honoring Allan B. Wolter*, ed. W. A. Rank and G. J. Etzkorn (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1985), 245–69.

<sup>61</sup> *ST* 1a.111.1 ad.1: “. . . quod credibilia proponantur credenti.”

<sup>62</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.1.2 ad.2 and 2a2ae.1.9.

<sup>63</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.1.8. Cf. Conley, *A Theology Of Wisdom*, 95; Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 149.

<sup>64</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.1.7. Mark F. Johnson, “God’s Knowledge in Our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology,” *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 41–2. The passage from Hebrews reads: “Credere enim oportet accedentem ad Deum quia est et inquiringibus se remunerator fit.” Cf. 2a2ae.1.6 ad.2.

<sup>65</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.2.2 ad.3: “. . . sub his conditionibus quas fides determinant.” Also see *ST* 1a.13.8; 2a2ae.1.8 ad.1. Cf. Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 67–8.

<sup>66</sup> *ST* 1a.1.9 ad.2

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 188.

Again, to emphasize what has just been said, in the *Summa* Thomas is not attempting to convey the knowledge of God as he will be known in the beatific vision since this would require the human intellect to stretch beyond itself, which it is simply incapable of doing and runs contrary to the very nature of God's revelation.<sup>68</sup> Instead, since God's revelation meets us where we are, the pedagogical character of *sacra doctrina* is deeply rooted in creation.<sup>69</sup> Under the light of revelation, *sacra doctrina* examines what God's self-disclosure tells humanity it can know of him in and through creation. Thomas's insistence that God's revelation directs *sacra doctrina* to knowledge of the divine culminates in his claim that, "*Sacra doctrina* should be declared to be wisdom highest above all human wisdoms."<sup>70</sup> According to Thomas, wisdom means being able to judge and govern things properly, and for *sacra doctrina* this means being able to properly judge or discern divine things. While *sacra doctrina* never transcends faith, Thomas's intention in the *Summa*, as we have seen, is to guide his readers to its wisdom through the pedagogical pattern of faith seeking understanding, and it is this pattern that guides the plan of the *Summa* itself, which is what we turn to next.<sup>71</sup>

#### 2.4 Hold Tight and Pretend it's a Plan: The Structure of the *Summa*

As the discussion above indicated, the structure of the *Summa* contributes to the pedagogical identity of the work; nevertheless, the structure of the *Summa* is a complex issue, and the current debates on this topic ensure that this question yields no easy answers.<sup>72</sup> Although Jordan's work has made it clear that the space Thomas devotes to the moral development of the reader in the *prima secundae* and the *secunda secundae* indicates that moral education is integral to the structure of the *Summa*, Thomas doubtlessly formulates this educational reform because of a much larger theological vision that shapes and directs his pedagogical agenda.<sup>73</sup> In other words if the pedagogical end of the *Summa* was simply moral education, Thomas would have created a work more like the traditional Dominican moral handbook, which, as we have learned, he

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<sup>68</sup> *ST* 1a.88.3. Cf. Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 192–4; Eugene F. Rogers, *Aquinas on the Supreme Court: Race Gender, Ethnicity, and Failure of Natural Law in Thomas's Biblical Commentaries* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2013), 251.

<sup>69</sup> *ST* 1a.1.9 and 1a.88.1.

<sup>70</sup> *ST* 1a.1.6: "Haec doctrina maxime sapientia est inter omnes sapientias humanas."

<sup>71</sup> *ST* 1a.1.6 ad.3. Cf. 2a2ae.1.5 ad.4. On the sapiential character of *sacra doctrina*, see Conley, *A Theology Of Wisdom*, 59–66 and 94–105; Johnson, "God's Knowledge in Our Frail Mind," 26 and 36–9; Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 23–46; Paul Morrissey, "The Sapiential Dimension of Theology according to St. Thomas," *New Blackfriars* 92 (2011): 1–15.

<sup>72</sup> For a summary of the debates over the structure of the *Summa*, see Brian Johnstone, "The Debate on the Structure of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas: From Chenu (1939) to Metz (1998)," in *Aquinas as Authority*, ed. Paul Van Geest, Harm Goris, and Carlo Leget (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 187–200. Candler arrives at a number of conclusions about the structure of the *Summa* that are similar to those outlined in this section. See his detailed analysis in *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction*, 90–106.

<sup>73</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 10.

desperately opposes. Instead, Thomas produces a work that envisions moral maturity as a fundamental aspect of a much larger pedagogical project that is designed to inculcate the habit of thinking theologically in the reader, but in order to follow the trajectory of this design in the interpretation of the divine ideas, the broader structural patterns of the work must be identified.<sup>74</sup>

Since Thomas's intention to organize the *Summa* according to the subject of *sacra doctrina* (*ordo disciplinae*) has already been mentioned, his response to *ST* 1a.1.7, where the subject of *sacra doctrina* is discussed, is an early sign of the *Summa*'s structural orientation. There he writes: "What a science discusses is its subject. In this case the discussion is about God; for it is called theology, as it were, talk about God. Therefore he is the subject of this science."<sup>75</sup> Yet, on its own this assertion does not tell the reader much about how the work will be organized, nor does Thomas's further qualification in the prologue to *ST* 1a.2 help much: "The fundamental aim of holy teaching is to make God known, not only as he is in himself, but as the beginning and end of all things and of reasoning creatures especially."<sup>76</sup> These passages do, however, alert the reader to the governing principles of *sacra doctrina* that, in retrospect, should now remind us of the articles of faith. Viewed from a distance, the *Summa* clearly follows the great credal forms of the Church's confession with, as Jordan observes, moral teaching embedded into its heart.<sup>77</sup> It should not be too surprising that Thomas utilizes the credal form to structure the *Summa*, since the articles of faith provide the basis for *sacra doctrina*'s pedagogical development of faith seeking understanding.

The divine origination of *sacra doctrina* through God's self-disclosure is brought into focus by structuring the *Summa* after the articles, which immediately directs the reader's attention to the soteriological *telos* of the work itself, as Thomas points out when he says, "We have to recognize an end before we can stretch out and exert ourselves for it. Hence it was necessary for our welfare (*salus*) that divine truths surpassing reason should be signified to us through divine revelation."<sup>78</sup> Just as God gave scripture to teach humanity about salvation, so Thomas

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<sup>74</sup> On the epistemological importance of the good life, see Janet E. Smith, "Come and See," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 194–211.

<sup>75</sup> *ST* 1a.1.7 s.c.: "Illud est subjectum scientiae de quo est sermo in scientia. Sed in hac scientia fit sermo de Deo; dicitur enim theologia, quasi sermo de Deo. Ergo Deus est subjectum hujus scientiae." Thomas's distinction between *sacra doctrina* and metaphysics is discussed in §5.1 and §5.2.

<sup>76</sup> *ST* 1a.2, prol: "Qui igitur principalis intentio huius sacrae doctrinae est Dei cognitionem tradere, et non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est principium rerum et finis earum, et specialiter rationalis creaturae." Anna Williams identifies this principle as the key characteristic of theology. See, "What Is Systematic Theology?" 47. Cf. *ST* 1a.1.3 ad.1.

<sup>77</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> *ST* 1a.1.1: "Finem autem oportet esse praecognitum hominibus qui suas intentiones et actiones debent ordinare in finem. Unde necessarium fuit homini ad salutem quod ei nota fieret quaedam per revelationem divinam quae rationem humanam excedunt."

structurally orients *sacra doctrina's* expression in the *Summa* to the same soteriological end.<sup>79</sup> While the *Summa's* structural parallel to the creedal form fortifies the pedagogical correspondence between the cumulative identity of the work and its individual parts, this is certainly not the only structural organization of the *Summa* that has been proposed. The many competing accounts of the *Summa's* structure suggest that, with such a complex work, it might be misguided to search for only one organizing theme; rather, it might be best to think of the work as expressing a multi-layered harmony between varying organizing principles that engage the reader at various levels in the reoccurring pattern of faith seeking understanding.<sup>80</sup> It might therefore be useful to discuss a couple of the arguments that can be brought together to support our reading of the divine ideas in the remaining chapters.

First, contemporary debates over the structure of the *Summa* began with an article published by M. -D. Chenu in 1939.<sup>81</sup> Chenu posited that the *Summa* was patterned after the Neoplatonic *exitus-reditus* schema. According to Chenu, creation's emanation from God and its return to him are depicted through the *prima pars* and *secunda pars*.<sup>82</sup> There have, however, been significant criticisms of Chenu's argument not least because it appears to relegate the *tertia pars*, as Chenu himself acknowledges, "[to] no more than a part added to the whole as an afterthought."<sup>83</sup> Many scholars have agreed that while the *exitus-reditus* motif may not be an acceptable explanation of the *Summa's* overall structure, it does, nevertheless, appear in the structural patterns of the work.<sup>84</sup> It may therefore be said that the *exitus-reditus* motif appears

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Max Seckler, *Le Salut et L'histoire. La Pensée de Saint Thomas d'Aquin Sur La Théologie de L'histoire*, Cogitatio Fidei 21 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1967), 30–1.

<sup>80</sup> The notion that the *Summa* has a multi-layered harmony that supports various organizing patterns is taken from Nicholas Wolterstorff's thoughtful reflections on the nature of written works. See his, "The Unity Behind the Canon," in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology: Providence, Scripture, and Resurrection*, ed. Michael Rea, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 235–6.

<sup>81</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Le Plan de La Somme Théologique de Saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 47 (1939): 93–107. Later modified and republished in *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1950), 255–76. This work was translated into English as *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. M.-D. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964). References will be to the English translation.

<sup>82</sup> Chenu proposes a direct connection between the *exitus-reditus* pattern and the divine ideas when he states: "[The doctrine of the divine ideas] simultaneously combines a rational explanation of things, which is drawn precisely from their natures, with a religious explanation since these natures in themselves and in their destiny are the realization of a divine idea," and after noting the instability of pantheistic Neoplatonism, he concludes, "Saint Thomas, without sacrificing anything of the transcendent personality of God, principle and end of all things, will extract all the advantages and all the truth present in the doctrine of emanation and return" (*Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, 312).

<sup>83</sup> Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, 312. For a wonderful counterbalance to the many criticisms of Chenu's argument, see Paul Rorem's thoughtful article, "'Procession and Return' in Thomas Aquinas and His Predecessors," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 13 (1992): 147–63. In his revision of Chenu's *exitus-reditus* model, Michel Corbin, *Le Chemin de La Théologie Chez Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 801–2, proposes a way to read *tertia pars* that approaches it not as an afterthought, but as the culmination of Thomas's soteriologically oriented pedagogical program. For a thorough critique of Chenu's position, see te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 11–8.

<sup>84</sup> The *exitus-reditus* motif is a common theme in Thomist studies. See, for instance, the discussions in: M.-V. Leroy, "Review of *Saint Thomas d'Aquin. Les Clés D'une Théologie* by A.-M. Patfoort," *Revue Thomiste* 84 (1984): 298–303; Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford

throughout the *Summa* as a type of reoccurring internal movement through which the reader is, at various points and through diverse ways, taken on the voyage of creation's emanation from and return to God.<sup>85</sup>

Another important organizing motif was identified by Eugene Rogers, who perceptively locates a key christoform structural arc in the relation between *ST* 1a.1 and the opening prologue to the *tertia pars*.<sup>86</sup> In the first question of the *Summa*, Thomas asserts, in keeping with what we have discussed above, that humanity “stood in need of being instructed by divine revelation.”<sup>87</sup> Following this claim, Thomas utilizes a distinctly Aristotelian concept to clarify the substantive relation between divine revelation and the speculative/theological dimension of *sacra doctrina*. He writes: “Now the subject of a science's first principles and of its entire development is identical, since the whole of a science is virtually contained in its principles.”<sup>88</sup> While Rogers claims that the christoform character of this passage would have been clear to Thomas's readers, it is not explicitly disclosed until the prologue of the *tertia pars*, where Thomas writes, “[W]e must bring the entire theological discourse to completion by considering the Savior himself and his benefits to the human race.”<sup>89</sup> Here, according to Rogers, Thomas finally identifies the *totus scientia* of divine revelation from *ST* 1a.1.7 with the incarnate Christ, and, as he concludes, “It is Jesus Christ who stands tacitly as the new light or form that gives rise to this new *scientia, a scientia praeter philosophicas disciplinas*.”<sup>90</sup>

The pedagogical pattern of *sacra doctrina*, then, does not just culminate in its discussion on Christ but, through a kind of reverse motion, it originates in him as well, as Thomas says, “Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, as he was, according to the angel's witness, *saving his people from their sins* (Mat. 1.21), showed in his own person that path of truth which, in rising again, we can follow

University Press, 1987), 139; Gilbert Narcisse, *Les Raisons de Dieu: Argument de Convenance et Esthétique Théologique Selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Fribourg: Editions universitaires, 1997), 89–90; Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, 55–8; Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian*, 82–3; te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 11–2.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *ST* 1a.2, prol.; 1a.14.2 ad.1; 1a.44, prol.; 1a.103, prol.; 3a.6.1 ad.1. A. Patfoort, in his critique of Chenu's original argument, actually substantiates this claim by noting that Thomas begins to depict creation's return in the latter half of the *prima pars*. See his “L'unité de La *La Pars* et Le Mouvement Interne de La Somme Théologique de S. Thomas d'Aquin,” *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 47 (1963): 513–44. Later republished in *Saint Thomas d'Aquin. Les Clés D'une Théologie* (Paris: FAC-éditions, 1983), 49–70.

<sup>86</sup> Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God*, New edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 57.

<sup>87</sup> *ST* 1a.1.1: “. . . necessarium fuit hominem instrui revelatione divina.” Cf. *SCG* Bk. 1, chs. 4 and 5.

<sup>88</sup> *ST* 1a.1.7: “Idem autem est subiectum principiorum et totius scientiae, cum tota scientia virtute contineatur in principiis.” Cf. Aristotle, *Meta.* II, 1. 993b24.

<sup>89</sup> *ST* 3a.1, prol.: “. . . necesse est ut ad consummationem totius theologici negotii . . . de ipso omnium Salvatore et beneficiis ejus humano generi praestitis nostra consideratio subsequatur.”

<sup>90</sup> Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, 57. It is worth noting that what is being suggested here is not that the whole of *sacra doctrina* is about the *totus Christus*, which Thomas explicitly denies in *ST* 1a.1.7; instead, it is being argued that in the revelation of Christ the whole of *sacra doctrina* is revealed. There is some discussion over who Thomas has in mind in his reference to the *totus Christus* in *ST* 1a.1.7. On this discussion see James Ginther, *Master of the Sacred Page: A Study of the Theology of Robert Grosseteste* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 49 n.24.



to the blessedness of eternal life.”<sup>91</sup> Christ, consequently, not only reveals the path followed by *sacra doctrina* in the progressive rehabilitation of humanity through faith’s pursuit of wisdom, but he is also the path on which this rehabilitation occurs. This should alter our understanding of the *Summa*’s structure and purpose in two important ways.<sup>92</sup> First, since Thomas waits until the end of the *Summa* to explicitly state that *sacra doctrina* originates and is sustained by Christ, he does not formally order the work after the conditions necessary “for understanding salvation history,” as many have conjectured, but instead according to the ontological structures that substantiate the reality of salvation history itself.<sup>93</sup> Second, the revelation in the *tertia pars* that the pedagogical pattern of the *Summa* derives from Christ and returns to him in the journey toward the beatific vision intelligibly grounds the cyclical movement suggested by the *exitus-reditus* motif in the historical revelation of Christ’s redemptive work.<sup>94</sup> We will close this section by noting that the reading of the *Summa* prompted by the structural importance of the *tertia pars* suggests, somewhat paradoxically, as Brian Johnstone has brilliantly argued, that the *Summa* should be read, or at least conceptually approached, in reverse, since what comes later in the *Summa* secures our understanding of what has come before, and this insight holds important implications for our study as we turn to a more focused analysis of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas in the next chapter.<sup>95</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion: Thomas Aquinas as Teacher of the Divine Ideas

Early in his critique of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas, Bulgakov writes, “Various themes are united and intertwined in Thomas’s theology: Aristotelianism and Platonism, Augustinian and scholastic dogmatics. Therefore, a precise characterization of this complex doctrine is scarcely possible. Depending upon which of these elements is emphasized, the system of Thomism is seen in one primary color or another.”<sup>96</sup> Unfortunately, it appears that Bulgakov overlooked the most direct answer to this problem, which is that one should not attempt to interpret Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas by prioritizing one aspect or source above the rest. It seems rather obvious that if one reads Thomas’s account of the doctrine in the *Summa* as an encyclopedic statement on the divine ideas, where its meaning can be derived by parsing the various sources influencing his thought, the resulting interpretation will inevitably conclude that

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<sup>91</sup> *ST* 3a.1, prol.: “Quia salvator noster dominus Iesus Christus, teste angelo, *populum suum salvum faciens a peccatis eorum*, viam veritatis nobis in seipso demonstravit, per quam ad beatitudinem immortalis vitae resurgendo pervenire possimus.” Cf. *ST* 1a.2, prol.

<sup>92</sup> For an overview of contemporary discussions on Christ’s place in the *Summa*, see Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 162–80.

<sup>93</sup> Johnstone, “Debate on the Structure,” 191. Cf. *ST* 1a.1.2; 1a.21.2; 1a2ae.57.2; 2a2ae.27.4.

<sup>94</sup> Seckler, *Das Heil in der Geschichte*, 43. Cf. Johnstone, “The Debate on the Structure of the *Summa*,” 192.

<sup>95</sup> Johnstone, “Debate on the Structure,” 200.

<sup>96</sup> Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 19.

the divine ideas are incompatible with some aspect of his thought – whether that be his trinitarianism, epistemology, Christology, doctrine of creation, or any number of other possible options – because it attempts to categorize his thought according to a set of standards located outside his goal for the *Summa*.<sup>97</sup> The divine ideas appear in a very different light, as the next chapter demonstrates, if one approaches Thomas as a theologian attempting to communicate his vision of the theological journey; as Jordan thoughtfully says, “Thomas’s decision to write as a theologian when he wrote in his own voice was chiefly the result of his view that no Christian should be satisfied to speak only as a philosopher.”<sup>98</sup>

Instead, if the reader accepts that in the *Summa* Thomas has taken on the task of leading his readers from the simple confession of faith to the wisdom of *sacra doctrina*, then the divine ideas must be read as aiding in somehow the reader’s understanding of God’s revelation. As Matthew Levering poignantly states, “[T]he task of appropriating Thomas’s theology does not consist in balancing criticism and praise of Thomas, but in employing creatively those portions of Thomas’s thought with which one can see more deeply into the realities revealed in scripture and taught in the church.”<sup>99</sup> By outlining the pedagogical design of the *Summa* here, this chapter has prepared the way for our assessment of Thomas’s inclusion of the divine ideas in the *Summa* as a theologically motivated doctrinal exposition pedagogically intended to enhance the reader’s movement toward the contemplative vision of God. With this evaluation of Thomas’s pedagogical efforts in the *Summa* in mind, the next chapter will consider the theological structure of his formal discussion on the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15, and how it might affect the interpretation of his argument for a plurality of ideas.

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<sup>97</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 87–8.

<sup>98</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 155.

<sup>99</sup> Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology,” 40.

### 3. A Case for the Theological Validity of the Divine Ideas

*The reality and character of things consist in their being creatively thought by the Creator.*<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Dietrich Bonhoeffer astutely describes, in his commentary on Genesis 1.1 (“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth”), an acute danger latent in the intersection between God and creation presented in the doctrine of the divine ideas. He remarks that “[W]e can know nothing at all of *this* God except as the Creator of our world.”<sup>2</sup> He proceeds to say that this passage of scripture “rules out every application of causal categories for an understanding of the creation. The relation between Creator and creature can never be interpreted in terms of cause and effect, because between the Creator and the creature there stands no law of thought or law of effect or anything else,” and that, consequently, “[Genesis 1.1] declares not that in the beginning God had this or that idea about the purpose of the world, ideas that we must now try to discover, but that in the beginning God *created*. No question can go back behind the creating God, because one cannot go back behind the beginning.”<sup>3</sup> In this rather forceful rejection of the doctrine, Bonhoeffer identifies the potential of the divine ideas to undermine the distinction between God and the world, which lies at the heart not only of Thomas’s thought but also of orthodox theology in both the East and West.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, “The Negative Element in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O’Connor, 3rd Revised ed. (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1-3*, ed. John W. de Gruchy, trans. Douglas Stephen Bax, vol. 3, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 31; German original, *Schöpfung Und Fall. Theologische Auslegung von Genesis 1–3* (München: Eubelischer Verlag A. Lempp, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 31-2.

<sup>4</sup> In Thomist circles David Burrell popularized the description of the gulf that distinguishes, but does not separate, God and creation as “the distinction” or “the christian distinction,” which he borrows from Robert Sokolowski’s work *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1995). While Burrell often comments on Sokolowski’s work, he offers a more elaborate discussion on the significance of Sokolowski’s distinction between God and the world in *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*, *Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 217–33. Rudi te Velde correctly, in my opinion, observes that Thomas would probably not agree with Sokolowski’s description of God as “possibly being all that there is, with no diminution of goodness or greatness” (Sokolowski, p.23) because, for Thomas, according to Te Velde, “[T]he ‘absoluteness’ does not characterize God prior to and apart from the relationship of creation, but rather the mode of his causality *in* the relationship of all things to him. In Thomas’s view there is no way of thinking about God prior to or beyond the causality of creation” (*Aquinas on God: The Divine Science of the Summa Theologiae* [Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006], 91–2 fn.24). Te Velde is not attempting to diminish God’s aseity; rather, he is emphasizing that, for Thomas, humanity’s knowledge of God is always rooted in him as Creator (cf. §2.1.3). For a discussion on the centrality of the distinction between God and the world in the development of orthodox theology in both the East and West, see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), chap. 5.

Thomas summarizes the distinction, which Sarah Grant fittingly calls a “non-reciprocal relation of dependence,”<sup>5</sup> in *ST* 1a.13.7, where he says, “since God is altogether outside the order of creatures, since they are ordered to him but not he to them, it is clear that being related to God is a reality in creatures, but being related to creatures is not a reality in God, we say it about him because of the real relation in creatures.”<sup>6</sup> Although this passage indirectly reveals a general agreement between Thomas and Bonhoeffer on the creational boundedness of humanity’s knowledge of God (*ST* 1a.1.1 ad.1; cf. §2.1.3), Bonhoeffer, unlike the angelic doctor, rejects the doctrine of the divine ideas because, according to him, the divine ideas lock God into a metaphysical order of causality that he believes to be contrary to the revelation of creation. This fear that the divine ideas threaten to muddle the theological account of creation with a metaphysics that subverts the creational distinction between divine freedom and the world’s contingency is not entirely unfounded.<sup>7</sup> Various incarnations of the doctrine have long been accused or, at least, suspected of contributing to theologically murky accounts of the distinction between God and the world.<sup>8</sup> The persistence of these worries has, however, left an indelible

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<sup>5</sup> Sara Grant, *Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 40.

<sup>6</sup> “Cum igitur Deus sit extra totum ordinem creaturae, et omnes creaturae ordinentur ad ipsum, et non e converso, manifestum est quod creaturae realiter referuntur ad ipsum Deum; sed in Deo non est aliqua realis relatio eius ad creaturas, sed secundum rationem tantum, in quantum creaturae referuntur ad ipsum.”

<sup>7</sup> It may even be the case that such a reading of the divine ideas could find a home in the interpretation of the *Summa contra Gentiles* offered by Norman Kretzmann, who writes, “Aquinas’s own presentation of God’s willing of other things . . . and his acceptance of the Dionysian principle (‘Goodness is by its very nature diffusive of itself and [thereby] of being’) commit him to a necessitarian explanation of God’s willing things other than himself” (*The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas’s Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles, II*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001], 126). Although it appears that one could make a case for the doctrine of the divine ideas following Kretzmann, there are a number of factors complicating this move, including the apparent absence of the divine ideas from the *SCG* (cf. ch.1 n.6), the debates over the accuracy of Kretzmann’s interpretation, and his preemptive dismissal of a trinitarian argument for divine freedom (p.135, fn.254), that make such an association untenable for this project. For those interested in more on Kretzmann’s reading of Thomas’s doctrine of creation, see Bernhard-Thomas Blankenhorn, “The Good as Self-Diffusive in Thomas Aquinas,” *Angelicum* 79 (2002): 803–37; John F. Wippel, “Norman Kretzmann on Aquinas’s Attribution of Will and of Freedom to Create to God,” *Religious Studies* 39 (2003): 287–98; Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 271 fn.54; Thomas S. Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion: Metaphysics and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 164–6.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most well known case of the divine ideas being accused of distorting the distinction between God and the world is found in the works of the Carolingian theologian John Scottus Eriugena and their reception by later thinkers. In *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, no.86 and 90, Thomas reveals that he is aware of Eriugena’s account of the divine ideas in his homily on the prologue to the Gospel of John although the homily is wrongly attributed to Origen. While we cannot be concerned in this essay with whether or not this criticism of Eriugena is accurate, its persistence demonstrates that certain variations in the account of the divine ideas are prone to being read in ways that muddle the distinction between the Creator and creation. For examples of this interpretation of Eriugena and attempts to reappraise his thought, see W. Norris Clarke, “The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism,” in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O’Meara (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 115–20; Dermot Moran, “Pantheism from John Scotus Eriugena to Nicholas of Cusa,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (1990): 131–52; Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 84–8; Cyril O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme’s Haunted Narrative* (New York: SUNY Press, 2002), 256 n.29; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 117. Many early modern and modern accounts of the doctrine have also been read as exhibiting similar theologically

mark on the interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, and raised serious doubts about the theological validity of the divine ideas.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to defend the theological validity of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas by identifying some of the gestures that indicate his theological restructuring of the doctrine. This chapter is divided into three primary sections that deal chiefly with questions of hermeneutical approach to the doctrine and the theological gestures of the divine ideas in the *Summa*. The first section addresses the theological intelligibility of the divine ideas in Thomas's formal or *ex professo* discussion on the doctrine in *ST* 1a.15. In the second section, we examine Josef Pieper's claim that creation is the hidden key in Thomas's thought. While this proposition has become quite well known in Thomist studies, the integral role of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas in Pieper's argument warrants closer analysis for its penetrating insights into the function of the doctrine in Thomas's thought. Following the hermeneutical principles we gather from Pieper, the third and final section of this chapter considers the role of the divine ideas in Thomas's argument for creation's twofold sense of truer existence through which he upholds the distinction between God and the world.

### 3.1 The Theological Intelligibility of the Divine Ideas

In his response to the claims that the doctrine of the divine ideas is irrelevant for Thomas's mature thought, Boland makes the off-handed remark that it seems unlikely so early in a work aimed at educating his readers by avoiding useless questions that Thomas would include just that in the divine ideas.<sup>10</sup> Thomas's pedagogical motivations in the *Summa*, however, suggest that the divine ideas are not only relevant to his thought but also that an accurate reading of the doctrine depends on approaching it through this pedagogical paradigm. While the common atomistic approach to Thomas's formal discussions on the divine ideas has provided a number of important insights to his understanding of the doctrine, this approach will never yield a complete picture of its contribution to his theological project for a couple of reasons.<sup>11</sup> First,

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problematic formulations of the creational distinction; see, for examples, the discussions on Jacob Boehme, Peter Sterry, Nicolas Malebranche, G. W. F. Hegel and others in Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, Suny Series in Hegelian Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 91; O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 104–15; Marc A. Hight, *Idea and Ontology: An Essay in Early Modern Metaphysics of Ideas* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 177–217; W. J. Mander, *The Philosophy of John Norris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 58–9; Dewey D. Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51–85; Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 381; Lucinda Martin, "Jacob Boehme and the Anthropology of German Pietism," in *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception*, ed. Ariel Hessayon and Sarah Apetrei (London: Routledge, 2013), 120–41.

<sup>9</sup> For examples of this mark on the interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, see §3.3 below.

<sup>10</sup> Vivian Boland, O.P., *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 213.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the common atomistic approach to Thomas's doctrine of divine ideas, see §1.1.

since atomistic readings typically work across various texts, they encourage the interpreter to secure, independent of each particular text, an interpretive vantage point that will support one's comparative analysis; however, this approach creates artificial parameters for each text, which inevitably restrict the interpretation of doctrine in each instance, and, in most studies on the divine ideas, a distinctly philosophical stance has been adopted. Second, and potentially more problematic, this approach tends to treat each instance as a stable representation of the whole doctrine.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, as Jordan has noted, the *Summa's* pedagogical design “invites particular extensions or applications” of Thomas's thought and doctrinal reflections, and, in the case of the divine ideas, this intention is reflected in the particularly fragmented way he presents the doctrine (§2.1.1).<sup>13</sup> It is notable that in the *Summa* Thomas leaves many of his discussions on various issues, including the divine ideas, considerably shorter than their parallel treatments in other works.<sup>14</sup> The brevity of the discussion on the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15 only magnifies its fragmentary quality, which Thomas utilizes to demonstrate the very practice he encourages in the *Summa's* pedagogical design by returning again and again to the divine ideas in order to, as will be seen here and in the following chapters, expand and apply the doctrine in various ways and in new directions.<sup>15</sup> In this way, the doctrine of the divine ideas provides Thomas's readers with an example of the way in which the material of *sacra doctrina* may be expanded, reordered, and variously applied as each reader develops the habit of thinking theologically through which the knowledge of *sacra doctrina* becomes their own. Thus, it seems best to think of Thomas's discussion in *ST* 1a.15 as a prelude to the doctrine's development and application later in the *Summa*, but since it is often best to begin with the prelude, that is where we will start.

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<sup>12</sup> Duns Scotus's critical evaluation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas in his *Reportatio Parisiensis examinata* I-A, *In I Sent.* d. 36, q.1-4 is an early example of the problems associated with approaching elements of Thomas's works as closed or stable systems. For more on Scotus's interpretation of Thomas, see Timothy B. Noone, “Aquinas on Divine Ideas: Scotus's Evaluation,” *Franciscan Studies* 56 (1998): 307–24; Timothy B. Noone, “Scotus on Divine Ideas: Rep. Paris. I-A, D. 36,” *Medioevo: Rivista Di Storia Della Filosofia* 24 (1998): 359–453.

<sup>13</sup> Jordan, “The *Summa's* Reform of Moral Teaching,” 45. Repeated in *Rewritten Theology*, 119. Robert Henle overlooks the implications of the *Summa's* fragmentary character when he concludes that the doctrine is irrelevant to Thomas's interests because “no new development in the substance of the doctrine appears within” the formal discussions on the divine ideas (*Saint Thomas and Platonism. A Study of the Plato and Platonic Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* [The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956], 359).

<sup>14</sup> Thomas's reflections on the divine ideas in both the *Sent.* I, d.36 and, especially, *De ver.* 3 are more detailed than his account in *ST* 1a.15. Both Jenkins and Pasnau note, although for vastly different reasons, the importance of Thomas's arguments in the *Summa* being shorter than elsewhere in his *corpus*; however, both seem generally amenable to the notion that Thomas does this so that his readers can begin the process of extending and applying the work in different ways. See, John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82–3; Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a 75-89* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6–7.

<sup>15</sup> Pieper has claimed that this fragmentary quality of doctrine is essential to Thomas's understanding and application of the divine ideas. See, Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 46 and 62–3. Cf. §2.1.1 and §3.2 below.

### 3.1.1 Prelude: A Summary of *Summa Theologiae* 1a.15<sup>16</sup>

Before proceeding to his discussion on God's knowledge, Thomas explains, in the prologue to *ST* 1a.14, that after considering the divine substance (*divina substantia*), it is necessary to examine God's activities. Agents have, according to Thomas, two types of activity, immanent and external, and he concludes that it is best to consider God's immanent activities of knowing and willing prior to the principle of divine power. Thomas closes this prologue by pointing out that because the divine mind knows the "intelligible natures of things" (*rationes autem rerum*) as objects of divine knowledge, it is necessary to include a discussion on the divine ideas in the reflections on God's immanent activity of knowing. It is, however, not insignificant that Thomas includes the divine ideas, along with his reflections on the divine life and the qualities of truth and falsity, in between his formal discussions on God's knowledge and will because, much like his creative placement of ethics at the heart of the *Summa* to emphasize the necessary correlation between ethical and theological reflection, he situates the divine ideas here to ensure that they cannot be dismissed as an afterthought in the assessment of God's immanent activities.

Thomas opens his discussion on the divine ideas with the simple affirmation that, "We must hold that there are ideas in the divine mind," by which he means the forms of things in the divine mind existing separate from the things themselves.<sup>17</sup> He proceeds to explain that such forms may refer to two things: the ontological exemplar of a thing or the principle of knowing that thing. To support this claim, he observes that, with the exception of things produced by chance, when something is generated, the form is its intended end. There is, however, a distinction between agents operating according to nature (*esse natura*), where the form of the thing produced exists in the agent naturally, and agents acting through the intellect (*esse intelligibile*), where the likeness (*similitudo*) of the thing generated must preexist in the agent's mind. At this point Thomas reinforces his argument with the common analogy of the architect (*artifex*), which notes that prior to the building of a house a likeness of it must preexist in the mind of the architect.<sup>18</sup> Since the world, as Thomas states, was not formed by chance, "there must be in the

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<sup>16</sup> For summaries of *ST* 1a.15 that follow the parallels between Thomas's various treatments of the doctrine, see L. -B. Geiger, "Les Idées Divines Dans L'oeuvre de S. Thomas," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 175–209; John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas," in *The Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas*, Etienne Gilson Series 30 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008 [Originally published, 1993]), 147–55; Boland, *Ideas in God*, 210–4; Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 14–20.

<sup>17</sup> *ST* 1a.15.1: "Necesse est ponere in mente divina ideas."

<sup>18</sup> Thomas had previous employed the analogy of the *artifex* in *ST* 1a.9.1 ad.2; 1a.14.8; 1a.14.11; 1a.14.12 ad.3. The artisan (architect/craftsman) analogy is certainly the longest standing metaphor for the divine ideas. For examples of its use by Patristic and other Medieval authors, see Origen, *De prin.* Bk.1, 3-4; Augustine, *De Gen. ad litt.* VIII 12.28; *De civ. dei* XI.10; *Tract. in Io.* I.17; John Scotus Eriugena, *Periphy.* 560B-C, 1; *Hom. in prol. Io.* 7; Anselm, *Monol.* 34; Bonaventure, *Coll. in Hex* 20.5; *Comm. in Evang. S. Io.* I, n.13. The analogy was adapted by Christian Theologians from Plato's *Timaeus* 27c-29d, which was one of few works by Plato made available to Latin speakers in

divine mind a form, to the likeness of which the world is made; and that is what we mean by an idea.”<sup>19</sup> After establishing that it is necessary to posit the existence of ideas in the divine mind for both ontological and cognitive reasons, he concludes the article by briefly responding to its three objections. First, he rejects Plato’s theory that the Forms exist autonomously or *per se* by appealing to Aristotle’s argument that the Forms must exist in an intellect (ad.1).<sup>20</sup> Next, he notes that God does not know himself through an idea even though he knows both himself and everything else through his essence because his essence is the principle of generation (*principium operativum*) for everything that exists but not for himself (ad.2). Finally, he reinforces the whole argument in article 1 with the crucial point that, “God in his essence is the likeness of all things. Hence an idea in God is simply the divine essence.”<sup>21</sup>

In the second article, Thomas considers whether or not there is a plurality of ideas existing in the divine mind.<sup>22</sup> He opens his reply, much like in article 1, by emphatically asserting that, “we must postulate a plurality of ideas.”<sup>23</sup> The first half of his reply is devoted to demonstrating why this is necessary, and he does so by focusing on the implications of creation’s order. Thomas rejects the notion, attributed to Avicenna and others, that the ordered multitude of creation is the incidental byproduct of the successive progression of agents from God in which the divine mind has only one idea, which is of the first created creature. It appears that his problem with this position is that if it were true, God’s providential care for creation would be restricted to the first creature alone, which might seem like a rather peripheral detail in light of his whole argument. In fact, it is quite the opposite. In his reply Thomas writes:

Now that which is best of all in creation is the good which consists in the order of the universe as a whole, as Aristotle shows. Therefore the order of the universe as a whole is the special object of God’s intention . . . If however the order of the whole universe is the direct object of his creation, and intended by him, he must have an Idea of the order of the whole universe. Now a plan governing a whole necessarily involves knowing what is special to the parts

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the Middle Ages by Calcidius (Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages*, reprint with a new preface and four supplementary chapters [London: Kraus International Publishing, 1982], 27–8; John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* [Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd, 1996], 401–8). It is, however, still unclear whether Thomas ever read the *Timaeus* (Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism*, xxi n.41). Thomas’s use of and relation to Moses Maimonides on the analogy of the artisan is discussed by Burrell in *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 105–19; *Faith and Freedom*, 34–42.

<sup>19</sup> *ST* 1a.15.1: “Necesse est quod in mente divina sit forma, ad cuius similitudinem mundus est factus; et in hoc consistit ratio ideae.”

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s theory of the Forms, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 148–53. For Aristotle’s criticism of Plato, see *Meta.* III, 2. 997b6; VII, 6. 1031a28, and for Thomas’s reflections on Aristotle’s argument in this work, see his commentary in *Sent. Metaph.* XII, n.231–34, 407–09.

<sup>21</sup> *ST* 1a.15.1 ad.3: “Deus secundum essentiam suam est similitudo rerum omnium. Unde idea in Deo nihil aliud est quam ejus essential.”

<sup>22</sup> As Jordan correctly notes, Thomas prefers to speak of a “plurality of ideas” rather than of “many ideas” because he is concerned with maintaining God’s simplicity in his discussions on the divine ideas (“The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 38 [1984]: 21). Cf. *Sent.* I, d.36, q.2, ad.2.

<sup>23</sup> *ST* 1a.15.2: “Necesse est ponere plures ideas.”



which make up the whole; just as an architect cannot plan a house without knowing what is special to each part of it. Thus, then, there must be in the divine mind the natures of all things in what is proper to each.<sup>24</sup>

The argument here elaborates on Thomas's claim in the previous article, which associates the existence of the ideas with God's intention to create, by arguing that this intention encompasses the totality of creation. Unlike Neoplatonic theories, which considered multiplicity to be a defect resulting from an 'ontological fall,' Thomas augments the language of the divine ideas to express the revelation that God's providential design contains the distinction (*distinctio*) of each thing within creation, which again reminds us of the importance behind his decision to situate the divine ideas between his reflections on God's knowledge and will.<sup>25</sup>

The second half of this reply is concerned with demonstrating that the plurality of divine ideas does not threaten to uproot the doctrine of divine simplicity. For evidence that the plurality of ideas does not undermine simplicity, Thomas, fairly straightforwardly, makes the point that an idea is in the mind as an object of knowledge (*quod intelligitur*) and not as a principle of knowledge (*qua intelligitur*), with the latter being, as he says, "the form which makes the intellect actually knowing."<sup>26</sup> Thomas concludes by saying that it would be contrary to divine simplicity if the divine mind was informed by the plurality of likenesses (*plures species*) as principles of knowledge, but divine simplicity is not opposed to God knowing many things as objects of knowledge. Although Thomas clearly thinks that it should be quite obvious to everyone why the plurality of ideas does not jeopardize divine simplicity, many of his contemporaries and successors did not find this claim quite as convincing and instead rejected the plurality of ideas in an attempt to preserve divine simplicity.<sup>27</sup> In contrast to the various medieval figures who maintained the irreconcilability of divine simplicity and the plurality of ideas, many contemporary commentators

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<sup>24</sup> *ST* 1a.15.2: "Id autem quod est optimum in rebus existens, est bonum ordinis universi, ut patet per Philosophum. Ordo igitur universi est proprie a Deo intentus . . . Sed si ipse ordo universi est per se creatus ab eo, et intentus ab ipso, necesse est quod habeat Ideam ordinis universi. Ratio autem alicujus totius haberi non potest, nisi habeantur propriae rationes eorum ex quibus totum constituitur; sicut aedificator speciem domus concipere non potest, nisi apud ipsum esset propria ratio cujuslibet partium ejus. Sic igitur oportet quod in mente divina sint propriae rationes omnium rerum."

<sup>25</sup> Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 105.

<sup>26</sup> *ST* 1a.15.2: "Quae est forma faciens intellectum in actu."

<sup>27</sup> For analyses of various contemporaries and successors of Thomas that rejected or were highly reticent to accept the plurality of ideas under the auspices of protecting simplicity, see Armand A. Maurer, "Role of Divine Ideas in the Theology of William of Ockham," in *Studies Honoring Ignatius Charles Brady, Friar Minor*, ed. Romano Stephen Almagno and Conrad L. Harkins, Franciscan Institute Publications Theology Series (St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1976), 357–77; M. J. F. M. Hoenen, *Marsilius of Inghen: Divine Knowledge in Late Medieval Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 121–56; Rega Wood, "Distinct Ideas and Perfect Solitude: Alexander of Hales, Richard Rufus, and Odo Rigaldus," *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 7–31; Alessandro D. Conti, "Divine Ideas and Exemplar Causality in Auriol," *Vivarium* 38 (2000): 99–116; Benjamin DeSpain, "Seeing One's Own Face in the Face of God: The Doctrine of the Divine Ideas in the Mystical Theologies of Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa," in *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, ed. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 43–4.

on Thomas, following L. –B. Geiger’s insightful work, now claim that the primary benefit he culls from the doctrine of the divine ideas is a way to reconcile the multiplicity of creation with the doctrine of divine simplicity, which has helped broaden the recognition of the doctrine’s contribution to Thomist studies.<sup>28</sup>

After concluding that there is a plurality of ideas and that this plurality is compatible with the doctrine of divine simplicity, Thomas closes his reply with one of the more interesting aspects of the doctrine’s development in question 15. He writes, “God knows his essence perfectly; he knows it therefore in all the ways in which it is knowable. Now the divine essence can be known not only as it is in itself, but as it can be participated in some degree of likeness by creatures . . . God, in knowing his essence as imitable in this particular way by this particular creature, knows his essence as the nature and idea proper to that creature”<sup>29</sup> This argument significantly clarifies Thomas’s position on the referent for the divine ideas. As article 1 claimed, a divine idea is nothing other than the divine essence, but here it is noted, as Gregory Doolan has summarized, “[A] divine idea consists in God *knowing* his essence as imitable in these diverse ways. It is this knowledge that constitutes an idea.”<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, each thing has its own substantial form in so far as it imitates God’s idea of its participation in the divine essence. Thomas concludes the article by adding a few more remarks in his responses to the objections. First, he notes that God not only knows the multitude of things in creation through his essence but that he also knows that he knows them through his essence (ad.2). Next, he explains that the plurality of ideas is not caused by the multitude of things “but by the divine intellect setting its essence to things.”<sup>31</sup> In his last response, Thomas highlights that while the multitude of ideas may be logically distinguishable, they are not ontologically distinct from each other because the relations between them may be reduced to the divine essence (ad.4).

The final article in question 15 addresses the controversial issue of whether or not God has ideas for everything he knows, including things he will never create. Thomas opens the reply by acknowledging that Plato postulated that Forms had both cognitive and ontological functions,

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<sup>28</sup> Geiger, “Les Idées Divines,” 179. Cf. L. –B. Geiger, “Les Rédactions Successives de *Contra Gentiles* 1, 53 D’après L’autographe,” in *Saint Thomas d’Aquin Aujourd’hui*, ed. J. Y. Jolif and et al. (Paris, 1963), 221–40. For other endorsements of this position, see Vincent P. Branick, “The Unity of the Divine Ideas,” *The New Scholasticism* 42 (1968): 171–2; Gianni Baget-Bozzo, “La Teologia Delle Idee Divine in San Tommaso,” *Rivista Di Filosofia Neo Scolastica* 66 (1974): 305; John Lee Farthing, “The Problem of Divine Exemplarity in St. Thomas,” *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 215; Boland, *Ideas in God*, 8; Harm Goris, “Theology and Theory of the Word in Aquinas: Understanding Augustine by Innovating Aristotle,” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>29</sup> *ST* 1a.15.2: “Ipse enim essentiam suam perfecte cognoscit; unde cognoscit eam secundum omnem modum quo cognoscibilis est. Potest autem cognosci non solum secundum quod in se est, sed secundum quod est participabilis secundum aliquem modum similitudinis a creaturis . . . Deus cognoscit essentiam suam ut sic imitabilem a tali creatura, cognoscit eam ut propriam rationem et ideam hujus creaturae.”

<sup>30</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 116.

<sup>31</sup> *ST* 1a.15.2 ad.3: “Sed ab intellectu divino comparante essential suam res.”

which he then parallels with his own position by asserting, again, that ideas in the divine mind have both these functions as well. From there, he proceeds to distinguish between God's practical and speculative knowledge, based on the distinction between the ontological and cognitive functions of ideas. He states, "As a principle of the production of things it may be called an exemplar, and belongs to practical knowledge; as a principle of knowing, it is properly called an intelligible nature, and can belong also to speculative knowledge."<sup>32</sup> According to this distinction, everything God creates corresponds to an exemplar while, as principles of knowledge, ideas (*rationes*) are related to God's speculative knowledge, which includes things that will never come into existence.

Subsequently, Thomas adds that there is no idea of evil because God knows evil through the nature of good (*rationem boni*);<sup>33</sup> however, he argues, contrary to Plato's theory that Form and matter concurrently cause (*concausa*) a thing's existence, that there is a divine idea of matter because matter, like form, is created by God, but this idea is "not distinct from the idea of the composite of matter and form."<sup>34</sup> The article closes with a critique of Plato's theory that there are no ideas for individuals other than that of species. He writes, "But divine providence extends not only to species but also to individuals."<sup>35</sup> In this statement Thomas counters Plato's claim by appealing again to divine providence, which serves as another instance in his discussion on the divine ideas that anticipates his doctrine of divine providence. With this Thomas brings his discussion on the divine ideas to a close, which provides us with a basis from which we can identify and examine the distinctly theological character of his doctrine of the divine ideas.

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<sup>32</sup> *ST* 1a.15.3: "Et secundum quidem quod est principium factionis rerum, exemplar dici potest, et ad practicam cognitionem pertinet; secundum autem quod principium cognoscitivum est, proprie dicitur ratio, et potest etiam ad speculativam scientiam pertinere."

<sup>33</sup> On the absence of a divine idea for evil, Thomas writes in *ST* 1a.15.3 ad.1: "Malum cognoscitur a Deo non per propriam rationem, sed per rationem boni."

<sup>34</sup> *ST* 1a.15.3 ad.3: "... non aliam ab idea compositi." Thomas concludes this passage by noting, "Nam materia secundum se neque esse habet, neque cognoscibilis est." Eleonore Stump aptly summarizes Thomas's understanding of prime matter in her discussion on Thomas's theory of matter and form, where she says, "[P]rime matter is the component of the configured composite which makes it the case that the configured thing can be extended in three dimensions and can occupy a particular place at a particular time. But by itself, apart from form, prime matter exists just potentially" (*Aquinas* [London: Routledge, 2003], 37). For a survey of Thomas's various discussions on prime matter throughout his corpus, see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 312–8. Wippel also provides a discussion on Thomas's parallel passages in *Sent.* I, d.36, q.2, a.3 ad.2 and *De ver.* 3.5 on the divine idea of prime matter (p. 321). Boland and Doolan, likewise, discuss Thomas's argument for the existence of a divine idea for prime matter in *Ideas in God*, 227–9 and *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 133–5. While Thomas refers to prime matter throughout the *Summa*, in *ST* 1a.44.2 he lays out his position on the divine causality of prime matter. On the metaphysical implications of Thomas's theory of prime matter for his doctrine of creation, see Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 122–3 and 134–6. For those interested in a comparison of Thomas's position with Aristotle's theory, see David P. Lang, "The Thomistic Doctrine of Prime Matter," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 54 (1998): 367–85.

<sup>35</sup> *ST* 1a.15.3 ad.4: "Sed providentia divina non solum se extendit ad species, sed ad singularia."

### 3.1.2 Peering Beneath the Surface of Things: Thomas's Silence in *ST* 1a.15

Although other contemporary commentators on Thomas have found the most direct way to balance the reception of *ST* 1a.15 is by assessing its triumphs and failures in subverting unacceptable philosophical contours in the language of the divine ideas, this approach can easily and often does lose sight of the doctrine's theological orientation because it appropriates the doctrine through an external point of contact.<sup>36</sup> Instead, the pedagogical design of the work encourages the reader to adopt an internal vantage point that follows the transformation of faith into the wisdom of *sacra doctrina*, which suggests that Thomas's intention in question 15 is to enhance the reader's understanding of the realities revealed by God. If the pedagogical motivations behind the *Summa* dictate its unfolding, then it is crucial that one address how philosophically born concepts, like the divine ideas, contribute to the teaching of *sacra doctrina*.

For an answer to this question, let us return to Thomas's discussion at the beginning of the *Summa*, where he is reflecting on the superiority of *sacra doctrina* above the other sciences (*ST* 1a.1.5). There he claims that *sacra doctrina* utilizes insights from other sciences not because of an insufficiency in the science of *sacra doctrina* itself but because the human intellect is weak; thus, as he writes, human understanding is "more readily guided into the world above reason, set forth in holy teaching, through the world of natural reason."<sup>37</sup> We could say, then, that Thomas appropriates the doctrine of the divine ideas to elaborate on an element of *sacra doctrina* that is held by faith but remains obscure to the human intellect because of its inability to apprehend immediately the full scope of the truth revealed by God. In order to identify the doctrine's place in the pedagogical pattern of the *Summa*, we will attempt to answer three questions in this section: First, what does the doctrine provide Thomas? Second, what are the conditions or parameters he establishes in the doctrine? Third, what does the doctrine anticipate?

As for the first question, what Thomas draws from the philosophical origins of the divine ideas is predicated upon his conviction that certain truths about divine things are revealed through creation because God discloses in scripture that everything he has made imitates him (§2.3). In other words, for Thomas, scripture first reveals that God intentionally communicates his likeness to all things in the act of creation, and also provides human beings, through faith, with the ability to discern the knowledge of this likeness in the principles of the other sciences.

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<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, W. Norris Clarke, "The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 109–27; "The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas," in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, and Person* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 97; John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas, Radical Orthodoxy* (London: Routledge, 2001), 40; Alice Ramos, *Dynamic Transcendentals: Truth, Goodness and Beauty from a Thomistic Perspective* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 27–46; Hughes, "Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas," 124–37.

<sup>37</sup> *ST* 1a.1.5 ad.2: "Qui ex his quae per naturalem rationem . . . facilius manuducitur in ea quae sunt supra rationem, quae in hac scientia traduntur."

When Thomas notes, as we have just seen, that Plato theorized both the cognitive and ontological functions of the ideas, he is identifying, from the perspective of faith, the interplay between the knowledge of divine things disclosed in creation and the reordering of that knowledge in light of God's self-disclosure through scripture.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in contrast to both Plato, who holds that the Forms exist *per se*, which, Thomas says elsewhere, "seems alien to the faith," and Aristotle, who only asserts that they must exist *in intellectu*, Thomas maintains that the ideas belong to the divine mind itself, which effectively identifies both the cognitive and the ontological functions of the ideas with God's single act of knowing.<sup>39</sup> The unity of the ontological and cognitive in the divine mind helps highlight Thomas's association of the divine ideas with his theory of exemplarism (art.3) and the order of creation (art.2), which displays his interest in the ontological dimension of the doctrine. What Thomas finds in the doctrine of the divine ideas is a grammar that addresses, and is well suited for discussing, the deep structures of creation; yet he qualifies his position in such a way as to reorder the conditions for the doctrine in the exchange between faith and understanding.

Contrary to the worry asserted by some contemporary theologians that integrating platonic concepts, such as the divine ideas, into theological discourse necessarily imposes a creational dissonance between the personal dimension of life and its deeper structural reality, Thomas reorders the language of the divine ideas to avoid such a pitfall by appropriating the doctrine through the conditions of faith seeking understanding, which his silence on the human mind's cognitive relation to the divine ideas aptly exhibits.<sup>40</sup> Despite opening his discussion on the divine ideas in question 15 with a quotation from Augustine that claims one cannot be wise without knowing the divine ideas, Thomas remains reticent throughout his discussion to say anything about the divine ideas as objects of human knowledge. Even in *ST* 1a.84.5, where Thomas directly addresses the question of whether or not humans know everything in the divine ideas, he distances himself from the platonic notion that the knowledge of a thing in the human intellect derives from direct participation in the archetypal form of the thing known. He

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas's relation to Plato is a complex issue. It is generally accepted that Thomas did not read the limited number of Plato's dialogues that had been translated into Latin. Instead, the body of his knowledge of Plato derives from other sources he read. His familiarity, or lack thereof, with Plato does not impede our current inquiry, however, since we are interested in what Thomas says and not with what he knew. For detailed analyses of Thomas's knowledge and relation to Plato, see Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism*; Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas and the Platonists," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F. M. Hoenen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 279–324.

<sup>39</sup> *ST* 1a.84.5: "Videtur esse alienum a fide." Cf. *ST* 1a.14.8.

<sup>40</sup> See the discussions on the potential danger of integrating Neoplatonic concepts into theological discourse in, Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118; Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 26; W. Norris Clarke, *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 78; Tina Beattie, *Theology after Postmodernity: Divining the Void—a Lacanian Reading of Thomas Aquinas*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 341.

proceeds to state that only the blessed in heaven see everything in the divine ideas (*in rationibus aeternis*) while in this life the divine ideas function only as principles of knowledge.<sup>41</sup> It appears that the closest Thomas comes to saying that human beings in this life have knowledge of the divine ideas directly is in *ST* 2a2ae.8.3 ad.3, where he considers the Holy Spirit's gift of understanding, which elevates the human intellect beyond the reach of natural reasoning.

Because God's self-disclosure through scripture reveals that the divine essence remains beyond our comprehension in this life (§2.3), Thomas reorders the language and knowledge of the divine ideas to correspond to the conditions of faith.<sup>42</sup> Since, as stated in article 1 of question 15, the ideas in the divine mind are nothing other than the divine essence, the divine ideas must also remain, in this life, beyond the grasp of the human intellect (*ST* 1a.14.8 ad.3).<sup>43</sup> Thus, he arrives at the doctrine of the divine ideas not by way of his formal epistemology, but through the correlation between the revelation of God's creative act and humanity's reflections on the natural order, which mutually affirm that creation has a deeper ontological structure than what the human intellect apprehends directly through the senses. That Thomas's interest in the divine ideas derives principally from the doctrine's ontological function is confirmed, as Wippel, Farthing, and Doolan have all said, by his focus on the ideas' relation to the order of creation and their capacity as exemplars.<sup>44</sup> It is from his silence, then, that the reader initially discovers the movement of faith in the doctrine of the divine ideas. By refusing to venture beyond the reach of the human intellect, Thomas directs the reader away from the fabled pursuit of cognitively comprehending the ideas, which Bonhoeffer worried was unavoidable, to what the doctrine anticipates in the development of *sacra doctrina*.

In a remark on the nature of the *Summa*, te Velde once wrote: “[Thomas] is engaged in an ontological depth inquiry into how that very reality must be understood in relation to which

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<sup>41</sup> Paul J. DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 2012), 132.

<sup>42</sup> It is worth mentioning, at this point, that I generally agree with the position that Thomas upholds the doctrine of the divine ideas in conjunction with an Aristotelian understanding of the cognitive act. However, I would want to emphasize that he arrives at the position in response to the conditions of faith and not because he is first an Aristotelian. See, for instance, Harm Goris, “Theology and Theory of the Word,” 63. It seems that John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock's interpretation of Thomas's position on the divine ideas is incomplete when they claim that all knowledge is somehow intuitively derived from the ideas (*Truth in Aquinas*, Radical Orthodoxy [London: Routledge, 2001], 9–12, 126 n.103). Also see Paul DeHart's critical analysis of Milbank and Pickstock on this point in *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy*, 119–21, 135–7.

<sup>43</sup> Pieper aptly summarizes this same point when he argues, “This relation on which the truth of things is fundamentally based—the relation between natural reality and the archetypal creative thought of God—cannot, I insist, be known formally by us. We can of course know things; we cannot formally know their truth. We know the copy, but not the relation of the copy to the archetype, the correspondence between what has been designed and its first design” (“The Negative Element,” 58–9). Cf. Josef Pieper, *An Anthology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 98–9; German original, *Josef Pieper: Lesebuch* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1981). Pieper's decision to include this section of *Unaustrinkbares Licht* in the anthology of his works he produced near the end of his career reinforces the importance he sees in this argument. For more on this point, see §3.2.2 below.

<sup>44</sup> Farthing, “The Problem of Divine Exemplarity,” 214; Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas,” 150; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 15.

the statements of faith about God have their truth.”<sup>45</sup> Te Velde’s comment is helpful for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it pinpoints at the heart of the *Summa*’s theological motivations the very relation that emerges in the doctrine of the divine ideas. If we take a moment to recall that Thomas concludes in his discussion on the articles of faith with a note that all of them could be reduced to the two principle articles of God’s existence and his providence (§2.1.3), then the theological intentions behind his doctrine of the divine ideas will move into focus more easily, especially in light of te Velde’s remark. In the summary of *ST* 1a.15.2 above, the plurality of the divine ideas secured that God’s providential order in creation extended to the distinctions between all creatures, and, as we have now been reminded, divine providence is a fundamental statement of faith; thus, following the logic of te Velde’s claim, it would seem appropriate to say that the divine ideas belong to the reality in which the statements of faith have their truth.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, because some may still doubt that this connection to divine providence substantiates the theological character of Thomas’s discussion on the divine ideas, let us consider what he says in *ST* 2a2ae.1.8 ad.1. There he writes, “By faith we hold to many truths about God that philosophers could not fathom, for example the truths about his providence, omnipotence and sole right to adoration. All such points are included in this article, ‘I believe in one God.’”<sup>47</sup> Here he not only identifies divine providence as a distinctly theological doctrine, but he also limits it to the purview of theology; thus, Thomas’s appropriation of the divine ideas to support the revelation of God’s providential ordering of creation confirms the theological validity of the divine ideas. Question 15, however, does not provide a detailed exposition of divine providence. The discussion on the divine ideas therefore provides preliminary insight into the conditions necessary for understanding the doctrine of divine providence, and so Thomas concludes his discussion on the divine ideas by directing his reader’s attention to divine providence in anticipation of what will be developed.

Thomas’s reference to divine providence in the final sentence effectively brings the isomorphic pattern of faith seeking understanding (§2.1.1) in question 15 to a close. The movement from the simple affirmation that the divine ideas must exist to the elaboration on their contribution to understanding the reality in which the articles of faith are true is brought to a close by returning the reader to the position of faith in anticipation of the discussion on divine providence. By approaching the divine ideas through the conditions of faith, Thomas is able to

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<sup>45</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Boland, *Ideas in God*, 262–4.

<sup>47</sup> “Quod multa per fidem tenemus de Deo quae naturali ratione investigare philosophi non potuerunt, puta circa providentiam ejus et omnipotentiam, et quod ipse solus sit colendus. Quae omnia continentur sub articulo unitatis Dei.” Cf. *Sent.* IV, d.1, q.1, a.3 ad.4; *Compend. Theol.* 2.246.

validate the philosophically conceived language of the doctrine in theological discourse; however, through its contact with the principles of faith, the doctrine is reordered in the light of God's revelation that he is the Creator who providentially sustains (*qui conservat*) and governs (*qui gubernat*) his creation. Thus, he advances through the language of the divine ideas a theological grammar for the deep ontological structure of creation, which he locates in the very essence of God. In discussions on creation's actual existence, this grammar enables Thomas to distinguish logically between talk about creation's structure and talk about the divine creative essence *per se*, which he will utilize to address creation's, and in particular humanity's, orientation to its origin and end. Question 15 still only provides the groundwork for this grammar, which awaits elaboration and application as the logical gestures of the doctrine are, time and again, revisited throughout the *Summa*, but Thomas's execution of this doctrinal development can be difficult to follow as the divine ideas move into the peripheral space of his unfolding theological vision. Fortunately, Josef Pieper supplies us with some hermeneutical guidelines that uncover, first, why the subtle gestures of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas can be easily overlooked, and, second, where those gestures might reside in Thomas's argumentation.

### 3.2 Revisiting Josef Pieper's Hidden Key

There are perhaps few scholars that have faithfully cited a single notion more than David Burrell has Pieper's penetrating argument that creation is the "hidden element in the philosophy of St. Thomas."<sup>48</sup> According to Burrell, what Pieper achieves in this observation is a blurring of

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<sup>48</sup> Pieper, "The Negative Element," 47–67. Burrell finds ways to quote this exact statement in studies ranging from ethics to interfaith dialogues. For examples of Burrell's application of Pieper's argument, see *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 34; *Freedom and Creation*, 11; "God's Knowledge of Future Contingents: A Reply to William Lane Craig," *The Thomist* 58 (1994): 2; "Reflections on 'Negative Theology' in the Light of a Recent Venture to Speak of 'God Without Being,'" in *Postmodernism and Christian Philosophy*, ed. R. T. Ciapolo (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1997), 60; *Faith and Freedom*, 116 and 177; "Religious Life and Understanding: Grammar Exercised in Practice," in *Grammar and Grace: Reformulation in Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, ed. Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain (London: SCM Press, 2004), 132; "The Act of Creation with Its Theological Consequences," in *Creation and the God of Abraham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 49; "Creation in *Super Evangelium S. Joannis Lectura*," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 118–9; "Creatio Ex Nihilo Recovered," *Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 1, 3, and 15; "In Search of a Universal Ethics: A New Look at the Natural Law by the International Theological Commission," in *Searching for a Universal Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Traditions*, ed. John Berkman and William C. Mattison III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 191 and 194. Otto Pesch also adopts and develops Pieper's argument in *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Größe mittelalterlicher Theologie* (Mainz: Verlag, 1988). Cf. Otto-Hermann Pesch, "Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 185–216. For others that positively cite Pieper's claim, see Carlo Leget, *Living with God: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation between Life on Earth and "Life" after Death* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 31; Christopher Stephen Lutz, *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre: Relativism, Thomism, and Philosophy* (Lexington Books, 2004), 138; Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 142 n.1; Guy Masini, O.S.B. et al., "'Without Me You Can Do Nothing': St. Thomas with and without St. Augustine on John 15:5," in *Aquinas the Augustinian* (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2007), 170; John



the boundary between theology and philosophy that was imposed by modernity.<sup>49</sup> What regularly goes unstated in these references, however, is that as Pieper defends his claim that, “[T]here is a fundamental idea by which almost all the basic concepts of [Thomas’s] vision of the world are determined: the ideas of creation, or more precisely, the notion that nothing exists which is not *creatura*, except the Creator Himself,” he has a great deal to say about the nature of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas and its peripheral role in his work. Thus, before proceeding to our discussions on some of the more subtle applications of the doctrine in the *Summa*, it will be profitable to examine Pieper’s hermeneutical recommendations on how to approach Thomas in light of our assessment on the formal treatment of the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15. Taking the time here to consider Pieper’s argument will help us flesh out the peripheral centrality of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas addressed elsewhere in this study (§1.3). It will also give us the opportunity to reflect on the creational orientation of Thomas’s theological vision, which will serve as the beginnings of an intellectual therapy for Thomas’s understanding of the divine ideas.

### 3.2.1 *A Discussion on Pieper’s Hermeneutical Precepts*

Citing Martin Heidegger’s argument that, “the doctrine of a thinker is precisely ‘*das im Sagen Ungesagte*’ (the unexpressed in what is expressed),” Pieper begins his assessment of Thomas’s work by situating his reflections under the notion “that an interpretation which does not reach the unspoken assumptions underlying the actual text must remain, in essence, a misinterpretation, even if in other respects the letter of the text be commented upon with considerable learning; this latter fact may, indeed, make matters worse.”<sup>50</sup> What Pieper is articulating here is that readings of Thomas, or any author for that matter, that fail to search for the assumptions that sit at the edges of his arguments and expositions are hindered by their own interpretive presuppositions, and, more disastrously, they can easily distort Thomas’s thought because they have overlooked the boundaries and parameters established by these unspoken assumptions. In response to the interpretive quagmire this creates, Pieper asks, “Is there a way to

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D’arcy May, “Faith, Ethics, and Communication: Some Recent Writing in Philosophical Theology,” *Journal of Religious History* 31 (2007): 458.

<sup>49</sup> David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Deconstructing Theodicy: Why Job Has Nothing to Say to the Puzzle of Suffering* (Brazos Press, 2008), 111. For superb introductions to Pieper’s polymath work, see the essays in Bernard N. Schumacher, ed., *A Cosmopolitan Hermit: Modernity and Tradition in the Philosophy of Josef Pieper* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2009). I most heartily agree with Denys Turner’s remark that “Pieper’s *The Silence of St. Thomas* . . . did for me what Hume did for Kant, in that it ‘awoke me from my dogmatic slumber’ and disclosed for me a living mind hidden behind versions of Thomas’s thought that amounted to but dead dogma” (*Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013], 288).

<sup>50</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 46. The quotation comes from Martin Heidegger’s *Platon’s Lehre von Der Wahrheit* (Berne, 1947), 5.

get on to the track of such underlying and therefore unformulated assumptions?” to which he answers:

I think there exist several such deciphering keys. One, which I have frequently verified, is certainly this. It occasionally happens that what is unexpressed shows itself, as though through a “hole”, through a “gap” in the pattern, in a certain “jump” in the development of the thought, a kind of inconsequence in the argument. (This at least is how it appears to *us*, who interpret and start out with other assumptions which are just as implicit and perhaps never once explicitly formulated.) What matters is that, whenever one of these seeming illogicalities is encountered, we avoid passing over it carelessly.<sup>51</sup>

The point that Pieper is making here is not that Thomas remains entirely silent about creation, which would be a baseless claim since he devotes a great deal of space to this topic throughout his *corpus*, but that even where it is not explicitly acknowledged, Thomas’s commitment to the idea that reality only exists, or is true, because it is “creatively thought by God” permeates everything he writes.<sup>52</sup>

At this point in the work, Pieper entices his readers to ask about what examples there are of this “jump” or “unevenness” in Thomas’s reasoning that might allow us a glimpse of this unspoken means of development. To answer this question, Pieper subsequently turns to Thomas’s discussion on the truth of natural things in article two of *De veritate* 1; yet, before considering the example he provides, let us get a general sense of Pieper’s approach to this article because it reveals a great deal about what, in his judgment, lies at the heart of Thomas’s doctrine of creation. Much has been written about the first question of *De veritate* since there Thomas provides his most well-known description of the transcendentals as well as an elaborate discussion on the various definitions given to truth, including his preferred formulation as the “adequation of thing and mind” (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*).<sup>53</sup> Pieper is, however, particularly interested in Thomas’s claim, in the second article, that, “A natural thing being placed between

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<sup>51</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 46.

<sup>52</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 55. Cf. Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Richard Winston, Clara Winston, and Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 176–86; Josef Pieper, “A Plea for Philosophy,” in *For the Love of Wisdom: Essays on the Nature of Philosophy*, ed. Berthold Wald, trans. Roger Wasserman (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 125.

<sup>53</sup> On the historical context, conceptual innovation, and the structure of Thomas’s argument in *De ver.* 1, see Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Reflections on Truth: “Adaequatio rei et intellectus”* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel, 1984); Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 243–89; Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 211–27. Harm Goris discusses some of the apparent irregularities in Thomas’s discussion on truth in *De ver.* In *Free Creatures of an Eternal God: Thomas Aquinas on God’s Infallible Foreknowledge and Irresistible Will* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1996), 160–2. It is also notable that while Thomas attributes the definition of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to Isaac Israel, which he does again in *ST* 1a.16.2 obj.2, no one has, it seems, been able to locate the actual source. See, Joseph T. Muckle, “Isaac Istaeli’s Definition of Truth,” *Archives D’histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire Du Moyen Age* 8 (1933): 5–8; John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II* (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2007), 79 n.35.

two intellects [the divine and the human minds] is called true in so far as it conforms to either.”<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere, he insists that this “dryly conceptual proposition” resonates with the same meaning expressed in Augustine’s “hymnlike exhortation,” “We see these things you have made, because they exist, but for you it is different: they exist because you see them.”<sup>55</sup> The conceptual congruity that Pieper proposes between Augustine and Thomas at this point prepares us for the direction he will take in his interpretation of Thomas, which is further indicated in his remark on the passage from Augustine that, “We are not simply declaring here, strictly speaking, that God has created everything out of nothing. Rather, we intend to say, using an image from ancient Egyptian ontology, that everything has sprung from God’s eye. And this means that the primordial forms of all things reside in the creative mind of God.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, it is clear that Pieper’s declaration about the hermeneutical permeation of creation in Thomas’s philosophy does not simply refer to *creatio ex nihilo* in general, but that, more specifically, it concerns how the createdness of the world is rooted in the “creative knowledge of God,” and, for the purposes of this study, it is also evident that the grammar of the divine ideas is, for Pieper, a suitable expression for the ontological structure of the world’s createdness.<sup>57</sup>

Consequently, we should not be surprised when Pieper concludes, in his reflections on *De ver.* 1.2, that, “In this ‘localization’ of existing things between the absolutely creative knowledge of God and the non-creative, reality-conformed knowledge of man is found the

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<sup>54</sup> *De ver.* 1.2: “Res ergo naturalis inter duos intellectus [intellectus divinus et intellectus humanus] constituta, secundum adaequationem ad utrumque vera dicitur.” See Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 53–4. While Thomas does not reproduce this notion verbatim in the *Summa*, its substance is maintained in *ST* 1a.16.1 and 2. For a description of Thomas’s argument in *De ver.* 1.2, see Jan A. Aertsen, “Truth in the Middle Ages: Its Essence and Power in Christian Thought,” in *Truth: Studies of a Robust Presence*, ed. Kurt Pritzl, O.P. (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2010), 138–40.

<sup>55</sup> Josef Pieper, “What Is Interpretation?,” in *For the Love of Wisdom: Essays on the Nature of Philosophy*, ed. Berthold Wald, trans. Roger Wasserman (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 217; translated from the German, *Schriften zum Philosophiebegriff*, ed. Berthold Wald (Hambrug: Meiner, 1995). Augustine, *Conf.* XIII, 38: “. . . nos ista quae fecisti uidemus, quia sunt, tu autem quia uides ea, sunt.” Cf. Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 61; John J. Navone, *Toward a Theology of Beauty* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 2–3.

<sup>56</sup> Josef Pieper, “The Truth of All Things,” in *Living the Truth*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 44; German original, *Wahrheit Der Dinge* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1966). Cf. Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 55. Thomas provides a comparable argument in *ST* 1a.105.3, where he says, “Similiter cum ipse sit primum ens et omnia entia praeexistent in ipso sicut in prima causa, oportet quod sint in eo intelligibiliter secundum modum ejus. Sicut enim omnes rationes rerum intelligibiles primo existunt in Deo et ab eo derivantur in alios intellectus ut actu intelligant, sic etiam derivantur in creaturas ut subsistant.” Christina Van Dyke argues that Robert Grosseteste develops, quite independent of Thomas, a similar epistemological framework for the divine ideas. See “The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth: Robert Grosseteste on Universals (and the Posterior Analytics),” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48 (2010): 153–70. Pieper’s emphasis here on the conformity of truth both to the divine and to the human mind also has significant implications for the dichotomy cast between the divine or the natural origin of necessary truths in a great deal of secondary literature on the question of the grounds for propositional knowledge, but that is a subject for another study. For an example of this dichotomy as well as an introduction to the relevant literature on this question, see Gloria Ruth Frost, “Thomas Aquinas on Necessary Truths about Contingent Beings” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2009), 145–56.

<sup>57</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 55; Josef Pieper, “The Timeliness of Thomism,” in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O’Connor, 3rd Revised ed. (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), 96.

structure of all reality as a system in which the archetypes and the copies are both embraced.”<sup>58</sup> Although Thomas does not utilize the formal grammar of the divine ideas in *De ver.* 1.2, Pieper’s interpretive move is not contextually unwarranted. Prior to his *duos intellectus* proposition, Thomas asserts, “[T]hings are themselves measured by the divine intellect, in which are all created things – just as all works of art find their origin in the intellect of an artist.”<sup>59</sup> Here Thomas alludes to the principle claim of the doctrine of the divine ideas identified in *ST* 1a.15 (§3.1.1), and his application of the artisan analogy solidifies this connection.<sup>60</sup> It may also be said that Thomas’s reference to chapter thirty-one of Augustine’s *De vera religione* in *De ver.* 1.2 justifies the conclusion that the divine ideas are at least present in the landscape of Thomas’s argument since there Augustine states, “Nor can there be any hesitation in identifying the unchanging nature which is above the rational soul with God and in asserting that primary life and primary being are one with primary Wisdom. This, you see, is that unchanging Truth which is rightly said to be the law of all arts and crafts, itself the art of the almighty craftsman.”<sup>61</sup> Despite the absence of direct reference to the divine ideas, Pieper’s hermeneutical turn to the divine ideas in *De ver.* 1.2 is not out of context, since we have just identified ways to see the doctrine working in the background of Thomas’s thought on the truth of natural things, but for an explanation of why the divine ideas do not surface here, let us now examine the example Pieper gives from *De ver.* 1.2 of the rift in Thomas’s reasoning.

### 3.2.2 Filling the Void: Situating Thomas’s Doctrine of the Divine Ideas

On the adequation of a natural thing to the divine mind, Thomas argues, “A natural thing . . . is said to be true with respect to its conformity with the divine intellect in so far as it

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<sup>58</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 54.

<sup>59</sup> *De ver.* 1.2: “Sunt mensuratae ab intellectu divino, in quo sunt omnia sicut omnia artificata in intellectu artificis.”

<sup>60</sup> In the succession of questions in *De veritate*, we can also see how the propositions from q.1 a.2 anticipate Thomas’s statement on the doctrine of divine ideas in *De ver.* 3.1 s.c. 7 that, “Omnes creaturae sunt in mente divina, sicut arca in mente artificis. Sed arca in mente artificis est per suam similitudinem et ideam. Ergo omnium rerum ideae sunt in Deo.” For further discussion on the relevance of the language of “measure” in Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas, see §5.2.1 and §5.3.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *De ver. rel.* 31: “Nec iam illud ambigendum est incommutabilem naturam, quae supra rationalem animam sit, deum esse et ibi esse primam vitam et primam essentiam, ubi est prima sapientia. Nam haec est illa incommutabilis veritas, quae lex omnium artium recte dicitur et ars omnipotentis artificis.” Whether Augustine had the doctrine of the divine ideas in mind while he composed this section of his work is a question for another time, but we can establish why Thomas would have likely seen the doctrine in this statement on the eternal law since in *ST* 1a2ae.93.1 he argues: “Unde sicut ratio divinae sapientiae in quantum per eam cuncta sunt creata, rationem habet artis vel exemplaris vel ideae; ita ratio divinae sapientiae moventis omnia ad debitum finem, obtinet rationem legis. Et secundum hoc, lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae.” Cf. *De ver.* 14.2 The relation between divine wisdom and the divine ideas is discussed further in §4.2 and §4.3, and the connection to the eternal law is addressed in §5.3.

fulfills the end to which it was ordained by the divine intellect.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, as Pieper states, “[A]n existing thing is true to the extent that it reproduces the pattern of divine knowledge.”<sup>63</sup> Pieper notes that Thomas reinforces this claim with Avicenna’s definition of truth, in which it is said, “The truth of every individual thing is the property of being which has been established for it.”<sup>64</sup> Yet, according to Pieper, there is nothing in Avicenna’s definition that would cause “us to notice any connection between the two statements,” or, to be more specific, it is not clear how Avicenna’s remark substantiates Thomas’s insistence “that the truth of things consists in their being creatively thought by God.”<sup>65</sup> To formulate this “rift in the texture” of Thomas’s argument another way: why does Thomas think that Avicenna’s definition ratifies his argument in *De ver.* 1.2 or in, for instance, *ST* 1a.16.1, where he again cites this definition along side the same sections of Augustine’s *De vera religione* to support his conclusion that, “[E]verything is said to be true in the absolute sense because of its relation to a mind on which it depends. Thus man-made things are called true in relation to our mind; a house, for instance, is ‘true’ if it turns out like the plan in the architect’s mind . . . Similarly natural things are called true when they bear a likeness to the types in the divine mind”?<sup>66</sup> Pieper replies that, “This evident ‘gap’ in his line of argument can only mean that St. Thomas was unable to separate the idea that things have an essence – a ‘what’ – from the other idea that this essence of things is the fruit of a designing and creative knowledge,”<sup>67</sup> or, to put this another way, the fruit of “the createdness of things, i.e., the truth that the designs, the archetypal patterns of things, dwell within the Divine Logos.”<sup>68</sup>

For Pieper, the doctrine of the divine ideas, then, belongs to the unspoken horizon of the world’s createdness, which, as already noted, permeates Thomas’s entire *corpus*, and it accordingly fills the void of certain rifts in Thomas’s discussions on the distinction between God and the world. If we also, momentarily, return to the question of God’s incomprehensibility

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<sup>62</sup> *De Ver.* 2.1: “Res naturalis . . . adaequationem ad intellectum divinum dicitur vera, in quantum implet hoc ad quod est ordinata per intellectum divinum.”

<sup>63</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 62.

<sup>64</sup> *De Ver.* 2.1: “Veritas cuiusque rei est proprietas sui esse quod stabilitum est ei.” Thomas also cites this definition in *De Ver.* 1.1; *SCG* Bk. 1, ch.60; *ST* 1a.16.1. For Avicenna’s argument, see the critical edition of his *Liber de Philosophia Prima Sive Scientia Divina* VIII, c.6, ed. S. Van Riet, vol. 2 (Louvain: Peters, 1980), 413. On Thomas’s use of Avicenna, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes II*, 31–64 and 79. For Avicenna’s general influence on Medieval thought, see A.-M. Goichon, *La Philosophie d’Avicenne et Son Influence En Europe Médiévale* (Paris: Adrienne-Maisonneuve, 1944). Avicenna’s argument in this section of his work is discussed by Hoenen in *Marsilius of Inghen*, 66–70.

<sup>65</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 62.

<sup>66</sup> “Unaquaqueque res dicitur vera absolute, secundum ordinem ad intellectum a quo dependet. Et inde est quod res artificiales dicuntur verae per ordinem ad intellectum nostrum, dicitur enim domus vera, quae assequitur similitudinem formae quae est in mente artificis . . . Et similiter res naturales dicuntur esse verae, secundum quod assequuntur similitudinem specierum quae sunt in mente divina.”

<sup>67</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 62–3.

<sup>68</sup> Pieper, “Timeliness of Thomism,” 96. For more on Thomas’s arguments that the divine ideas dwell in the Word of God referenced here, see §4.3 and §4.4. James Stone also argues that Thomas’s reference to Avicenna in *De Ver.* 1.2 directs the reader to the doctrine of the divine ideas; however, he appears to be unaware of Pieper’s reflections on this passage. See “The Foundation of Universal and Necessary Propositions in Select Writings of St Thomas Aquinas” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 2008), 253.

(§2.3.1), we may yet be able to catch a glimpse, in Pieper's thoughts on Thomas's silence, of another way in which the divine ideas silently sit in the space that distinguishes God and world.

Following his discussion on the jump of reasoning in *De ver.* 1.2, Pieper considers Thomas's emphatically apophatic statements about humanity's noetic limitations, such as, "This is the highest point in human knowledge of God: to know that we do not know God."<sup>69</sup> In his discussion on what he calls the "negative element" of Thomas's thought, Pieper is particularly interested in Thomas's remark from *De ver.* 5.2, where he says that the human intellect fails to arrive at a perfect knowledge of God in this life "on account of the weakness of our intellect, which cannot assimilate all the evidence of God that is to be found in creatures."<sup>70</sup> While Pieper does not identify a jump in Thomas's reasoning here, he, nevertheless, concludes that, according to Thomas, the reason the human intellect cannot fully comprehend God's self-disclosure through creation is because, "[T]he ultimate reality of things is something to which we can never finally penetrate, because we can never fully grasp these likenesses of the Divine Ideas precisely as likeness."<sup>71</sup> Since the divine essence, then, remains ultimately veiled behind the mystery of the impenetrable relation between a copy and its exemplar, it could be said that God is intelligible in this life for precisely the same reason that he is incomprehensible – the human mind's ability to know, yet not comprehend the truth, of material things.<sup>72</sup> Thus, for Pieper, the question of God's incomprehensibility cannot be adequately answered "without formally bringing into play the concept of creation, i.e., the structure of things precisely as creatures. In other words, things in so far as they are creatively thought by God possess these two properties: on the one hand their ontological clarity and self-revelation and, on the other hand, their inexhaustibleness; their

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<sup>69</sup> *De pot.* 7.5 ad.14: "Hoc illud est ultimum cognitionis humanae de Deo quod sciat se Deum nescire." Cf. §2.1.1 n.15.

<sup>70</sup> *De ver.* 5.2 ad.11: "... propter imbecillitatem intellectus nostri, qui nec totum hoc de Deo potest ex creaturis accipere quod creaturae manifestant de Deo." Thomas offers a similar argument in *ST* 1a.1.5 ad.1 and 2, which we have already discussed (§2.3.3). Cf. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God*, 41–7.

<sup>71</sup> Pieper, "The Negative Element," 66–7. Thomas makes this point in *ST* 1a.84.5, where he says, "Tamen praeter lumen intellectuale in nobis, exiguntur species intelligibiles a rebus acceptae, ad scientiam de rebus materialibus habendam; ideo non per solam participationem rationum aeternarum de rebus materialibus notitiam habemus, sicut Platonici posuerunt quod sola idearum participatio sufficit ad scientiam habendam." On this point, Levering remarks, "Aquinas wants to insist that the divine ideas (as God's knowledge) have priority, since our intellectual light is 'participated likeness of the uncreated light.' However, he also wants to say that in the act of knowing, we do not directly know the eternal ideas. Instead, we gain knowledge by abstracting form particular material things" (*Paul in the Summa Theologiae* [Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014], 226). Despite the lack of direct reference to the divine ideas in *De ver.* 5.2, the doctrine is again hinted at by the context of the discussion. First, this question addresses divine providence, and, as noted above (§3.1.2), the divine ideas and providence are intimately related to one another in the *Summa* as well as in *De ver.* 3. Second, in the body of Thomas's response, he relates God's providential activity to an archer who determines the motion of an arrow to its end, which recalls the same analogy he gives in *De ver.* 3.1 to explain the character of the divine ideas. Cf. Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 412.

<sup>72</sup> Pieper, "The Negative Element," 58–9.

knowability as well as their ‘unknowability,’<sup>73</sup> and, as he says later, “the common root” in this epistemological dialectic is the reality that the archetypal patterns for creation dwell in the mind of God.<sup>74</sup>

In these two examples from *De veritate*, Pieper has argued that Thomas uses the doctrine of the divine ideas to give a voice to the incomprehensibility of the creational relation revealed in the distinction between God and the world. Although the voice may be hidden in rifts and hints that are latent in various arguments and propositions, it is, nonetheless, present in these places, where Thomas contemplates the truth and incomprehensibility of God and the world. Pieper therefore situates Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas in the dialectical harmony between theology and philosophy, which Edith Stein saliently describes as the only way “reality can be made intelligible in its ultimate reasons and causes.”<sup>75</sup> To better understand how Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas contributes to this dialectical harmony in upholding the ontological asymmetry between God and the world, let us look more closely at Thomas’s use of the divine ideas in his exposition on creation’s twofold sense of truer existence.

### 3.3 Divine Difference in Creational Imitation

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted the discomfort many have with divine ideas for reasons acutely registered in Adolf Harnack’s criticism of Thomas that, “[I]here are still to be found in him traces of the idea that creation is the actualizing of the divine ideas, that is, their passing into the creaturely form of subsistence,” and, he continues, “in this way the pantheistic acosmism is certainly not quite banished, while in the thesis of Thomas, that God necessarily conceived from eternity the *idea* of the world . . . the pancosmistic concept of God is not definitely excluded.”<sup>76</sup> That this type of reading has deeply affected the interpretation of

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<sup>73</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 69. Pieper continues: “Unless we go back to this basic position, we cannot, I submit, show how the ‘negative element’ in the thought of St. Thomas is safeguarded from agnosticism. Anyone who endeavors to pass this by runs the inevitable danger of interpreting St. Thomas as a Rationalist, and therefore of misunderstanding him ever more, as is illustrated by the example of some Neo-Scholastic authors who tried to reduce his teaching to a system.”

<sup>74</sup> Pieper, “Timeliness of Thomism,” 95–6. Jordan makes a similar point, when he notes, “In so far as the divine essence is known to itself in a manner which is in principle inaccessible to unaided human knowing, the divine Ideas explain intelligibility only to remove it from human power . . . The intelligibility is surely there, but not for human minds as naturally active” (“The Intelligibility of the World,” 29–30).

<sup>75</sup> Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt (Washington: ICS Publications, 2002), 23; German original, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein: Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins* (Freiburg: Herder, 1950).

<sup>76</sup> Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. William McGilchrist, vol. 6 (London: Williams and Nogent, 1899), 184–5. Translated from the third edition of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 3 vols. (Freiburg-Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1894-1898). See Bulgakov’s remarkably similar remarks in *The Bride of the Lamb*, 21–2. James Ross also criticizes the divine ideas along similar lines in “God, Creator of Kinds and Possibilities: *Requiescant universalia ante res*,” in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 316–9. Cf. Fergus Kerr, O.P., *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Wiley-

Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas is incontrovertible since the majority of studies dealing with his work on the divine ideas find it necessary to include an explanation of how he avoids such a pitfall in his doctrine of creation.<sup>77</sup> With the persistence of this question about the theological consistency of divine ideas in mind, this section now examines how Thomas integrates the grammar of the divine ideas into his theological formulation of creation's ontological dependence on God to clarify and uphold the divine difference not only in the world's creational formation but also in its eschatological fulfillment.

### 3.3.1 *Creation's Twofold Sense of Truer Existence*

Perhaps the subject where Thomas most decidedly relates the grammar of the divine ideas to the question of the distinction between God and the world is that of creation's twofold sense of existence.<sup>78</sup> In *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3, for example, Thomas responds to the objection that things without life in this world must have a truer existence in the mind of God than they do in their own natures since in the divine mind, they exist in God as life.<sup>79</sup> The entire article is essentially an exegetical response to John 1.3-4, which is introduced in the *sed contra* of *ST* 1a.18.4, where it is said, "We have the words: *That which was made, in him was life*. But everything except God was made. Therefore in God all things are life."<sup>80</sup> Thomas opens his reply in ad.3 with the

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Blackwell, 2002), 156; Katy Leamy, *The Holy Trinity: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and His Sources* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 23–5.

<sup>77</sup> See, for instance, the responses to this question in Vincent P. Branick, "The Unity of the Divine Ideas," *The New Scholasticism* 42 (1968): 178; Gianni Baget-Bozzo, "La Teologia Delle Idee Divine in San Tommaso," *Rivista Di Filosofia Neo Scolastica* 66 (1974): 310–1; Geiger, "Les Idées Divines," 194–5; Clarke, "The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity," 121–5; Mark D. Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984): 30–1; John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 116–7; Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 272; Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 207 and 213; Hughes, "Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas," 124–5 and 136–7.

<sup>78</sup> It may be worthwhile to reiterate (cf. §1.3) at this point that while we are focused on the role of the divine ideas in articulating, as Burrell says, "the distinction between God and the world in such a way as to respect the reality appropriate to each" (*Knowing the Unknowable God*, 17), the doctrine is only one piece of a much larger discussion in the *Summa* that embraces not only the revelation of the distinction in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, but also the exchange between, what Susannah Ticciati designates, the "articulation" and the "display" of the divine difference (*A New Apophaticism: Augustine and the Redemption of Signs* [Leiden: Brill, 2013], 43), which Thomas had begun to formulate prior to *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 in places such as *ST* 1a.13.7, cited in the introduction to this chapter, or *ST* 1a.8.4 where he argues, "Deus est in omnibus rebus, non quidem sicut pars essentiae, vel sicut accidens, sed sicut agens adest ei in quod agit." On the display of the divine difference in the creational distinction between essence and existence, see Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God*, 19–34; and for the articulation, see Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 158–62.

<sup>79</sup> Leget provides an overview of context for interpreting *ST* 1a.18.4 in *Living with God*, 41–6.

<sup>80</sup> *ST* 1a.18.4 s.c.: "Dicitur: quod factum est, in ipso vita erat. Sed omnia praeter Deum facta sunt. Ergo omnia in Deo sunt vita." Despite the grammatical difficulties posed by the punctuation of this passage, it was a key text in the exchange between biblical exegesis and theological interpretation of the divine ideas in Patristic and Medieval hermeneutics. Thomas considers the possible punctuations of John 1.3-4 offered by Augustine, Chrysostom, Origen, Hilary of Poitiers, and John Scotus Eriugena in *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2. On Thomas's interpretation of this passage, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 243–5. It is notable that the punctuation of John 1.3-4 is still



observation that Plato's theory of the Forms would essentially be true if form was the only facet in the *ratio* of natural things; however, as he continues:

Since matter enters the *ratio* of natural things, we must say that absolutely speaking material things have a truer existence in the divine mind than they have in themselves; because in the divine mind they have an uncreated, but in themselves a created existence. But *qua* individual man or horse they have their individual existence more truly in themselves than in the divine mind; because the truth of man includes matter, which individual material things do not have in the divine mind.<sup>81</sup>

In this response Thomas utilizes the precepts from the doctrine of the divine ideas to delineate a twofold sense of truer existence that distinguishes, without confusion, created and uncreated modes of existence.

Both the transcendence and eminence of the divine life are displayed here with respect to the existence of individual things, which are shown to imitate the divine life in composite modes of existence that depend upon the uncreated forms or ideas (*rationes*) in the divine mind. Since the truth of natural things resides not in individual things (§3.2), but in, as Thomas had stated earlier, “a likeness to the types in the divine mind,”<sup>82</sup> his remark in this reply that “the truth of man includes matter” (*veritas hominis pertinet esse materiale*) recalls his statement in *ST* 1a.15.3, noted at the end of §3.1.1, where he argues that God's idea of matter is not distinct from the divine idea of, what he calls elsewhere, the *forma totius*, that is, as Gaven Kerr describes it, “the concretely existing thing as a whole.”<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, a particular thing's created mode of

a matter of debate. See Peter M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 164–6.

<sup>81</sup> *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3: “Sed quia de ratione rerum naturalium est materia, dicendum quod res naturales verius esse habent simpliciter in mente divina, quam in seipsis, quia in mente divina habent esse increatum, in seipsis autem esse creatum. Sed esse hoc, utpote homo vel equus, verius habent in propria natura quam in mente divina, quia ad veritatem hominis pertinet esse materiale, quod non habent in mente divina.” In *De ver.* 4.6 Thomas argues along a similar distinction. He writes: “Cum ergo quaeritur utrum res verius sint in seipsis quam in verbo, distinguendum . . . Si designet veritatem rei, sic proculdubio maior est veritas rerum in verbo quam in seipsis. Si autem designetur veritas praedicationis, sic est e converso: verius enim praedicatur homo de re quae est in propria natura, quam de ea secundum quod est in verbo.” While in this passage Thomas distinguishes between *veritas rei* and *veritas praedicationis*, in *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 the emphasis is on created and uncreated modes of existence, which Stone correctly identifies as the unspoken metaphysical basis for the distinction in *De ver.* 4.6 (“Foundation of Universal,” 260). Although he conflates the arguments in *De ver.* 4.6 and *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 into a single point, Stone also notes that the distinction between the modes of existence in *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 substantiates the distinction between God and the world (pp. 262–4). Frost, in a similar way, conflates the arguments in *De ver.* 4.6 and *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3, but she overlooks the ontological emphasis in *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 in her conclusion that in the *Summa*, “What Aquinas means in claiming that an actually existing creature is more properly a thing of its kind than God's idea of that creature, is that the term that is used to signify creatures of a given kind applies more properly to material creatures of that kind than to the divine exemplar for that kind” (“Aquinas on Necessary Truths,” 154). It is notable, and unfortunate, that neither Boland nor Doolan substantively address, to my knowledge, *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 or *De ver.* 4.6 in their monographs on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas. For their cursory references to these passages and their context, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 243–6; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> *ST* 1a.16.1: “. . . similitudinem specierum quae sunt in mente divina.”

<sup>83</sup> Gaven Kerr, O.P., *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2015), 46. For Thomas's description of composite being as *forma totius*, see *De ente*, c.2, *BDT* 5.2, and

existence depends entirely upon the exemplar form in the divine mind, but it is not ontologically equivalent to that form, as Thomas establishes in his reply just prior to *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3, where he states, “Copies must be in conformity with the exemplar so far as concerns their intelligible form, not so far as concerns their mode of existence. Sometimes the form has one kind of existence in the exemplar and a different kind in the copy.”<sup>84</sup> It cannot be said, then, that the divine ideas are the concrete reality of natural things, or, as Norris Clark prodigiously illustrates, “It is true that my intelligibility, the intelligible content of the divine idea of me, exists in a higher, more perfect way in God than in me; but this is still not my true being, my *esse*.”<sup>85</sup> Instead, the divine ideas are the uncreated truth of God’s knowledge of himself as imitable in diverse ways, which is communicated in the divine act of creation as the formal cause of similarity according to which natural things imitate the divine life in the mode of existence determined by the divine mind.<sup>86</sup>

Consequently, a composite being of matter and form is more perfect in its imitation of the simple divine essence of God by being embodied rather than in obtaining a form that resembles the uncreated existence of the divine ideas.<sup>87</sup> Thomas provides a clear testament to this point in the *Summa*’s discussion on disembodied souls, where he says, for the soul “to be separated from the body is contrary to its nature . . . Hence, the soul is joined to the body in order to be and act in accordance with its nature,”<sup>88</sup> to which could be added his argument from *De potentia* that, “The soul is more like God when united to the body than when separated from it, because its nature is then more perfect. For a thing is like God insofar as it is perfect, although God’s perfection is not of the same kind as a creature’s.”<sup>89</sup> Despite entering, through death, a

*Sent. Metaph.* VII, lect. 9, n.1469. Cf. Armand Maurer, “Form and Essence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas,” *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951): 165–76; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 328–9; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 164–5.

<sup>84</sup> *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.2: “exemplata oportet conformari exemplari secundum rationem formae, non autem secundum modum essendi. Nam alterius modi esse habet quandoque forma in exemplari et in exemplato.” Cf. David L. Greenstock, “Exemplar Causality and the Supernatural Order,” *The Thomist* 16 (1953): 16.

<sup>85</sup> Clarke, “The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity,” 123.

<sup>86</sup> Baget-Bozzo describes the doctrine of creation as, “la teologia della comunicazione e della similitudine” (“Le Teologia Delle Idee Divine,” 310), which captures the transcendence of God in the act of communication and his eminence expressed in the similarity of creation through the imitation of the divine ideas. On this point, also see Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 163.

<sup>87</sup> While the situation is certainly different with angels because they are not composite beings of matter and form but of actuality and potency (*ST* 1a.50.2 ad.3), the principle of this argument is still applicable to their unique form of existence. See Isabel Iribarren, “Angelic Individuality and the Possibility of a Better World: Durandus of St Pourçain’s Criticism of Thomas Aquinas,” in *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*, ed. Martin Lenz and Isabel Iribarren (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 50.

<sup>88</sup> *ST* 1a.89.1: “. . . esse separatum a corpore est praeter rationem suae naturae . . . [I]deo ad hoc unitur corpori, ut sit et operetur secundum naturam suam.” For similar statements, see *SCG* Bk. 4, c.79; *In 1 Cor.* 15, lect. 2, no.924; *Compend. Theol.* 1.151; *ST* 1a.76.1 ad.6. Cf. Richard Heinzmann, “Anima Unica Forma Corporis: Thomas von Aquin Als Überwinder Des Platonisch-Neuplatonischen Dualismus,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch Der Görres-Gesellschaft* 93 (1986): 256.

<sup>89</sup> *De pot.* 5.10 ad.5: “Anima corpori unita plus assimilatur Deo quam a corpore separata, quia perfectius habet suam naturam. Intantum enim unumquodque Deo simile est, in quantum perfectum est, licet non sit unius modi perfectio Dei et perfectio creaturae.” On this point Peter Geach remarks, “[The] description of the life that

formal state of noetic existence closer to, albeit still incomprehensibly distant from, the simple divine essence (cf. *ST* 1a.75.1; 1a.89.2; 1a.93.3), disembodied souls, nevertheless, become less perfect imitations of the uncreated exemplar forms in the divine mind and, thereby, of the divine essence itself (*ST* 1a.15.1 ad.3). The outcome, then, of the priority Thomas gives in *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 to the truer existence of the uncreated ideas in the divine mind is not the dissolution of the divine difference in creation's participatory ascent toward God, but the ontological basis to speak of creation's difference-in-continuity in the act of being (*esse*) that flows out (*fluit*) from God and terminates in the *truer* existence of natural things (*ST* 1a.58.6). Thus, the function of the formal distinctions derived from the doctrine of the divine ideas in Thomas's notion of creation's twofold sense of truer existence reinforces the divine difference by ensuring that the assimilation of a natural thing, which creationally proceeds, as all things do, from God, to the divine likeness eternally known by God is the actualization of a similarity-in-remoteness, which grounds the act of participatory imitation in the *forma totius* of created existence not only in this world, but also in the next, as the following section establishes.<sup>90</sup>

### 3.3.2 Aquinas's Eschatological Exemplarism: *Creatura in Deo est creatrix essentia*

In his commentary on John 1.3-4, where he refers his readers to the discussion in *ST* 1a.18.4, Thomas again argues that because God's understanding and life are the same as his act of existence (cf. *ST* 1a.18.3 ad.2), "whatever is in God is not only living, but is life itself, because whatever is in God is his essence."<sup>91</sup> Thomas proceeds to elaborate on the depth of this argument by adding the statement, "the creature in God is the creating essence" (*creatura in Deo*

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would be possible for the disembodied soul is meager and unattractive; but why should it be otherwise" (*Three Philosophers* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976], 100).

<sup>90</sup> Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 235. Creation's similarity-in-remoteness also has important implications for what Pieper calls, "earthly contemplation," which he summarizes in his comments on what he describes as G. K. Chesterton's "almost mystical conviction of the miracle in all that exists, and of the rapture dwelling essentially within all experience," in which Pieper says, "lie three separate assertions: that everything holds and conceals at bottom a mark of its divine origin; that one who catches a glimpse of it 'sees' that this and all things are 'good' beyond all comprehension; and that seeing this, he is happy" (*Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston [South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998], 88; German original, *Glück Und Kontemplation* Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1979)].

Contemplation of the divine ideas, then, occurs in this life for the one, as Pieper says earlier in this work, "whose gaze is directed toward the depths of things," which is seen in the day-to-day when we behold the world before us (p.79). Lawrence Dewan makes a similar point about natural contemplation in his observation, "We find things 'interesting,' not merely because they reveal a mind at work originating them, but because that mind at their origin produced them while contemplating himself, i.e. the fullness of being" ("Truth and Happiness," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 67 [1993]: 14). Cf. Matthew Cuddeback, "Josef Pieper on the Truth of All Things and the World's True Face," in *A Cosmopolitan Hermit: Modernity and Tradition in the Philosophy of Josef Pieper*, ed. Bernard N. Schumacher (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2009), 247.

<sup>91</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, no.91: "Quicquid est in Deo, non solum vivit sed est ipsa vita, quia quicquid est in Deo, est sua essentia."

*est creatrix essentia*).<sup>92</sup> Here Thomas delves further into the implications of his claim that the divine ideas are identical with God's infinitely simple being (cf. §4.4), but to grasp the implications of this statement for the distinction between God and the world, we should consider his argument in *ST* 1a.18.3, where he concludes that life, defined as the substantial capacity for self-movement or operation (*ST* 1a.18.1), is predicated of God in the truest sense because his being (*esse*) is his knowledge (*intelligere*), which is, as Thomas states, "most perfect and always in the state of actuality."<sup>93</sup> This recourse to the description of God as *actus purus*, outlined in *ST* 1a.9.1 to establish God's incomprehensibility by explaining how the sapiential motion of the divine life precludes any notion of potentiality or change (*ST* 1a.9.1 ad.2), grounds Thomas's translation of God's immanent operation of self-knowledge (§3.1.1) into the means for communicating God's external act of creating since, as Thomas insists, "Creation is not a change," or movement from potentiality to actuality, but the gracious gift of God's immanent operations expressed in the intentional emanation of all things from him.<sup>94</sup>

Thomas's argument that the archetypal forms in the divine mind are the *creatrix essentia*, therefore, integrates the doctrine of the divine ideas into how he speaks of God intentionally turning outward in the act of creation; thereby, identifying the divine ideas with God's being of *actus purus*, which he confirms in his commentary on John 1.3-4 when he apophatically

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas repeats this claim in *Sent.* I, d.36, q.1, a.3 ad.1; *De ver.* 8.16; and *De pot.* 3.5 ad.2. For more on the meaning, sources, and impact of this statement, see Ianuarius di Somma, "De naturali participatione divini luminis in mente humana secundum S. Augustinum et S. Thomam," *Gregorianum* 7 (1926): 332; Armand Maurer, "St. Thomas and Eternal Truths," *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970): 105 n.50; Baget-Bozzo, "La Teologia Delle Idee Divine in San Tommaso," 308–11; John F. Wippel, "The Reality of Nonexisting Possibles According to Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines," *The Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1981): 733–4; Gilles Emery, *La trinité créatrice: Trinité et création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d'Aquin et de ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1995), 63; Boland, *Ideas in God*, 206 n.57 and 243; Goris, *Free Creatures of an Eternal God*, 27 n.53; William Riordan, *Divine Light: Theology of Denys the Areopagite* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 126–7; Stone, "Foundation of Universal," 275.

<sup>93</sup> *ST* 1a.18.3: "... perfectissimus, et semper in actu." Leget lucidly restates the basis for this argument in his comments on Thomas's interpretation of John 17.3 (*Lect. Ioan.* 17, lect. 1, no.2186), on which he writes, "First [Thomas] explains that all activities to which one moves oneself can be called operations of life. The more actual and perfect these operations are, the more one speaks of 'life.' Because knowing (*intelligere*) is the highest of these operations, the act of knowing can be called 'life' in the best sense (*operatio intellectus maxime est vita*)" ("The Concept of 'Life' in the Commentary on St. John," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering [Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2005], 159–60).

<sup>94</sup> *ST* 1a.45.2 ad.2: "Creatio non est mutatio." Cf. David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "God's Eternity," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984): 389–406; Burrell, "The Act of Creation," 43–4. Thomas's use of emanation (*emanatio*) to describe the world's creational procession from God has resulted in some confusion. Following his reading of Dionysius (*DDN* 4, lect. 1, no.271), Thomas's use of emanation represents another instance of him theologically appropriating a philosophically born idea in which he finds a fitting, as Burrell says, "vehicle for introducing the creator as cause-of-being" ("Aquinas's Appropriation of Liber de Causis to Articulate the Creator as Cause-of-Being," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. [London: SCM Press, 2003], 76). However, as with the divine ideas, he reorders the doctrine to avoid the errors in the Platonic notion of necessary emanation (cf. *ST* 1a.32.1 ad.3; 1a.104.3). In addition to Burrell's work, see Milbank and Pickstock's discussion on Thomas's theological appropriation of emanation in *Truth in Aquinas*, 45–50. On the question of compatibility between Thomas's theory of emanation and his use of the analogy of artisan, see Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 102–7.

deconstructs the analogy of the artisan.<sup>95</sup> Because God's simple divine being is pure actuality, for Thomas, as Burrell notes in his comments on *ST* 1a.104.1, "[I]here is no difference between God's conserving activity and God's creating, other than the proviso that creating presumes nothing at all to be already present. In other words, all of God's activity partakes of creating: all that God can do is to create."<sup>96</sup> What Burrell pinpoints here is that the various works we attribute to God, e.g., creating, governing, and redeeming, are all, in reality, to use Hebert McCabe's illustration, the external projection of God's simple act of existence.<sup>97</sup> Thus, when Thomas identifies the divine ideas with God's creating essence, he allows us to catch a glimpse of what it means for creation to imitate the divine likenesses in the mind of God, since the divine operations of salvation and sustaining are not different from the work of creation. To put this another way, because the diverse activities we attribute to God are a reflection of what is united and simple in his immanent operations of knowing and loving (*ST* 1a.13.4), to say that the divine ideas are God's knowledge of his essence as imitable extends the language of imitation beyond the existence granted to creatures in God's work of *creatio ex nihilo* to the perfect actualization of this existence in creation's multi-faceted operations, which imitate the diverse activities we ascribe to God's simple divine life of *actus purus*.

Thomas discusses the progression from initial to dynamic actualization of imitating the divine likenesses in *ST* 1a.73.1, where he observes, "For any being there are two kinds of completeness, initial and evolved. The first is present when the thing has all that makes up its substance . . . The second kind of completeness, on the other hand, is the goal that the thing is to achieve. This goal is either an activity . . . or it is something achieved through activity."<sup>98</sup> It is, according to Thomas, this second kind of perfection that requires us to propose the existence of a plurality of ideas because, as he says, "[I]n every effect the ultimate end is specifically the object

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 2, The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 47. Thomas explains that while a thing conceived in the mind of an artisan has a type of existence, it does not enjoy a state of complete actuality because what the artisan knows does not belong to her essence or existence, but this is not the case with God, as seen above (*Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, no.91). This apophatic deconstruction of the artisan analogy reminds us that all God-talk is derived from the world of senses (*ST* 1a.12.12), and, therefore, cannot comprehensibly describe God.

<sup>96</sup> Burrell, *Freedom and Creation*, 68. Cf. *Sup. Ps.* 32, no.8.

<sup>97</sup> Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (Continuum Publishing, 1999), 48. McCabe uses this description to account for the immutability of God's soteriological work. He writes, "The story of Jesus is nothing other than the triune life of God projected onto our history, or enacted sacramentally in our history . . . I use the word 'projected' in the sense that we project a film onto a screen . . . Now imagine a film projected not on a screen but on a rubbish dump. The story of Jesus – which in its full extent is the entire Bible – is the projection of the trinitarian life of God on the rubbish dump that we have made of the world." I am grateful to Mark McIntosh for altering me to this passage.

<sup>98</sup> "Duplex est rei perfectio, prima, et secunda. Prima quidem perfectio est, secundum quod res in sua substantia est perfecta . . . Perfectio autem secunda est finis. Finis autem vel est operatio . . . vel est aliquid ad quod per operationem pervenitur."

of the principal agent's intention."<sup>99</sup> This goal or "ultimate perfection," as Thomas describes it, which is, as stated in *ST* 1a.73.1, "the goal intended for the whole universe, is the perfect bliss of the blessed, and this will occur at the very end of the world."<sup>100</sup> In Thomas's description of the divine ideas as God's creative essence, we discover a way to speak of creation's eschatological fulfillment as the perfect imitation of its creative principle in the divine mind.<sup>101</sup>

Yet, Thomas insists that this eschatological actualization of creation's perfect imitation does not diminish the distinction between God's simple divine existence and creation's composite reality, as he writes elsewhere in his discussion on the seven days of creation, "For the glory expected in the future reward is twofold – spiritual and corporeal – the second not only glorying human bodies but also making the entire universe new."<sup>102</sup> In his discussion on the eschatological persistence of filial fear, Thomas subtly relies on the divine ideas to reinforce this distinction between God and the world. The divine ideas enter his discussion on fear in his theological reflections on Ps. 110.10, which states, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord." Thomas insists that filial fear emerges in response to the work of wisdom, directing human life according to the divine ideas (*ST* 2a2ae.19.7).<sup>103</sup> Consequently, when he later writes, "The defect implied in fear is rooted in the very nature of the creature, its infinite remoteness from God, and so is one that will continue in heaven,"<sup>104</sup> the implication is that filial fear eschatologically persists because in humanity's return to God through the perfect imitation of the divine likenesses, we do not become the divine ideas or obtain a mode of existence equivalent to them, but remain ontologically distinct in our participatory union with God. The doctrine of the divine ideas, then, supplies Thomas with a way to reinforce the ontological distinction between God and the world by establishing that the eschatological *reditus* of all things to God embraces creation's similarity-in-remoteness.

In these discussions on Thomas's use of the formal distinctions derived from the doctrine of the divine ideas to establish creation's twofold sense of existence, his theological assimilation of the doctrine offers a formulation of the divine ideas that is the very opposite of Bonhoeffer's criticism that the doctrine muddles the distinction between God and the world.

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<sup>99</sup> *ST* 1a.15.2: "[I]n quolibet effectu illud quod est ultimus finis proprie est intentum a principali agente."

<sup>100</sup> "Ultima autem perfectio, quae est finis totius universi, est perfecta beatitudo sanctorum; quae erit in ultima consummatione saeculi."

<sup>101</sup> In *De ver.* 4.8 Thomas even goes so far as to say, "Similitudo creaturae in verbo est productiva et motiva creaturae in propria natura existentis, quodammodo contingit ut creatura seipsam moveat, et ad esse producat, inquantum scilicet producitur in esse, et movetur a sua similitudine in verbo existente. Et ita similitudo creaturae in verbo est quodammodo creaturae vita."

<sup>102</sup> *ST* 1a.66.3: "Expectatur enim in futura remuneratione duplex gloria, scilicet spiritualis, et corporalis, non solum in corporibus humanis glorificandis, sed etiam in toto mundo innovando."

<sup>103</sup> For more on the presence of the divine ideas in this section of the *Summa*, see §6.3.

<sup>104</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.19.11 ad.3: "Timor importat defectum naturalem creaturae, secundum quod in infinitum distat a Deo, quod etiam in patria remanebit. Et ideo timor non evacuabitur totaliter."

Rather than diminishing the value of creation, Thomas employs the grammar of the divine ideas to explain the ontological asymmetry of creation's non-reciprocal dependence on God's creative knowledge for existence. He uses the distinction between God and the world to direct his reader's attention away from the cognitive and metaphysical pitfalls commonly associated with the divine ideas as well as embrace the world's creational integrity as the intentional emanation of God's immanent operations of knowing and loving turned outward. Furthermore, this chapter identified the traits in Thomas's formal discussion on the divine ideas that exposed his efforts to theologially reposition the doctrine within the *Summa's* pedagogical pattern of faith seeking understanding wherein he prepares his readers for the development and varied application of the doctrine encountered in places like *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3 and *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, n.91; however, as was observed in the section on Pieper's claim that the createdness of the world is the unspoken assumption that directs Thomas's thought, these developmental gestures often occur at the edges of arguments where there are rifts or jumps in Thomas's reasoning. While this chapter has noted certain ways in which Thomas confirms the theological validity of the divine ideas, we now need a more robust engagement with the doctrine's peripheral or subtle gestures elsewhere in the *Summa*. We begin this task in the following chapter on the trinitarian basis for the theological fittingness of the divine ideas.

#### 4. The Grounds for a Trinitarian Rereading of the Divine Ideas

*Anyone who expressly and consistently denies that things originated from the Logos – i.e., who denies their verbal character – finds the substance of the real world itself slipping away between his fingers.<sup>1</sup>*

##### Introduction

When Thomas addresses questions on the origin, multiplicity, and diversity of creation in the *Summa*, his responses directly and indirectly recall and supplement his formal discussion on the divine ideas and, subsequently, expose the underlying trinitarian dimension of the doctrine at work in his exposition on the Word of God's causal relation to creation. How one interprets the relation between the Word of God and the divine ideas determines or, perhaps we could say, represents the theological meaning and value attributed to the doctrine, given that the revelation of God's trinitarian life pedagogically defines his theological methodology (§2.1.2). At the end of his recent article on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, John Hughes writes, "For Aquinas, the divine ideas . . . understood according to the logic of the Trinity, are crucial to understanding creation as truly free and personal rather than proceeding from natural necessity, but also as in accordance with the intrinsic order of divine goodness and wisdom rather than simply formless, random, and arbitrary."<sup>2</sup> Hughes's remarks here note that Thomas's trinitarian doctrine of creation redefines the hermeneutical context for the divine ideas. Thomas alludes to the trinitarian adaptation of the doctrine in his discussion on the personal designation of the Father, where he says, "For just as we know that the word conceived mentally by the artisan issues from him before the artifact he fashions on the model of his idea, so too the Son proceeds from the Father before the creature does."<sup>3</sup>

He reiterates this point in his exegetical reflections on Hebrews 11.3 ("By faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God: that from invisible things visible things might be made"), where, regarding God's act of creation, Thomas argues, "Therefore, he [the author] says, *by faith we understand that the world*, i.e., the entire universe of creatures, *was framed*, i.e., fittingly corresponded, *to the word*, i.e., to God's concept, as artifacts correspond to their art," by which he means, "Visible things were produced from invisible ideal notions in the Word of God, by whom all things were made. These notions, even though they are the same reality, differ

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, "What Does It Mean to Say 'God Speaks,'" in *Problems of Modern Faith: Essays and Addresses*, trans. Jan van Heurck (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), 144; translated from the German, *Über die Schwierigkeit Heute zu Glauben* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> John Hughes, "Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas: How Fair Is Bulgakov's Critique?," *Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 136–7.

<sup>3</sup> *ST* 1a.33.3 ad.1: "Sicut enim verbum conceptum in mente artificis, per prius intelligitur procedere ab artifice quam artificiatum, quod producitur ad similitudinem verbi concepti in mente; ita per prius procedit filius a patre quam creatura."



in aspect by diverse relations connoted in respect to the creature.”<sup>4</sup> It appears that here the notion of fittingness facilitates Thomas’s trinitarian reconfiguration of the doctrine through which he explicitly identifies the Word of God as the locus for the divine ideas. While others have discussed the hermeneutical importance of the connection between the divine ideas and the Word of God, Thomas’s rich sense of fittingness (*convenientia*) in theology and creation suggests that there is still more to be explored in this relation.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this chapter, then, is to locate in the pedagogical development of the *Summa*’s treatise on God grounds for a more robust trinitarian rereading of the divine ideas, based on Thomas’s methodological notion of fittingness. However, because our venture here, and in the following chapters, requires delving further into the peripheral or subtle gestures of the doctrine, it is necessary to begin with some additional thoughts on his grammar for the divine ideas, which will help us to identify references to the doctrine in other parts of the *Summa*.

Thus, the first section considers the distinction between, what we will call, Thomas’s formal and applied grammars for the doctrine of the divine ideas. In addition to laying out this distinction, we identify here some of the cues that subtly indicate the presence of the divine ideas in different arguments throughout the *Summa*. The second section elaborates on our initial observations about the hermeneutical significance of Thomas’s arguments from fittingness, which were discussed in chapter one (§1.2). This section argues that the *Summa*’s entire treatise on God rests on the aesthetic logic of fittingness, and that this methodological framework provides a basis for grappling with the gestures of the divine ideas in Thomas’s exposition on the mystery of creation. In the third section, the unity of the *Summa*’s *consideratio de Deo* is considered along with the methodological framework of the divine ideas, which together secure the link

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<sup>4</sup> *In Heb.* 11, lect. 2, no.564 and 565: “Ideo dicit *intelligimus fide saecula*, id est, totam universitatem creaturae, *aptata*, id est, convenienter respondentia, *verbo*, id est conceptui Dei, sicut artificiatum arti suae . . . Nos dicimus secundum modum praedictum, quod ex invisibilibus rationibus idealibus in Verbo Dei, per quod omnia facta sunt, res visibiles sunt productae. Quae rationes, et si realiter idem sunt, tamen per diversos respectus connotatos respectu creaturae differunt secundum rationem.”

<sup>5</sup> For other considerations of Thomas’s identification of the divine ideas with the Word of God, see Gianni Baget-Bozzo, “La Teologia Delle Idee Divine in San Tommaso,” *Rivista Di Filosofia Neo Scolastica* 66 (1974): 308–9; L.-B. Geiger, “Les Idées Divines Dans L’oeuvre de S. Thomas,” in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 203; Mark D. Jordan, “The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984): 31–2; John Lee Farthing, “The Problem of Divine Exemplarity in St. Thomas,” *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 222; Alice Ramos, “The Divine Ideas and the Intelligibility of Creation: A Way Toward Universal Signification in Aquinas,” *Doctor Communis* 43 (1991): 264; Vivian Boland, O.P., *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 235–48; James Stone, “The Foundation of Universal and Necessary Propositions in Select Writings of St Thomas Aquinas” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 2008), 161–2; John F. Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas,” in *The Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas*, Etienne Gilson Series 30 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 143–7; Hughes, “Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas,” 136. There are basically three reasons these studies highlight the connection between the Word and the ideas: first, to clarify the Word of God’s causal relation to creation; second, to challenge claims that Thomas’s doctrine is fundamentally deistic or demiurgic; third, to establish, principally in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the presence of the divine ideas where no direct reference is made to it.

between the divine ideas and the Word of God while also directing our attention to Thomas's reflections on the trinitarian act of creation. Finally, the fourth section turns to the mystery of creation and Thomas's application of the divine ideas to substantiate creation's participation in the trinitarian life of God. Here we examine Thomas's discussions on the procession of the Word of God and his argument that the eternal processions are the exemplar notions for creation.

#### 4.1 An Excursus on Thomas's Formal and Applied Grammars for the Divine Ideas

It appears to be a common assumption in studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas that his formal or *ex professo* remarks on the doctrine offer encyclopedic codifications of the grammar for the divine ideas.<sup>6</sup> The conclusion that the formal discussion on the divine ideas in, for example, *ST* 1a.15 gives fixed meanings is not unreasonable since a range of terms, including *similitudo*, *ratio*, *exempla*, *forma*, and *species*, are explicitly employed in this section with precise lexical connotations, which define and refine the doctrine of the divine ideas; however, the atomistic hermeneutic adopted by the majority of these studies is prone to overlooking the fluidity in the doctrine's applied grammar found elsewhere in the *Summa*. Consequently, there is a, hopefully inadvertent, tendency to limit the range and meaning of the terms that fall within the grammatical domain of the doctrine. While in most instances Thomas's application of the doctrine's grammar adhere to the lexical descriptions given in the formal discussions on the divine ideas, there are, nevertheless, places in the *Summa* where this is not true, which leave us having to assume that Thomas is either being inconsistent or that the formal grammar for the divine ideas serves a purpose other than terminological codification.

Certainly the most notable terminological distinction found in the *Summa's* formal discussion on the divine ideas is the difference between *ratio* (notion) and *exemplar* (exemplar). In *ST* 1a.15.3 Thomas gives a clear description of the distinction between these terms when he explains that for things which do not and never will exist "there is in God no idea in the sense of exemplar, but only in the sense of notion."<sup>7</sup> Both *ratio* and *exemplar* can therefore be described as ideas in the divine mind, and, as such, they contribute to the grammatical framework of the divine ideas in the *Summa*. While *ratio*, according to this passage, is reserved for ideas in God's speculative knowledge, which may be called, as James Ross emphasizes, following *De potentia Dei*

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<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the best example of this interpretive supposition is Doolan's extensive systematic analysis of the evolution in Thomas's terminology for the divine ideas in the various formal discussions on the doctrine from the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* through the *Summa Theologiae* (*Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 4-21).

<sup>7</sup> *ST* 1a.15.3 ad.2: "... non est idea in Deo secundum quod idea significat exemplar, sed solum secundum quod significat rationem."

1.5 ad.11 and *De Veritate* 3.6, “incomplete ideas” (*indeterminata ideae*),<sup>8</sup> the meaning of *exemplar* is specifically limited to God’s practical knowledge of things that already do or will exist.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, in *ST* 1a.44.3, Thomas asserts, regarding the created distinctiveness between things, “we should say that divine wisdom holds the originals (*rationes*) of all things, and these we have previously called the ideas, that is the exemplar forms (*formas exemplares*) existing in the divine mind.”<sup>10</sup> Here *ratio* is identified with the formal meaning given to “exemplar” as the pattern that preexists in the divine mind for something that will be created, while in *ST* 1a2ae.93.1 there is a collation of *exemplar* and *ratio* that if interpreted as a reference to God’s actually practical knowledge (*actu practica cognitio*), would result in a theory of reprobation that resembles a form of double predestination that Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas will simply not permit (*ST* 1a.15.3 ad.1; 1a.21.3; 1a.23.3).<sup>11</sup> While this variation in the *Summa*’s use of *exemplar* is rare, there are many instances where *ratio* diverts from its formal classification in *ST* 1a.15. For example, in response to an objection that the forms of material things are derived from spiritual substances (*spirituales substantiae*), Thomas argues, “Forms participated in matter . . . are traceable . . . to ideas (*rationes*) in the divine mind, which endowed created things even with the seeds of forms that they might be brought to full realization through a process of movement.”<sup>12</sup> Again, *ratio* shifts from being a term for God’s speculative knowledge of things that will never exist to an expression of the exemplarity after which actual things are patterned.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> James F. Ross, “Aquinas’s Exemplarism; Aquinas’s Voluntarism,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1990): 178. Restricting the meaning, either explicitly or implicitly, of *ratio* to “notion,” or something similar, is common in codifications of Thomas’s grammar of the divine ideas. Cf. James F. Ross, “God Creator of Kinds and Possibilities,” in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 315 fn.1; Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 2, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 20; Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 16; Stone, “Foundation of Universal,” 173–4.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *DDN* V, lect. 3, no.665.

<sup>10</sup> “Oportet dicere quod in divina sapientia sunt rationes omnium rerum, quas supra diximus ideas, idest formas exemplares in mente divina existentes.”

<sup>11</sup> It is worth mentioning that the taxonomy of God’s actually practical knowledge derives from *De ver.* 3.3, where Thomas distinguishes between God’s *actu practica cognitio*, which is, “. . . ad opus actu ordinatur, sicut artifex praeconcepta forma proponit illam in materiam inducer,” and God’s *habitu vel virtute practica cognitio*, which reflects when, “artifex excogitat formam artificii, et scit modum operandi, non tamen operari intendit.” While this distinction can be mapped onto Thomas’s description of the divine ideas in the *Summa* (Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 11), I am using the category of God’s actually practical knowledge to emphasize the character of *exemplar* in *ST* 1a.15. For a discussion on the potential of this distinction to help answer various questions surrounding the doctrine of the divine ideas, see Aaron Martin, “Reckoning with Ross: Possibles, Divine Ideas, and Virtual Practical Knowledge,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 78 (2005): 193–208.

<sup>12</sup> *ST* 1a.65.4 ad.2: “Formae participatae in materia reducuntur . . . ad rationes intellectus divini, a quibus etiam formarum semina sunt rebus creatis indita, ut per motum in actum educi possint.” Similar uses of *ratio* can be found in, *ST* 1a.21.2; 1a.22.1; 1a.45.6; 1a.87.1; 1a.103.6. It is also notable that in many of these places, where Thomas is clearly referring to the doctrine of the divine ideas, he does not employ “*ideae*.”

<sup>13</sup> The fluidity with which Thomas uses *ratio* or *rationes* for the divine ideas of things that will never exist and for things that do or will exist also cautions us against rigidly separating the logical distinction between God’s speculative and practical knowledge, since the things God knows by way of his practical knowledge he knows the truth of according to his speculative intellect (*ST* 1a.14.16). Cf. Matthew Cuddeback, “Josef Pieper on the Truth of

These examples of Thomas's flexibility with the formal grammar should alert us to the possibility that he may have a much larger network of words, concepts, and topical or analogical themes in the *Summa* that represent his doctrine of the divine ideas, which would suggest that locating references to the divine ideas is not simply a task of identifying places where he uses the terms *ratio*, *exemplar*, or *idea*. Thomas, however, does not leave the reader without clues to the presence of the divine ideas in places where the formal grammar is not used. Some of the more recognizable indicators are the analogies used to describe the divine ideas, such as the analogy of the artisan, noted in the previous chapter (§3.1.1), or the analogy of the archer identified in *De ver.* 3.1 (§3.3.2, n.71), which also reappears in various places throughout the *Summa*, although the connection there is more oblique than with the references to the analogy of the artisan. In the *Summa* the link between the divine ideas and the analogy of the archer emerges through a series of subtle gestures associated with the larger network of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas. For example, references to the analogy of the archer (*ST* 1a.19.4; 1a.23.1; 1a.103.1 ad.3; 1a.103.8) often occur in sections with citations from other works, such as Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus* and Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae* III, which directly contribute to Thomas's understanding of the doctrine. Moreover, Thomas's practice of citing authoritative voices represents another way that he can make the presence of the divine ideas felt in an argument without directly appealing to the doctrine.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the works from Dionysius and Boethius, another work that Thomas makes clear is essential to his understanding of the divine ideas is Augustine's discussion on the doctrine in question 46 of his *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, which was, perhaps, the most influential treatise on the divine ideas in the medieval period.<sup>15</sup> What is particularly noteworthy about this text for the current discussion is that, in the second section of the treatise, Augustine identifies *formae*, *species*, and *rationes* as acceptable references for the divine ideas because, as he states earlier, despite Plato having been the first to use the term *ideae*, the doctrine had been discussed by others using a variety of terms.<sup>16</sup> Before he proceeds to his analysis of the divine

All Things and the World's True Face," in *A Cosmopolitan Hermit: Modernity and Tradition in the Philosophy of Josef Pieper*, ed. Bernard N. Schumacher (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2009), 241–3.

<sup>14</sup> On Thomas's use of these works to develop his doctrine of the divine ideas, see *Sent.* I.36.1, aa.1-2; I.36.2, aa.1-3; I.38.1 aa.1-2; *De Ver.* q.3; *DDN* V, lect. 3; *ST* 1a.15.1 and 3; 1a.22.1; 1a.26.4; 1a.65.4 ad.1; 1a.93.2 ad.4; *Quod.* 4.1. For discussion on these texts and the place of these authors in the tradition of the divine ideas leading up to Thomas, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 88–92 and 100–3; F. O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, New edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 7–13, 117–29 and 215–24.

<sup>15</sup> In the *Summa* Thomas explicitly refers to *De div. quaest.* 46 eleven times; however, only four of those citations are from *ST* 1a.15 and 1a.44. For more on this text and its significance for medieval theories of the divine ideas, see Hans Meyerhoff, "On the Platonism of St. Augustine's *Quaestio de Ideis*," *The New Scholasticism* 16 (1942): 16–45; T. J. Kondoleon, "The Immutability of God: Some Recent Challenges," *The New Scholasticism* 58, no. 3 (1984): 293–315; Boland, *Ideas in God*, 37–47.

<sup>16</sup> *De div. quaest.* 46.1: "Ideas Plato primus appellasse perhibetur . . . sed alio fortassis atque alio nomine ab aliis atque aliis nuncupatae sunt."

ideas, Augustine asserts, “Enough of the name! Let us see the thing which above all we must contemplate and come to know while leaving it in the power of each to call that thing which he knows by whatever name pleases him.”<sup>17</sup> At the very center of the doctrinal tradition on the divine ideas that Thomas inherited, lies this claim from Augustine that the doctrine need not be bound to specific words because what matters is the belief, as Augustine says, “that all things are created on a rational plan . . . [that] must be thought to exist nowhere but in the very mind of the Creator.”<sup>18</sup> It would seem, then, that the lexical flexibility we discover in Thomas’s applied grammar reflects his commitment to Augustine’s instruction on this point.

There are at least two pedagogical advantages to the flexibility of Thomas’s grammar for the divine ideas. First, it allows him to make more subtle gestures with the doctrine, which he can use to direct the reader’s attention to the focal point of the discussions where these peripheral references are found. In a sense, then, the substantive contribution of the divine ideas to these inquiries comes into focus only as one is led, by Christ (§2.4), ever closer to the vision of, what Mary Carruthers has aptly called, the “memory of heaven” through the maturation of the reader’s habit of theological thinking, which is existentially mirrored in the reader’s movement through the *Summa*.<sup>19</sup> The second advantage is that by relying on a network of words, concepts, and themes to represent the divine ideas, Thomas can subtly introduce the doctrine at various points in the *Summa* where it might be considered unhelpful or distracting to explicitly discuss the divine ideas; however, once he has provided his readers with the tools to reimagine the doctrine, Thomas can draw on these allusions to create an *a fortiori* movement in the theological vision of the *Summa*, as we will see in our discussions on the fourth and fifth ways (§5.2 and §5.3). For now, however, this section has made us aware of the need to keep an eye out for gestures in the *Summa* where the interpretive relevance of the divine ideas must draw out in conversation with Thomas’s formal remarks on the doctrine in *ST* 1a.15, as we will attempt to demonstrate below. But before we proceed to that part of the analysis, let us clarify the logic of fittingness at

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<sup>17</sup> *De div. quaest.* 46.1: “De nomine hactenus dictum sit. Rem videamus, quae maxime consideranda atque noscenda est, in potestate constitutes vocabulis, ut quod uolet quisque appellet rem quam cognouerit.”

<sup>18</sup> *De div. quaest.* 46.2: “Omnia ratione sint condita . . . [quod] arbitrandum est nisi in ipsa mente creatoris.”

<sup>19</sup> Carruthers discusses what is meant by the “memory of heaven” in *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 60–70. I must concur with Peter Candler that Carruthers does not “take seriously enough the theological character of memory” in Patristic and Medieval authors (*Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, Or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006], 44 fn.7). Candler also makes the important observation about this movement toward the “memory of heaven” that, “Aquinas inverts the classical assumptions that memory is only of things past by asserting (with Augustine) that it recalls future destinies” (*Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction*, 159). Cf. *ST* 3a.83.4, where Thomas comments on the celebration of the eucharist: “[A]nte celebrationem huius mysterii, primo quidem praemittitur praeparatio quaedam ad digne agenda ea quae sequuntur . . . Tertia pars commemorat caelestem gloriam, ad quam tendimus post praesentem miseriam, dicendo, gloria in excelsis Deo.”

work in Thomas's thought, because it can help identify the progression of his pedagogical argumentation in relation to the divine ideas.

## 4.2 The Logic of Theological Fittingness

Gilbert Narcisse notes, at the outset of his study on *convenientia*, that overtly rationalistic interpretations of Thomas tend to neglect or treat arguments from fittingness as though they were, what Thomas calls, "artificial fables" because they do not adhere to strict philosophical principles.<sup>20</sup> Only recently, in fact, have Thomist scholars begun to show a serious interest in the hermeneutical implications of Thomas's arguments from fittingness. However, the rather dismissive evaluation we encounter in Doolan's response to Thomas's insistence that "the Word [of God] is the art full of living patterns of all things," suggests that the methodological significance of *convenientia* for the interpretation of Thomas's arguments on the doctrine of the divine ideas needs closer analysis.<sup>21</sup> Since it is Doolan's contention that doctrine of the divine ideas signifies a distinctly philosophical dimension of Thomas's thought,<sup>22</sup> the explicit identification of the divine ideas with the Word of God represents, for him, a rather inconvenient theological turn in Thomas's description of the doctrine.<sup>23</sup> In his comments on *In Heb.* 11, lect. 2, Doolan acknowledges that "it is fitting to attribute [the divine ideas] to the Word of God," but he only does so because he believes it will help him silence the theological inflection of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas.<sup>24</sup> Doolan maintains his commitment to a

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<sup>20</sup> Gilbert Narcisse, O.P., *Les Raisons de Dieu: Argument de Convenance et Esthétique Théologique Selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1997), xxi–xxiii.

<sup>21</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, no.77: "Verbum est ars plena omnium rationum viventium." Thomas is citing Augustine's *De Trin.* 6.10, where it says, "[H]oc esse est unum omnia tamquam uerbum perfectum cui non desit aliquid et ars quaedam omnipotentis atque sapientis dei plena omnium rationum uiuentium incommutabilium, et omnes unum in ea sicut ipsa unum de uno cum unum."

<sup>22</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, xvii. For more on Doolan's argument that Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas is principally philosophical, see §5.1.3.

<sup>23</sup> In addition to the passages cited from *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect.2, no.77 and *In Heb.* 11, lect.2, no.564, there is also, for example, Thomas's argument in *ST* 1a.93.8 ad.4, where he concludes that all temporal things will be seen as unchangeable in the beatific vision because "in ipso Verbo increato sunt rationes omnium creaturarum." Cf. *ST* 1a.33.3 ad.1; 1a.34.3; 1a.44.3; 1a.55.2 ad.1; 1a.58.7; 1a.65.4 ad.1; 1a.74.3 ad.1. For additional references linking the divine ideas and the Word of God, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 235–48.

<sup>24</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 118. Doolan presents his discussion on the relation of the divine ideas to the Word of God as a response to the argument offered by Wippel and Geiger, for references, see n.5 above, that Thomas's use of *rationes* in the *Summa contra Gentiles* implicitly identifies the divine ideas with the Word of God. He concedes that this connection does introduce a "theological note" to Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas; however, he quickly qualifies this admission by stating that the theological turn this connection represents "does not appear in any of [Thomas's] other *ex professo* treatments of the divine ideas" (p.98), which is a conclusion debunked in the previous chapter (§3.1). It is also notable that, in his efforts to deconstruct this connection, Doolan emphasizes Augustine's authority in Thomas's commentaries on scripture, where the divine ideas are regularly identified with the Word of God (p.118), which suggests that he wants to shift the reason for this theological turn, at least in part, to Thomas's theological inheritance. Yet, in doing so Doolan exposes the similarity in his approach to the very hermeneutical practices, discussed in §5.1.1 and §5.1.2, employed by Étienne Gilson, James Ross, and Mark Jordan in their studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, that he is attempting to distance himself from. Moreover, in his efforts to minimize the theological trajectory of Thomas's discussions on the divine ideas, Doolan

philosophical reading of the doctrine by pressing the distinction between essential attributes and personal properties in Thomas's delineation between *idea* and *Verbum* set up by *ST* 1a.39.7, where it says, "[Q]ualities of intellect are appropriated [by way of similitude] to the Son, who proceeds by way of intellect, as the Word."<sup>25</sup>

Regarding this delineation, Doolan highlights Thomas's argument in *De veritate* that, "A word differs from an idea, for the latter means an exemplary cause and nothing else, but the Word in God of a creature means an exemplary form that is drawn from something else. Hence, a divine idea pertains to the essence, but the Word, to a person."<sup>26</sup> To this claim, Doolan adds Thomas's remarks from *ST* 1a.34.3, where he says, "We employ the term 'idea' chiefly to indicate reference to creatures; this is why it is used in the plural about the divinity; nor is it a personal term. By the name 'Word,' however, we intend to indicate chiefly relationship to the one speaking it and then, in consequence, a relationship to the creature . . . For this reason in God there is but one single Word and it names a person."<sup>27</sup> Because of this conceptual distinction between *Verbum* and *idea*, Doolan determines that for Thomas there is no sense in which "the notions, or divine ideas, pertain uniquely to one of the Divine Persons rather than to the divine essence," which he takes as sufficient ground for claiming that the doctrine is, at best, only tangentially related to Thomas's theological vision; thereby, clearing the path for his philosophical reconstruction of the doctrine.<sup>28</sup> While this conclusion may make Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas more manageable, it relies on an assumption that the logic of

ignores that the doctrine is regularly linked to the Word of God not only in Thomas's biblical commentaries, but also in his systematic works. For example in *Sent.* I, d.36, q.2, a.1 s.c. 1 and *De ver.* 3.1 s.c.1, Thomas says, "Qui negat ideas esse, infidelis est, quia negat filium esse." While Thomas attributes this quotation to *De div. quaest.* 46, it does not appear in Augustine's *corpus*. Some suspect that he may have inherited the statement from Albert the Great, who cites *De civ. dei* 10 as the source. On the provenance of this citation, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 7 fn.15; James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 73–4. Although this exact statement cannot be found in Augustine's works, he does, nevertheless, explicitly identify the divine ideas with the Word of God, as the passage cited in n.21 above confirms.

<sup>25</sup> "Ea quae pertinent ad intellectum appropriantur [per viam similitudinis] Filio, qui procedit per modum intellectus ut Verbum." Gilles Emery notes, in a comment on *ST* 1a.32.1 ad.2, "These 'similitudes' constitute arguments from congruity or fittingness," which are, he says in a quotation from *ST* 2a2ae.1.5 ad.2, "non demonstrativae, sed persuasiones quaedam manifestantes non esse impossibile quod in fide proponitur" (*The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 29–30; French original, *La Théologie Trinitaire de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> *De ver.* 4.4 ad.4: "Verbum differt ab idea: idea enim nominat formam exemplarem absolute; sed verbum creaturae in Deo nominat formam exemplarem ab alio deductam; et ideo idea in Deo ad essentiam pertinet. Sed verbum ad personam."

<sup>27</sup> *ST* 1a.34.3 ad.4: "Nomen ideae principaliter est impositum ad significandum respectum ad creaturam, et ideo pluraliter dicitur in divinis, neque est personale. Sed nomen verbi principaliter impositum est ad significandam relationem ad dicentem, et ex consequenti ad creaturas . . . Et propter hoc in divinis est unicum tantum verbum, et personaliter dictum."

<sup>28</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 122. Boland argues, in his assessment of these same passages, that Thomas highlights the distinction between *Verbum* and *idea* not in order to delineate between talk about the divine essence and the three persons, but rather to bring "together discourse about the Persons in God and discourse about the divine essence." He continues, "In stressing the divinity of the Word, Saint Thomas maintains a clear distinction between uncreated and created reality." See, Boland, *Ideas in God*, 246–8.

fittingness is merely a notional convenience, which should, therefore, have little bearing on our interpretation of the doctrine, but this conclusion simply does not square with what Thomas actually says about arguments *ex convenientia*.

Thomas's clearest statements about the logic of fittingness are found in his responses to the questions on whether Christ's incarnation and passion were necessary. On the necessity of the incarnation, he writes:

We refer to something as necessary for an end in two senses. First, when the goal is simply unattainable without it, e.g. food for sustaining human life. Second, when it is required for a better and more expeditious attainment of the goal, e.g. a horse for a journey. In the first sense the Incarnation was not necessary for the restoration of human nature, since by his infinite power God had many other ways to accomplish this end. In the second sense, however, it was needed for the restoration of human nature.<sup>29</sup>

Because there is, as Thomas subsequently restates in his discussion on the passion of Christ (*ST* 3a.46.2 ad.3), no authority above God, the form of necessity predicated to the incarnation is one of fittingness determined by God's knowledge and will (*ST* 1a.19.3).

The relevance of this distinction between absolute necessity and the necessity of fittingness or supposition for Thomas's theological methodology is specified in his reply to the objection that Christ's passion was necessary because "faith cannot cling to what is false" (*fidei non potest subesse falsum*), to which he responds, "Human faith and even the Sacred Scriptures which instruct it rest upon the divine foreknowledge and plan. Hence the necessity which derives from the assertions of the faith and of Scripture is of the same nature as the necessity arising from divine foreknowledge and will."<sup>30</sup> Since the divine will is absolutely free from the necessity to will anything other than its own goodness (*ST* 1a.19.3), theological study, based on these remarks, may be aptly described as a spiritual exercise (*spiritualia exercitia*) in discerning the fittingness of God's creative and redemptive activities.<sup>31</sup> Since, however, God remains above

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<sup>29</sup> *ST* 3a.1.2: "Dicendum quod ad finem aliquem dicitur aliquid esse necessarium dupliciter, uno modo, sine quo aliquid esse non potest, sicut cibus est necessarius ad conservationem humanae vitae; alio modo, per quod melius et convenientius pervenitur ad finem, sicut equus necessarius est ad iter. Primo modo Deum incarnari non fuit necessarium ad reparationem humanae naturae, Deus enim per suam omnipotentem virtutem poterat humanam naturam multis aliis modis reparare. Secundo autem modo necessarium fuit Deum incarnari ad humanae naturae reparationem."

<sup>30</sup> *ST* 3a.46.2 ad.4: "Fides humana, et etiam Scripturae divinae, quibus fides instruitur, innituntur praesentiae et ordinationi divinae. Et ideo eadem ratio est de necessitate quae provenit ex suppositione eorum, et de necessitate quae provenit ex praesentia et voluntate divina." If we recall Eugene Roger's argument for the *Summa's* "christoform structural arc," discussed in Chapter Two (§2.4), the fact that this important methodological discussion occurs at the end of the *Summa* is not problematic since what one reads, at any point in the *Summa*, is structurally defined as much by what comes before as by its relation to the christological vision to which it leads.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ST* 2a2ae.186.3; 2a2ae.189.1; *JCG* Bk. 3, ch.132. Thomas Weinandy provides an insightful description of theological study that summarizes both what we are saying about the methodological function of theological fittingness and how it differs from the theological hermeneutics that emerged after the Enlightenment. He writes: "Many theologians today, having embraced the Enlightenment presuppositions and the scientific method that it fostered, approach theological issues as if they were scientific problems to be solved rather than mysteries to



humanity's intellectual comprehension (*ST* 1a.12.1 ad.1), theological fittingness also entails an aesthetic reimagining of the things we do understand to clarify the truths discerned through the mysteries of faith (*ST* 1a.39.1 ad.1). Accordingly, the aesthetic reasoning of *convenientia* sits, as Narcisse says, "between, on the one hand, the logic of arguments from authority, and, on the other, the logic of arguments from reason" through which it harmonizes the *scientia* of *sacra doctrina* in, as Narcisse continues, a "perfect reciprocity" of metaphysics, theology, and the ecclesial tradition (§2.3.2 and §2.3.3), and "invites the contemplative, silent prolongation of mystery, the inchoate experience, distant but real, of what will be seen immediately and intuitively in the age to come."<sup>32</sup>

At this point it seems appropriate to recall the discussion in *ST* 1a.1.6 ad.3 (§2.3.3), where Thomas establishes that theological inquiry embodies a unique convergence between the intellectual virtue of wisdom (*ST* 1a2ae.57.2) and the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom (*ST* 2a2ae.45), such that the knowledge acquired through *sacra doctrina* "goes to God most personally as deepest origin and highest end."<sup>33</sup> Since the *Summa* is designed to be a sustained mediation on *sacra doctrina*, its purpose, to summarize our earlier discussion (§2.1), is to draw the reader into an actual encounter with the wisdom of God, or, as Anna Williams explains, "the *Summa* is to be

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be discerned and clarified. However, the true goal of theological inquiry is not the resolution of theological *problems*, but the discernment of what the *mystery* of faith is" (*Does God Suffer?* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000], 32). On the homogenization of methodology in the Enlightenment and its impact on theological research, see Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Cf. Nicholas M. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 37.

<sup>32</sup> Narcisse, *Les Raisons de Dieu*, 145 and 146. Cf. Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 161 and 164–5. Narcisse argues that *convenientia* has, in Thomas's thought, a type of threefold foundation. The first is the *analogia entis*, about which he writes, "L'analogie suppose un rapport, un accord, une proportion, une ressemblance, autant de thèmes très proches du concept de convenance" (p.89). Next is the *analogia fidei*, which, according to Narcisse, "Elle se développe à l'intérieur de la foi, considérant non plus l'unité de l'être créé, mais l'unité du dessein de Dieu" (pp.89-90), or, in the words of Aidan Nichols, "the interrelated unity of all themes in sacred doctrine" (*Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* [Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007], 17). The third aspect is, Narcisse concludes, "L'incessante dialectique entre l'économie et la théologie épouse toutes les convenances harmonisées par le mouvement *exitus-reditus*, lui-même surdéterminé par le mouvement christologique de la venue et du retour du Christ" (p.91). Particularly clear examples of *convenientia*'s hermeneutical significance can be found in Thomas's refusal, as Adam Johnson notes, in *ST* 3a.46.5 ad.3, "to adopt a single theory which succinctly captures the essence or heart of the atonement" ("A Fuller Account: The Role of 'Fittingness' in Thomas Aquinas' Development of the Doctrine of the Atonement," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 [2010]: 307), as well as his commentaries on scripture, where Thomas regularly draws upon many Church Fathers to help clarify the meaning of a passage while making little effort to reconcile or eliminate differences in their interpretations. On this point, see John F. Boyle, "Authorial Intention and the *Divisio Textus*," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 6; and from the same collection of essays, Stephen F. Brown, "The Theological Role of the Fathers in Aquinas's Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura," 9–20.

<sup>33</sup> *ST* 1a.1.6: "... propriissime determinant de Deo secundum quod est altissima causa." Cf. Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 33.

read as an act of contemplation whereby we are united to the mind of God.”<sup>34</sup> It is, then, in the dialectic exchange between the gift and intellectual virtue of wisdom that the logic of fittingness, guided by the contemplative presence of God’s divine wisdom in *sacra doctrina*’s defense of faith’s intelligibility, constitutes a reordering of natural reasoning through the convergence of metaphysical, theological, and ecclesial principles. Thomas elaborates on this point in the *Summa contra Gentiles* when, speaking about those who have faith, he states, “they do not believe foolishly, as though ‘following artificial fables’ (2 Pet. 1.16). For these ‘secrets of divine Wisdom’ (Job 11.6) the divine Wisdom itself, which knows all things to the full, has deigned to reveal to men. It reveals its own presence, as well as the truth of its teaching and inspiration, by fitting arguments.”<sup>35</sup> Far from arguments of fittingness being hermeneutically barren, they reflect, in the *scientia* of *sacra doctrina*, the perfect wisdom of God, thereby encouraging the reader to look for the harmony (§2.4) governing the knowledge acquired through the habit of thinking theologically. This includes even those places where this noetic unity may not initially appear to us, such as in the reception of the treatise on God, to which we now turn.

### 4.3 Stick to the Plan: The Unity of the *Summa*’s Treatise on God

At the heart of Doolan’s argument that the fittingness of attributing the divine ideas to the Word of God minimizes the doctrine’s theological significance lies the assumption that Thomas’s doctrine of God can be effectively divided between a philosophical approach, which is concerned with the unity of the divine essence, and a theological approach, which deals with the personal properties of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup> This assumption relies, at least to some degree, on the interpretive paradigm standardized by Théodore de Régnon, which claims that the Western/scholastic concept of God prioritizes the Hellenistic notion of the divine essence over theological reflection on the relational distinctions between the divine persons.<sup>37</sup> According to

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<sup>34</sup> A. N. Williams, “Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*,” *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 59.

<sup>35</sup> *SCG* Bk. 1, ch.6: “[A]dhibentes non leviter credunt, quasi *indoctas fabulas secuti* (2 Pet. 1.16). Haec enim divinae sapientiae secreta ipsa divina sapientia, quae omnia plenissime novit, dignata est hominibus revelare: quae sui praesentiam et doctrinae et inspirationis veritatem, convenientibus argumentis ostendit.” In his reflections on this passage, Michael Waddell concludes, “Arguments from fittingness are the effect and testimony of the presence of Wisdom, Who dwells in the minds of men through the gift of wisdom . . . [A]rguments from fittingness are miraculous testimonies of the wisdom they convey: miraculous, that is, for those who have ears to hear. These arguments belong to the discourse of faith, not natural reason” (“Wisdom, Fittingness and the Relational Transcendentals,” in *Was Ist Philosophie Im Mittelalter? Qu’est-Ce Que La Philosophie Au Moyen Âge? What Is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998], 542).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jordan, “The Intelligibility of the World,” 19 fn.9.

<sup>37</sup> Théodore de Régnon introduces this argument in his massive four volume *Études de Théologie Positive Sur La Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Victor Retaux et Fils, 1982-1989). He deals with Thomas, primarily, in the second volume. The influence of de Régnon’s work on twentieth century theology is discussed by Michel René Barnes in “De Régnon Reconsidered,” *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 51–79, which also offers a definitive deconstruction of de

Karl Rahner, Thomas was the first to systematically structure this separation by situating the so-called non-trinitarian treatise *De Deo uno* before the theologically motivated treatise *De Deo Trino*, such that, as Rahner says, “[T]he first topic under study is not God the Father as the unoriginate origin of divinity and reality, but as the essence common to all three persons.”<sup>38</sup> While the debate over the relation of the divine essence to the distinction of divine persons is, as Gilles Emery states, “among the foremost points of controversy in the interpretation” of Thomas’s trinitarian theology, Emery, in opposition to the crystallization of the dispute around the terms “essentialism” and “personalism,” which he notes predetermines “the kind of solution one can adopt,” argues, “The study of God as principle is not determined by the aspect of Unity or of Trinity, but rather is determined by the unique and entire reality of God (the three persons of one same essence).”<sup>39</sup>

For support of this argument, Emery turns to the outline of the *prima pars* given after *ST* 1a.1, where we discover that the *Summa’s consideratio de Deo* is not two separate treatises, but instead a single treatise divided into three sections: “First, we shall consider those things that pertain to the divine essence (qq. 2-26); second, the distinction of the persons (qq. 27-43); third, the coming forth of creatures from him (qq. 44ff).”<sup>40</sup> That Thomas includes the economy of creation within his treatise on God recalls his response in *ST* 1a.1.7 where he establishes that the *scientia* of *sacra doctrina* is a knowledge of God and everything in relation to him (§2.3.2; *SCG* Bk.

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Régnon’s argument. De Régnon’s work was also the catalyst for the opposition between Augustinian/western and Cappadocian/eastern formulations of the Trinity, which, unfortunately, shaped a great deal of twentieth century thought on the Trinity. Examples of de Régnon’s influence can be found in the works of Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur La Théologie Mystique de L’Église d’Orient* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (London: T& T Clark, 1991); T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: On Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1996); Michel Corbin, *La Trinité ou l’Excès de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1997). While some twentieth century scholars, such as Eric Mascall (*The Triune God: An Ecumenical Study* [London: Churchman Publishing, 1986], 24), were wary of de Régnon’s conclusions, it was not until Barnes’s article and Lewis Ayres’s prodigious monograph (*Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006]) that the opposition between Augustinian and Cappadocian formulations of the Trinity would be finally challenged.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 16; German original, “Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte,” in *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, vol. 2, *Mysterium Salutis, Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967). In an earlier study on the division between *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*, Rahner remarks, “If one begins with the basic notions of the Augustinian and western approach, a non-Trinitarian treatise *De Deo Uno* comes apparently automatically before *De Deo Trino*” (“Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise *De Trinitate*,” in *Theological Investigations*, trans. Kevin Smyth, vol. 4 [London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1966], 83-4; German original, Karl Rahner, “Bemerkungen zum dogmatischen Traktat ‘De Trinitate,’” in *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 4 [Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1960], 103-33).

<sup>39</sup> Gilles Emery, O.P., “Essentialism or Personalism in the Treatise on God in St. Thomas Aquinas?,” in *Trinity in Aquinas*, trans. Matthew Levering, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2006), 165 and 176; French original, “Essentialisme Ou Personnalisme Dans Le Traité de Dieu Chez Saint Thomas d’Aquin?,” *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998): 5-38. Cf. Hans Jorissen, “Zur Struktur des Traktates ‘De Deo’ in der *Summa theologiae* des Thomas von Aquin,” in *Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinigen Gott: Elemente einer trinitarischen Theologie*, ed. Michael Böhnke and Hanspeter Heinz (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985), 237.

<sup>40</sup> *ST* 1a.2, prol.: “Primo namque considerabimus ea quae ad essentiam divinam pertinent; secundo, ea quae pertinent ad distinctionem personarum; tertio, ea quae pertinent ad processum creaturarum ab ipso.” For a comparison of this paradigm with the structure of the treatises on God in Thomas’s other works, see Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 36-9. Emery essentially argues that while many of Thomas’s other works do not repeat the same structure as the *Summa*, the tripartite paradigm is, nevertheless, maintained in each work.

2, ch.4), but, as the reader will come to learn (cf. §3.3.2), this reference to God’s creative activity also represents, as Emery says, the “general matter of divine action in the world; it extends to divine ‘government’ (the realization of providence), which also involves some aspects of the return of creatures to God.”<sup>41</sup> By extending the *Summa*’s treatise on God to the divine operations of creation and salvation, Thomas reasserts that the formal object of *sacra doctrina* is rooted in God’s self-disclosure (*ST* 1a.1.1), and inversely establishes that the *consideratio de Deo* is a “structured unit,” wherein the mystery of God’s divine activities are expressed in the fittingness of, what Emery calls, “the redoublement of language,” by which he means, “In order to speak the Trinitarian mystery, it is necessary always to employ two words, two formulas, in a reflection in two modes that joins here the substantial (essential) aspect and the distinction of persons (relative properties).”<sup>42</sup> Consequently, as Thomas indicates in the prologue to his discussion on the trinitarian processions, where he writes, “After discussing the unity of God’s nature it remains for us to discuss the trinity of persons *in* God,”<sup>43</sup> the transition from what is common to what is distinct marks only a shift in his unified exposition on the nature of God, wherein both the essential and personal aspects belong to the same divine reality, that is the mystery of God’s trinitarian life, which is made known to us through revelation.

Now, the *Summa*’s pairing of what is *common* and *proper* to the three persons within a single exposition on the trinitarian mystery does not dismiss the distinction between things that are more readily known to us through natural reason and the truths known only through faith. As Thomas explains, “God’s essential attributes, rather than what is proper to the persons, are among the matters known on grounds of reason; from creatures, the source of our knowledge, we are able to arrive at knowledge of essential attributes with certainty, but not of the personal properties (cf. *ST* 1a.32.1 ad.1).”<sup>44</sup> It does, however, indicate that the insights drawn from natural reason on the essential attributes are repositioned under the rubric of *sacra doctrina*’s theological response to the revelation of God since, according to *ST* 1a.1.1, what is revealed necessarily

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<sup>41</sup> Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 40. Cf. §2.4, esp. fn.84.

<sup>42</sup> Emery, “Essentialism or Personalism,” 178. Emery adopts the argument for “the law of redoublement” from Ghislain Lafont’s *Peut-on Connaître Dieu En Jésus-Christ?* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 130. For a summary of “the law of redoublement” in the interpretation of Thomas’s treatise on God, see Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 214–6.

<sup>43</sup> *ST* 1a.27 prol.: “Consideratis autem his quae ad divinae essentiae unitatem pertinent, restat considerare de his quae pertinent ad Trinitatem personarum *in* divinis.” Cf. Carl Sträter, “Le Point de Départ Du Traité Thomiste de La Trinité,” *Sciences Ecclésiastiques* 14 (1962): 83; Gilles Emery, O.P., “The Doctrine of the Trinity in St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M., Daniel A. Keating, and John Yocum (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 50. In *In I Cor.* 2, lect.1, no.85 Thomas states, “Quamvis enim omnis sapientia a Deo sit, ut dicitur (Sir. 1.1), tamen speciali quodam modo haec sapientia, quae est de Deo, est etiam a Deo per revelationem.”

<sup>44</sup> *ST* 1a.39.7: “Essentialia vero attributa sunt nobis magis manifesta secundum rationem, quam propria personarum, quia ex creaturis, ex quibus cognitionem accipimus, possumus per certitudinem devenire in cognitionem essentialium attributorum; non autem in cognitionem personalium proprietatum.” Cf. *Sent.* I, d.29, q.1, a.2, qc.2, arg.1; *ST* 1a.33.3 ad.1.

includes both forms of truth related to the knowledge of the divine being, or as Thomas phrases it in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, “[I]t is fitting that both of these truths be proposed to man divinely for belief.”<sup>45</sup> In other words while the *Summa*’s discussion on God’s knowledge and will incorporates metaphysical claims, Thomas’s description of *sacra doctrina* (§2.1.1) establishes that the basis for attributing these immanent operations to God is not principally derived from philosophical reasoning, but from the revelation that these operations subsist in God as the Word and Holy Spirit (*ST* 1a.37.1 ad.2).

Thomas’s decision to begin the *Summa*’s treatise on God with an exposition of the divine essence cannot, therefore, be reduced to a separate hermeneutical framework because the entire tripartite treatise is governed by the knowledge of *sacra doctrina*, which originates in the revelation of God’s creative and redemptive activities (§2.3.3). Instead, the structure represents his efforts to integrate the order of humanity’s knowledge into his exposition of the triune God through which he joins philosophical insights with the language of faith to theologially clarify the intelligibility of belief in the trinitarian mystery. The structure of the *Summa*’s treatise on God is, consequently, a pedagogically motivated epistemological arrangement, guided, as Emery concludes, “by an internal theological requirement which brings about the integration, distinct as they are, of philosophy and theology.”<sup>46</sup> If we keep the *Summa*’s pedagogical paradigm in mind while reading the treatise on God, then the sequence of the sections reveals an order of intensification in which, as Emery writes, “each point of doctrine is situated in such a way that it draws on the preceding expositions and illuminates the subsequent scene.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, the *Summa*’s section on the divine essence is not designed to be read in contradistinction to the exposition on the three persons or the trinitarian act of creation, but as a phase in Thomas’s mediation on the mystery of God’s trinitarian life.

What this means for the interpretation of his doctrine of the divine ideas is that despite the philosophical tone in *ST* 1a.15, the divine ideas cannot be, as Doolan surmises, somehow extracted from the treatise’s theological trajectory since each scene in the treatise anticipates fuller expression in the following section (§2.1.1), with the goal being to instill in the reader the proper habit of thinking theologially about the triune creator (cf. *ST* 1a2ae.12.4 ad.2).

Furthermore, since *ST* 1a.15 should not be read as a closed statement on the divine ideas (§3.1),

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<sup>45</sup> *SCG* Bk. 1, ch.4: “. . . utraque convenienter divinitus homini credenda proponitur.”

<sup>46</sup> Emery, “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” 51.

<sup>47</sup> Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 50. Emery restates this point when he argues, “The order of concepts at work [in the treatise on God] takes on, indeed, a properly Trinitarian reason: The understanding of the divine person presupposes the knowledge of the essence *because it integrates it* (the *proper* does not have reality without the *common*). One cannot conceive of the person without the substance or without the nature belonging to the very *ratio* of the divine person,” which he notes is defined in *De pot.* 9.4 as, “distinctum subsistens in natura divina” (“Essentialism or Personalism,” 179).

the philosophical elements in the formal remarks on the doctrine do not operate autonomously within the *Summa*'s treatise on God, but are inductively appropriated to strengthen, as Frederick Bauerschmidt notes, the "deeper apprehension of the fittingness of . . . the ways in which the mysteries of faith interlock with each other and with our ordinary knowledge of the world."<sup>48</sup> Each movement within the treatise on God should therefore be thought of as advancing the recursive pedagogical pattern of the *Summa* by providing a microcosmic vision of the theological fittingness unveiled in the contemplative journey of *sacra doctrina*, which would suggest that Thomas's arguments defending the necessity of the divine ideas (*ST* 1a.15.1 and 2) do not stand in methodological abstraction from his insistence on the theological fittingness (*ST* 1a.32.1 ad.2) of locating the divine ideas in the Word of God, "who is the Art and Wisdom of the Father."<sup>49</sup> Instead, the former remarks secure the fittingness of the divine ideas for theological discourse about God in response to the revelation that "the three persons are one and the same identical essence."<sup>50</sup>

The divine ideas, then, are properly attributed to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the unity of the divine essence (cf. *ST* 1a.39.7 ad.2). However, in keeping with the progressive movement of the treatise toward the exposition on the mystery of creation, it is also fitting to emphasize, as Thomas does, the doctrine's identification with the Word of God because he is, as it is stated in Col. 1.15, "The firstborn over all creation," about which Thomas says, "With respect to this, we should note that the Platonists posited the existence of Ideas, and said that each thing came to be by participating in an Idea . . . Instead of these we have one, namely, the Son, the Word of God . . . and thus in him all things were created, as in an exemplar: *he spoke, and they were made*, because he created all things to come into existence in his eternal Word."<sup>51</sup> By contrasting the exemplarity of the Word with the Platonic theory of Forms, Thomas is not rejecting the doctrine of the divine ideas; rather, in the course of his exegetical work on the book

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<sup>48</sup> Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, 162. Bauerschmidt subsequently argues that the "inductive seeing of fittingness" is characteristic of *sacra doctrina*'s *scientia* (p.164) because, as Thomas states, ". . . ita haec doctrina non argumentatur ad sua principia probanda, quae sunt articuli fidei; sed ex eis procedit ad aliquid aliud ostendendum" (*ST* 1a.1.8). Doolan notes that Thomas's argument for the divine ideas in the *ST* 1a.15.1 is inductive, but he ignores that the inductive composition of the argument is in keeping with Thomas's description of theological inquiry (*Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 58 fn.28).

<sup>49</sup> *ST* 3a.59.1 ad.2: "Qui est ars et sapientia Patris."

<sup>50</sup> Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 144. That Thomas arrives at this conclusion in response to scripture is demonstrated in his exegesis of, for instance, Jn. 14.11, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me," about which he says in *Lect. Ioan* 14, lect. 3, no.1981: "[I]n divinis essentia est idem personae secundum rem, et sic essentia patris est pater, et essentia filii, filius. Ubi cumque ergo est essentia patris, est ipse pater; et ubi cumque est essentia filii, est ipse filius. Essentia autem patris est in filio, et essentia filii est in patre. Ergo filius est in patre, et pater in filio." Cf. *Lect. Ioan.* 16, lect. 7, no.2161; *ST* 1a.39.1 and 2.

<sup>51</sup> *In Col.* 1, lect. 4, no.37: "Circa quod sciendum est, quod Platonici ponebant ideas, dicentes, quod quaelibet res fiebat ex eo quod participabat ideam . . . Loco enim harum idearum nos habemus unum, scilicet filium, verbum Dei . . . et ideo omnia in ipso condita sunt, sicut in quodam exemplari: *dixit, et facta sunt*, quia in verbo suo aeterno creavit omnia ut fierent." Cf. Boland, *Ideas in God*, 241.

of Colossians, he arranges his appropriation of the doctrine to ensure that it is interpreted in light of the Word's relation to creation, as indicated by his subsequent remarks on Col. 2.3, where it is revealed that the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ, to which Thomas adds, "[God's] wisdom is a treasure where the ideas behind all his works are united together as one, that is, in the divine wisdom. And all such treasures are in Christ . . . Now whatever is in the wisdom of God is in his single Word, because he knows all things by one simple act of his intellect."<sup>52</sup> While the structure is reversed in the *Summa*, when Thomas draws upon the grammar of the divine ideas to argue that, "The causal plan of all God's works is contained in the Word,"<sup>53</sup> he is refining his appropriation of the doctrine in relation to the mystery of creation, which establishes that the doctrine of the divine ideas passes, as it does in his exegetical work, into the exposition on God's trinitarian act of creating through the revelation of the Son's causal relation to creation (*ST* 1a.34.3 ad.1; 1a.46.3). It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that Thomas's identification of the divine ideas with the Word of God is a fitting extension of the doctrine within the unfolding unity of the *Summa's* treatise on God, which culminates in the exposition on the mystery of creation, where, as we will see in the following section, Thomas offers further clarification of the trinitarian principles at work in his application of the doctrine.

#### 4.4 The Fittingness of Speaking about the Trinitarian Processions as *Rationes*

In the *Summa's* second question on God's creative activity, Thomas argues that the work of creation is a fitting (*conueniens*) expression of God's absolute freedom to form the universe, in its unity and multiplicity, through his knowledge and love (*ST* 1a.45.6) by which he also vivifies and guides each thing to its fitting or proper (*debitus*) end in him (*ST* 1a.45.6 ad.2).<sup>54</sup> Thus, while God is under no obligation to create (*ST* 1a.19.3), there is a fittingness found in both the act of creation and the diversity of things created "by reason of his existence, that is, his essence, which is," Thomas adds, "common to the three Persons."<sup>55</sup> When he turns to the question of how a

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<sup>52</sup> *In Col.* 2, lect. 1, no.81: "Et secundum hoc non habet rationem thesauri, sed secundum quod huiusmodi rationes uniuertur in uno, scilicet sapientia diuina, et omnes huiusmodi thesauri sunt in Christo . . . Quicquid autem in sapientia Dei est, est in Verbo suo uno, quia uno simplici actu intellectus cognoscit Omnia."

<sup>53</sup> *ST* 1a.34.3: "[I]n verbo importatur ratio factiva eorum quae Deus facit."

<sup>54</sup> *Debitus* is one word among many, including *competit*, *pertinet*, *congruit*, *expedit*, and *decet*, that Thomas often employs as a synonym for *conueniens*, as seen in *Sent.* IV, d.33, q.1, a.1; *ST* 1a2ae.58.4; 1a2ae.91.2. Cf. Narcisse, *Les Raisons de Dieu*, 41.

<sup>55</sup> *ST* 1a.45.6: ". . . secundum suum esse, quod est eius essentia, quae est communis tribus personis." Thomas had already established the essential fittingness of God's will to create when he argued in *ST* 1a.19.2, "Sic igitur vult et se et alia, sed se ut finem, alia vero ut ad finem, in quantum concedet diuinam bonitatem etiam alia ipsam participare." He clarifies this argument in *ST* 1a.47.1, where he writes, "Produxit enim res in esse propter suam bonitatem communicandam creaturis, et per eas repraesentandam. Et quia per unam creaturam sufficienter repraesentari non potest, produxit multas creaturas et diversas, ut quod deest uni ad repraesentandam diuinam bonitatem, suppleatur ex alia, nam bonitas quae in Deo est simpliciter et uniformiter, in creaturis est multipliciter et

variety of things could fittingly emanate from the triune creator without contradicting, what Burrell has aptly labeled, the “formal feature” of divine simplicity (§3.3.2), Thomas falls back on the line of reasoning he introduced in *ST* 1a.15.2 in order to make sense of God’s deliberate diversification of creation (§3.1.1).<sup>56</sup> He writes, “[A] voluntary agent which acts through will, such as God is, as we have seen (1a.19.4), acts through a form as held in the mind. Since, therefore, it is not against God’s singleness and simplicity that he should understand many things, as we have also seen, the truth remains that although he is the One he can also make the many.”<sup>57</sup>

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divisim.” On this point, Christopher Franks remarks, “Of course, just because God is Trinity, it is truly appropriate to God’s character to create, for God is Word and Love. God goes forth in self-communication among the three persons, and so it is perfectly fitting for such a God to seek, through creating and redeeming others, ‘to communicate by likeness its own good to others as much as it possible’ [*ST* 1a.19.2]” “The Simplicity of the Living God: Aquinas, Barth, and Some Philosophers,” *Modern Theology* 21 [2005]: 281). Cf. Matthew Levering, “Christ, the Trinity, and Predestination: McCormack and Aquinas,” in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Michael T. Dempsey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 263–4.

<sup>56</sup> Burrell describes simplicity not as a divine attribute, but as formal feature of divine existence, by which he means that it “defines the manner in which such properties [e.g. living, wise, and willing] might be attributed to God. When we say God is simple, we are speaking not about God directly but about God’s ontological constitution” (*Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986], 46). Cf. David B. Burrell, C.S.C., “Distinguishing God from the World,” in *Language, Meaning, and God*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 77. He first uses this terminology in *Aquinas: God & Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1979), 15, where he acknowledges his indebtedness to the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Eddy Zemack (p.177 n.4).

<sup>57</sup> *ST* 1a.47.1 ad.1: “Agens voluntarium, quale est Deus, ut supra ostensum est, agit per formam intellectam. Cum igitur Deum multa intelligere non repugnet unitati et simplicitati ipsius, ut supra ostensum est, relinquitur quod, licet sit unus, possit multa facere.” Because others have examined the compatibility between divine simplicity and the divine ideas in great detail (§3.1.1, n.28), I have chosen to not single out Thomas’s discourse on their relation for further consideration in this study; nevertheless, Eleonore Stump is certainly correct when she remarks that simplicity is “perhaps the most difficult and controversial piece of medieval philosophical theology, but also one of the most important” (“God’s Simplicity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 135). As such, Thomas’s formulation of the doctrine has garnered a considerable amount of attention from philosophers and theologians alike. For examples, see Brian Davies, “Classical Theism and the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity,” in *Language, Meaning, and God: Essays in Honour of Herbert McCabe*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 51–74; Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 70–9; R. M. Burns, “The Divine Simplicity in St Thomas,” *Religious Studies* 25 (1989): 271–93; Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas’ Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); E. C. Sweeney, “Thomas Aquinas’ Double Metaphysics of Simplicity and Infinity,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1993): 297–317; Peter Weigel, *Aquinas on Simplicity: An Investigation Into the Foundations of His Philosophical Theology* (Peter Lang, 2008); Brian Leftow, “Aquinas, Divine Simplicity and Divine Freedom,” in *Metaphysics and God*, ed. Kevin Timpe (London: Routledge, 2009), 21–38; Eleonore Stump, “Simplicity and Aquinas’s Quantum Metaphysics,” in *The Reception of Aristotle’s Metaphysics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Gerhard Krieger, Forthcoming. Consequently, it is worth mentioning here that many of the same objections raised against the divine ideas are also levied against the doctrine of divine simplicity. See, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Inquiring about God: Selected Essays*, ed. Terence Cuneo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 108; R.T. Mullins, “Simply Impossible: A Case against Divine Simplicity,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): 181–203. Analytic philosophers have also shown an increased interest, both positively and negatively, in Thomas’s doctrine of divine simplicity, as seen in, Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980); William E. Mann, “Divine Simplicity,” *Religious Studies* 18 (1982): 451–71; Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “Absolute Simplicity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 353–82; William F. Vallicella, “Divine Simplicity: A New Defense,” *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 508–25. The analytic approach, however, complicates the interpretation of Thomas’s doctrine because it tends to emphasize contemporary philosophical commitments, which ignore the theological structure of his thought, as outlined by Katherin Rogers, in her insightful article, “The Traditional Doctrine of Divine Simplicity,” *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 165–86. What is needed, then, are more studies that focus on Thomas’s theological reconfiguration of the doctrine,



What becomes clear from Thomas's recourse to the logic of the divine ideas here and elsewhere in the *Summa's* exposition on the mystery of creation is that the doctrine supplies him with a grammar fit for describing God's deliberate act of creating the world in all of its variety, such as when he notes, at the end of his reply to the objection that God's effect must be one because he is one, that, "the plurality of things corresponds to a plurality of ideas in the divine mind."<sup>58</sup> Another succinct example of this grammatical fittingness is found in the *Summa's* question on the origin of creation, where Thomas argues, "Granted that creatures are never so perfect as to be like God according to likeness of nature, namely to be of the same species as child and parents are, nevertheless, they touch his likeness in representing the exemplar understood by God, rather as does the house in bricks and mortar the house in the architect's mind."<sup>59</sup> In these passages, as with all the references to the doctrine in the *Summa*, Thomas employs the grammar of the divine ideas to illuminate the mystery of creation, which is known only through God's self-disclosure in scripture (*ST* 1a.46.2), by relying on the fitting correspondence between humanity's natural knowledge of the world and the mysteries of faith, which is, in fact, guaranteed by this very revelation (*ST* 1a.4.2; 1a.13.2). Thomas, subsequently, makes use of this correspondence to elaborate on his trinitarian reconfiguration of the doctrine.

Since we have already established that Thomas intentionally leaves his formal remarks on the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15 open for further development (§3.1; §4.3), it is not surprising to discover that he discreetly returns to the doctrine in his discussion on the trinitarian act of creation. In his answer to the question of whether creation is proper to any one divine Person, Thomas says:

[T]he causality concerning the creation of things answers to the respective meaning of the coming forth each Person implies. For, as was shown when we were discussing God's knowledge and willing, God is the cause of things through his mind and will, like an artist of works of art. An artist works through an idea conceived in his mind and through love in his will bent on something. In like manner God the Father wrought the creature through his Word, the Son, and through his Love, the Holy Ghost. And from this point of view the processions of the divine Persons can be seen as types [or exemplars]

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like Franks does in his superb article, which takes aim at the joint work of Stump and Kretzmann by arguing that they "consider simplicity in abstraction from the ecclesial reflections on the Trinity and the Incarnation that are in fact determinative for how Thomas discusses simplicity" ("The Simplicity of the Living God," 276).

<sup>58</sup> *ST* 1a.47.1 ad.2: "[P]luralitati rerum correspondet in mente divina pluralitas idearum." Burrell makes a similar observation when he remarks, "[O]nce we speak of God freely creating, then ideas become a convenient way for us to articulate the fact that God creates deliberately" (*Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004], 84).

<sup>59</sup> *ST* 1a.44.3 ad.1: "Licet creaturae non pertingant ad hoc quod sint similes Deo secundum suam naturam, similitudine speciei, ut homo genitus homini generanti; attingunt tamen ad eius similitudinem secundum repraesentationem rationis intellectae a Deo, ut domus quae est in materia, domui quae est in mente artificis." Cf. *De pot.* 7.1 ad.8; *SCG* Bk. 2, ch.46; *ST* 1a.4.3.

for the production of creatures inasmuch as they include the essential attributes of knowledge and will.<sup>60</sup>

While the formal parallel depicted here between the analogy of the artisan and the archetypal notions (*rationes*) for creation ensures the presence of the divine ideas (§4.2), to begin making sense of the doctrine's peripheral gesture in this passage, it is necessary to first revisit a distinction alluded to in the first article of question 15, but, fortunately, spelled out in more detail elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

In *ST* 1a.15.1 Thomas distinguishes between natural and intelligible likenesses (*similitudes*). Although this distinction is initially employed in question 15 to reinforce Thomas's argument that an intelligible likeness of creation must exist in the divine mind, it also illustrates the twofold function of divine exemplarity. Thomas describes this twofold function in *De potentia*, where he writes that there are two types of likenesses between God and creatures:

This is true in one way forasmuch as creatures reproduce, in their own way, the idea of the divine mind, as the work of a craftsman is an imitation of the form in his mind. In another way it is true in that creatures are somewhat likened to the very nature of God, forasmuch as they derive their being from the first being, their goodness from the sovereign good, and so on.<sup>62</sup>

Here Thomas employs the very distinction facilitated by the grammar of the divine ideas to affirm that all creatures have a likeness not only to the nature of God but also to an ideal notion in the divine mind. Insofar as creatures share in a perfection of God's being, they imitate, albeit deficiently, the perfection of the divine essence; however, according to each creature's particular mode of being, they imitate the exemplar form in the divine mind.<sup>63</sup>

With this distinction in mind, it should now be easier to breakdown the complexity of Thomas's argument in *ST* 1a.45.6. Thomas opens this passage with references to *ST* 1a.14.8 and 1a.19.4, where he explains that the cause of creation is God's act of knowing and willing the

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<sup>60</sup> *ST* 1a.45.6: “[D]ivinae Personae secundum rationem suae processionis habent causalitatem respectu creationis rerum. Ut enim supra ostensum est, cum de Dei scientia et voluntate ageretur, Deus est causa rerum per suum intellectum et voluntatem, sicut artifex rerum artificiarum. Artifex autem per verbum in intellectu conceptum et per amorem suae voluntatis ad aliquid relatum operatur. Unde et Deus Pater operatus est creaturam per suum Verbum, quod est Filius, et per suum Amorem, qui est Spiritus Sanctus. Et secundum hoc processionem Personarum sunt rationes productionis creaturarum, in quantum includunt essentialia attributa, quae sunt scientia et voluntas.”

<sup>61</sup> That Thomas has the divine ideas in mind here is also confirmed by his remarks in *DDN* II, lect. 1, where he elaborates on the trinitarian cause of creation in his comments on the passage from Dionysius cited in the *sed contra* of this article, about which he says, “[S]ed prout secundum Platonicos totalitas quaedam dicitur ante partes, quae est ante totalitatem quae est ex partibus; utpote si dicamus quod domus, quae est in materia, est totum ex partibus et quae praeexistit in arte aedificatoris, est totum ante partes. Et in hunc modum tota rerum universitas, quae est sicut totum ex partibus, praeexistit sicut in primordiali causa in ipsa deitate; ut sic, ipsa deitas patris et filii et spiritus sancti, dicatur tota, quasi prae habens in se universa.”

<sup>62</sup> *De pot.* 3.4 ad.9: “Uno modo in quantum res creatae imitantur suo modo ideam divinae mentis, sicut artificata formam quae est in mente artificis. Alio modo secundum quod res creatae ipsi naturae divinae quodammodo simulantur, prout a primo ente alia sunt entia, et a bono bona, et sic de aliis.”

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 111; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 150.

existence of each creature. Thus, to the degree that a creature acts through intellect and will, it shares in the perfection of God's being, since the divine acts of knowing and willing are the divine essence (*ST* 1a.45.7). In this way, the first form of God's exemplarity is represented as creatures imitate the perfection of the divine essence; however, God's act of knowing and willing are also shown to converge in the representation of God as the artisan who creates not from knowledge alone, but from the unified reality of his knowledge and love. The exemplar forms are, therefore, not imposed on God as *God*, but are intentional similitudes that express in creation the concurrence of God's single act of knowing and loving (*ST* 1a.93.6).<sup>64</sup> From the first half of this passage, we can see that Thomas defends God's causal relation to creation by situating the ontological and noetic dimensions of divine exemplarity alongside each other; however, this initial framework builds to a subtle shift in the flow of the argument, which directly relates to the trinitarian reality of the divine ideas.<sup>65</sup>

In a single breath, Thomas seamlessly transitions from the exemplarity of God's knowledge and love in the act of creation to the claim that the eternal processions are themselves the proper notions or exemplars (*rationes*) for all created things. Before we consider the mechanics at work in this statement, let us take note of the distinctly trinitarian bent this proposition places on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas. For Thomas, it appears, the revelation of God's trinitarian act of creation extends to the formal cause of each thing in that the exemplar notions for creation can be traced back to the eternal processions, which are realized in each creature as a particular instance of God's knowledge and love. It follows, then, that when Thomas asserts that God revealed himself so that human beings could know him as their beginning and final end (*ST* 1a.2.prol), which is ultimately union with God (*ST* 3a.1.5 ad.3), his insistence, at the end of the *Summa*, that "the blessed are united to God in knowing and loving" inversely announces that human beings are finally united to God through the same trinitarian reality after which they are patterned (*ST* 1a.45.7).<sup>66</sup> To unravel how Thomas arrives at such a bold application of the divine ideas, we must revisit his discussion on the Word of God.

After concluding that the Son proceeds from the Father as "an inner word so proceeds from the one uttering it that it remains within him," Thomas considers what is spoken by God in

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<sup>64</sup> In his discussion on the divine ideas in thirteenth-century scholasticism, Clarke remarks, "The die is cast. The divine ideas are no longer the very forms, the true being, of creatures, but their intentional similitudes, whose only being is that of the one divine act of knowing" ("The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity," 122).

<sup>65</sup> Te Velde observes, in a comment on Thomas's understanding of God's twofold exemplarity, "Apparently the distinction does not have a principal character in his eyes since he often mentions the two aspects together" (*Participation and Substantiality*, 111). For examples in addition to *De pot.* 3.4 ad.9, see *Sent* I, d.2, q.1, a.2; II, d.16, q.1, a.2 ad.2; *De pot.* 7.1 ad.8; 7.7 ad.6; *ST* 1a.44.3. While Thomas's various joint references to the two aspects of likeness cannot settle the debate over the relation of the plurality of ideas to the unity of God's ontological exemplarity, they do undermine attempts to methodologically distinguish his inclusion of both, as will be discussed in §5.1.

<sup>66</sup> *ST* 3a.2.10: "Unio sanctorum ad Deum per cognitionem et amorem."

his Word.<sup>67</sup> He says, “For the Father in knowing himself and the Son and the Holy Spirit and all else included in his knowledge, conceives the Word in such a way that the whole Trinity and even all creation are spoken in the Word.”<sup>68</sup> Now, the Word of God alone is spoken as one uttered; however, it belongs to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be spoken in the Word, as Thomas concludes, “in the way a reality understood in a word is uttered.”<sup>69</sup> What is spoken by God does not, however, differ from what is known by him (*ST* 1a.27.1 ad.2), and since “God’s act of knowledge is his substance,”<sup>70</sup> the Father, it may be said, contemplates the fullness of divine being, that is the reality of God’s trinitarian life, in his Word (*ST* 1a.34.1 ad.2), which necessarily includes all the ways in which the trinitarian relations are knowable (*ST* 1a.14.6). Yet, we must be careful to avoid the conclusion that the trinitarian shift in the language of the divine ideas eschews the formal argument on the doctrine in *ST* 1a.15.2 that the plurality of ideas expresses God’s knowledge of the diverse ways the divine essence is imitable, as Thomas himself instructs the reader, “Without denying the essential causality proper to the divine nature, the comings forth of the divine Persons are modulating causes and intelligible exemplars of creation.”<sup>71</sup>

Instead, the trinitarian turn in Thomas’s gestures with the grammar of the divine ideas represents a fitting theological extension of the general principle, “Effects proceed from an efficient cause because they pre-exist there; every agent enacts its like. Now effects pre-exist in a cause according to its mode of being. Since, then, God’s being is his actual understanding, creatures pre-exist there as held in his mind, and so, as being comprehended, do they proceed from him.”<sup>72</sup> This extension is, however, only realized, for Thomas, in the Son of God, who, as

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<sup>67</sup> *ST* 1a.34.1 ad.1: “Nam verbum interius sic a dicente procedit quod in ipso manet.” Harm Goris outlines the development of Thomas’s understanding of the inner word in “Theology and Theory of the Word in Aquinas: Understanding Augustine by Innovating Aristotle,” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 62–78. Also consider the discussion on the general notion of “inner word,” in Lonergan, *Verbum*, 13–24.

<sup>68</sup> *ST* 1a.34.1 ad.3: “Pater enim, intelligendo se et filium et spiritum sanctum, et omnia alia quae eius scientia continentur, concipit verbum, ut sic tota Trinitas verbo dicatur, et etiam omnis creatura.”

<sup>69</sup> *ST* 1a.34.1 ad.3: “. . . eo vero modo quo dicitur res in verbo intellecta, cuilibet personae convenit dici.” It should be noted here that this is also how Thomas speaks about the divine ideas, as he makes abundantly clear in *ST* 1a.28.4 ad.3: “Respectus ideales sunt ut intellecti a Deo. Unde ex eorum pluralitate non sequitur quod sint plures relationes in Deo, sed quod Deus cognoscat plures relations.” Consequently, the Father does not utter himself through each divine idea, but through his one Word utters himself and all that he knows. Thomas is, then, undoubtedly referring to the same reality when he talks about the divine ideas and the utterance of the Trinity in the Word as things understood by God, although one pertains to God’s inter-trinitarian self-communication and the other to the diverse ways things can imitate the divine being.

<sup>70</sup> *ST* 1a.14.4: “intelligere Dei est ejus substantia.”

<sup>71</sup> *ST* 1a.45.7 ad.3: “Etiam processiones personarum sunt causa et ratio creationis aliquo modo.” Although the first part of the quotation does not appear in the Latin, the translator’s inclusion of it clarifies the force of Thomas’s response.

<sup>72</sup> *ST* 1a.19.4: “Secundum hoc enim effectus procedunt a causa agente, secundum quod praeexistunt in ea, quia omne agens agit sibi simile. Praeexistunt autem effectus in causa secundum modum causae. Unde, cum esse divinum sit ipsum eius intelligere, praeexistunt in eo effectus eius secundum modum intelligibilem. Unde et per modum intelligibilem procedunt ab eo.” Cf. *De ver.* 2.3; *De pot.* 7.1 ad.8; *SCG* Bk. 2, ch.46; *ST* 1a.4.2; 1a.42.1 ad.3.

the inner word (*verbum interius*) of the Father, “has an image of the vocal word,” or, in other words, creation, within himself.<sup>73</sup> Thomas says as much when he notes, in his exegetical remarks on 1 Cor. 11, “[E]ven a natural agent, begin superior, makes the things it acts on similar to itself. Now the primordial principle of the production of things is the Son of God: *all things were made through him* (Jn. 1.3). He is, therefore, the primordial exemplar, which all creatures imitate as the true and perfect Image of the Father.”<sup>74</sup> Edith Stein is, therefore, certainly correct when she remarks that the Word of God, according to Thomas, “shows, as it were, a double countenance, the one mirroring the one and simple divine nature, the other mirroring the manifold of finite existents. The Logos is the divine nature (as object of divine knowledge), and it is the manifold of meaningful existence of created things as encompassed by the divine intellect and as reflecting the divine nature in images and likenesses.”<sup>75</sup>

As exemplar causes, then, the divine ideas are uniquely attributed to the Son of God through whom the whole of creation is uttered in imitation of the Father’s knowledge spoken in his Word (*Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, no.77). Furthermore, by distinguishing between the referents for *Verbum* and *idea* in *De ver.* 4.4 and *ST* 1a.34.3 (§4.2), Thomas lays the ground work for the peripheral gestures of the divine ideas in his exposition on creation in order to specify that the origin, multiplicity, and diversity of creation represent the vocal expression of the Father’s eternal contemplation in his Word of the trinitarian processions as *rationes* for the manifold ways the divine essence can be imitated.<sup>76</sup> Thus, much like we saw in the previous chapter (§3.1.2), Thomas utilizes the grammar of the divine ideas to locate the deep ontological structure for

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For further discussion on this principle in general and in relation to the divine ideas, see Vincent P. Branick, “The Unity of the Divine Ideas,” *The New Scholasticism* 42 (1968): 174; John F. Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas on Our Knowledge of God and the Axiom That Every Agent Produces Something Like Itself,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 74 (2000): 81–101; Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, 221. On the relation of this principle to Thomas’s trinitarian metaphysics, see Philipp Rosemann lengthy discussion in *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A “Repetition” of Scholastic Metaphysics* (Leuven University Press, 1996), 341–51.

<sup>73</sup> *De ver.* 4.1: “. . . habet imaginem vocis.” In this same article, Thomas models the threefold character of “word” on the analogy of the craftsman. He writes, “Et ideo, sicut in artifice tria consideramus, scilicet finem artificii, et exemplar ipsius, et ipsum artificium iam productum, ita et in loquente triplex verbum invenitur: scilicet id quod per intellectum concipitur, ad quod significandum verbum exterius profertur.”

<sup>74</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11, lect.1, no.583: “Etiam naturale agens tamquam superius assimilat sibi patiens. Primordiale autem principium totius processionis rerum est filius Dei, secundum illud Io. I, 3: omnia per ipsum facta sunt. Et ipse ideo est primordiale exemplar, quod omnes creaturae imitantur tamquam veram et perfectam imaginem patris.”

<sup>75</sup> Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt (Washington: ICS Publications, 2002), 119. Thomas reiterates this point in *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 1, no.32, where he discusses the Vulgate’s translation of Jn. 1.1, about which he says, “Quod Graece ‘Logos’ dicitur, Latine et rationem et verbum significat; sed hoc melius verbum interpretatur, ut significetur non solum ad patrem respectus, sed ad illa etiam quae per verbum facta sunt operativa potentia. Ratio autem, etsi nihil per eam fiat, recte ratio dicitur.”

<sup>76</sup> It is this creational dimension of the relation between the divine ideas and the Word of God that Doolan fails to consider in his interpretation (§4.2); however, as Burrell notes in his criticism of Doolan on this point, “Showing how the effective context for the ‘divine ideas’ is that of creation will offer us a better chance of adopting Aquinas’s presumptions in reading him, and save us from importing our own” (“Book Review of Gregory Doolan’s *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*,” *Nova et Vetera (English)* 7 [2009]: 752).

creation in God's eternal self-knowledge, but through the course of the *Summa's* pedagogical evolution, he reveals that the whole of creation, in all of its multiplicity and variety, fittingly corresponds to God's eternal self-reflection on the trinitarian life secured in the Word of God and illuminated by the grammar of the divine ideas.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

While a great deal more could be said about Thomas's trinitarian reformulation of the divine ideas in his doctrine of creation, we have identified, through the pedagogical development of the *Summa*, the grounds for a more robust trinitarian rereading of the doctrine. As we have seen, Thomas's argument that, "God makes nothing except through the conception of his intellect, which is an eternally conceived wisdom, that is, the Word of God, and the Son of God,"<sup>77</sup> does not make the divine ideas redundant, as Boland also observes,<sup>78</sup> but, instead, exposes the way he employs the grammar of the doctrine to fittingly delineate between God's inter-trinitarian self-communication and the Father's knowledge of the different ways the eternal trinitarian relations can be imitated, such that he can claim, "In all creatures we find a likeness of the Trinity by way of trace in that there is something in all of them that has to be taken back to the divine Persons as its cause."<sup>79</sup> There is, consequently, as Vincent Branick argues, "[A] structure of reality which precedes our intellection and which forces us to consider God in a multiplicity of ideas."<sup>80</sup> This structure is rooted in the Father's intimate knowledge of the order between the three persons of the Trinity (*ST* 1a.36.2), and drawn out by Thomas in his discussion on the trinitarian act of creation, where he uses the grammar of the divine ideas to identify the eternal processions as exemplar notions for creation. Attempts, then, to separate Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas from the *Summa's* pedagogical efforts to instill the proper habit of thinking theologically about God ultimately divorce the doctrine from the very premise that ensures its fittingness for discourse about God, as the following chapter demonstrates.

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<sup>77</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, n.77: "Sic ergo Deus nihil facit nisi per conceptum sui intellectus, qui est sapientia ab aeterno concepta, scilicet Dei verbum, et Dei filius aeterno concepta, scilicet Dei verbum, et Dei filius." Cf. Boland, *Ideas in God*, 248.

<sup>78</sup> Boland, *Ideas in God*, 248.

<sup>79</sup> *ST* 1a.45.7: "In creaturis omnibus invenitur repraesentatio Trinitatis per modum vestigii, in quantum in qualibet creatura inveniuntur aliqua quae necesse est reducere in divinas Personas sicut in causam." Cf. *ST* 1a.93.2 ad.4.

<sup>80</sup> Branick, "The Unity of the Divine Ideas," 171 n.1. Branick is commenting on *Sent.* I, d.2, q.1, a.3, where Thomas claims, "Et ideo pluralitati istarum rationum respondet aliquid in re quae Deus est: non quidem pluralitas rei, sed plena perfectio, ex qua contingit ut omnes istae conceptiones ei aptentur." This argument is echoed in Thomas's reply to the objection in *ST* 1a.13.4 ad.2 that it is pointless to predicate multiple things to the simple divine being: "Rationes plures horum nominum non sunt cassae et vanae, quia omnibus eis respondet unum quid simplex, per omnia huiusmodi multipliciter et imperfecte repraesentatum."

## 5. Peripheral Preface: A Metaphysical Prefix to Thomas's Doctrine of the Divine Ideas

*The guiding principle of a theologically founded worldliness . . . patently includes the acceptance, for example, of all the findings of natural reason . . . on the one hand; and on the other hand, the principle calls for an allegiance to the standards of a superhuman and supernatural truth.*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In his monumental study on Thomas's metaphysics, John Wippel argues:

[W]e may find a running series of philosophical discussions joined together as succeeding questions or chapters in works such as the *Summa theologiae* . . . We may easily remove such discussions from the general theological context of the writings in which they appear and from the references to Scripture and the Fathers contained in some of their *videtur* or *sed contra* and use them as important sources in reconstructing Thomas's metaphysical thought.<sup>2</sup>

Wippel concludes that we may do this, “because in these cases Thomas has developed his philosophical thinking on these points as part of his philosophical enterprise, by relying on unaided human reason.”<sup>3</sup> It is, however, this type of hermeneutical dissection that perpetuates the notion that the “authentic spirit of Thomism” is, as Fergus Kerr notes in his comments on Hans Urs von Balthasar's early interpretation of Thomas, “that philosophy and theology should divide and go their separate ways.”<sup>4</sup>

As we saw in the previous chapter, Gregory Doolan preserves his mentor's hermeneutical approach when he concludes that the doctrine of the divine ideas serves primarily as a metaphysical precept in Thomas's philosophy that may be divorced from its theological arc (§4.2).<sup>5</sup> Although the doctrine of the divine ideas certainly retains its philosophical contours

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 133–4.

<sup>2</sup> John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), xxi. In response to this claim, Matthew Levering asserts, “[I]ndeed it would be a grave theological mistake to treat these references to Scripture and the Fathers as mere decorations. Rather, without conflating philosophy and theology, theologians must seek to understand the interplay of Scripture and metaphysics that constitutes the fabric of Aquinas's theology” (Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004], 48 n.3).

<sup>3</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, xxi n.20.

<sup>4</sup> Fergus Kerr, O.P., “The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas,” in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 32. Kerr is commenting on, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 263–6.

<sup>5</sup> For Doolan, then, references to Scripture and the Church Fathers in Thomas's discussions on divine ideas function, at best, as theological modifiers that can be stripped from his descriptions of the doctrine to reveal his metaphysical vision for the doctrine, as we saw in his deconstruction of the connection between the Word of God and divine ideas (§4.2, esp. n.24). Yet, this type of interpretive dissection of Thomas's thought has been, to reiterate, adamantly opposed by recent developments in Thomist studies. Cf. Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God*, New edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame

throughout his works, we have already noted that Thomas's pedagogical design of the *Summa* suggests that he intentionally integrates the doctrine's metaphysical insights into his vision of *sacra doctrina* in order to elaborate on truths about God and creation latent in the confession of faith (§2.1).<sup>6</sup> To put this another way, Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas mirrors, as the previous two chapters have adumbrated, his paradigm for theological discourse in the *Summa*, or, in the words of Marie-Dominique Chenu, the doctrine "simultaneously combines a rational explanation of things, which is drawn precisely from their natures, with a religious explanation since these natures in themselves and in their destiny are the realization of a divine idea."<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the hermeneutical practices Wippel and Doolan adopt remain common in the interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas and, thus, demand closer scrutiny. Fortunately, Thomas's allusion to the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth proofs for the existence of God (*ST* 1a.2.3) provide us with a type of peripheral preface to his doctrine of the divine ideas through which we can examine the validity of this interpretive bias in the evaluation of the doctrine's meaning and contribution. The intimations to the divine ideas in these proofs also offer us an excellent example of the dialectical exchange between philosophy and theology in, what Matthew Levering calls, Thomas's "theocentric metaphysics," since the groundwork completed in the so-called 'five ways' for proving the existence of God functions like a

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Press, 1999), 5–7; Fergus Kerr, O.P., *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 64; Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 154 n.1.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Matthew Levering, *Paul in the Summa Theologiae* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 17 and 145.

<sup>7</sup> M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. M.-D. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), 312. The specific context for this citation is quoted in §1.2. Chenu's somewhat ambiguous proposal here that the divine ideas represent the "home of theology" because they provide both a rational and a religious account of things, can be clarified with the help of Kieran Conley's observation that, for Thomas, "Theology is the child of faith and reason, supernatural truth, received in faith and developed by reason, is given birth as the divine-human knowledge called theology . . . In constructing conceptually its work of theological architecture human intelligence must keep the desired end ever in view, an understanding of the truths of faith" (*A Theology Of Wisdom: A Study in St. Thomas* [Dubuque: The Priory Press, 1963], 67). Theological reflection, therefore, arises from a dialogue between faith and philosophical reasoning; however, contrary to Wippel and Doolan, who propose that the theological layer of this dialogue can be easily peeled off to reveal the substantive philosophical content beneath, Conley's comment emphasizes that for Thomas the exchange between faith and philosophical reasoning in theological reflection is always a dynamic interplay leading to theological wisdom. Consequently, as Mark Jordan says, "[A]ny philosophy 'in' the *Summa* must be approached through theology if it is to be approached within the book's structure" (*Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, 154), which is the type of *modus operandi* this study has attempted to maintain. With Chenu's proposition in mind, the parallels between the doctrine of the divine ideas and the notion of theological fittingness, outlined in §4.2, should also be more obvious. On the paradigmatic form of the doctrine, Vincent Branick makes a similar observation about the divine ideas; when commenting on humanity's knowledge of divine simplicity, he concludes, "The judgment of unity was in fact already made . . . before any consideration of the multiplicity of the divine ideas. But the judgment had to be seen as in some way developing out of the terms used for the very multiplicity of the ideas. Since this intellectual process is the method of all theologizing, the concern for the multiplicity and unity of the divine ideas becomes a sort of paradigm of all theological discourse" ("The Unity of the Divine Ideas," *The New Scholasticism* 42 [1968]: 171–2).



metaphysical prefix to his theological reformulation of the doctrine later in the *Summa*.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the majority of this chapter is devoted to identifying the function, presence, and anticipation of the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways in relation to the pedagogical pattern of the *Summa*. However, because our argument here is largely a response to the pattern of hermeneutical bifurcation between theology and philosophy, to settle questions over the doctrine's relevance for Thomas, it will be beneficial to first confirm the persistence of this practice in the evaluation of his thought on the divine ideas.

The first section, therefore, identifies and examines the recourse to separating Thomas's theological and philosophical interests in various studies dealing with the dual claims that God alone is the exemplar for all creation (*ST* 1a.44.3) and that there must be a plurality of ideas in the mind of God after which creatures are patterned (*ST* 1a.15.2). In the next section, the contribution of the five ways to Thomas's pedagogical vision for the *Summa* is considered. Here we examine the allusions to the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth proofs, which confirm that Thomas is indirectly referring to the doctrine in the construction of these arguments. This section also extrapolates on what the doctrine of the divine ideas would look like, according to Thomas, if he had limited his account to a strictly philosophical perspective. The final section briefly elaborates on the theological turn in Thomas's application of the divine ideas anticipated by his intimations to the doctrine in the fourth and fifth ways.

### 5.1 Worlds Apart: The Curious Practice of Bifurcating Theology and Philosophy

In the debate over how to handle the apparent tension in Thomas's dual claims that the divine essence is the exemplar cause (*exemplariter*) of all things (*ST* 1a.3.8 ad.1) and that all the exemplars (*omnes rationes*) for things preexist in the mind of God (*ST* 1a.105.3), many studies have sought refuge in the distinction between the *scientiae* of philosophy and theology; however, these studies often turn this distinction into a rigid separation, which, according to Fergus Kerr, the last sixty years of Thomist scholarship has, by and large, aspired to overturn.<sup>9</sup> David Burrell is

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<sup>8</sup> Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 2004, 36. Levering writes, "Theocentric metaphysics belongs to the pedagogical intention of theological wisdom."

<sup>9</sup> Kerr, O.P., "The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas," 30. Kerr, along with many others, traces the institutionalization of this bifurcation in Thomist studies to Pope Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, which called for Catholic scholars to answer the challenge of Enlightenment philosophy by returning to the works of Thomas; however, in an unfortunate turn of events, what emerged from this directive was an interpretive *praxis* that, in Kerr's words, "kept to very much the same canons of rationality as we find in the Enlightenment" (*Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007], 2). Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 65–75; Thomas F O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 171. For more on the events surrounding these developments in Thomist scholarship, see Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 25–39; Vivian Boland, O.P., *St. Thomas Aquinas* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 112–9. On Kerr's assessment of these events, see Paul D. Murray,

one Thomist scholar who has worked diligently on many fronts to show that there is no “neat division between ‘philosophy’ and ‘theology’ which had indeed fuelled the Thomist revival during the twentieth century . . . We are misled, then, only when we fail to recognize that Aquinas’s project is explicitly theological, and doubly misled if we expect philosophy to do more than he himself demanded of it.”<sup>10</sup> Yet, it appears that this reorientation in Thomist studies has not quite found its way into the analysis of Thomas’s arguments for the divine ideas, as indicated by Burrell’s recent review of Gregory Doolan’s book on Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas, in which he critiques Doolan for perpetuating this division.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore the purpose of this section to identify the reoccurring hermeneutical bifurcation of Thomas’s theology and philosophy in studies dealing with his doctrine of divine exemplarism, and the place to begin is with the work of Étienne Gilson, since many of the questions found in later English studies on the doctrine first appear in his works.<sup>12</sup>

### 5.1.1 *Sweeping away Theological Tradition in favor of a Thomist Philosophy*

Gilson’s work on Thomas, which was largely intended to challenge the Leonine Thomism that emerged in the late nineteenth century, has had a significant impact on English Thomist studies, and his work *Le Thomisme* has been described as, “the most influential exposition of Thomas’s thought,” so it seems reasonable to assume that his treatment of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas has probably shaped, either directly or indirectly, its reception in later generations.<sup>13</sup> In *Le thomisme* Gilson insists that “exemplarism is one of the essential elements of Thomism,” but he quickly qualifies this claim by asserting that Thomas

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“Discerning the Dynamics of Doctrinal Development: A Post-Foundationalist Perspective,” in *Faithful Reading: New Essays in Theology in Honour of Fergus Kerr, OP*, ed. Simon Oliver, Karen Kilby, and Thomas O’Loughlin (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 196–8. William Abraham develops an exquisite argument to help contemporary theologians reorient their methods of reception and interpretation in *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 1–57.

<sup>10</sup> David B. Burrell, C.S.C., “Religious Life and Understanding: Grammar Exercised in Practice,” in *Grammar and Grace: Reformulation in Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, ed. Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain (London: SCM Press, 2004), 125. Cf. Burrell, “Religious Life and Understanding,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1969): 683; Burrell, “Theology and Philosophy,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 34–46; Burrell, “Creation in *Super Evangelium S. Joannis Lectura*,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>11</sup> David B. Burrell, C.S.C., “Book Review of Gregory Doolan’s *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*,” *Nova et Vetera (English)* 7 (2009): 751–2.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that this bifurcation between theology and philosophy is not necessarily characteristic of each author’s broader reception of Thomas’s works, but representative of the way each one responds to his doctrine of the divine ideas.

<sup>13</sup> Kerr, O.P., *After Aquinas*, 80. Francesca Aran Murphy provides a thoughtful discussion on Gilson’s presence throughout contemporary English theology in *Art and Intellect in the Philosophy of Etienne Gilson* (University of Missouri Press, 2004), 331–42. Also see Wayne J. Hankey, “From Metaphysics to History, From Exodus to Neoplatonism, From Scholasticism to Pluralism: The Fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-Speaking North America,” *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 157–88.

intentionally distances himself from the doctrine's Platonic/Augustinian foundation.<sup>14</sup> Gilson returns to Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas later in the work and, after reviewing Thomas's statements in *ST* 1a.15 and *De ver.* 3, he concludes, "The most important result of all these considerations is to show us how vague and inadequate was our first attempt to define the creative act . . . It leaves totally unexplained the first origin of things."<sup>15</sup> Here we encounter the first signs of Gilson's dissatisfaction with the doctrine of the divine ideas, which anticipate his more direct answer in *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne* to the question why Thomas even includes the doctrine within the pages of his canon.

Armand Maurer aptly summarizes Gilson's thought on the divine ideas in this latter work when he writes that, for Gilson, "Thomas's new conception of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* would logically lead him to dispense with divine ideas . . . as though they were superfluous."<sup>16</sup> According to Gilson, Thomas says all that he needs to in *ST* 1a.14 based on his argument for God being *ipsum esse subsistens*.<sup>17</sup> He then boldly argues, "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that at bottom everything St. Thomas said about the Ideas was in his view one more concession made to the language of a philosophy that was not really his own."<sup>18</sup> In this remark Gilson makes his final assessment of the divine ideas known, and concludes that Thomas adopted a philosophical perspective that no longer needed the doctrine of the divine ideas because it could sufficiently attribute creation to a single divine exemplar – the divine essence.<sup>19</sup> So, Gilson asks, why does Thomas include arguments for the plurality of ideas? He answers that it was out of deference to the authority of Augustine in theology. Accordingly, for Gilson, when Thomas is discussing the plurality of ideas, as he says, "Clearly, we are in theology, where Augustine wields great authority."<sup>20</sup> As we can see, Gilson concludes that Thomas's motivation for including the doctrine of divine ideas is not his constructive philosophical endeavors, but his theological

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<sup>14</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Thomism: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Laurence K. Shook and Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002), 72. This is a translation of *Le Thomisme: Introduction À La Philosophie de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 6th ed., Etudes de Philosophie Médiévale (Paris: J. Vrin, 1965 [Original: Strasburg, 1919]).

<sup>15</sup> Gilson, *Thomism*, 133. He also argues here that one of the "consequences of this doctrine is to de-existentialize completely the notion of creation" (p.149).

<sup>16</sup> Armand A. Maurer, "James Ross on the Divine Ideas: A Reply," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 217. Cf. Wayne J. Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London: Routledge, 1998), 146. Thomas describes God as *ipsum esse subsistens* in *ST* 1a.3.4, 1a.4.1, 1a.7.1, and 1a.12.4. For more on this Thomist notion of God, see Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 119–25.

<sup>17</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Christian Philosophy: An Introduction*, trans. Armand A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993), 104 and 107; French original, Gilson, *Introduction à La Philosophie Chrétienne*.

<sup>18</sup> Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 103–4.

<sup>19</sup> Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 108. It should be noted that Gilson is not arguing that the divine ideas serve a theological purpose in Thomas's thought, but that Thomas's theology of tradition will not allow him to exclude a doctrine from his writings that Augustine endorsed.

respect for tradition; however, this type of argument only works if Thomas's theological and philosophical commitments can, generally speaking, diverge from one another.

Following in Gilson's footsteps, although initially unknowingly, is James Ross, whose pivotal essay on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, "Aquinas's Exemplarism; Aquinas's Voluntarism," has received more sustained attention than any other work on this topic.<sup>21</sup> What prompted Ross to write this article was a study published by John Wippel on the reality of nonexistent possibles.<sup>22</sup> In response to Wippel, Ross raises a number of valid concerns about the implications of the doctrine of the divine ideas for questions about possible worlds and the nature of creation, which he addresses more fully in other works.<sup>23</sup> Ross is determined, in this article, to challenge, what he calls, "a photo exemplarist" reading of the divine ideas, which he asserts "holds that God has ideas, like photographs or blueprints, 'for each thing and each kind,

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<sup>21</sup> *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1990): 171–98. Ross's article is the subject of two responses: Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, James Ross, and Exemplarism: A Reply," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 221–34; Maurer, "James Ross on the Divine Ideas." He replies to these to articles in, James F. Ross, "Response to Maurer and Dewan," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 235–43. Ross's article is also the focus of discussion in David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 111–8; Aaron Martin, "Reckoning with Ross: Possibles, Divine Ideas, and Virtual Practical Knowledge," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 78 (2005): 193–208; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 112–3 and 139. There were a number of studies on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas completed after Gilson's initial publication of *Le Thomisme* and before Ross's essay, which include Marie-Charles Perret, "La Notion d'Exemplarité," *Revue Thomiste* 41 (1936); Timotheus Sparks, *De divisione causae exemplaris apud S. Thomam* (River Forest, Ill.: Dominican House of Studies, 1936); David L. Greenstock, "Exemplar Causality and the Supernatural Order," *The Thomist* 16 (1953): 1–31; Theodore J. Kondoleon, "Exemplary Causality in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas" (Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1967); Branick, "The Unity of the Divine Ideas"; Armand Maurer, "St. Thomas and Eternal Truths," *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970): 91–107; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the Possibles," *The New Scholasticism* 53 (1979): 76–85; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge," *Dialogue* 18 (1979): 392–404; W. Norris Clarke, "The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 109–27. However, despite some of these studies attempting to challenge, in various ways, the pattern of bifurcation in the reception of Thomas's doctrine of divine ideas, they accomplished very little in actually deterring the interpretive division between theology and philosophy, as indicated by the absence of any pressure on Ross to defend his practice of relegating Thomas's statements about the plurality of ideas to his theological inheritance.

<sup>22</sup> The article that Ross is responding to is John F. Wippel, "The Reality of Nonexisting Possibles According to Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines," *The Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1981): 729–58. Later republished as chapter 7 in *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 163–90.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, James F. Ross, "Creation," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (October 1, 1980): 614–29; James F. Ross, "God, Creator of Kinds and Possibilities: Requiescant Universalia Ante Res," in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 315–34; James Ross, "Eschatological Pragmatism," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 279–300; James F. Ross, "The Crash of Modal Metaphysics," *The Review of Metaphysics* 43 (December 1, 1989): 251–79. Among scholars indebted to analytical philosophy, there is a growing interest in the divine ideas for many of the same reasons that Ross opposes the doctrine. For examples, see Jay Wesley Richards, *The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Immutability, and Simplicity* (Colorado Springs: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 242–50; Greg Welty, "Truth as Divine Ideas: A Theistic Theory of the Property 'Truth,'" *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 47 (Fall 2004): 55–68; Greg Welty, "Theistic Conceptual Realism: The Case for Interpreting Abstract Objects as Divine Ideas" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, 2006); James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction: An Argument for God from Logic," *Philosophia Christi* 13 (2011): 321–38.

both actual and possible.”<sup>24</sup> Although Gilson leaves a number of hints to his position on Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas scattered throughout a number of his works, Ross initially identifies him, along with Maurer and Wippel, as a representative of the photo exemplarist interpretation. However, Ross was, at the time, unaware of Gilson’s *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne*, and in his reply to Maurer’s review of his article, he admits, “Had I been familiar with that book, I would have claimed Gilson as an ally.”<sup>25</sup>

Similar to Gilson’s interpretation, then, Ross insists that Thomas’s commitment to Aristotelian metaphysics leaves room for “only *one* divine idea, the *same* no matter what God does.”<sup>26</sup> Ross ultimately concludes that in Thomas’s statements on the doctrine of the divine ideas “there is little left of Augustine’s doctrine, except for the words.”<sup>27</sup> This claim essentially leaves Thomas’s formal remarks of the doctrine devoid of any substantive contribution to his works. Again, much like Gilson, Ross reasons that Thomas only includes the doctrine of the divine ideas because he is “constrained by various formulae that have great theological authority (e.g., formulae from Augustine and from Pseudo-Dionysus).”<sup>28</sup> Thus, as with Gilson, Ross’s interpretation of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas relies on the possibility that Thomas’s theological and philosophical commitments can operate at cross-purposes.<sup>29</sup> While the works of both Gilson and Ross have greatly enriched our understanding of Thomist metaphysics, their interpretations of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas cannot be sustained without the assumption that his theological principles can be swept away to expose a revolutionary philosophical theory of divine exemplarism.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, despite arriving at a radically different interpretation of the doctrine than Wippel, one cannot help but notice the similarities between the approaches of Gilson and Ross and that of Wippel outlined in the introduction to this chapter.

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<sup>24</sup> Ross, “Aquinas’s Exemplarism,” 173.

<sup>25</sup> Ross, “Response to Maurer and Dewan,” 235.

<sup>26</sup> Ross, “Aquinas’s Exemplarism,” 174.

<sup>27</sup> Ross, “Response to Maurer and Dewan,” 235.

<sup>28</sup> Ross, “Aquinas’s Exemplarism,” 239.

<sup>29</sup> Ross’s initial misunderstanding of Gilson’s position is notable because it exposes a common interpretive assumption on the relation between Thomas’s theology and philosophy, which enables them both to reach similar conclusions about how to deal with Thomas’s statements on the plurality of ideas. For fuller descriptions of Ross’s initial misreading of Gilson, see Maurer, “James Ross on the Divine Ideas,” 219–20; Ross, “Response to Maurer and Dewan,” 235–7.

<sup>30</sup> Ross says as much when he remarks, in his response to Dewan, “Our disagreement is not, in general at least, about what Aquinas is trying to achieve . . . but about how he achieves the objects, and perhaps, whether he is framing a revolutionary reinterpretation of the divine ideas and the divine power within accepted theological discourse, or is adopting that discourse and the underlying Augustinian exemplarism. I opt for the revolution” (“Response to Maurer and Dewan,” 238).

### 5.1.2 *Exchanging a Philosophy of the Many for a Theology of the One*

The next work to be considered is Mark Jordan's exceptional article on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas. This was published some years prior to Ross's study, but offers a different interpretive trajectory for the bifurcation between theology and philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Jordan explains that he intends to follow the lines of Thomas's thought on the divine ideas "as a means of showing how an account of creation at once clarifies and inverts the analysis of natural intelligibility."<sup>32</sup> He is certain, much like Gilson and Ross, that Thomas's assessment of the divine ideas arises largely out of respect for the voices of authority in his thought (i.e. Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Albert the Great).<sup>33</sup> Unlike Gilson and Ross, however, who worry that the doctrine's Neoplatonic origins threaten to obscure, according to their readings, the consistency of Thomas's metaphysics, Jordan insists that from the time Thomas first interacts with the doctrine in his *Scriptum super Sententiis*, "the balance of Platonic to Aristotelian claims and the ambivalent relation of philosophy to faith [colors his] whole discussion of the Ideas."<sup>34</sup> By situating Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas within the context of philosophy's relation to faith, Jordan exhibits an incredible sensitivity to the various philosophical and theological issues at work in Thomas's discussions on the divine ideas.

One example of this sensitivity is Jordan's rather deft parsing of the interplay between Platonic and Aristotelian concepts in Thomas's discussions on the doctrine, which he asserts are essential to his interpretation because it is through the exchange between them that Thomas distances himself from both.<sup>35</sup> Yet, in distancing himself from both Platonism and Aristotelianism, Jordan claims, "Thomas argues from the common opinion of philosophy to the specific tenets of the Christian teaching about creation."<sup>36</sup> There is a reversal here in the location of Thomas's reflections on the divine ideas from that seen in the arguments of Gilson and Ross since Jordan is arguing that Thomas's discussions on the doctrine belong to the first stage in a larger transition from a philosophical to a theological perspective.<sup>37</sup> While, as Jordan acknowledges, the majority of Thomas's expositions on the plurality of ideas adhere to the arguments of his authorities, he asserts that when "the qualifications and the authorities have

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<sup>31</sup> Mark D. Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984): 17–32.

<sup>32</sup> Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World," 17.

<sup>33</sup> Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World," 21–2, 24, 29.

<sup>34</sup> Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World," 20. On the unease Gilson and Ross have with the Neoplatonic origin of the divine ideas, see Gilson, *Thomism*, 148–52; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 14 and 113; Ross, "God, Creator of Kinds," 315–6; Ross, "The Crash of Modal Metaphysics," 276–9; Ross, "Aquinas's Exemplarism," 174–7.

<sup>35</sup> Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World," 20, 24–5.

<sup>36</sup> Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World," 20.

<sup>37</sup> Jordan, "The Intelligibility of the World," 32: "For Thomas, as the doctrine of Ideas makes clear, philosophy may know nature adequately without being able to reach the ground of natural intelligibility at all."

dropped away; what remains is the bare teaching that the divine essence is the sufficient and direct exemplar of all created being as particular and particularly disposed.”<sup>38</sup>

Jordan finds support for his argument in Thomas’s discussions on the nature of divine exemplarism in the *Summa contra Gentiles* and the *Lectura super Ioannem* as well as in *Quodlibet* 4, where the divine essence is explicitly identified as the proper idea for every creature.<sup>39</sup> He concludes, then, that “there is no longer much need to speak of exemplars or Ideas. In the direct imitation of God by creatures, Ideas are otiose . . . There is no need for a middle step.”<sup>40</sup> Consequently, whereas Gilson and Ross align Thomas’s statements about the plurality of ideas with his theological commitments in order to maintain his philosophical consistency, Jordan flips the arrangement by identifying the plurality of ideas with a set of philosophical precepts left behind in the wake of Thomas’s theological claim that there is only one divine exemplar – the divine essence – expressed in the act of creation through the Word of God. In both cases, however, the arguments rely on the possibility of bifurcating Thomas’s thought along some point of division between his theological and philosophical reflections.<sup>41</sup>

### 5.1.3 Leaving Theology Behind

The final work to be examined here is Doolan’s book on the divine ideas, which regularly regards itself as a response to the interpretive practice of dismissing the relevance of the divine ideas exemplified in readings of Gilson and Ross.<sup>42</sup> Doolan summarizes his response to Gilson

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<sup>38</sup> Jordan, “The Intelligibility of the World,” 29.

<sup>39</sup> SCG IV, c.13: “Fecit igitur Deus omnia per verbum suum, quod est ratio rerum factarum ab ipso.” *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 2, no.77: “Sic ergo Deus nihil facit nisi per conceptum sui intellectus, qui est sapientia ab aeterno concepta, scilicet Dei verbum, et Dei filius: et ideo impossibile est quod aliquid faciat nisi per filium.” *Quod.* 4, q.1, a.1: “Licet enim omnes res, in quantum sunt, divinam essentiam imitentur, non tamen uno et eodem modo omnia imitantur ipsam, sed diversimode, et secundum diversos gradus. Sic ergo divina essentia, secundum quod est imitabilis hoc modo ab hac creatura, est propria ratio et idea huiusmodi creaturae.” For a rebuttal of Jordan’s interpretation of *Quodlibet* 4, see Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 105–6.

<sup>40</sup> Jordan, “The Intelligibility of the World,” 29. Jordan’s conclusion here is reminiscent of Ross’s description of the divine ideas as a “fifth wheel” in “The Crash of Modal Metaphysics,” 277.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Henle also offers an interpretive approach to Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas that is similar to the one found in Gilson and Ross. See Robert John Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism. A Study of the Plato and Platonic Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956), 351–9. For examples of the persistence of this division in more recent discussions on Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas, see Gloria Ruth Frost, “Thomas Aquinas on Necessary Truths about Contingent Beings” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2009), 124 and 136–54; K. Scott Oliphint, *God with Us: Divine Condescension and the Attributes of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 238–40.

<sup>42</sup> Wippel’s studies on Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas also maintain this hermeneutical pattern of bifurcation; however, since Doolan’s work is principally an elaboration and extension of his mentor’s argument, Wippel’s position is faithfully represented in the interpretive trajectory of the division between theology and philosophy found in Doolan’s answer to the question of how to reconcile Thomas’s arguments for both a plurality of ideas and the existence of one divine exemplar. For those interested in reviewing Wippel’s arguments, see “The Reality of Nonexisting Possibles,” 730–40; *Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, The Étienne Gilson Series 16 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993). This latter work was recently republished in *The Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas*, Étienne Gilson Series 30 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 125–62.

and Ross in his defense of Thomas's arguments for the existence of a plurality of ideas. He writes:

Gilson, and Ross are quite right that ontologically, there is but one exemplar of all things, which is God. As the fullness of being (*esse*), the divine essence is imitable in diverse ways. Still, when Thomas addresses the subject of divine ideas, it is not simply to this imitability that he is referring. Rather, for him a divine idea consists in God's *knowing* his essence as imitable in these diverse ways. It is this knowledge that constitutes an idea. Since these ways are themselves diverse, so too is God's knowledge and, hence, his ideas.<sup>43</sup>

Here Doolan, unlike Gilson and Ross, quite correctly holds Thomas's statements about the plurality of ideas and the unity of divine exemplarity together, but what is notable about Doolan's argument is how he reaches this conclusion.

Shortly after making this argument, Doolan unabashedly asserts in opposition to Gilson that the doctrine of the divine ideas "is not even principally a theological doctrine. Rather, it is a *philosophical* one that plays a key role in Thomas's metaphysical thought."<sup>44</sup> Thus, contrary to the formulations discussed above, Doolan attempts to resolve the apparent tension in Thomas's dual claims by shifting the entire discussion away from Thomas's theological vision. Although Doolan arrives at a clear answer to the question about how to interpret Thomas's affirmations that a plurality of divine ideas exist, he does so in a way that relies on the same bifurcation between theology and philosophy found in the arguments he is attempting to overturn. By ignoring Thomas's understanding of *sacra doctrina* (§2.1), Doolan's approach offers a reading that is inconsistent with Thomas's stated agenda in the *Summa*. While the problems with attempting to extract the doctrine of the divine ideas from Thomas's theological project are discussed in greater detail below (§5.2.1 and §5.2.2), one clue to Doolan's misstep is, as we have already seen (§4.2), the effort he puts into severing the explicit theological gestures of divine ideas from the interpretation of the doctrine itself. For the moment, we have established that there is a clear pattern of hermeneutical bifurcation in the reception and interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas that runs counter to his understanding of *sacra doctrina*, but to continue the process of reevaluating the interpretive context for the divine ideas, it is necessary to examine more carefully the role of philosophical argumentation in the *Summa*.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 116.

<sup>44</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 122 (italics his).

<sup>45</sup> For those that may be wondering, Boland's work was not examined here because, by and large, his study offers a rare, although not exclusive, exception to this hermeneutical pattern of bifurcation. His interest in how Thomas theologically appropriates the philosophical notion of the divine ideas through a synthesis of the work on the doctrine by Augustine, Dionysius, and others results in an interpretive framework where Thomas elevates the doctrine's philosophical precepts into theological discourse through revelation. The general difference, then, between Boland's study and this one is, perhaps, simply that of emphasis. See Boland, *Ideas in God*, 1–8.



## 5.2 Overture to the Intelligibility of God

Despite the fact that Thomas devotes only one article in the *Summa* (1a.2.3) to the five ways, it is undoubtedly the most well-known and often discussed portion of his whole *corpus*, which makes the discussion on *ST* 1a.2.3 a rather tumultuous conversation to enter; however, to avoid a truncated interpretation of the divine exemplarism introduced in the five ways, it is necessary to examine the inferences to the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways in light of the general function and purpose of the proofs within the *Summa*.<sup>46</sup> How one reads the five ways deeply influences or, better yet, exposes one's understanding of other important themes in Thomas's thought, such as the relation between faith and reason, grace and nature, and theology and philosophy.<sup>47</sup> At one time the standard reading of the *quinque viae* was rooted in Neo- or Paleo-Thomist interpretations of the *Summa* that envisioned *ST* 1a.2.3 as Thomas's preliminary remarks on the capacity of reason alone to provide rational justification for belief in God.<sup>48</sup> Over the past few decades, however, there has been a growing opposition to the distinctly modernist concerns in this, once standard, interpretation of the five ways. The scholarly reaction to this

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<sup>46</sup> Although, as John Wippel has persuasively argued, the five ways do not have an "overriding logical plan" that would require interpreting them collectively, various readings of the fourth and fifth ways have created some precedent for reading them together (*The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000], 499; Cf. David Twetten, "To Which 'God' Must a Proof of God's Existence Conclude for Aquinas?" in *Laudemus Viros Gloriosos: Essays in Honor of Armand Maurer, CSB*, ed. R. E. Houser [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007], 146–83). For reasons to read the fourth and fifth ways together, see John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134–41; Daniel D. De Haan, "Why the Five Ways? Aquinas's Avicennian Insight into the Problem of Unity in the Aristotelian Metaphysics and Sacra Doctrina," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (2013): 147–9; Jason A. Mitchell, L.C., "The Method of *Resolutio* and the Structure of the Five Ways," *Alpha Omega* 15 (2012): 370–8; Anastasia Wendlinger, *Speaking of God in Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart: Beyond Analogy* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 116–21, 144. Since our primary interest in this section is identifying the intimations to the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways, there are many details about and in these proofs that will not be directly addressed; however, laying out the purpose and function of the five ways within the *Summa* should provide a sufficient context for our analysis of the arguments.

<sup>47</sup> There is perhaps more written on Thomas's five ways than any other topic in his body of work; however, within this vast range of literature, there are three common positions: first, the interpretation that the five ways succeed at proving the existence of God; second, the interpretation that they fail to prove the existence of God; third, the interpretation that they do not represent attempts to prove the existence of God, but serve a different purpose in the *Summa* altogether, which is the position that I adopt. For a helpful survey of the most prominent interpretations, see Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 52–72.

<sup>48</sup> For discussions on the rise and development of Leonine or Neo-Thomist readings of Aquinas, see McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*; Fergus Kerr, O.P., "A Different World: Neoscholasticism and Its Discontents," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (April 1, 2006): 128–48; Kerr, O.P., *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 1–16. One of the more prominent examples of this earlier approach is Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Dieu, Son Existence et Sa Nature. Solution Thomiste Des Antinomies Agnostiques*, First edition (Paris, 1915). Following its original publication, this work went through eighteen editions in three decades. There are still many scholars today that maintain Thomas's purpose in the five ways is to highlight some aspect of reason's autonomy; for examples, see Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1990), 83–139; Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Turner provides a helpful summary of his book in "Faith, Reason, and the Eucharist: Music as Model for Their Harmony," in *Redeeming Truth: Considering Faith in Reason*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (London: SMC, 2007), 15–33. Cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, in Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 806–8.

reading has led to a series of sophisticated reformulations in the understanding of the purpose and function of the proofs within the *Summa*.<sup>49</sup>

While there are, as one would expect, variations in the interpretive implications of these reformulations, they have shown that the proofs are not designed to provide an independent metaphysical basis for belief in God's existence. Instead, the philosophical arguments introduced in the five ways participate in a series of pedagogical exercises rooted in the articles of faith, which, as we may recall (§2.1.3), rely on the disclosure of God's self-knowledge in scripture as the foundation for humanity's knowledge of God.<sup>50</sup> Thomas's appeal to Exodus 3.14, where God reveals that he is being itself (*ipsum esse*; *ST* 1a.13.11), in the *sed contra* of *ST* 1a.2.3 firmly establishes in the premise to the proofs that God is existent. The proofs, accordingly, are not logical precursors to *sacra doctrina*, nor should they be read as attempts to offer epistemic justification for belief in God's existence.

Furthermore, even though q.2 clearly acknowledges philosophy's competence to arrive at a knowledge of divine things, it is not, for Thomas, the prowess of natural reasoning that justifies this claim, but Romans 1.19-20, where God reveals that he has also disclosed himself in creation.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, the inclusion of five ways in the *Summa* is a response to God's revelation (*ST* 1a.1.8) that certain truths about him may be known through creation; yet, as he somewhat notoriously remarks, these truths "would have appeared only to few, and even so after

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<sup>49</sup> For a sample of studies that have offered creative reformulations of the five ways, see Victor Preller, *Divine Science and The Science of God: A Reformulation of Thomas Aquinas*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 108–78; David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Exercises in Religious Understanding* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 82–176; David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Aquinas God & Action* (Routledge & Kegan, London, 1979), pt. 1; Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God*, New edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 58–72; Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 26–31; John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, Radical Orthodoxy (London: Routledge, 2001), 24–36; Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 37–60; Kevin W. Hector, "Apophaticism in Thomas Aquinas: A Re-Reformulation and Recommendation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 4 (2007): 377–93; Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 168–73.

<sup>50</sup> On *ST* 1a.2.3 being an exercise that serves the pedagogical aims of the *Summa*, see Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 266–71; Burrell, *Exercises in Religious Understanding*, 6. Cf. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith*, 225; Rudi A. te Velde, "Understanding the Scientia of Faith: Reason and Faith in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*," in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr, O.P. (London: SCM Press, 2003), 55–74; Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 2004, 39. This is not to suggest that the five ways are something other than philosophical arguments; rather, I am noting that Thomas's motivation for including the proofs in the *Summa* is theological, and that this context is important for understanding the purpose and function of philosophical argumentation in the work. Cf. §2.1.3; *ST* 1a.46.2.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. §4.3. I am indebted to the work of Eugene Rogers on the interpretive significance of Thomas's reference to Romans 1.19-20 in *ST* 1a.2 for understanding the function of the five ways, see Eugene F. Rogers, "Thomas and Barth in Convergence on Romans 1?" *Modern Theology* 12 (1996): 57–84; Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*. There are still a number of Thomists who maintain that the five ways represent Thomas's vision of pre-theological proofs for the existence of God. For a discussion on those philosophers and theologians that continue to offer this interpretation of the five ways, see Kerr, O.P., "The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas," 28–40.

a long time and mixed with many mistakes.”<sup>52</sup> With this passage in mind, Thomas’s comment in *ST* 2a2ae.2.2 ad.3 becomes very telling about the limitations of the five ways. He writes, “Belief in God as descriptive of the act of faith is not attributable to unbelievers. In their belief God’s existence does not have the same meaning as it does in faith.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, while the five ways represent humanity’s metaphysical assent to a nominal notion of that which may be called God (*ST* 1a.2.2 ad.2), this philosophical taxonomy does not carry the same meaning as its homonymic counterpart in the confession of faith.<sup>54</sup> The substantive discrepancy here between the affirmations of God’s existence in philosophy (*ST* 1a.2.2 ad.1) and in the articles of faith (*ST* 2a2ae.1.7) expose the basic inability of natural reasoning to breach the infinite gulf that distinguishes God from the world.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, this limitation does not deter Thomas from utilizing the five ways in his effort to guide the readers of the *Summa* to the contemplative vision of God. To understand where the proofs fit on that journey, we must return to Thomas’s discussion on the distinction between philosophy and *sacra doctrina* described in the closing lines of *ST* 1a.1.1, where he dismisses the claim that *sacra doctrina* is unnecessary because the philosophical *disciplinae* are sufficient for the study of God. He replies, “There is nothing to stop the same things from being treated by the philosophical sciences when they can be looked at in the light of natural reason and by another science when they are looked at in the light of divine revelation. Consequently, the theology of *sacra doctrina* differs in kind from that theology which is ranked as a part of philosophy.”<sup>56</sup> In a subsequent article (*ST* 1a.1.3), Thomas clarifies the nature of this distinction between theology and philosophy when he notes that it is the formal object or subject that defines each *scientia*. Accordingly, as Thomas details in his commentary on Boethius’s *De Trinitate*:

There are two kinds of theology or divine science. There is one that treats of divine things, not as the subject of the science but as the principles of the subject. This is the kind of theology pursued by the philosophers and that is also called metaphysics. There is another theology, however, that investigates

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<sup>52</sup> *ST* 1a.1.1: “(Quia veritas de Deo per rationem investiata) a paucis, et per longum tempus, et cum admixtione multorum errorum homini proveniret.” Cf. *Compend. Theol.* 1.36.

<sup>53</sup> “Credere Deum non convenit infidelibus sub ea ratione qua ponitur actus fidei. Non enim credunt Deum esse sub his conditionibus quas fides determinat.” It seems worth mentioning that, as Kerr observes (*After Aquinas*, 67), in this passage, Thomas is not referring to the existential dimension of the philosophical conclusion that God exists, but to the meaning of the proposition itself.

<sup>54</sup> For a thorough discussion on the importance of Thomas’s notion of a nominal definition of God, see Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 135–76.

<sup>55</sup> *ST* 1a.8.1; 1a.10.2; *De ver.* 2.3 ad16; 3.1 ad.7. Cf. *Compend. Theol.* 2.246.

<sup>56</sup> *ST* 1a.1.1 ad.2: “Unde nihil prohibet de eisdem rebus de quibus philosophicae disciplinae tractant secundum quod sunt cognoscibilia lumine naturalis rationis, etiam aliam scientiam tractare secundum quod cognoscuntur lumine divinae revelationis. Unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinent differ secundum genus ab illa theologia quae pars philosophiae ponitur.”

divine things for their own sakes as the subject of the science. This is the theology taught in sacred scripture.<sup>57</sup>

It may be said, then, as Victor Preller observes, that for Thomas, “God is extrinsic to the proper subject of ‘first philosophy,’ but intrinsic to that of the Science of God.”<sup>58</sup>

Earlier in this section from his commentary on Boethius’s *De Trinitate*, Thomas explains that the principle subject of metaphysical inquiry is “being-in-general” (*ens commune*), or, as he says, metaphysics is “the science that investigates what is common to all beings, which has for its subject being as being.”<sup>59</sup> Since God is, according to Thomas, the fullness of being or, as noted above (§5.1.1), “being itself subsisting through itself,” philosophy’s concentration on the intelligibility of being offers a clear point of intersection between metaphysics and theology.<sup>60</sup> As Rudi te Velde argues, “The philosophical science of metaphysics treats divine matters from the viewpoint of what is common to all things. In this sense the knowledge of God (or of the First Being) is said to be the goal of the consideration of metaphysics.”<sup>61</sup> From this perspective, it may be argued that the goal of metaphysical inquiry reflects, what Gilson once described as, “the natural vocation of the intellect to a vision of God” (*ST* 1a.6.3; 1a.62.1; 1a2ae.1.8). However, because God is not a being (*ens*) or the being that is common to all things (*SCG* Bk. 1, ch. 26), this goal is one that humanity is, as Gilson concludes, “naturally incapable” of reaching (*ST* 3a.1.3 ad.2).<sup>62</sup> Therein lies the danger of assuming that the five ways are intended to demonstrate the existence of God according to the standards of reason alone.

Preller elaborates on this danger when he states, “we cannot derive from them [the five ways] any ‘first cause’ or ‘God’ who is not univocally tied into the causal chain or system of perfection of which he is supposedly the intelligible explanation.”<sup>63</sup> It would appear, then, that if the five ways are interpreted as proofs for the existence of God outside the domain of faith, they inject a notion of univocity into Thomas’s doctrine of God that resembles a dangerous form of

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<sup>57</sup> *BDT* 5.4: “Sic igitur theologia, sive scientia divina, est duplex. Una, in qua considerantur res divinae non tanquam subjectum scientiae, sed tanquam principium subjecti, et talis est theologia, quam philosophi prosequuntur, quae alio nomine metaphysica dicitur. Alia vero quae ipsas res divinas considerat propter seipsas ut subjectum scientiae, et haec est theologia, quae sacra scriptura dicitur.”

<sup>58</sup> Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 228.

<sup>59</sup> *BDT* 5.4: “[Scientia] in qua ponuntur ea quae sunt communia omnibus entibus, quae habet subjectum ens in quantum est ens.”

<sup>60</sup> *ST* 1a.4.2: “ipsum esse per se subsistens”

<sup>61</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 53. Cf. Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 231–5.

<sup>62</sup> Gilson to de Lubac, June 19, 1965, in Henri de Lubac, ed., *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, trans. Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 181–2; French original published in, *Lettres de M. Étienne Gilson Adressées Au P. Henri de Lubac et Commentées Par Celui-Ci* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1986).

<sup>63</sup> Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 135. More on this problem, as it relates to the fourth way, is presented below.

ontotheology, which most Thomists today would deny he supports.<sup>64</sup> Stephen Long is, however, correct to ask whether, for Thomas, such a domain even exists, and he is also right to insist that this question is, in fact, christological in nature since the *Summa's* christoform arc (§2.1.4), introduced in the prologue to *ST* 1a.2 and culminating in the *Tertia Pars*, transposes the proofs into the service of *sacra doctrina*, where both faith and reason are conditioned by Christ.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the proofs mimic the Father's *demonstratio* (1a.42.6 ad.2), which is Christ, "who, as a man, is the way (*via*) that has been stretched out for us to God."<sup>66</sup>

In their imitation of the Father's demonstration, it is *sacra doctrina* that determines, in Eugene Rogers's terms, the "serviceability" of the proofs, which Te Velde keenly identifies with philosophy's inquiry into the intelligibility of being (*ens et verum convertuntur*).<sup>67</sup> Te Velde explains that the question of God's existence is, for Thomas, "first and foremost a matter of finding an access (*via*) to the intelligibility of God."<sup>68</sup> Since, as we have just seen, Christ is the realization of this access, Thomas's christological recontextualization of the five ways reconfigures the proofs to serve the pedagogical aims of the *Summa* (*ST* 1a.1.5 ad.2), and in this way they become serviceable as mediatory markers to help readers begin the pilgrimage of faith seeking understanding.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Thomas's work of theological appropriation redemptively embraces the five ways in order to elevate them into, as Rogers insightfully states, "the realm of *revelabilia*, in which, through God-bestowed faith, they are joined with the first truth they cannot otherwise reach. The five ways are caused to assert the unGod-forsakenness of nature."<sup>70</sup> With this basic outline of the purpose and function of the five ways in the *Summa*, we may now proceed to identifying the intimations to divine exemplarity in the fourth way.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 211.

<sup>65</sup> Long, *Speaking of God*, 212. On this point Rogers remarks, "Because (Thomas) thinks more like a mathematician and less like an after-dinner speaker: the christological presupposition can very well go without saying when Thomas programmatically announces it, like a negative sign before a parenthesis, and therefore constantly implies it" (*Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, 18).

<sup>66</sup> *ST* 1a.2.prol.: "... qui secundum quod homo via est nobis tendendi in Deum." Cf. Rogers, "Thomas and Barth in Convergence," 66. Cf. §2.2.2.

<sup>67</sup> Rogers, "Thomas and Barth in Convergence," 66.

<sup>68</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 38.

<sup>69</sup> Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 40. Cf. Henri De Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans. Mark Sebanc and Cassian Fulsom, O.S.B. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 88.

<sup>70</sup> Rogers, "Thomas and Barth in Convergence," 66. Contrary to Norman Kretzmann's claim that *ST* 1a.2.3 represents an unnecessary philosophical digression from the *Summa's* theological project, the christological arc of the *Summa* indicates that the inclusion of the five ways conforms to the soteriological praxis of *sacra doctrina* (*The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles I*, vol. 1 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001], 56, n.75). Cf. Bruce D. Marshall, "Quod Scit Una Uetula: Aquinas on the Nature of Theology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 3–7.

### 5.2.1 Reading between the Lines: The Fourth Way on a Plurality of Extrinsic Exemplars

The fourth way structurally integrates exemplar and efficient causalities into a two-stage argument that proceeds from humanity's experience of hierarchical variation in the intensity of characteristics such as being, goodness, and truth in the world to the existence of a separate maximal being (*maxime ens*) that perfectly possess these properties.<sup>71</sup> Although the rhetoric of the argument is rather straight forward, the proof, nevertheless, contains a number of interpretive challenges, including the question of its reference to the divine ideas since the fourth way never explicitly uses the formal grammar of the doctrine.<sup>72</sup> It might appear at first glance, as Gregory Doolan has, in fact, argued, that the structural composition of the proof does not depend on a notion of the divine ideas because it is designed to demonstrate that humanity's experience of perfections such as being, goodness, and truth to a greater or lesser (*magis et minus*) degree provides the speculative space for the intelligibility of a maximal being that is the normative standard for this gradation.<sup>73</sup> The objective of the fourth way is, therefore, to argue for the existence of a first exemplar cause that each thing approximates by participation in it as the efficient cause of all things;<sup>74</sup> yet, as Thomas clarifies elsewhere, the proof's central theme of *ex*

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<sup>71</sup> *ST* 1a.2.3: "Quarta via sumitur ex gradibus qui in rebus inveniuntur. Invenitur enim in rebus aliquid magis et minus bonum, et verum, et nobile, et sic de aliis huiusmodi. Sed magis et minus dicuntur de diversis secundum quod appropinquant diversimode ad aliquid quod maxime est, sicut magis calidum est, quod magis appropinquat maxime calido. Est igitur aliquid quod est verissimum, et optimum, et nobilissimum, et per consequens maxime ens; nam quae sunt maxime vera sunt maxime entia, ut dicitur II *Metaph.* Quod autem dicitur maxime in aliquo genere est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis, sicut ignis qui est maxime calidus est causa omnium calidorum, ut in eodem libro dicitur. Ergo est aliquid quod est causa esse et bonitatis et cujuslibet perfectionis in omnibus rebus, et hoc dicimus Deum."

<sup>72</sup> Chief among these difficulties is also the question of how exemplar and efficient causality are related to one another in the proof. There is considerable debate over whether the first half of the argument includes both exemplar and efficient causality or if it argues solely from exemplar causality. According to the latter position, it is only in the second half of the argument that efficient causality is introduced while the former posits that it blends both forms of causality throughout the proof. Regardless of the position one adopts, both maintain that Thomas introduces a form of exemplarism in the first half of the proof. For examples favoring the argument that the first half of the proof concerns only exemplar causality, see Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Le problème de l'existence de Dieu dans les écrits de S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Philosophes Médiévaux 23 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Éditions de l'Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1980), 241; Marion Wagner, *Die Philosophischen Implikate Der "Quarta Via." Eine Untersuchung Zum Vierten Gottesbeweis Bei Thomas von Aquin (S. Th. I, 2, 3c)* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 29–37; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 473; De Haan, "Why the Five ways? Aquinas's Avicennian Insight into the Problem of Unity in the Aristotelian Metaphysics and Sacra Doctrina," 150–2. For examples of the other position, see Maurice Corvez, "La Quatrième Voie Vers L'existence de Dieu Selon Saint Thomas," in *Quinque Sunt Viae*, ed. Leo Elders (Vatican City, 1980), 75–83; Jason A. Mitchell, L.C., "Resolutio Secundum Rem, the Dionysian Triplex via and Thomistic Philosophical Theology," in *Proceedings Metaphysics 2009* (Madrid: Editorial Dykinson, 2011), 402; Mitchell, "The Method of *Resolutio*," 371–2. Good summaries of both positions may be found in, Joseph Bobik, "Aquinas' Fourth Way and the Approximating Relation," *The Thomist* 51 (1987): 17–36; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 70–3.

<sup>73</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 75–6. Cf. Arthur Little, S.J., *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1949), 103; Charles A. Hart, "Participation and the Thomistic Five ways," *New Scholasticism* 26 (1952): 270.

<sup>74</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* prol., no.5. Cf. Van Steenberghen, *Le problème de l'existence de Dieu*, 225; A. Contat, "La Quarta via Di San Tommaso d'Aquino E Le Prove Di Dio Di Sant' Anselmo Di Aosta Secondo Le Tre Configurazioni Dell' Ente Tomistico," in *Sant' Anselmo D' Aosta "Doctor Magnificus". A 900 Anni Della Morte*, ed. C. Pandolfi and J. Villagrasa (Rome: IF Press, 2011), 150.

*gradibus* leads to a concept of extrinsic exemplarity that falls within the domain of the divine ideas.<sup>75</sup>

In his commentary on the *Liber de Causis*, Thomas elaborates on the metaphysical basis for the gradation of perfection in the world. He explains that the *maxime ens* or the *primum ens*, as it is described in the commentary, “in each genus is the measure of that genus insofar as, by approaching it or receding from it, something is known to be more perfect or less perfect in that genus . . . *The first being is the measure of all beings because it has created all beings with the due measure appropriate to each thing according to the mode of its nature.*”<sup>76</sup> The metaphysical connection in this passage between the *magis et minus* of perfection and the concept of measure reveals that the first stage of the proof is arguing for the intelligibility of a maximal being that is the first formal cause because it measures all other things; however, in his reflections on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Thomas explains that this notion of measure, which has deep (Neo-)Platonic roots,<sup>77</sup> necessarily encompasses the existence of a plurality of extrinsic exemplars. There Thomas concurs with Aristotle’s criticism of the Platonic theory that all things participate in a single idea of the good because there would be, in effect, no basis, according to Thomas, for the gradation of goodness, and, by extension, being, truth, and the like, that we experience in the world around us.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, while the principle objective of the fourth way is to show that the maximal being is the first efficient and exemplar cause of all things because it is the principle and end of all being, goodness, and truth, to make this point, the proof assumes in its argument *ex gradibus* that there are intrinsic formal causes, or substantial forms, which, according to Thomas, indicate that there is also a plurality of extrinsic exemplar causes.<sup>79</sup> As Jason Mitchell observes, in his reflections on

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<sup>75</sup> In addition to the sources cited in n.72, also see Little, *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism*, 62–80; Theodore J. Kondoleon, “Exemplary Causality in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas” (Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1967), 162–3; Jules M. Brady, “Note on the Fourth Way,” *The New Scholasticism* 48 (1974): 219–32; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 473.

<sup>76</sup> *SDC* prop. 16 “In quolibet genere est mensura illius generis, in quantum, per accessum ad ipsum vel recessum ab ipso, cognoscitur aliquid esse perfectius vel minus perfectum in genere illo . . . Ens primum esse mensuram omnium entium, quia creavit omnia entia cum debita mensurae convenit unicuique rei secundum modum suae naturae.” Cf. *In I Sent.* d. 8, q.4, a.1. Various scholars have noted that parallels between the passage from lecture 16, as well as others, in the *Super librum De Causis* and the fourth way demonstrate the general Neoplatonic character of the proof. See, Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism*, 356; Fernand Van Steenberghe, “Prologomènes à La ‘Quarata via,’” *Rivista Di Filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 70 (1978): 99–112; Jan A. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas’s Way of Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 175–7; Jason A. Mitchell, L.C., “Aquinas on the Ontological and Theological Foundation of the Transcendentals,” *Alpha Omega* 16 (2013): 57.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. James M. McEvoy, “The Divine as the Measure of Being in Platonic and Scholastic Thought,” in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John Wippel (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 85–116.

<sup>78</sup> *SLE* 1, lect. 6, no.81: “Manifestum est ergo, quod non est aliquod unum bonum commune, quod scilicet sit idea, vel ratio communis omnium bonorum: alioquin oporteret, quod bonum non inveniretur in omnibus praedicamentis, sed in uno solo.” Cf. Vivian Boland, O.P., “Thinking About Good—Thomas Aquinas on *Nicomachean Ethics* I, *Divine Names* IV-V and *de Ebdomadibus*,” *New Blackfriars* 83 (2002): 392–3.

<sup>79</sup> *SLE* 1, lect. 7, no.96; *De ver.* 3.3; *SCG* Bk. 1, ch. 26. Cf. De Haan, “Why the Five ways? Aquinas’s Avicennian Insight into the Problem of Unity in the Aristotelian Metaphysics and *Sacra Doctrina*,” 150–1.

the fourth way, “Proper to all formal (or exemplar) causality is the notion of ‘measure.’ Measure, though, has its foundation in similitude. Thus, as an extrinsic formal cause, the exemplar idea measures the effect the agent produces by way of imitation.”<sup>80</sup> In clarifying the mechanics of the proof, then, we discover that for the gradation of perfections in the world to be intelligible there must not only be a maximal being, but also a plurality of extrinsic exemplar causes that metaphysically substantiate the ground for the measured approximation to the first cause that all things express to the degree that they are perfect in their substantial forms (*SLE* Bk. 1, lect. 7, n.93).

Although Thomas will use the same type of logical gestures found in the proof’s argument *ex gradibus* to explain the plurality of divine ideas (cf. *ST* 1a.47.1 ad.2; *De Ver.* 3.2), it would be a mistake to interpret the philosophical notion of measure at work in the fourth way as providing something more than conceptual space for the intelligibility of a plurality of extrinsic exemplars. If we follow the argument of the fourth way through to its conclusion, then we will begin to see how, on its own, it threatens to subvert the distinction between God and the world. At the center of the proof’s argument stands a seemingly innocuous analogy between heat and goodness, which is adapted from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, but, as Preller explains, “[The fourth way] seems to imply, through its parallel between heat and goodness, that the transcendental perfections are instances of generic characteristics.”<sup>81</sup> Consequently, as Preller observes, “this back and forth between Plato and Aristotle . . . [suggests that] the substantial efficient cause of the generation of a formal characteristic in another being may be the *highest* in the *genus*, but it is univocally *in* the genus. If Aquinas accepted all of the terms of the fourth way, he would have to assert that God is supreme *in* the ‘genera’ of existence, goodness, truth, and nobility.”<sup>82</sup>

According to this reading of the fourth way, if the internal gestures of the proof are strictly adhered to, the relation depicted between the hierarchy of limited perfections in the world and the generic characteristics of being, goodness, truth and the like is one of, in Lloyd Gerson’s terms, “gradable univocity,” which encompasses the *primum ens*, the domain of extrinsic exemplars, and the measured perfection of all things.<sup>83</sup> Van Steenberghen and Doolan, however,

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<sup>80</sup> Mitchell, “Resolutio Secundum Rem,” 402. Cf. François-Xavier Maquart, *Elementa Philosophiae*, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Paris: Andreas Blot, 1938), 315: “Siquidem in *priori* parte argumenti mens transit *formaliter de mensurato ad mensuram*, sed causa *mensurans* mensuratum non est nisi causa *exemplaris*.”

<sup>81</sup> Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 132. Doolan demonstrates the seemingly harmless nature of the reference by simply glancing over its interpretive implications (*Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 66–67). For more on Thomas’s use of this text elsewhere in his corpus, see Vincent de Couesnongle, “La Causalité Du Maximum: L’utilisation Par S. Thomas D’un Passage d’Aristote,” *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 38 (1954): 433–44; Vincent de Couesnongle, “La Causalité Du Maximum: Pourquoi Saint Thomas a-T-Il Mal Cité Aristote?,” *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 38 (1954): 658–80.

<sup>82</sup> Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 133 (emphasis his). Thomas confirms in *Sent. Metaph.* II, nn.292-3 that this text should be interpreted as implying univocal predication.

<sup>83</sup> Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 183.



oppose this conclusion because Thomas uniformly rejects the claim that the transcendental perfections are generic characteristics (*ST* 1a.4.3) that are univocally applicable (*ST* 1a.13.5) to both God and creatures as explained in *De Potentia* 7.7 ad.2, where, as Preller summarizes, Thomas says, “God is not related to the perfections of his creatures as ‘more perfect’—in the way that fire is ‘hotter’ than heated water—but as the nonunivocal principle or cause of their perfections.”<sup>84</sup>

Even though Van Steenberghen and Doolan are certainly correct in their assertion that Thomas denies this idea of univocal similitude between God and the world, they reject this reading of the fourth way in a misdirected effort to save Thomas from contradiction based on their assumptions about the philosophical character of the *Summa*. Van Steenberghen’s generally Neo-Thomist approach to the *Summa* prompts him to search for the philosophical continuity between the form of exemplarism offered in the fourth way and Thomas’s related discussions on the doctrine.<sup>85</sup> What he, along with Doolan, fails to consider is that while it is true that the proof’s underlying concept of extrinsic exemplars does not belong to Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas, it does, nevertheless, conform to his understanding of one way that both (Neo-) Platonist and Aristotelian philosophers have defined the doctrine.<sup>86</sup> This ambiguity in the philosophical patronage of the proof’s intimation of extrinsic exemplars is, broadly speaking, attributable to the fourth way’s concise integration of Platonist and Aristotelian precepts and the absence of any specific claims in the argument about the actual origin of the observable universe. Regardless, then, of whether the Platonist or the Aristotelian elements in the proof are emphasized, the fourth way’s depiction of an ascending univocal relation between the world’s limited perfections and the existence of a *maximum ens* encompasses a doctrine of exemplary forms that is, for Thomas, compatible with a reading of the proof in terms of necessary participatory emanation or eternal motion.<sup>87</sup>

Thomas’s subsequent dismissal of univocal similitude in fact confirms that the proof’s philosophical premise results in an expression of exemplar causality that must be, at least, formally incongruent with the *Summa*’s discussions on the nature of creation since humanity’s

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<sup>84</sup> Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 134. See, Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Le problème de l’existence de Dieu dans les écrits de S. Thomas d’Aquin*, Philosophes Médiévaux 23 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Éditions de l’Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1980), 209; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 76.

<sup>85</sup> Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Ontology*, trans. Martin J. Flynn (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1952), 97–8; Van Steenberghen, “Prolégomènes à La ‘Quarata via,’” 112. Cf. Bobik, “Aquinas’ Fourth Way,” 27–33; Murphy, *Art and Intellect in the Philosophy of Etienne Gilson*, 103–4.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3; 1a.44.3; 1a.65.4 ad.2; 1a.103.2 ad.3; *De ver.* 3.1 ad.5; *SCG* Bk. 3, ch.69; *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 1, no.65. Also see *In I Sent.* d.36, q.2, a.1 ad.1 and *SLE* 1, lect. 6, no.79, where, in addition to *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 1, no.65, Thomas argues that Aristotle did not intend to reject but simply modified Plato’s theory of the Forms.

<sup>87</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* prol. no.5; *SDC* props. 4, 10, and 20; *BDH* lect. 2, no.24; *Sent. Phys.* II, lect. 14, no.258 and VIII, lect. 2, no.971-90; *Sent. Metaph.* XII, lect. 8, no.2536-61 and lect. 11, no.2600-63. Cf. Augustine, *De civ. dei* 10.31 and 11.4.

knowledge of God's creational activity belongs solely to the mystery of creation revealed in scripture (§4.4). Doolan picks up on this inconsistency in the opposing methodological paradigms that shape the doctrines of exemplarism conveyed in the fourth way and Thomas's later reflections on creation (*ST* 1a.44-49); however, he insists that this incongruity proves that the fourth way does not include a notion of exemplar forms.<sup>88</sup> The basic problem with Doolan's interpretation is that he ignores the overarching theological framework of the *Summa*, because he assumes that Thomas' doctrine of the divine ideas is exclusively philosophical.<sup>89</sup> He therefore overlooks, as outlined above (§5.1), the distinct function of the proofs within the context of *sacra doctrina* (*ST* 1a.1.1). Nevertheless, the incongruity of the fourth way with Thomas's doctrine of God, as established elsewhere in question 1, does not render the insights offered in the proof theologically useless for directing the readers of the *Summa* on the journey to God (*ST* 1a.1.5 ad. 1 & 2), but before we proceed to some further reflections on Thomas's theological appropriation of the gestures to the divine ideas in the proof's argument *ex gradibus*, let us consider the claim that the fifth way also implicitly supports a doctrine of the divine ideas.

### 5.2.2 *The Fifth Way: An Overlooked Allusion to the Divine Ideas?*

Despite the various problems with his approach to, and assessment of, the fourth way, Doolan offers a brief but persuasive argument for the fifth way supporting an understanding of the divine ideas as types of "predefinitions" (*praediffinitiones*).<sup>90</sup> Much like the fourth way, the fifth never explicitly refers to the divine ideas, but, as the previous section demonstrated, this silence does not negate the possibility that the proof embraces a theory of exemplary forms. In order to quickly determine if this proof also implicitly relies on a theory of the divine ideas, it will be

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<sup>88</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 75–7. Doolan observes that while the fourth way's concept of exemplarism is deduced from the limited perfections found in the world, Thomas's formal arguments for the divine ideas justify the existence of intellectual exemplars from God's nature. He asserts that this methodological discrepancy demonstrates that the proof does not convey a notion of the divine ideas. He subsequently argues that instead of representing Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, the fourth way supports Thomas's understanding of natural exemplarity (§4.4); however, according to the logic of Doolan's argument, Thomas's defense of natural exemplarism elsewhere in the *Summa* should follow the same methodology as the proof, but this is simply not the case. In his descriptions of what, in Doolan's terms, would be called natural exemplarity, Thomas's arguments follow the same pattern as his support for the doctrine of the divine ideas (Cf. *ST* 1a.4.1 and 2; 1a.44.3; 1a.93.5 ad.4; 1a.103.6). Consequently, Doolan undermines his own position in his argument against the fourth way encompassing a doctrine of exemplar forms.

<sup>89</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 122. For a brief but insightful summary of the problems in Doolan's interpretive approach, see Burrell, "Book Review of Gregory Doolan," 751–55.

<sup>90</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 79–80. It is important to take note of the difference between this concept of the divine ideas and the fourth way's gesture toward a notion of extrinsic exemplars for a couple of reasons. First, it demonstrates that Thomas is aware that there are different philosophical formulations of the doctrine (Boland, *Ideas in God*, 9–12). Second, as the other chapters in this study have attempted to demonstrate, Thomas casts a wide net in his theological appropriation of the divine ideas tradition, which includes both of these formulations.

worthwhile to present the argument in its entirety. Thus, having finished his description of the argument for God's existence *ex gradibus* in the fourth way, Thomas writes:

The Fifth Way is based on the governance of nature. An orderedness of action to an end is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness. For their behavior hardly ever varies, and will practically always turn out well; which shows that they truly tend to a goal, and do not merely hit it by accident. Nothing however that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with intelligence, and this we call "God."<sup>91</sup>

With the argument laid out above, we may now say that it is somewhat stunning that the parallels between this proof and Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas have gone generally unnoticed since, unlike the Fourth's more enigmatic reference to the exemplar forms, the fifth way includes references to a number of themes that Thomas often makes use of in his formal discussions on the divine ideas.<sup>92</sup>

The fifth way's argument *ex gubernatione rerum* is rooted in a teleological premise that proceeds from the world's observable order to the existence of a divine governor that guides the emergent operation of non-intelligent beings to their proper end.<sup>93</sup> To support this claim, the proof introduces concepts of divine intelligence, providential ordering, and natural law, which are themes not only related to Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas but also crucial to its framework and theological development.<sup>94</sup> Doolan also observes that the proof's principle contention that the "directedness of natural bodies points to the need for a governor who provides them with their intention toward an end" resembles some of Thomas's thoughts about the divine ideas in *De Veritate*.<sup>95</sup> There Thomas says, "An operation of a nature which is for a definite end presupposes an intellect that has pre-established the end of the nature and ordered it

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<sup>91</sup> *ST* 1a.2.3: "Quinta via sumitur ex gubernatione rerum. Videmus enim quod aliqua quae cognitione carent, scilicet corpora naturalia, operantur propter finem, quod apparet ex hoc quod semper aut frequentius eodem modo operantur, ut consequantur id quod est optimum; unde patet quod non a casu, sed ex intentione perveniunt ad finem. Ea autem quae non habent cognitionem, non tendunt in finem nisi directa ab aliquo cognoscente et intelligente, sicut sagitta a sagittante. Ergo est aliquid intelligens, a quo omnes res naturales ordinantur ad finem, et hoc dicimus Deum."

<sup>92</sup> In one of his discussions on the fifth way, Van Steenberghe alludes to this connection by citing *ST* 1a.15.2 on the ordered nature of the universe (*Le problème de l'existence de Dieu*, 231). Mitchell also indirectly picks up on it in his argument that the fifth way's "ratio of providence" presupposes the notion of exemplar causality presented in the fourth way, which he links directly to the divine ideas ("The Method of *Resolutio*," 373 and 376).

<sup>93</sup> Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 343; A. Contat, "Esse, Essentia, Ordo. Verso Una Metafisica Della Partecipazione Operativa," *Espíritu: Cuadernos Del Instituto Filosófico de Balmesiana* 61 (2012): 9–71.

<sup>94</sup> For a sample of the places in the *Summa* where these themes are associated with Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, see: on *ST* 1a.15; 1a.21.2; 1a.22; 1a.23; 1a.44.3 s.c.; 1a.55.3; 1a.103.6; 1a.2ae.93; 2a.2ae.1.8 ad.2. The parallels between the argument of the fifth way and Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas are further substantiated by his discussion on the doctrine in *De Veritate*, where even the image of the archer (§4.1) is employed in much the same way as it is in the proof (*De Ver.* 3.1).

<sup>95</sup> Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 80. Cf. Cornelio Fabro, "Sviluppo, Significato E Valore Della IV Via," *Doctor Communis* 7 (1954): 74; Mitchell, "The Method of *Resolutio*, 375.

to that end. For this reason, every work of nature is said to be a work of intelligence . . . This, therefore, seems to constitute the character of an idea . . . [that it] has, in some sense, the nature of an end.”<sup>96</sup> These conceptual and grammatical similarities reveal, as Doolan establishes, that even though the fifth way does not directly refer to the divine ideas, the argument for the providential ordering of natural beings to their final end implicitly relies on a theory of the divine ideas.<sup>97</sup>

Given the level of continuity between the logical gestures made in the argument of the fifth way and many of Thomas’s latter reflections on the divine ideas, perhaps the biggest challenge we face here is maintaining our initial claim that the five ways do not represent his attempt to reach God through reason alone, which, if true, would support Doolan’s claim that Thomas’s subsequent discussions on the divine ideas are exclusively philosophical rather than theological. Even Preller acknowledges, in contrast to the other proofs, that “the Fifth Way may not be *finally* incompatible with Aquinas’s doctrine of God.”<sup>98</sup> With the apparent absence of any glaring incongruities in these two areas of the *Summa*, it seems perfectly reasonable to suspect that the continuity between them reflects Thomas’s effort to use the philosophical intelligibility of the divine ideas represented in the fifth way to lead his readers to a knowledge of God through natural reasoning; however, if we remain attentive to the *Summa*’s premise for the five ways, the problems with this type of reading begin to surface.

In his discussion on the fifth way, Preller notes that the compatibility between the proof and Thomas’s teachings of God lies in his emphasis on providence. However, as the previous chapter demonstrated (§2.1.3), for Thomas, as he asserts in *De Veritate*, the confession of God’s “providence over all things” made in the articles of faith “cannot be proved.”<sup>99</sup> Since divine providence is, according to Thomas, always related to the unity of God’s volition and knowledge (*ST* 1a.22.prol.),<sup>100</sup> the reference in the proof to intelligence without mention of divine volition could serve as a marker for the point of divergence between the fifth way and Thomas’s subsequent reflections on divine providence in his doctrine of God; however, for our purposes, Thomas’s insistence that the doctrine of providence belongs to the theological province of faith is sufficient to establish this distinction. This proof, nevertheless, offers clearer signs of

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<sup>96</sup> *De Ver.* 3.1: “Operatio naturae, quae est ad determinatum finem, praesupponit intellectum, praestituentem finem naturae, et ordinantem ad finem illum naturam, ratione cuius omne opus naturae dicitur esse opus intelligentiae . . . Haec ergo videtur esse ratio ideae . . . [ista] habet quodammodo rationem finis.” Cf. *ST* 1a.15.2.

<sup>97</sup> It is a bit peculiar that Doolan actually acknowledges this conceptual congruity between the fifth way and Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas since he explicitly rejects the connection that divine providence is the same thing as divine exemplarism (*Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*, 159).

<sup>98</sup> Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God*, 134.

<sup>99</sup> *De Ver.* 14.9 ad.8: “omnium providentia . . . probari non [potest].”

<sup>100</sup> Michael Anthony Hoonhout, “The Systematic Understanding of Divine Providence in the “*Summa Theologiae*”” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, 1998), 66–7.

compatibility with Thomas's doctrine of God because it is more restrained than, for example, the fourth way in its assertions about God. Beyond ascribing intelligence to God, the fifth way avoids making any statements that parallel the fourth way's univocal predication of perfections, and in doing so this proof reinforces our claim that the function of the five ways is to establish the speculative space for the intelligibility of faith's beliefs about God.

Unlike the fourth way, which fills in the metaphysical space it creates for the intelligibility of God with univocal connotations for the divine being that must be deconstructed in the process of theological appropriation, the fifth way simply lays the groundwork for the intelligibility of the confession in the articles of faith that all things are governed by God's providence. The fifth way establishes the metaphysical space for the intelligibility of God as the one who has determined the observable orderliness in the actions of non-intelligent beings, and the underlying intimation to the divine ideas serves as a buttress to the philosophical insight of the proof that God's providential ordering of creation is not unintelligible to the rational mind. Thomas's work of theologically appropriating the argument of the fifth way is, therefore, far less invasive than with the fourth because he can simply begin filling in the space created by the proof with a theological account of divine providence and his own theologically reconfigured doctrine of the divine ideas.<sup>101</sup> Both of these proofs, nevertheless, can assist the readers of the *Summa* on their journey to the vision of God, and their underlying intimations to the divine ideas provide insight into the subtle gestures that characterize Thomas's use of the doctrine.

### 5.3 Theological Appropriation of the Divine Ideas in the Doctrine of Divine Providence

Although the fourth and fifth ways were not intended to prove the existence of the divine ideas, if *sacra doctrina* determines, as we have argued above (§5.2), the suitability of the arguments included within the five ways for facilitating access to the theological intelligibility of God, then the underlying presence of the divine ideas in both of these proofs reveals a great deal about the function of the doctrine within the *Summa*.<sup>102</sup> In the first place, despite not referring

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<sup>101</sup> The connection between providence and the divine ideas here and later in the *Summa* actually confirms our earlier claim (§3.1.2) that Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas undergoes a theological reconfiguration because the contrast between the philosophical notion of providence introduced in the proof and Thomas's theological elaboration on the meaning of divine providence places the connection between the doctrines of providence and the divine ideas later in the *Summa* within a distinctly theological context. Cf. Michael A Hoonhout, "Grounding Providence in the Theology of the Creator: The Exemplarity of Thomas Aquinas," *The Heythrop Journal* 43 (2002): 1–19.

<sup>102</sup> While the arguments offered in the five ways have a long tradition handed down to Thomas from ancient philosophers, Church Fathers, and other medieval writers, their historical lineage does not negate the claim that Thomas intentionally makes subtle gestures to the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways. In fact, to the contrary, it reinforces our argument because it demonstrates that Thomas had repeatedly seen these same gestures being made by others; thus, the discreet hints to the divine ideas made in the fourth and fifth ways reflect the much

directly to the doctrine of the divine ideas in either proof, Thomas's discussions elsewhere on the arguments from the gradation of perfections and the order of non-intelligent beings reveal that the mechanics supporting these proofs rely on the existence of extrinsic exemplars, and the intimations to the divine ideas through the language of 'measure' and the notion of order confirm the presence of the doctrine in Thomas's articulation of both proofs. Thus, for the fourth way, the existence of a plurality of extrinsic exemplars clarifies how there can be both one being that is the first exemplar cause of all other things and, for example, degrees of goodness in the world. As for the fifth way, a notion of extrinsic exemplars is needed to explain the teleological directedness we see in the multitude of non-intelligent beings within creation.<sup>103</sup> Accordingly, since the purpose of these proofs is to establish the intelligibility of God, Thomas's allusions to the doctrine in two of the five ways suggest that the divine ideas play an important role in making sense of God's intelligibility in relation to the multitude of things that exist, and his awareness of Aristotelian and (Neo-) Platonist philosophical arguments for the plurality of extrinsic exemplars ensures that the notion of a plurality of divine ideas is not unintelligible to the rational mind.<sup>104</sup>

The distinctly philosophical form of argumentation in *ST* 1a.2.3, however, also entails that without, as it were, opening up space for the theological adaptation and extension of these arguments, the subtle gestures of the doctrine of divine ideas at work in the fourth and fifth ways could not carry the reader any further than metaphysical insight into the nature of being-in-general.<sup>105</sup> In other words if we read Thomas's thought on the divine ideas in the *Summa* along strictly philosophical lines, as Doolan proposes (§5.1.3), the doctrine cannot escape the univocal connotations that prompt the criticisms of Sergei Bulgakov and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which we

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larger tradition behind Thomas's reception of the arguments. For more on the genealogies of the fourth and fifth ways, see Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 117–8 and 124; Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 71.

<sup>103</sup> For further discussion on this point, see Boland, *Ideas in God*, 261–4.

<sup>104</sup> See, *BDT* 4.1; *De sub. sep.* c. 10; *SDC* prop. 1; *Sent. Metaph.* X, lect.4. Cf. John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas on the Distinction and Derivation of the Many from the One: A Dialectic between Being and Nonbeing," *The Review of Metaphysics* 38, no. 3 (1985): 563–90; Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 242–4.

<sup>105</sup> Kevin Hector offers an interesting perspective in his observation that, for Thomas, "Being is something that God can have in common with creatures precisely because being is not a genus – creatures can resemble God insofar as they are, just as God is, without violating the rule that God is not a member of any genus. Because 'being' is not a genus, it provides Thomas with a basis for connecting God and creatures" ("Apophaticism in Thomas Aquinas," 387). To reinforce this claim, he then adds, "Note the role played by the *analogia entis*: 'being' is indeed a common term between God and creatures, but because 'being' is not a predicate, it does not warrant an anthropological stating-point for theological statements. Rather, Thomas deploys the *analogia entis* precisely as a way of affirming the meaningfulness of the Gospel's claims about God . . . Thomas is engaged in 'faith seeking understanding,' not natural theology" (n.20). These remarks summarize Hector's rather compelling argument, based on *ST* 1a.3.5 and 1a.4.3, that one way Thomas opens up space for theological adaptation and extension of philosophical arguments is by unshackling 'being' from the category of genus.

have discussed previously.<sup>106</sup> This interpretive conundrum, however, brings us to the second point of our discussion on what the peripheral placement of the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways tells us about the function of the doctrine within the *Summa*. For Thomas the doctrine of the divine ideas plays, as we have been arguing throughout this study (§1.3), a supporting role in the pedagogical program of the *Summa*, and the peripheral engagements with the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways reinforce this claim. Yet, the explicitly philosophical shape of the arguments in the five ways demonstrates that, if they are read on their own, the meaning of the doctrine shifts in relation to the focal point of the proofs. Much like the relation between an artist's focal point and use of foreground or background in a painting, the substantive meaning of the doctrine of the divine ideas is determined by the focal point of the argument being made. On the one hand, then, the interpretation of the divine ideas is quite pliable, as the variegated history of the doctrine confirms, while, on the other hand, Thomas's subsequent theological appropriation of the subtle gestures in the fourth and fifth ways instructs the reader on the process of reorienting the focal point for the divine ideas to the vision of God obtained through *sacra doctrina*.<sup>107</sup>

One topic where the allusions to the doctrine of the divine ideas in both the fourth and fifth ways converge is Thomas's exposition on the doctrine of divine providence, where we find the theological extension of both the argument *ex gradibus* and the argument *ex gubernatione rerum*. Thomas describes the nature of providence when he observes, "Since God is the cause of things through his mind, and, as we have already made clear (1a.15.2), the idea of each and every effect must pre-exist in him, the divine mind must preconceive the whole pattern of things moving to their end . . . Therefore the very exemplar itself in God of the plan of things to their end is called his Providence."<sup>108</sup> Here Thomas firmly establishes the link between the divine ideas and the

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<sup>106</sup> For the criticisms of Bulgakov and Bonhoeffer, see the introductions to Chapters Two and Three. Cf. John Hughes, "Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Divine Ideas in Aquinas: How Fair Is Bulgakov's Critique?," *Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 124–37.

<sup>107</sup> Given the flexibility in the interpretation of the divine ideas, Thomas's more tempered interaction with the doctrine is understandable. For more on the various forms the doctrine of the divine ideas has taken throughout its tangled history, see Rega Wood, "Distinct Ideas and Perfect Solitude: Alexander of Hales, Richard Rufus, and Odo Rigaldus," *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 7–31; Vivian Boland, O.P., *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pt. 1; Robert Aurelien, "Idées Humaines, Idées Divine: Ockham Lecteur d'Augustin," *Revue Thomiste* 103 (2003): 479–93; Stephen Lahey, "Of Divine Ideas and Insolubles: Wyclif's Explanation of God's Understanding of Sin," *The Modern Schoolman* 86 (2008/2009): 211–32; Wendy Petersen Boring, "Revising Our Approach to 'Augustinian Illumination': A Reconsideration of Bonaventure's *Quaestiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi* IV, Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* Ia.84, 1–8, and Henry of Ghent's, *Summa Quaestionum Ordinarum*, Q. 2, Art. 1, 2," *Franciscan Studies* 68 (2010): 39–81; Benjamin DeSpain, "Seeing One's Own Face in the Face of God: The Doctrine of the Divine Ideas in the Mystical Theologies of Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa," in *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, ed. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 29–46.

<sup>108</sup> *ST* 1a.22.1: "Cum autem Deus sit causa rerum per suum intellectum, et sic cuiuslibet sui effectus oportet rationem in ipso praexistere, ut ex superioribus patet; necesse est quod ratio ordinis rerum in finem in mente divina praexistat . . . Ipsa igitur ratio ordinis rerum in finem, providentia in Deo nominatur."

doctrine of divine providence anticipated by his comments at the end of *ST* 1a.15.3 ad.4 (§3.1.1 and §3.1.2). There is, however, a subtle distinction from Thomas's formal discussion on divine ideas that is introduced at the end of this citation, which demonstrates his continued elaboration on and extension of the doctrine as he proceeds through the *Summa*. He clarifies this distinction in *De veritate*, where he explains:

There is a twofold order to be found in things. First, there is that order according to which things come from their principles. Second, there is the order according to which they are directed to an end. Now, the divine disposing pertains to that order according to which things proceed from their principles; for things are said to be disposed inasmuch as they are established on diverse grades by God, who is like an artist arranging the different parts of his work in different ways. Consequently, disposition seems to pertain to art. Providence, however, implies the ordering which directs to an end; for this reason it differs from the divine art and disposition. For divine art is so called because of its relation to the production of things . . . Providence, however, implies ordering to the end.<sup>109</sup>

While Thomas's formal remarks compare the divine ideas to, what would be called here, the artist's proper judgment about what to make, his explanation of divine providence in *ST* 1a.22.1 suggests that the divine ideas relate not only to the origin of created things but to their entire existence as things ordered to an end (§3.3.2), which brings us to the theological adaptation of the arguments *ex gradibus* and *ex gubernatione rerum* in the *Summa*'s doctrine of divine providence.

In his answer to a question on the work of providence, Thomas states, "It pertains to divine Providence to produce every degree of being (*esse*)."<sup>110</sup> Thus, the hierarchical gradation of being in the world is determined by God, as initially indicated in the fourth way (§5.2.1); however, embedded in this comment are the principles for Thomas's theological extension of the arguments from the gradation of things and their government, which he identifies in response to the biblical revelation, cited in *ST* 1a.22.2, that divine wisdom "reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well" (Wis. 8.1).<sup>111</sup> Concerning the implications of this passage, Thomas explains, in contrast to various philosophical perspectives, that the

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<sup>109</sup> *De ver.* 5.1 ad.9: "Quod in rebus potest considerari duplex ordo: unus secundum quod egrediuntur a principio; alius secundum quod ordinantur ad finem. Dispositio ergo pertinet ad illum ordinem quo res progrediuntur a principio: dicuntur enim aliqua disponi secundum quod in diversis gradibus collocantur a Deo, sicut artifex diversimode collocat partes sui artificii; unde dispositio ad artem pertinere videtur. Sed providentia importat illum ordinem qui est ad finem. Et sic providentia differt ab arte divina et dispositione, quia ars divina dicitur respectu productionis rerum . . . providentia autem dicit ordinem in finem." The distinction here follows Aristotle's division between the operations of art (*ars*) and prudence (*prudencia*), or, in other words, the difference between right judgment about things to be made (*faciendorum*) and things to be done (*agendorum*). Cf. *SLE* VI, lect. 3, no.1153-1160; *ST* 1a2ae.57. Alice Ramos's discussion on this point is also of tremendous value. See, *Dynamic Transcendentals: Truth, Goodness and Beauty from a Thomistic Perspective* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 79.

<sup>110</sup> *ST* 1a.22.4: "Ad divinam providentiam pertinet omnes gradus entium producere."

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Sent.* IV, d.49, q.1, a.3, qc.1; *SCG* BK. 3, ch.97; *De ver.* 22.1; *In Rom.* 9, lect. 3, no.773; *ST* 1a.109.2; 2a2ae.165.1; 3a.60.4.



revelation of God's providential care for creation means, "We are bound to profess that divine Providence rules all things, not only in their general natures, but also as individuals" because, he continues, "his Providence is naught else than the idea whereby all things are planned to an end."<sup>112</sup> Thomas initially prepares the reader for this theological adaptation of the arguments *ex gradibus* and *ex gubernatione rerum* in his discussion on divine knowledge, where he concludes, "God's knowledge is the measure of things . . . because it measures the essence and the truth of a thing. For every thing possesses the truth of its own nature in the measure in which it imitates the divine knowledge."<sup>113</sup> The development of this principle in the doctrine of divine providence is, however, transmitted within the *Summa*, as the passages cited above demonstrate, through the formal remarks on the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15.2 and 3, where Thomas takes additional steps to ensure that the reader understands that the measure of created things in the divine mind extends to each particular thing as an individual. Far from rendering the formal discussion on the divine ideas redundant, then, as Gilson supposes (§5.1.1), the doctrine of the divine ideas provides Thomas with the grammar he will utilize to extend the claims of question 14 into his theological exposition on God's providential care for every individual thing within creation.

Thomas's theological extension of the divine ideas in his reflections on God's intentional gradation of creation does not end there. In the passages cited above, Thomas's references to God's providential oversight of the effects within creation allude to a unique qualification in his doctrine of the divine ideas, which is finally spelled out in the discussion on the eternal law in question 93 of the *prima secundae*. There, he writes:

Just as in every artist's mind there pre-exists an exemplar of the things he makes by his art, so too does an exemplar of the ordered actions to be done by those subject to a governor pre-exist in his mind . . . And so, as being the principle through which the universe is created, divine wisdom means art, or exemplar, or idea, and likewise it also means law, as moving all things to their

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<sup>112</sup> *ST* 1a.22.2: "Necesse est dicere omnia divinae providentiae subiacere, non in universali tantum, sed etiam in singulari . . . Cum nihil aliud sit Dei providentia quam ratio ordinis rerum in finem." Following this final remark, Thomas writes: "Similiter etiam supra ostensum est quod Deus omnia cognoscit, et universalia et particularia. Et cum cognitio eius comparetur ad res sicut cognitio artis ad artificata, ut supra dictum est, necesse est quod omnia supponantur suo ordini, sicut omnia artificata subduntur ordini artis." Here we have a more specific example of Thomas embracing a theological reconfiguration of the craftsman analogy initiated through an interpretive interplay between scripture and Hellenistic philosophy, which he uses to elaborate on the biblical imagery of God's creational activity as governor over all things. For more on the use of the craftsman analogy in the interpretation of scripture, see Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 107–10. Boland provides a helpful discussion on the transmission of this analogy into Western theology through Cicero and Seneca. See, *Ideas in God*, 23–8. Since Thomas's use of the craftsman analogy is largely indebted to Augustine, for a detailed discussion on his reception and application of the analogy, see Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 97–139.

<sup>113</sup> *ST* 1a.14.12 ad.3: "Scientia Dei est mensura rerum . . . quia mensurat essentiam et veritatem rei. Unumquodque enim intantum habet de veritate suae naturae, inquantum imitatur Dei scientiam."

due ends. Accordingly the Eternal Law is nothing other than the exemplar of divine wisdom as directing the motions and acts of everything.<sup>114</sup>

Put more simply, as Thomas does in his comments on Jn. 12.49, “Just as the patterns of all things pass from the Father to the Son, who is the Wisdom of the Father, so also the patterns of all things to be done.”<sup>115</sup>

For Thomas, then, as Alice Ramos notes, “[I]he exemplar is not only the measure of a thing in being, but also its measure in activity and thus in its process of finalization or perfecting.”<sup>116</sup> Boland is certainly correct when he concludes that this argument “puts the traditional understanding of the ideas under great pressure.”<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, it does represent a fitting extension of the doctrine in response to the revelation that God has ordered the whole of creation in such a way that through it he guides each creature to its eschatological realization in him as a particular imitation of the pure actuality that is the divine essence (*ST* 1a.14.1 ad.1). By identifying the divine ideas with God’s knowledge of the ways his own pure actuality can be imitated through, what we called earlier (§3.3.2), the dynamic actualization of each creature, Thomas broadens the grammar of the doctrine to embrace both the creational formation of each creature as well as each one’s eschatological fulfillment in God. Although the reader of the *Summa* may not immediately realize the broader implications of his doctrine of the divine ideas, Thomas’s subtle engagements with the doctrine, beginning in the fourth and fifth ways, pedagogically prepare the reader to theologically reimagine the divine ideas. Consequently, what we see Thomas doing in his exposition on divine providence is theologically appropriating the allusions to the divine ideas in the fourth and fifth ways to secure the unique *telos* of every creature in God, as indicated in *ST* 1a.44.3, where he argues that all things reach after (*consequuntur*) determinate forms located in the wisdom of God, which rational creatures do, as the next chapter demonstrates, through the virtue of hope.

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<sup>114</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.93.1: “sicut in quolibet artifice praeexistit ratio eorum quae constituuntur per artem, ita etiam in quolibet gubernante oportet quod praeexistat ratio ordinis eorum quae agenda sunt per eos qui gubernationi subduntur . . . Unde sicut ratio divinae sapientiae in quantum per eam cuncta sunt creata, rationem habet artis vel exemplaris vel ideae; ita ratio divinae sapientiae moventis omnia ad debitum finem, obtinet rationem legis. Et secundum hoc, lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae, secundum quod est directiva omnium actuum et motionum.”

<sup>115</sup> *Lect. Ioan.* 12, lect. 8, no.1723: “Sicut ergo a patre derivantur in filium, qui est sapientia patris, rationes omnium rerum, ita et rationes omnium agendorum.”

<sup>116</sup> Ramos, *Dynamic Transcendentals*, 80.

<sup>117</sup> Boland, *Ideas in God*, 327.

## 6. The Theological Metaphysics of Hope (and Spiritual Despair)

*This hope, which is identical with our very being itself. . . finds its ultimate fulfillment on the other side of death, “after” the here-and-now. In a word, the object of existential hope bursts the bounds of “this” world.*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

One locus where the doctrinal gestures of the divine ideas quietly resurface in order to reinforce Thomas’s account of God’s eternal plan for humanity’s eschatological realization (§5.3) is the immeasurably rich topic of hope. The general reception of Thomas’s thought on this theological virtue has, unfortunately, been maligned on a number of fronts by critical interpretations offered by leading contemporary theologians, chief among them being Jürgen Moltmann.<sup>2</sup> In a characteristic passage from an essay published in 1985, Moltmann critically remarks of Thomas that, “His ‘theology of hope’ is in truth not the theology of a biblical ‘hope’ but the anthropology of the natural desire (*appetitus naturalis*) of the inner self-transcendence of human beings which finds its answer in the metaphysical theology of the supreme good (*summum bonum*).”<sup>3</sup> Although this essay and the position it represents have been robustly challenged by Thomist scholars like Jean-Pierre Torrell, who remarks on Moltmann’s interpretation, “Only a deep misunderstanding based on a very narrow consultation of the works has allowed some to suspect that Thomas ‘liquidated’ Biblical eschatology in favor of a simply transcendental desire,”<sup>4</sup> it continues to exhibit considerable influence over the general reception of Thomas’s theological reflections on hope.<sup>5</sup>

At the heart of Moltmann’s argument is the contention that, as he says, “Thomas replaces the biblical history of the promise with a finalistic metaphysic,” or, in other words, “Taking the place of the eschatological promise of the ‘new heaven and the new earth’ – ‘Behold,

<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, *Hope and History: Five Salzburg Lectures*, trans. David Kipp (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 107; German original, *Hoffnung Und Geschichte: Fünf Salzburger Vorlesungen* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> For summaries of these critical evaluations, including Moltmann’s, see Dominic Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2011), 43–8. Cf. Zachary Hayes, *A Vision of the Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 126–53.

<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, “Christian Hope: Messianic or Transcendent? A Theological Discussion with Joachim of Fiore and Thomas Aquinas,” *Horizons* 12 (1985): 333; German original, “Christliche Hoffnung: Messianisch Oder Transzendental? Ein Theologisches Gespräch Mit Joachim von Fiore Und Thomas von Aquin,” *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 33 (1982): 241–60.

<sup>4</sup> Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, 327 n.54. Cf. Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism*, 142–4. For a brief but insightful criticism of Moltmann’s theology of hope, see Josef Pieper, “Pastless Future, Groundless Hope,” in *Problems of Modern Faith: Essays and Addresses*, trans. Jan van Heurk (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), 157–73.

<sup>5</sup> For examples of contemporary works written from various theological and philosophical perspectives that positively cite or address the influence of this essay’s assessment of Thomas, see Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 38 and 228 n.88; Rowena A. Pecchenino, “Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here?,” *Revue de Philosophie économique* 12 (2012): 5; Timothy Harvie, “Jürgen Moltmann and Catholic Theology: Disputes on the Intersections of Ontology and Ethics,” *The Heythrop Journal* 55 (2014): 370–2; J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 295.

I make all things new' (Rev. 21.5) – is the *visio Dei beatifica in patria*, that is, in heaven, the bliss of the pure spirits in the hereafter.”<sup>6</sup> Contrary to this opposition between metaphysics and biblical history, the newfound appreciation for Thomas’s commentaries on scripture, the hitherto “forgotten corpus of the Angelic Doctor,”<sup>7</sup> has exposed, as Anselm Min observes, that, “Aquinas’s theology is historical but not historicist in that it . . . locates change in the context of a trinitarian history of salvation with hope in the enduring identity of the substance of inherited faith.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, when Thomas argues, in his evaluation of Rom. 5.2, that through grace those who believe in God have been promised, as he says, “the glory that God has in himself,” and, accordingly, “Our hope for this has been given to us by Christ: *we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and to an inheritance which is incorruptible* (1 Pet 1.3),” he reveals that his metaphysical reflections on the beatific vision are not divorced from his understanding of God’s work of redemptive recreation, but rather rooted in the eschatological anticipation of the work already fulfilled by Christ.<sup>9</sup>

Now, it is possible that Moltmann’s misreading of Thomas is attributable to a much larger, longstanding oversight in Thomist studies, which has been identified by Anna Williams in her observation that, “Accounts of Thomistic eschatology have tended to stress beatific vision alone.”<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the reasons for Moltmann’s misunderstanding, his critique has an all-too-familiar ring to it, since it essentially duplicates the same basic argument seen in Bulgakov’s condemnation of Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas, discussed in the introduction to Chapter Two, which is that he trades the truth of God’s revelation for a metaphysic grounded in Aristotelian and Platonic principles. Consequently, tracing the subtle gestures of the divine ideas

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<sup>6</sup> Moltmann, “Christian Hope,” 333.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John Yocum, eds., *Aquinas on Scripture: A Critical Introduction to His Commentaries* (London: T.& T. Clark, 2005), ix.

<sup>8</sup> Anselm K. Min, *Paths to the Triune God: An Encounter Between Aquinas and Recent Theologies* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 4. Cf. Armand Maurer’s study *St. Thomas and Historicity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1979), 33, which was notably published before Moltmann’s essay, and argues for a reading of Thomas that is similar to the one represented here by Min. Matthew Levering exposes the false dichotomy in Moltmann’s opposition between biblical history and Thomas’s metaphysical inquires when he argues that it is not an imposition on scripture to suggest that it addresses metaphysical concerns “once,” as he says, “one recognizes that ‘metaphysics’ is intellectual judgment about ultimate questions regarding the nature of God and creatures” (*Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004], 41).

<sup>9</sup> *In Rom.* 5, lect. 1, no.385: “Gloria quam Deus habet in seipso . . . Et huiusmodi spes indita est nobis per Christum. I Petr. I, 3 s.: regeneravit nos in spem vivam, per resurrectionem Iesu Christi ex mortuis in haereditatem incorruptibilem.” Cf. *SCG* Bk. 3, ch.153; *Compend. Theol.* 2.4; *In Gal.* 5, lect. 2; *In Eph.* 1, lect. 6; *In Heb.* 9, lect. 1; *Lect. Ioan.* 3, lect. 2. Johnstone’s argument, discussed earlier (§2.4), that the *Summa* should be approached in reverse further undermines Moltmann’s reading of Thomas since, in the *tertia pars*, Thomas explicitly grounds the beginning and end of hope in the death (3a.25.4 s.c.) and resurrection (3a.53.1; 3a.57.1 and 6) of Christ. Thomas’s metaphysical reflections on the nature of hope found earlier in the *Summa* could then be read as his theological exposition of what a person experiences in the virtue of hope, which has been secured in Christ.

<sup>10</sup> A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 46. Williams proceeds to demonstrate in her study that, for Thomas, as she says in the same place, “Deiformity necessarily accompanies the vision of God.”

within Thomas's reflections on the theological virtue of hope provides us with a unique opportunity to challenge the formulaic dichotomy between metaphysics and theology repeatedly projected into Thomas's thought, since his discussions on hope offer what Williams calls, "a microcosmic version of the *Summa Theologiae* itself."<sup>11</sup> While an explicit connection between the divine ideas and the theological virtues is made in *ST* 1a2ae.62.1, where Thomas explains, in his reply to the second objection, that the theological virtues are copies or imitations (*exemplatae*) of the exemplar virtues (*exemplares virtutes*) which "pre-exist in God, just as in him pre-exist the patterns of all things," this is not the link we are interested in at the moment.<sup>12</sup> Instead, the purpose of this chapter is to identify, in particular, how the gesture of the doctrine, which establishes that the true meaning of each person is located within the eternal mind of God (*ST* 1a.18.4 ad.3; §3.3.1), peripherally functions within Thomas's descriptions of the volitional movements of hope and despair to and away from God (*ST* 2a2ae.17.1), but to do so we must first establish some parameters for this discussion by considering Thomas's reflections on the passion of hope and the eschatological reality that hope anticipates.

The first section, then, examines Thomas's discussions on the irascible appetites of hope and despair, which offer not only a general context for interpreting his expositions on the theological virtue of hope and the vice of spiritual despair but also an example of the relation between nature and grace in his theological vision. In the second section, Thomas's argument for humanity's creational disposition to eschatological fulfillment in the beatific vision is analyzed. Specifically, we consider here Thomas's insistence that while humanity's perfection is only realized in the beatific vision, it relates to each person in a unique way. Following this discussion on humanity's eschatological fulfillment, we consider, in the third section, the relation of hope, as a theological virtue, to Thomas's account of humanity's eternal beatitude. There we argue that Thomas's description of hope's movement to God includes certain peripheral gestures to the doctrine of the divine ideas, which indicate that this movement is also a stretching out for the creational actualization of God's eternal idea of the individual. The final section of this chapter continues this line of inquiry into the pattern of Thomas's subtle allusions to the divine ideas by examining his exposition on the nature of spiritual despair, where we discover that Thomas speaks of this vice as not only a withdrawing from God but also a rejection of God's revelation that each person is intentionally created after a likeness in the divine mind.

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<sup>11</sup> Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.61.5: "Oportet igitur quod exemplar humanae virtutis in Deo praeexistat, sicut et in eo praeexistunt omnium rerum rationes."

## 6.1 Supernatural Complement to a Natural Capacity: Some Background Notes

Thomas's discussion on the virtue of hope in his *Compendium theologiae* includes the incisive remark that "hope presupposes desire."<sup>13</sup> This comment notably reveals that Thomas thinks of the theological virtue of hope as a supernatural complement (*ST* 1a2ae.62.2 ad.1) to humanity's natural longing for what is good (*ST* 1a2ae.23.4). Desire, which belongs to the concupiscible passions, is, however, not the same as the irascible appetite of hope, as Thomas makes abundantly clear in *ST* 1a2ae.40.1, where he explains that, unlike desire, the object of hope is a good that is both distant and difficult to attain. Thus, while the virtue of hope presupposes humanity's natural capacity for desiring good, it is the stretching out (*extensio*) of the appetite of hope (*ST* 1a2ae.40.2) that is transformed, through the gift of grace (*ST* 1a2ae.106.1 ad.2), into the virtuous striving of hope for God.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the object of hope being a future good that is difficult to attain, it must, nevertheless, be possible, according to Thomas, to reach, which is what ultimately separates hope from despair (*ST* 1a2ae.50.1). There is, then, a notable symmetry in these irascible appetites, as Kevin White explains, one "may either approach a promising difficult good *as* good, in hope, or fall away from it *as* unreachable, in despair," which reappears in Thomas's discussions on the virtue of hope and the vice of despair (*ST* 2a2ae.17.1).<sup>15</sup> Despite these parallels, the irascible appetite is incapable of ascending to the heights of the virtue of hope or falling to the depths of spiritual despair (*ST* 2a2ae.17.1) since the virtuous ascent of hope and the sinful withdrawing of despair directly manifest one's relation to humanity's metaphysical aspiration for fulfillment (*ST* 1a2ae.63.3 ad.1). The natural dispositions of hope and despair, nevertheless, tell us not only about the nature of the movements in their religious counterparts, but also about humanity's creationally constituted metaphysical orientation to eschatological culmination.<sup>16</sup>

First, the irascible appetites of hope and despair uniquely express the *status viatoris* of humanity's temporal existence because they designate, in the words of Josef Pieper, "the

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<sup>13</sup> *Compend. Theol.* 2.7: "Spes desiderium praesupponit." This phrase also appears in *Sent.* III, d.26, q.2, a.3, qc.2 and *ST* 1a2ae.40.1, but unlike these instances, where Thomas is discussing the irascible passion of hope, the context of the discussion in the *Compendium* is the virtue of hope.

<sup>14</sup> To avoid confusion here, I am not suggesting that the natural perfection of the passion of hope is the theological virtue of hope since Thomas is quite clear elsewhere in the *Summa* that the moral virtue of magnanimity is the natural fulfillment of this irascible appetite (*ST* 2a2ae.17.5 ad.4; 2a2ae.129.1 ad.2). Instead, grace elevates the natural movements of our will to reach out for an end that lies beyond our natural appetites. See, Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 227–9.

<sup>15</sup> Kevin White, "The Passions of the Soul," in *Essays on Aquinas's Ethics*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 109.

<sup>16</sup> The use of "religious" here reflects the broader sense of the word identified in *ST* 2a2ae.81, where Thomas says that it "denotes properly a relation to God" (*proprie importat ordinem ad Deum*), rather than its more narrow use for the monastic or celibate life discussed in *ST* 2a2ae.184-189.

innermost structure of created nature . . . the inherent ‘not yet’ of the finite being.”<sup>17</sup> Clearly, then, these natural dispositions carry metaphysical connotations, but, according to Torrell, this is because, “In Thomas’s eyes, no creature in the universe is what it ought to be from the start; it does not reach fulfillment except at the end of an evolution and it ‘desires’ this expansion of its whole being.”<sup>18</sup> As Thomas explains, in his reflections on the seventh day of creation, which we have already seen (§3.3.2), “For any being there are two kinds of completeness, initial and evolved . . . The second kind of completeness is the goal that the thing is to achieve,” and, he argues, “this consummation pre-existed causally, on the side of nature, at the first forming of things.”<sup>19</sup> Far from creating a simple ontology of desire that is detached from the biblical narrative, as Moltmann argues, Thomas situates his understanding of the “not yet,” which characterizes the appetitive movements of hope and despair, at the very beginning of biblical history (*ST* 1a.95.3). Second, we also learn from Thomas’s descriptions of hope and despair that while the passion of hope cannot unite us to God, humanity’s natural capacity for it ensures that we are oriented to God, since he is the source of all that is good (*ST* 1a.6.1 ad.1), in such a way that what we experience in the theological virtue of hope is divinely adapted from our natural powers (*ST* 1a2ae.62.3).<sup>20</sup> Although much more could be said about the metaphysical implications of Thomas’s thought on the irascible appetites of hope and despair, these notes on what their distinct traits reveal about humanity’s creational constitution should be sufficient for our purposes.<sup>21</sup> In order, however, to avoid confusion here, it is worth saying a little more about the distinction between the passion and the virtue of hope since, as we will see below (§6.3 and

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<sup>17</sup> Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Richard Winston, Clara Winston, and Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 93. Cf. Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 69; Charles Pinches, “On Hope,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 351.

<sup>18</sup> Torrell, *Spiritual Master*, 327.

<sup>19</sup> *ST* 1a.73.1: “Quod duplex est rei perfectio, prima et secunda . . . Perfectio autem secunda est finis.” *ST* 1a.73.1 ad.1: “Ista consummatio praecessit causaliter, quantum ad naturam quidem, in prima rerum institutione.”

<sup>20</sup> In *ST* 3a.1.3 ad.2 Thomas insists that “Ad perfectionem etiam universi sufficit quod naturali modo creatura ordinetur sic in Deum sicut in finem. Hoc autem excedit limites perfectionis naturae ut creatura uniatur Deo in persona.” Cf. Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 99. It is also worth noting that at this point we have wandered into the territory of the highly contentious topic of Thomas’s position on the hypothetical state of pure nature. I will leave the relation of this topic to our current discussion for a future project since to properly delve into it here would significantly alter the path we are on. Those familiar with the debate, however, should be able to discern my stance. For overviews of this topic from both sides of the debate, see Steven A. Long, “On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End for Man,” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 211–37; John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (London: SCM Press, 2005); David Braine, “The Debate between Henri de Lubac and His Critics,” *Nova et Vetera (English)* 6 (2008): 543–89; Nicholas J. Healy III, “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace: A Note on Some Recent Contributions to the Debate,” *Communio* 35 (2008): 535–64; Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 129–247.

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion on the passions of hope and despair specifically, see Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 215–27; Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 149–51.

§6.4), the theological virtue of hope and the vice of spiritual despair are defined by the same characteristics as their irascible counterparts.

According to Thomas, both the concupiscible and the irascible passions are movements within the sensitive appetite (*ST* 1a2ae.22.3), which represents humanity's basic inclination to pursue or avoid objects apprehended through the senses (*ST* 1a.81.2; 1a2ae.23.1).<sup>22</sup> Thomas insists that the varied responses of the irascible appetites to these objects "display no elements of repose, only those of movement"; however, since, as Thomas notes, "all movement is directed towards some ultimate point of rest," the irascible appetites find their end in the repose of the concupiscible passions.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the passion of hope comes to rest in the concupiscible passion of joy (*ST* 1a2ae.25.1) while despair terminates in sorrow (*ST* 1a2ae.25.3).<sup>24</sup> Strictly speaking, then, the irascible passions of hope and despair are movements that remain within humanity's sensitive appetite. In contrast, Thomas argues that "because the virtue of hope is concerned with the divine good as its proper object rather than with any good on the level of sense, its act cannot engage the sensitive appetite. Its subject, then, is rather the superior appetite called the will and not the inferior appetite where the irascible belongs."<sup>25</sup> This identification of the rational appetite as the seat of the theological virtue of hope follows Thomas's reflections in *ST* 1a2ae.56.6, where he concludes, "If what confronts a man's will is a good which exceeds its capability, whether of the whole human race, such as the divine good, which transcends the limits of human nature, or of the individual, such as the good of one's neighbour, there the will

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas defines the sensitive appetite in *ST* 1a.81.2, where he says: "Quia appetitus sensitivus est inclinatio consequens apprehensionem sensitivam, necesse est quod in parte sensitiva sint duae appetitivae potentiae. Una, per quam anima simpliciter inclinatur ad prosequendum ea quae sunt convenientia secundum sensum, et ad refugendum nociva, et haec dicitur concupiscibilis. Alia vero, per quam animal resistit impugnantibus, quae convenientia impugnant et nocumenta inferunt, et haec vis vocatur irascibilis. Unde dicitur quod eius obiectum est arduum, quia scilicet tendit ad hoc quod superet contraria, et superemineat eis." Cf. *De ver.* 25.1; *ST* 1a2ae.23.1. For a detailed discussion on Thomas's understanding of the sensitive appetite, see Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 13–28.

<sup>23</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.25.1: "In passionibus irascibilis non invenitur aliquid pertinens ad quietem, sed solum pertinens ad motum . . . Quies autem, cum sit finis motus." Thomas concludes his argument in this article with the remark: "Passiones irascibilis et principium habent a passionibus concupiscibilis, et in passiones concupiscibilis terminantur." Cf. *Sent.* III, d.27, q.1, a.2; *De ver.* 35.2; 26.5; *Sent. de Anima* 3.14. Accordingly, the irascible appetites, for Thomas, shape humanity's fundamental psychological responses to the concupiscible passions. For more on Thomas's general assessments of the irascible appetites and their separation from the concupiscible passions, see Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a 75-89* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 240–3; Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 239–55; Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 213ff.; Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 50–4 and 62–74.

<sup>24</sup> For an excellent diagram that outlines the movements of hope and despair to their respective ends in the concupiscible passions of joy and sorrow, see Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 86.

<sup>25</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.18.1: "Actus autem virtutis spei non potest pertinere ad appetitum sensitivum, quia bonum quod est obiectum principale huius virtutis non est aliquod bonum sensibile, sed bonum divinum. Et ideo spes est in appetitu superiori, qui dicitur voluntas, sicut in subiecto, non autem in appetitu inferiori, ad quem pertinet irascibilis." The vice of spiritual despair is also principally located in the rational appetite, or will, since it is a habit or a principle of movement away from God (*ST* 1a2ae.59.1 ad.2; 2a2ae.20.3).



needs a virtue.”<sup>26</sup> The virtue of hope and the vice of despair are, therefore, habits of the will (*ST* 1a2ae.55.1) characterized by either a virtuous ascent to or sinful withdrawing from the eschatological promise of participation in the divine life, and, to reiterate, it is the goal of this chapter to identify how Thomas’s peripheral application of the divine ideas in his reflections on humanity’s movements to or away from God can help his readers make sense of the metaphysical mechanics at work in their personal experiences of hope and despair. Yet, before proceeding to our discussion on the virtue of hope itself, it would be beneficial to look more carefully at Thomas thought on the nature of humanity’s ultimate fulfillment because the virtue of hope actually enables humanity to strive for this end.

## 6.2 Eschatological Fulfillment: Humanity’s Happy Ending

Regardless of the structural motif one favors (§2.4), nearly every formulation of the *Summa*’s structure includes the idea that the progression of the work parallels, in some way, the journey of human life to its ultimate fulfillment in the beatific vision.<sup>27</sup> The convergence of the *Summa*’s developmental ascent with the journey of human life is, however, not surprising since, for Thomas, there is a direct correlation between, what could be called, the theotic spiral of *sacra doctrina*’s pedagogical praxis and the eschatological anticipation of humanity’s creational formation after the image of God.<sup>28</sup> As beings created after the image of God, we are all,

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<sup>26</sup> “Si quod bonum immineat homini volendum, quod excedat proportionem volentis; sive quantum ad totam speciem humanam, sicut bonum divinum, quod transcendit limites humanae naturae, sive quantum ad individuum, sicut bonum proximi; ibi voluntas indiget virtute.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. A. N. Williams, “Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*,” *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 59. Torrell’s remarks on the record kept by Bartholomew of Capua of the transformation Thomas underwent at Mass on December 6 1273, which resulted in him ceasing work on the *Summa* in the middle of the *tertia pars*, suggest that the angelic doctor’s own life bears witness to this intersection. Thomas is reported to have said after that Mass, “I cannot do any more. Everything I have written seems to me as straw in comparison with what I have seen” (cited in Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, trans. R. Royal, Revised edition, vol. 1 [Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996], 289; French original, *L’Initiation à Saint Thomas d’Aquin: sa personne et son oeuvre* [Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1993]). Concerning this comment, Torrell states, “Straw is a stock expression used to distinguish, by giving it proper weight, the grain of reality within the chaff of the words; the words are not the reality, but they designate it and they lead to it. Having arrived at reality itself, Thomas had a certain right to feel himself detached with respect to the words, but this does not at all signify that he considers his work as without value. Simply put, he had gone beyond it” (Torrell, *The Person and His Work*, 293). Thus, Thomas’s work gave way to the very vision of God that the *Summa* was pedagogically designed to guide its readers toward. On the epideictic nature of this report and the hermeneutical significance of this event, see Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, “Chaff: Thomas Aquinas’s Repudiation of His *Opera Omnia*,” *New Literary History* 28 (1997): 383–99; Peter A. Kwasniewski, “Golden Straw: St. Thomas and the Ecstatic Practice of Theology,” *Nova et Vetera (English)* 2 (2004): 61–90.

<sup>28</sup> For the formation of this correlation across the *Summa*, cf. 1a.93.2; 1a.93.4; 1a.93.7; 1a.103.6; 2a2ae.180.6; 2a2ae.188.6; 3a.9.2 ad.2. This argument is developed with tremendous precision by Eugene Rogers in “Thomas Aquinas on Knowing and Coming to Know: The Beatific Vision and Learning from Contingency,” in *Creation and the God of Abraham*, ed. David B. Burrell, C.S.C. et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 238–58, esp. 240–2. Vivian Boland also offers an excellent account of this position in “Truth, Knowledge and Communication: Thomas Aquinas on the Mystery of Teaching,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006): 287–304. To date the definitive study on Thomas’s doctrine of deification is Anna Williams’s *The Ground of Union*, 34–101. Also

according to Thomas, providentially oriented (*ST* 1a.22.1) to pursue happiness as the end or goal of life “for it signifies,” as he says, “perfect goodness”;<sup>29</sup> yet, the end of this pursuit, and consequently, the end for which each person was created, is only reached in the beatific vision (*ST* 1a.94.1), where God, who is goodness itself (*ST* 1a.19.1 ad.1), is seen “face to face” (1 Cor. 13.12). As noted earlier (§2.3), this is not possible in this life since we will only “see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3.2) when, as Thomas states, “we are made deiform, that is, like to God.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, humanity’s creational disposition to seek the good is a universal reality (*ST* 1a2ae.1.2 ad.3) that is rooted in God’s providential work of guiding everyone toward, what Thomas calls, the “likeness of glory” (*similitudo gloriae*) in *ST* 1a.93.5.<sup>31</sup>

Thomas elaborates on the nature of this likeness in his reply to an objection that humanity’s perfection is established in being created after the image of God. He writes, “Since God’s substance is his activity, the highest likeness of man to God relates to some operation. Consequently, happiness or beatitude, by which a man is made most perfectly conformed to God, and which is the fulfillment of human life, is an activity.”<sup>32</sup> While Thomas clearly attributes this activity to the intellectual contemplation of the beatific vision (*ST* 1a2ae.3.4; *Lect. Ioan.* 17, lect. 1, no.2186), it is not a vision of God, contrary to Moltmann, devoid of our bodily nature. Rather, according to Thomas, for the beatitude of the beatific vision to be complete (*omnibus modis perfectam*) it “requires the well-being of the body, both before and during its activity,” which occurs only after the resurrection when our “bodies will be called enspirited” because “In perfect bliss the whole man is fulfilled, his lower levels by the higher brimming over.”<sup>33</sup> The pursuit of

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see, Matthew Levering, “Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 (2007): 48–50. For a brief but insightful description of Thomas’s doctrine of the *imago dei*, see Gilles Emery, O.P., “Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise in Augustine and Aquinas,” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, trans. John Baptist Ku, O.P. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 5–10.

<sup>29</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.5.8: “Ratio autem beatitudinis communis est ut sit bonum perfectum.”

<sup>30</sup> *ST* 1a.12.5: “. . . efficiuntur deiformes, id est, Deo similes.” In order to avoid some common misconceptions about the doctrine of deification, it is worth noting that in *ST* 1a.4.3, 1a.42.1 ad.3, and many other places Thomas expressly denies the notion that any creature is or can become ontologically like God. For helpful introductions to the historical and doctrinal developments of deification in both Eastern and Western theological traditions, see the essays in Michael Christensen and Jeffery Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *SCG* Bk. 4, ch. 55. Carlo Leget, *Living with God: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation between Life on Earth and “Life” after Death* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 127–8.

<sup>32</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.55.2 ad.3: “cum Dei substantia sit eius actio, summa assimilatio hominis ad Deum est secundum aliquam operationem. Unde, sicut supra dictum est, felicitas sive beatitudo, per quam homo maxime Deo conformatur, quae est finis humanae vitae, in operatione consistit.” Some questions later (*ST* 1a2ae.61.5), Thomas declares that the activity of the cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, courage, and justice) characterize humanity’s movement toward this likeness of God, which culminate in the virtues of the blessed, who have “already achieved divine likeness” (*assequendum divinam similitudinem*). Cf. *ST* 3a.7.2 where Christ is said to possess these virtues of the *purgati animi*. On this point, see István P. Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 216–8.

<sup>33</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.4.6: “[Beatitudo] . . . requiritur perfecta dispositio corporis et antecedenter et consequenter.” *ST* 1a.97.4: “[Nostri] corpora *spiritualia* dicentur.” *ST* 1a2ae.3.3 ad.3: “In perfecta beatitudine perficitur totus homo,

likeness to God in his glory is therefore one of ascending actualization (*ST* 1a2ae.1.6) in the *totus homo*, whereby one moves from being only potentially active (*potentia operans*) to active (*operatio*) by imitating the trinitarian life of God in a dyadic motion of reception and relational impartation of goodness (*ST* 1a.103.4).<sup>34</sup>

Although the goal in this pursuit is the same for everyone (*ST* 1a2ae.3.1), Thomas argues, “The mind that has a greater share in the light of glory will see God more perfectly . . . and will be more blessed.”<sup>35</sup> There is, then, for Thomas, a gradation in the enjoyment of the beatific vision (*ST* 1a.12.4); yet, this gradation does not imply that those who have a smaller share in the light of glory remain, in the final state, somehow imperfect since, according to Thomas, “Each thing is perfect inasmuch as it is actual, for what is potential is still imperfect. Happiness, therefore, must go with man’s culminating actuality.”<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, complete actualization is the eschatological realization of one’s ultimate likeness to God, but only to the degree determined by God’s ordination, which Thomas reiterates in his rather candid remark, “The way along which each rational creature is led to ultimate bliss is a way that ends, according to God’s design, in this or that degree of bliss. And this once attained, there is no going further.”<sup>37</sup>

Thomas’s conclusion that God intentionally gradates humanity’s eschatological perfection also emphasizes the individual diversification of this culminating beatitude in his claim, “Each and every creature stretches out to its own completion, which is a resemblance of divine

sed in inferiori parte per redundantiam a superiori.” This notion of enspirited body derives from 1 Cor. 15.44 (cf. *In ad 1 Cor.* 15, lect. 7, no.989-1000), where Paul writes, “Seminator corpus animale surgit corpus spiritale si est corpus animale est et spiritale spiritale.” Thomas’s interpretation of this text (cf. *In ad 1 Cor.* 15, lect. 7, no.989-1000) largely parallels Augustine’s discussion on the distinction between the ensouled body (*corpus animale*) and the enspirited body (*corpus spiritale*) in *De Gen. litt.* VI, 30-39.

<sup>34</sup> In this twofold motion of reception and impartation, creation analogously imitates the perichoretic life of the Trinity since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share with one another the knowledge and love of the divine essence (*ST* 1a.42.5), which the Son and Holy Spirit eternally receive as a gift from the Father (*ST* 1a.27.2 ad.4). Cf. W. Norris Clarke, “To Be Is to Be Substance-in-Relation,” in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, and Person* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 119–20. On the importance of humanity relationally imparting goodness to others, Michael Hoonhout observes, “Aquinas takes this participation on the part of creatures so seriously that the vast majority of the discussion of divine government — more than three fourths of the questions — is dedicated to explaining the contributive role of creatures in the unfolding and execution of divine providence” (“Grounding Providence in the Theology of the Creator: The Exemplarity of Thomas Aquinas,” *The Heythrop Journal* 43 [2002], 5).

<sup>35</sup> *ST* 1a.12.6: “Intellectus plus participans de lumine gloriae perfectius Deum videbit . . . et beatior erit.” The various points we have been dealing with here are drawn together in the *sed contra* to this article where Thomas writes, “Vita aeterna in visione Dei consistit, secundum illud Ioan. (17.3), *haec est vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solum Deum*. Ergo, si omnes aequaliter Dei essentiam vident, in vita aeterna omnes erunt aequales. Cuius contrarium dicit apostolus (I Cor. 15.41) *stella differt a stella in claritate*.” Cf. *ST* 1a.113.2 ad.3.

<sup>36</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.3.2: “Unumquodque autem intantum perfectum est in quantum est actu; nam potentia since actu imperfecta est. Oportet ergo beatitudinem in ultimo acut hominis consistere.” Cf. *ST* 1a.12.1; 1a.62.1; 1a2ae.5.2 ad.3. Also see the discussions in, Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 52 and 252; Matthew Levering, *Paul in the Summa Theologiae* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 11–2.

<sup>37</sup> *ST* 1a.62.9: “Unaquaeque creatura rationalis a Deo perducitur ad finem beatitudinis, ut etiam ad determinatum gradum beatitudinis perducatur ex praedestinatione Dei. Unde consecuto illo gradu, ad altioerem transire non potest.”

fullness and excellence.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, when Thomas asserts, “Men are called blessed in this life either because of their hope of gaining happiness in the future life – *By hope we are saved* (Rom. 8.24) – or because of some participation of happiness anticipating our joy in the supreme good,” his insistence on the divinely ordained gradation of this end excludes the idea that the essence of this happiness is a generic eschatological reality.<sup>39</sup> Instead, Thomas affirms that the essence is a creaturely reality relative to the individual, as noted in *ST* 1a2ae.5.2 where he comments on Jn. 14.2 (“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places”) that, “The many mansions signify the diversity of happiness with regard to the various degrees of enjoyment in its subjects.”<sup>40</sup>

What all of these gestures amount to is a pattern in the *Summa*’s discussions on humanity’s eschatological transformation into “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1.4) in which the promise of eternal life elevates the life of the wayfarer toward a vision of God that is both universal and particular.<sup>41</sup> Following the pattern that emerges from the texts cited above, this promise is depicted as an eschatological anticipation of a participatory likeness to God not yet actualized in the individual, but, nonetheless, suited to each person’s created measure of eternal beatitude as both a personal and an ontological union with God (*ST*. 1a2ae.110.3; 2a2ae.23.1, 23.2 ad.1). The theological dynamics at work in Thomas’s reflections on the intersection between humanity’s pilgrimage toward eternal beatitude and its fulfillment translate the “not yet” of this life into the eschatological anticipation of *sacra doctrina* “inherent,” as Carlo Leget argues, “in the consideration of every theme that is questioned with respect to God (*sub ratione Dei*),” and, subsequently, “the horizon of our reflection and the theological expression of the object of our hope.”<sup>42</sup> With a sense of the eschatological horizon in the *Summa*’s theological discourse before us, it is now possible to begin examining the point on the crest where Thomas quietly situates the doctrine of the divine ideas in order to give a theological voice to the personal experience of being drawn into the fullness of dynamic union with God.

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<sup>38</sup> *ST* 1a.44.4: “Unaquaeque creatura intendit consequi suam perfectionem, quae est similitudo perfectionis et bonitatis divinae.”

<sup>39</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.5.3 ad.1: “Beati dicuntur aliqui in hac vita, vel propter spem beatitudinis adipiscendae in futura vita, secundum illud Rom. (8.24), spe salvi facti sumus, vel propter aliquam participationem beatitudinis, secundum aliqualem summi boni fruitionem.”

<sup>40</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.5.2 ad.1: “Diversitas mansionum significant diversitatem beatitudinis secundum diversum gradum fruitionis.” Thomas further comments on the implications of this passage in *Lect. Ioan.* 14, lect. 1, no.1852-1862 and *In 2 Cor.* 5, lect. 1, no.153-156.

<sup>41</sup> This passage from 2 Peter is a key text in Patristic and Medieval soteriologies of deification, and while Thomas only cites it a handful of times throughout the *Summa*, he does so at pivotal points within the work’s development. For more on the theological significance of this text for Thomas, see Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 34; Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 153–5; Brian Davies, “Happiness,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 233.

<sup>42</sup> Carlo Leget, “Eschatology,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 370 and 381.

### 6.3 Motus Spei: Incedens Deo et Divinae Ideae Sui Ipsius

While there is a scattering of references to the virtue of hope throughout the *Summa*, including Thomas's introduction to the theological virtues in *ST* 1a2ae.62, the treatise on the virtue begins in question 17 of the *secunda secundae*. In the first article of question 17, Thomas differentiates the motion of the virtue from the passion of hope. Citing Aristotle for support, Thomas explains that a virtue is something that causes its possessor to be good and to perform well, which hope accomplishes, according to Thomas, because "In as much as we hope for something as possible to us through divine help, our hope reaches God himself, upon whose help it relies."<sup>43</sup> Hope, then, brings about, what for Thomas is, "a personal relationship with God as the source whence other good things come our way," because it is, as he subsequently states, "a cleaving to God as source of absolute goodness, since hope is reliance on God's help to bring us to beatitude."<sup>44</sup> Thomas's account of hope's dependence on God for attaining its goal expresses two aspects of the virtue's character. First, despite the goal being distant and difficult to reach, hope's reliance on God ensures that it will attain the beatitude it strives for (*Lect. Ioan.* 3, lect. 2, no.471; 6, lect. 6, no.950). Second, by emphasizing the need for God's help, Thomas reinforces the point noted in our discussion on the passion of hope (§6.1) that the virtue and its goal exceed humanity's natural powers (*ST* 2a2ae.17.5 ad.4).

Although there are no explicit appeals to the doctrine of the divine ideas in Thomas's descriptions of these two characteristic features of the virtue, the doctrine does emerge through various subtle gestures that follow from them, which are perhaps intended to be understood only after one is immersed in the habit of thinking theologically that the *Summa* is pedagogically designed to instill in the reader. There are, however, some more obvious indicators of the doctrine located within his treatise on hope worth noting because they confirm that Thomas, at least, has the doctrine in mind while composing this section of the *Summa*. For instance, in question 19, on the gift of fear, Thomas states, "Chaste or filial fear is the beginning of wisdom (knowledge of divine things), as the first manifestation of wisdom. For it is the work of wisdom to regulate human life according to divine norms (*rationes divinas*), and the first indications of this is that man's reverence for God and subjection to him, with the result that in all things a person will be ruled by God."<sup>45</sup> The virtue of hope and gift of fear are united, by Thomas, as mutually

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<sup>43</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.17.1: "In quantum speramus aliquid ut possibile nobis per divinum auxilium, spes nostra attingit ad ipsum Deum, cuius auxilio innititur." Thomas cites Aristotle's *Nic. Eth.* II, 6. 1106a15.

<sup>44</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.17.6: "[Spes facit] hominem inhaerere Deo sicut cuidam principio ex quo aliqua nobis proveniunt . . . Spes facit Deo adhaerere prout est nobis principium perfectae bonitatis, in quantum scilicet per spem divino auxilio innititur ad beatitudinem obtinendam."

<sup>45</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.19.7: "Timor autem castus vel filialis est initium sapientiae (cognitio divinatorum) sicut primus sapientiae effectus. Cum enim ad sapientiam pertineat quod humana vita reguletur secundum rationes divinas, hinc

reinforcing dispositions (*ST* 2a2ae.19.9 ad.1) in humanity's pursuit of beatitude because they both revere and depend on God as the source of the good (*ST* 2a2ae.141.1 ad.3), but while hope relies on God to fulfill the promise of eternal life, filial fear serves as a sober reminder of creation's contingency, which eradicates the presumption of equality with God (*ST* 2a2ae.19.10 ad.3).<sup>46</sup> What is of particular interest to us here, however, are Thomas's references to "divine norms" (*rationes divinas*) and the description of wisdom as "the knowledge of divine things" (*divinorum*) in *ST* 2a2ae.19.7, because in other places these terms are identified with the divine ideas. For example in *ST* 2a2ae.45.3, Thomas cites a passage from Augustine's *De Trinitate* where Augustine proposes, "The mind of man does not remain the image of God except in the part which adheres to the eternal ideas to contemplate or consult them."<sup>47</sup> Thomas proceeds to equate Augustine's reference to the divine ideas with the *contemplatio divinorum* and the *rationes divinas*, thereby confirming that the discussion in *ST* 2a2ae.19.7 falls within the scope of Thomas's understanding of the divine ideas.<sup>48</sup>

A second reference to the doctrine of the divine ideas is located in Thomas's discussion on the sin of presumption in *ST* 2a2ae.21.1, which Thomas describes as "a groundless hope that God will bestow something unfitting to his own nature."<sup>49</sup> Presumption opposes genuine hope because it disregards the fear that recognizes the precariousness that characterizes the potentiality of humanity's existence (*ST* 2a2ae.130.2 ad.1) and instead claims an equality with God that assumes the fulfillment of salvation is somehow accessible in this life (*ST* 2a2ae.21.4). Thomas concludes that presumption is, then, "tantamount to a person being turned away from

oportet sumere principium, ut homo Deum revereatur et se ei subiiciat, sic enim consequenter in omnibus secundum Deum regulabitur."

<sup>46</sup> On the relation between hope and fear, see Luc-Thomas Somme, "L'amour Parfait Chasse-t-il Toute Crainte? Le Rôle Joué Par L'expression Timor Filialis Dans L'œuvre de Saint Thomas d'Aquin," in *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris: Image et Message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin à Travers Les Recentes Etudes Historiques, Hermeneutiques et Doctrinales*, ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1993), 303–20; Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 129; Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*, 157.

<sup>47</sup> Augustine, *De Trin.* XII.12: "Non maneat imago dei nisi ex qua parte mens hominis aeternis rationibus conspiciendis uel consulendis adhaerescit." Cf. *ST* 1a.79.9 and 1a2ae.74.7. Augustine prefers to speak of the divine ideas as God's eternal reasons (*aeternae rationes*). See, Vivian Boland, O.P., *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 39; Wendy Petersen Boring, "Revising Our Approach to 'Augustinian Illumination': A Reconsideration of Bonaventure's Quaestiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi IV, Aquinas's Summa Theologiae Ia.84, 1-8, and Henry of Ghent's, Summa Quaestionum Ordinarum, Q. 2, Art. 1, 2," *Franciscan Studies* 68 (2010): 50. It is worth noting that Thomas also references this section of Augustine's *De Trinitate* in the passage cited from *ST* 2a2ae.19.7.

<sup>48</sup> For those that might object to this reading of *ST* 2a2ae.19.7 because Thomas's use of *ratio* and *divinus* (cf. §4.1) is not limited to the connection presented in *ST* 2a2ae.45.3, there are two points to consider. First, the references to wisdom in *ST* 2a2ae.19.7 clearly prefigure Thomas's discussion in *ST* 2a2ae.45, where the relation between the divine ideas and divine wisdom is prominently featured. Second, filial fear concerns the relation of creation's contingency to God, which is the space in which Thomas theologically situates the doctrine of the divine ideas, as his reply to *De Veritate* 3.2 obj.2 confirms: "Sed idea de suo principali intellectu habet aliquid aliud praeter essentiam, scilicet ipsam proportionem creaturae ad essentiam." Cf. John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas," in *The Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas*, Etienne Gilson Series 30 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 140.

<sup>49</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.21.2 ad.2: "sed ex hoc quod sperat de Deo aliquid quod Deo non convenit."

divine truth.”<sup>50</sup> Divine truth is, for Thomas, a broad notion that encompasses what God is, knows and reveals, including the divine ideas (*ST* 1a.84.5 s.c.; 1a.87.1), and since presumption is specifically a rejection of the fear that belongs to the knowledge of divine things (*divinorum*), it is certain that this reference in *ST* 2a2ae.21.1 includes the divine ideas. Another clear indication that Thomas has the doctrine of the divine ideas in mind while writing the treatise on hope is the reference to the divine law in *ST* 2a2ae.22.1. Since hope is a movement of the will toward God (*ST* 2a2ae.18.1), it must, Thomas explains, “rely upon the assurance found in the divine law.”<sup>51</sup> Now, in his reply to the question on what the eternal or divine law is, Thomas emphatically states, as we saw in the previous chapter (§5.3), “The eternal law is nothing other than the exemplar of divine wisdom as directing the motions and actions of everything.”<sup>52</sup> While these three instances from the *Summa*’s treatise on hope confirm that the doctrine of the divine ideas is present in Thomas’s thought on the infused virtue, to clarify the doctrine’s role in his theological exposition on the movement of hope, we must take a closer look at his reflections on the object of hope.

Thomas’s insistence that the goal toward which the virtue of hope moves is both attainable and transcendent is rooted in his understanding of the very object after which it strives. He identifies this object with greater clarity in *ST* 2a2ae.17.2, where he writes, “[W]e should hope for nothing less from God than his very self; his goodness, by which he confers good upon creaturely things, is nothing less than his own being. And so the proper and principal object of hope is indeed eternal blessedness.”<sup>53</sup> Since there is no potentiality in God (*ST* 1a.3.4), Thomas’s argument here suggests that the reality upon which hope rests is not the possibility of beatitude, but the promise that it is already secured in God, which is, according to Thomas, guaranteed by Christ, who has fixed our hope beyond the veil of this life (*In Heb.* 6, lect. 4, no.325). Hope, consequently, may be described as humanity’s volitional act of stretching out for eschatological fulfillment in the beatific vision; however, because this final end is related to each person in a unique way (§6.2), the virtue of hope, as Thomas explains, “is directly set upon personal well-being.”<sup>54</sup> Because the object of hope is, as Thomas argues, both secured in God and unique to every individual, there must be, then, a particular reality or actuality in the divine mind that corresponds to the movement of hope in each person (*ST* 1a2ae.62.1; 2a2ae.18.4). While Thomas avoids delving into the theocentric metaphysical mechanics at work in the *Summa*’s

<sup>50</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.21.1 ad.3: “Hoc enim avertitur homo a veritate divina.”

<sup>51</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.22.1 ad.1: “Induci auctoritate legis divinae.”

<sup>52</sup> *ST* 1a2ae.93.1: “Hoc lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae, secundum quod est directiva omnium actuum et motionum.” Cf. *Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 4, n.118; 12, lect. 8, n.1723.

<sup>53</sup> “Non enim minus aliquid ab eo sperandum est quam sit ipse, cum non sit minor eius bonitas, per quam bona creaturae communicat, quam eius essentia. Et ideo proprium et principale obiectum spei est beatitudo aeterna.”

<sup>54</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.17.3: “Spes directe respicit proprium bonum.”

treatise on hope, his remark in the first article of the exposition that, “all things are subject to regulation and measure, their being good is reckoned on the basis of their reaching the rule proper to them,”<sup>55</sup> acts as a subtle gesture to remind the reader that the framework for discerning the intelligibility of his reflections on this virtue has already been given in the doctrine of the divine ideas (§5.2.1). We may therefore conclude that because the intentional similitudes for all things and all activities are identical to the divine essence (*ST* 1a.15.1 ad.3), the movement of hope toward God himself is also a movement toward the realization or creational actualization of God’s eternal idea for the individual.<sup>56</sup>

It would perhaps be helpful to note, or, at least, reiterate within the current context, that hope, being rooted in the knowledge of faith (*ST* 2a2ae.4.1), does not pierce the veil of God’s incomprehensibility (§2.3.3); thus, like the ascent of faith, the movement of hope in each person approaches God and the creational actualization of one’s divine idea in eternal beatitude through the veiled mirror of the incarnation (*In Col.* 2, lect. 1, no.82).<sup>57</sup> While the christological orientation in Thomas’s understanding of the theological virtues (*ST* 3a.1.2) recalls our discussion on the christoform arc in the structure of the *Summa* (§2.4), it also directs our attention to another instance where Thomas employs the doctrine of the divine ideas to codify a theological grammar for the beliefs implicit in the language of faith. In his response to the question of whether it was most fitting (*conueniens*) for the Son of God to assume human nature (cf. §4.2), Thomas writes:

It was most fitting for the Son of God to become incarnate . . . Now the Person of the Son, who is the Word of God, has a general affinity with all creatures because the craftsman’s mental word, i.e., his idea, is a pattern for whatever he fashions; so too the Word, God’s eternal conception, is the exemplar for all creation. Creatures are first established, though changeably, in their proper kinds by a sharing in that likeness; similarly, it is fitting that creatures be restored to their eternal and changeless perfection through the Word’s being united, not participatively, but in person with the creature. The

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<sup>55</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.17.1: “Omnibus [sunt] regulatis et mensuratis bonum consideratur per hoc quod aliquid propriam regulam attingit.” This passage reiterates Thomas’s claim in *ST* 2a2ae.8.3 ad.3, where he says, “Regula humanorum actuum est et ratio humana et lex aeterna, ut supra dictum est. Lex autem aeterna excedit naturalem rationem. Et ideo cognitio humanorum actuum secundum quod regulantur a lege aeterna, excedit rationem naturalem, et indiget supernaturali lumine doni spiritus sancti.” Cf. *ST* 1a2ae.62.1. Also see John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159.

<sup>56</sup> In a similar fashion, Sarah Borden Sharkey notes, in a comment on her observation, “[T]he act of existence is given shape by being an orientation towards a particular kind of fullness,” that, “Articulated this way, the divine ideas act strikingly like Whiteheadian ‘lures’ for the development of actual entities” (“How Can Being Be Limited?: W. Norris Clarke on Thomas’s ‘Limitation of Act by Potency,’” *The Saint Anselm Journal* 7 [2009]: 17 n.20).

<sup>57</sup> On the cognitive dimension of hope in relation to faith, see Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 128; Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*, 156.



craftsman repairs his own work when it has been damaged on the same mental model he used in making it.<sup>58</sup>

God's work of redemptive recreation is fittingly executed, according to this passage, through the Son because, as we have already seen (§4.4), the Father contemplates the exemplars for all creation in his Word.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, even though the object of hope surpasses our natural capacities, the fullness of God, including the exemplar ideas for every individual, are hidden in Christ (*In Col.* 2, lect. 1, no.81; §4.3); therefore, the soteriological expression of hope (*spe enim salvi facti sumus*) is, for Thomas, existentially realized by turning towards Christ, in whom the eternal essence of God and the ideas for all creation, while veiled, shine brightly (*Lect. Ioan.* 1, lect. 3, no.105). With this notion that the movement of hope is a turning in Christ toward God and his eternal idea of the individual, it is now time for us to consider briefly what one withdraws from in despair.

#### 6.4 Spiritual Despair: Denying One's True Meaning

The formidable and destructive nature of spiritual despair was a prominent topic in patristic and medieval works on the spiritual life. For example, John Cassian, whose works both directly and indirectly shaped much of Western monasticism, wrote of despair, in contrast with what may be called an ascetic or godly sadness, "There is another kind of sadness, which is more detestable. It inspires in the wrongdoer not amendment of life or correction of vice but the most pernicious despair of the soul. It did not cause Cain to repent after his brother's murder or Judas to hasten to healing and reparation after the betrayal; instead it drew him to hang himself with a noose in his despair,"<sup>60</sup> and it is on this type of sadness or spiritual despair that Thomas reflects in *ST* 2a2ae.20. Although it could easily go unnoticed in the *Summa*, Thomas's abiding concern for the disastrous effects of despair on the spiritual life are clearly on display in his biblical

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<sup>58</sup> *ST* 3a.3.8: "Convenientissimum fuit personam filii incarnari . . . Ipsius autem personae filii, qui est verbum Dei, attenditur, uno quidem modo, communis convenientia ad totam creaturam. Quia verbum artificis, idest conceptus eius, est similitudo exemplaris eorum quae ab artifice fiunt. Unde verbum Dei, quod est aeternus conceptus eius, est similitudo exemplaris totius creaturae. Et ideo, sicut per participationem huius similitudinis creaturae sunt in propriis speciebus institutae, sed mobiliter; ita per unionem verbi ad creaturam non participativam sed personalem, conveniens fuit reparari creaturam in ordine ad aeternam et immobilem perfectionem, nam et artifex per formam artis conceptam qua artificiatum condidit, ipsum, si collapsum fuerit, restaurat." On the basis of this passage, Romanus Cessario notes, "Thus one point remains sure: each adopted son or daughter participates in the unique sonship of the natural Son. As a result, each child of God, to the extent he or she remains united with Jesus, can manifest the goodness of the whole Trinity in creation" (*The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from St. Anselm to Aquinas* [Petersham: St Bede's Publications, 1990], 176). Cf. *In 1 Cor.* 11, lect. 1, no.583.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism*, 142–4.

<sup>60</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 9.9: "Est etiam aliud detestabilis tristitiae genus, quod non correctionem uitae nec emendationem uitiorum, sed perniciosissimam desperationem animae incit delinquenti: quod nec Cain fecit post fratricidium paenitere nec Iudam post prodicionem ad satisfactionis remedia festinare, sed ad suspendium laquei sua desperatione pertraxit." For more on patristic reflections on these two types of sadness, see Douglas Burton-Christie, "Evagrius on Sadness," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 44 (2009): 400–4.

commentaries, where, for instance, he notes, in his remarks on Eph. 4.19, that despair leads to an alienation from life itself and abandonment to rebellion against God (*In Eph.* 4, lect.6, no.235-236).<sup>61</sup>

Spiritual despair, as with its emotional counterpart (§6.1), only differs from hope in the object's final characteristic, which is concerned with the ability to attain the end after which one strives. Consequently, someone suffering from despair can still claim that eternal life is good, that it is in the future, and that it would be difficult to attain; however, unlike the virtue of hope, despair abandons the pursuit of this end (*ST* 2a2ae.17.1) because, as Charles Pinches observes, it “regards the possible to be impossible; it gives up on the future.”<sup>62</sup> The details for the distinction between the virtue of hope and the vice of despair are given in Thomas's response to the first question on the sinful nature of despair, where he says, “Now, the mind's true appraisal about God acknowledges that he grants pardon to sinners and brings men to salvation . . . Contrariwise, false opinion envisions God as denying pardon to the repentant sinner . . . And so . . . despair, reflecting as it does a false view of God, is vicious and sinful.”<sup>63</sup> Thomas then proceeds to explain that if despair is compared with the sins associated with other vices, there is “in terms of the effect upon us, then a greater danger discernible in despair” because, he continues, “the loss of hope has as its consequence that men plunge into evil without restraint and abandon their efforts to do good.”<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, in a discussion on the virtue of hope, Romanus Cessario aptly summarizes the nature of despair when he remarks, “[D]esperair acts directly against the formal motivating object (*quo*) of theological hope.”<sup>65</sup>

Since hope is, for Thomas, bent on personal well-being (§6.3), the destructive force of despair must also relate directly to the individual, as noted in his comments on the danger of this vice: “[D]esperair is rather a case of ceasing to expect a personal share in the divine goodness,”<sup>66</sup> which occurs, according to Thomas, because one's “judgment about particular applications is distorted.”<sup>67</sup> Although, like in his exposition on hope, Thomas makes no direct appeals to the doctrine of the divine ideas in his assessment of despair, these remarks about the personal dimension of the object it rejects bear the mark of the doctrine's subtle gestures, which we can see more clearly if we return to his earlier discussions on God's intentional ordering of creation

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *In Eph.* 5, lect.3, no.283; *In Rom.* 5, lect.6, no.466; *In Col.* 3, lect.1, no.148.

<sup>62</sup> Pinches, “On Hope,” 352.

<sup>63</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.20.1: “Circa Deum autem vera existimatio intellectus est quod ex ipso provenit hominum salus, et venia peccatoribus datur . . . Falsa autem opinio est quod peccatori poenitenti veniam denegat . . . Et ideo motus desperationis, qui se habet conformiter existimationi falsae de Deo, est vitiosus et peccatum.”

<sup>64</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.30.3: “. . . ex parte nostra, sic desperatio est periculosior, quia per spem . . . et ideo, sublata spe, irrefrenate homines labuntur in vitia, et a bonis laboribus retrahuntur.”

<sup>65</sup> Romanus Cessario, O.P., “The Theological Virtue of Hope (IIa IIae, Qq. 17-22),” in *Essays on Aquinas's Ethics*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 240.

<sup>66</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.20.3: “[D]esperatio autem ex hoc quod homo non sperat se bonitatem Dei participare.”

<sup>67</sup> *ST* 2a2ae.20.2: “. . . corrupta aestimatione eius circa particulare.”

(§5.3). Well before raising a question about the pernicious character of despair, Thomas established that the whole of creation was creatively thought by God (§3.2.1) in such a way that each creature was intentionally designed to participate in a likeness of the divine goodness (*ST* 1a.47.1), which for the rational creature is only realized in the rest or happiness of the beatific vision (*ST* 2a2ae.2.3). Now, as Pieper once remarked, “Genuine rest and leisure are possible only under the precondition that man accepts his own true meaning.”<sup>68</sup> Despair, then, is the rejection of this true meaning, which is paramount to a denial that each creature is intentionally patterned after a likeness of the divine goodness. Consequently, we may say, that, for Thomas, what one approaches in hope or withdraws from in despair is the eternal idea of the self residing in the mind of God.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In a lecture on Thomas’s soteriology, Otto Pesch poignantly remarks, “For Christian existence is nothing else than to live out the unity of faith, hope, and love, and that means to understand God’s truth for the world and for human beings . . . That is the way human beings proceed from God and go home to him,” which is, he says, “the basic and final purpose of theological understanding.”<sup>69</sup> What Pesch’s observation here highlights is that hope, along with faith and love, characterize the christian life, and that discerning the intelligibility of these things not only defines the pursuit of theological inquiry but also represents the contemplative journey of humanity’s return to God. Thomas’s subtle references to the doctrine of the divine ideas in his expositions on hope and despair reveal that the doctrine contributes to his understanding of humanity’s existential encounter with God. To put this another way, for Thomas, the very fact that human beings can experience both the virtue of hope and the vice of despair ensures that the true meaning of each person is eternally conceived in the mind of God, which, revealed through Christ, stands as a promise of eternal life for every individual. The presence of the divine ideas in Thomas’s treatise on hope further demonstrates that the doctrine is not restricted to his philosophical ruminations or even to his theological inquiry into the issues of divine simplicity and the multiplicity of creation, but instead it spreads throughout the *Summa* to help guide his readers to a better understanding of the truth revealed by God. Yet, the peripheral placement of the divine ideas within these expositions pedagogically leaves room for the reader that has matured in the habit of theological thinking to expand on what Thomas has said by taking these subtle gestures and applying them in new and different ways (§3.1). There are,

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<sup>68</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 119.

<sup>69</sup> Otto-Hermann Pesch, “Christian Existence according to Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 206.

however, certain challenges we face in continuing this process centuries after the *Summa* was completed, which the next and final chapter of the study will discuss.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> I would like to extend my gratitude to the participants at the January 2014 meeting of the Northumbrian Triangle who graciously offered their thoughts on an earlier draft of this section.

## 7. Conclusion

*Stillness . . . means the soul's power, as real, of responding to the real – a co-respondence, eternally established in nature – has not yet descended into words.*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In his book on Thomas's ethics, John Bowlin shrewdly remarks that, "unless we have antiquarian motives," we largely read Thomas today "because we hope to uncover points of view that will challenge our settled habits of thought."<sup>2</sup> The question at the beginning of this study, on how Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas *should* be read today, implicitly reminds us that there are "settled habits" present in the various interpretations of the doctrine offered in contemporary scholarship. While these habits manifest along a spectrum of responses to the doctrine of the divine ideas, which include more positive engagements as well as the simple uneasiness many scholars express over the compatibility of the doctrine with theological inquiry, the contemporary reception of the divine ideas is indelibly marked by the severely critical readings of the doctrine that emerged in the post-Enlightenment theological tradition. For example, Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests that the doctrine presents "a static cosmos of ideas" that fails to address "the contingency and historicity of reality that results from God's creative action."<sup>3</sup> Robert Jenson asserts that the doctrine of the divine ideas "displaces Christ from his New Testament role in creation."<sup>4</sup> Finally, Carl Braaten argues that this doctrine represents the intrusion of a "pantheistic way of thinking" into Christian theology.<sup>5</sup> These readings represent a tradition on the divine ideas that has entered the identity of contemporary theology, but which clearly deviates from the premodern heritage Thomas received and transmitted.

Given that many contemporary theologians and philosophers consider the doctrine of the divine ideas to be more or less antiquated, it would perhaps have been less complicated to portray this study on Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas as an exercise in historical conservation; however, the very assumption that the divine ideas are conceptually obsolete suggests that the doctrine may be examined, instead, for insights that will unsettle some of the fixed habits in contemporary theological discourse. While those that believe the doctrine's

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), 50; German original, *Musse Und Kult* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> John Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (London: T & T Clark, 1994), 27–8.

<sup>4</sup> Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Works of God*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7. Michael Horton concurs with Jenson's criticism of the divine ideas in his, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 333.

<sup>5</sup> Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: First Fortress Press, 2011), 34.

philosophical baggage in some way makes it theologically inoperable have attempted to purge the divine ideas from theological discourse, Thomas's peripheral engagements with the doctrine, in its broader grammatical locutions and subtle gestures, expose ways the grammar of the divine ideas can still unconsciously linger in reflections on topics such as creation, salvation, epistemology, and ethics. Now, one could, even in a quasi-Thomist sense, effectively replace the doctrine of the divine ideas in theological discourse, if an alternative grammar emerged that was *better* suited to communicate the truth of the world's createdness; however, this endeavor inevitably risks, as Pieper says, "the error of removing from the Christian consciousness the reality of creation itself."<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, there are better ways to answer the question of what to do with the divine ideas than claiming historical redundancy or arguing for contemporary elimination.

One solution is to continue Thomas's work of theologically expanding and reordering the doctrine's horizon by renewing our understanding of his pedagogical commitments to train his readers in the habit of thinking theologically, through which we can rediscover the nature of theological inquiry as a spiritual exercise in discerning the mysteries of faith. The *Summa's* entire discourse is fundamentally a theological exposition rooted in a recursive pattern of faith seeking understanding, which imitates the soteriological journey, textually inverted but existentially advancing from the revelation of Christ to the contemplative vision of God (Chapter Two). Thus, Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas surfaces in the *Summa* not as a philosophical excursus but as an integral expression of his pedagogical commitments to provide his reader's with a theologically fitting (*conveniens*) exposition of God's self-disclosure in creation and salvation such that the doctrine's very intelligibility depends on approaching his formal discussion on the divine ideas in *ST* 1a.15 as an isomorphic reflection of his theological vision designed to instill in his readers the wisdom of *sacra doctrina* (Chapters Three and Four). This formal treatment of the divine ideas also provides Thomas with a means to pedagogically reconfigure peripheral gestures he makes with the doctrine through the network of grammatical and analogical themes he develops to represent the divine ideas in the *Summa's* dialectic exchange between philosophy and theology (Chapters Five and Six). Finally, Thomas completes the theological integration of the divine ideas into his theological vision when the gestures of the doctrine serve to clarify for his readers the metaphysical mechanics in the existential reality of the soteriological journey to the eschatological vision of God (Chapter Six).

In short, then, this study has taken steps, guided by Thomas, to improve the groundwork necessary for a theological rehabilitation of the doctrine of the divine ideas. Although we have

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<sup>6</sup> Josef Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas," in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O'Connor, 3rd Revised ed. (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 33.

not, necessarily, attempted to settle some of the more notorious questions related to the interpretation of the divine ideas, we have worked to outline a different approach to Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas by following the development of his pedagogical vision in the *Summa*, which will hopefully provide future studies on the divine ideas with new angles of approach to the perennial questions about the doctrine. Throughout the chapters of this study, we have also attempted to identify areas in Thomas's thought where the subtle references to the divine ideas create space for the readers, including contemporary theologians and scholars, to elaborate on the doctrine's relevance for theological discourse. There are, however, certain challenges we face in attempting to recover the doctrine of the divine ideas that we should be aware of prior to venturing out on the path of theological renaissance. Thus, before bringing this study to a close with a final plea for the theological importance of reclaiming the doctrine of the divine ideas, we will consider some of the positive and negative implications of inquiries into intellectual history.

### 7.1 Renaissance's Double-Edged Sword

On the nature of received traditions, as Stephen Toulmin remarks, "[T]he existence of a consensus is one thing; the soundness of this view, the reliability of the historical assumptions on which it depends, are something else."<sup>7</sup> He proceeds to argue that if the historical assumptions "are sufficiently open to doubt," then we must look "more closely at the actual credentials, and the historical basis, of the standard account."<sup>8</sup> If we follow Toulmin's advice here and consider the history of the doctrine of the divine ideas, we find that it undergoes a significant transformation at some point during the Enlightenment. Herman Bavinck noted at the end of the nineteenth century that this once prominent, possibly even essential, doctrine all but vanishes, for some unknown reason, from theological discourse.<sup>9</sup> The doctrine's perceived disappearance radically alters its received tradition as it passes into post-Enlightenment generations. What remains unclear, however, is precisely why or when in the Enlightenment era this transition actually occurs.<sup>10</sup> This uncertainty in the historical development of the doctrine's modern

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 206; Dutch original, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. 2 (Kampen: J. H. Bos., 1897).

<sup>10</sup> Despite the impression that the doctrine disappears during the Enlightenment, a number of studies demonstrate various ways the doctrine continues to exert influence in modernity; however, the notion that the doctrine is abandoned still negatively informs the latter reception of the doctrine and increases the likelihood that places where the divine ideas do appear, albeit sometimes in less direct ways, will be overlooked. See Steven Nadler, *Malebranche and Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Marc A. Hight, *Idea and Ontology: An Essay in Early Modern Metaphysics of Ideas* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

tradition calls into question the basis for the critical readings of the divine ideas in contemporary thought, but it also exposes inherent tensions in the efforts of theological ressourcement.<sup>11</sup>

The ressourcement movement was initiated by a group of Roman Catholic scholars and theologians. Interest, however, in theological ressourcement now extends well beyond ecclesial distinctions and has become a prominent fixture in contemporary theological discourse.<sup>12</sup> Charles Péguy coined the term “ressourcement” in 1904, by which he meant, “[T]he appeal made by a less perfect tradition to one more perfect; the appeal made by a shallower tradition to one more profound; the withdrawal of tradition to reach a new depth, to carry out research at a deeper level; a return to the source, in the literal sense,” but it was not until Jean Daniélou’s 1946 essay on the state of theology in modernity that the outline for the movement, which came to be known as the *nouvelle théologie*, was first sketched.<sup>13</sup> The movement represents a type of *ad fontes* renewal and advancement of theological discourse through a return to the original sources in theological tradition. But this call for a return to the sources in theological ressourcement gives rise to a persistent tension present in the process itself. Denys Turner insightfully identifies the predicament that ressourcement faces because of what he calls its two-sided character. He writes, “On the one hand, the ‘cleaning-up’ operation can leave us with a more ‘authentic’ text resituated more transparently in its own culture and context: on the other, may it not also, for that very reason, distance that text from our own culture and context.”<sup>14</sup> What Turner has pinpointed here is that interpretive accuracy and constructive accessibility in the ressourcement movement do not always, as he says, “sit easily with one another.”<sup>15</sup>

In the case of the divine ideas, this tension is poignantly confronted in the efforts to reclaim the doctrine in contemporary theological discourse. The recent surge of interest in the doctrine of the divine ideas in the thought of ancient and medieval authors has exposed the doctrine’s general ubiquity in premodern theology, but these studies have also tended to be restricted to atomistic readings of the doctrine’s ontological and epistemological classifications.<sup>16</sup> Following the insights gained from these studies, contemporary scholars have become more

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<sup>11</sup> Much of what follows in this section is indebted to Denys Turner’s article, “How to Read the pseudo-Denys Today?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (2005): 428–440, which helped me to identify and clarify my own angst with the question of how we should read Thomas’s doctrine of the divine ideas today.

<sup>12</sup> For insightful discussions on the history and development of ressourcement theology in Catholic theology, as well as other ecclesial traditions, see the excellent essays in Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> From the preface to *Les Cathiers De La Quinzaine*, 1904. Cited in Yves Congar, O.P., *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. A. N. Woodrow (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 6. Jean Daniélou, “Les Orientations Présentes de La Pensée Religieuse,” *Études* 249 (1946): 5–21. On the contribution of this essay to the formation of the *nouvelle théologie*’s identity, see Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1–4.

<sup>14</sup> Turner, “How to Read,” 433.

<sup>15</sup> Turner, “How to Read,” 433.

<sup>16</sup> For a list of these works, see Ch. 1, notes 4 and 10.



aware of the doctrine's meaning in its premodern historical contexts and cultures; however, the modern loss of a constructive view of the divine ideas conversely means that the clarity gained in these studies inversely imposes a conceptual remoteness on the use of the doctrine, which makes it appear even more irrelevant and obscure to many forms of contemporary thought. This is not to suggest that what ancient and medieval authors meant in their discussions on the doctrine is unimportant, since understanding any historically conditioned text must begin with what the authors actually say. Rather, because we no longer have a fully developed doctrine of the divine ideas, it is difficult to grasp the reach of the divine ideas into other doctrines and areas of thought that shaped the way ancient and medieval figures understood or communicated various aspects of their theological and philosophical commitments. Without this broader framework for the doctrine, scholars will continue to be haunted by the uncertainties around what the doctrine ever provided theology.<sup>17</sup>

Another challenge to the contemporary recovery of divine ideas is our formation in the identity of contemporary theology. Hans Gadamer describes this issue when he observes:

At the beginning of all historical hermeneutics, then, the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research, between history and the knowledge of it, must be discarded. The effect of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity of effect, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal effects. Hence we would do well not to regard historical consciousness as something radically new—as it seems at first—but as a new element in what has always constituted the human relation to the past. In other words, we have to recognize the element of tradition in historical research and inquire into its hermeneutic productivity.<sup>18</sup>

The particular difficulty our historical position poses in relation to our received tradition is expertly identified in a comment made by Turner in a reflection on the nature of personal identity. He writes, “Our identities are constituted as much by our forgetting as they are by our active remembering, by what we forbid entry to our recalling as by what we allow into it. Now every act of remembering changes the past it remembers. As I change necessarily my past changes, I necessarily rewrite my story.”<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the disappearance of the divine ideas in theological discourse constitutes an act of forgetting that redefines the theological identity that contemporary scholars have inherited, and it colors our understanding of the past. We have already seen the examples of this active forgetting in the critical tradition of the divine ideas. The doctrine's once positive contribution to

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<sup>17</sup> Sarah Coakley emphasized this point to me in a private conversation on 5 Dec. 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Second, Revised Edition (London: Continuum, 2006), 283–4; German original, *Wahrheit Und Methode: Grundzüge Einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

<sup>19</sup> Turner, “How to Read,” 435.

theological discourse was rewritten during the formation of the contemporary theological identity that now governs, for better or worse, our reception of texts from epochs far removed from our own. Consequently, establishing the doctrine's constructive theological value will require rewriting, at least in part, the story that created this identity. This task, however, is not easy, since it requires us to challenge our own theological and intellectual commitments, and it can often lead to unsettling realizations. One way to actively engage in rewriting this narrative is by reconsidering theological discussions where the divine ideas once held a prominent place, but now appear to have all but vanished from the discourse.<sup>20</sup> Another option is to search for places in the works of authors like Thomas where glimpses of the doctrine are given in subtle or passing references, because these places may help us identify areas where the grammar of the divine ideas may be meaningfully recovered in rewriting the narrative of our theological identity.

## 7.2 The End is Silence: A Final Plea for Reclaiming the Doctrine of the Divine Ideas

In taking up the task of constructively reclaiming the doctrine of the divine ideas, the goal, it should be noted, is not simply to repeat what Thomas said, but to venture beyond his own extensions and applications of the doctrine, just as he intended in the pedagogical design of the *Summa* (§3.1), although this is certainly a case where it is easier said than done. While some may oppose the reading of the *Summa* offered in this study because it does not search for a definitive systematic account of Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, but instead follows a pattern in his application of the doctrine to instruct readers in the habit of thinking theologically, Pieper's observation that, "[E]very attempt to produce an absolutely tight system runs counter to the real life situation of the finite spirit, of man's creaturehood,"<sup>21</sup> reminds us that what the *Summa* offers is not a stable philosophical or even theological system but a path to the vision of God rooted in the revelation of humanity's createdness (§2.1.1). To this observation, we may add Denys Turner's astute remark that, "[T]heological speech is at once incarnated and apophatic speech, speech rooted in our common material condition and yet revelatory of that utterly unknowable reality which sustains that condition as created."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For some examples of studies that have already begun this process, see John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, Radical Orthodoxy (London: Routledge, 2001), 1–59; Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 189–97; Mark McIntosh, "The Maker's Meaning: Divine Ideas and Salvation," *Modern Theology* 28 (2012): 365–84.

<sup>21</sup> Josef Pieper, *No One Could Have Known: An Autobiography, The Early Years, 1904-1945*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 68; German original, *Noch Wusste Es Niemand. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen 1904-1945* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> Denys Turner, "Apophaticism, Idolatry and the Claims of Reason," in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, ed. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33.

Consequently, the pursuit of theological wisdom occurs in the space between the known and the unknown (*ST* 2a2ae.45.1 ad.2), and for that reason it must exhaust the full range of human knowledge in the articulation of *sacra doctrina*. As Matthew Levering notes, “In theological reflection, then, metaphysical knowledge gained by the intellectual virtue of wisdom is taken up into the *sacra doctrina* and illumined within it . . . This unity of *sacra doctrina* ensures that metaphysical and scriptural modes of divine naming are profoundly integrated by Aquinas.”<sup>23</sup> But in doing so theological inquiry stretches the limits of human language in order to expose the incomprehensible reality of God. There is, then, a tension in all theological discourse, as noted in Turner’s argument that, “it is in and through the very excess, the proliferation, of discourse about God that we discover its failure as a whole.”<sup>24</sup> Yet the breakdown of language before the face of God is precisely why constructively reclaiming the doctrine of the divine ideas is theologically important. Theologians today must continue the work of exhausting every avenue of speech about God, so that the last word of our journey is, as it was for Thomas, not one of speech but one of silence.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 32. Cf. Kieran Conley, O.S.B., *A Theology of Wisdom: A Study in St. Thomas* (Dubuque: The Priory Press, 1963), 20; Paul Morrissey, “The Sapiential Dimension of Theology according to St. Thomas,” *New Blackfriars* 92 (2011): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Turner, “Apophaticism, Idolatry and the Claims of Reason,” 16.

<sup>25</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element,” 38.

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*Note:* For a complete bibliography of Thomas's works arranged topically/chronologically, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, R. Royal, Revised edition, vol. 1 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 330-61. Below I give the bibliographical details for the two Latin collections of Thomas's works consulted in preparation for this project; however, unless otherwise indicated, I have used the Latin texts established by Enrique Alarcón, from the Universidad de Navarra, whose electronic version of Thomas's *opera omnia*, published at [www.corpusthomisticum.org](http://www.corpusthomisticum.org), is currently the most comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date edition that exists. Next, I provide a catalogue of the individual works cited with a notation on the collection where it can be found, and if an English translation was used, its details are provided in brackets. References to scripture are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

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 Busa *Opera Omnia: Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, ed. Robert Busa (Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: Fromman-holzboog, 1980)

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