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THE SPIRIT OF MEDIÆVAL PHILOSOPHY
(*L'ESPRIT DE LA PHILOSOPHIE MÉDIÉVALE*)

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A SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS I-X

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I. THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY [1-16 | 1-19]²

If “Christian Philosophy” = “philosophy as pursued by Christians”, then the term **Christian Philosophy** has at least a historical meaning: it could then be properly applied to most of the philosophical work done in the European Middle Ages. But how to define Christian Philosophy in the abstract – independently from those who have been actually engaged in it? The concept has been denied a meaning from several quarters: by those *historians* who only perceive a jumble of half-digested chunks from ancient philosophy; by those *rationalists* who think that philosophy ceases to be philosophy precisely insofar as it becomes Christian; and also by certain *Neo-Scholastics* who think that the only Christian ever to produce a purely rational philosophy, and hence a philosophy deserving of the name, was St. Thomas Aquinas. In fact *medieval thinkers* were themselves hardly at one on this question [4|4]. Broadly, there were the two irreconcilable positions of *Augustinians* (holding that Thomism is un-Christian) and *Thomists*

¹ My footnotes provide some original French and Latin formulations, bibliographical references, Bible passages referred to, explanations or brief critical notes, comments on the published English translation, and, last but perhaps not least, some references to parallel terms or ideas in the works of C. S. Lewis.

² Page numbers in the French edition (deuxième édition revue, Paris 1944) are followed by those in the English translation by A. H. C. Downes (Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York 1940). Since I read the book in French and summarized it from that text, most of the quotations in the present summary are given in my own translation, although some are taken verbatim from Downes’s version or partly brought into line with it. The difference in chapter size between the two versions reflects the difference between a layout with footnotes (French) and one with endnotes (English).

(holding that there is, to say the least, nothing un-Christian about being true). It might therefore seem best to abandon the whole idea of Christian Philosophy [7|8].

History cannot ultimately decide whether or not Christian Philosophy exists or is possible. Nevertheless, history may serve as a fund of “facts from which to infer concepts which, once inferred, might serve to judge the facts” [9|10]. What still needs to be found out is **how Christianity and Philosophy have actually perceived and conceived their mutual impacts** at those very moments when such give-and-take was actually occurring [9|10].

It takes some wilful dogmatism for the historian to deny that such impact ever occurred; or for the Christian to deny that reason is “essentially distinct” from faith; or for the philosopher to deny that reason is “inseparable from faith in its exercise”. “There is no such thing as Christian reason, but there might be a Christian exercise of reason” [10-11|12]; this is a matter of “conditions of fact” [4|5, 10|12].³ It is impossible to deny *a priori* that Christians or **Christianity may have altered the course of philosophical history by opening up perspectives that might have otherwise remained closed**. What is more, this appears to be what actually happened. Post-medieval metaphysics as pursued by Descartes, Malebranche, Leibnitz, and Kant (and even by contemporary anti-metaphysicians like Montague in his 1930 book *Belief Unbound*) is inconceivable on the supposition⁴ that nothing of philosophical significance ever happened between antiquity and Descartes [11|13, 14-15|16-18].

The influence of Christianity on philosophy is, in fact, **a historical reality**; therefore the notion of Christian Philosophy would seem to “have a meaning” [15|18].⁵ As Lessing said, “The religious truths were not rational while they were revealed, but they were revealed so as to become rational”.⁶

³ French: “conditions de fait”.

⁴ A supposition apparently found in Hamelin, *Le système d’Aristote* (1920).

⁵ French: “La notion de philosophie chrétienne a un sens, parce que l’influence du Christianisme sur la philosophie est une réalité.” Downes translates *un sens* as “a real meaning”.

⁶ *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780), §76: “Man wende nicht ein, dass dergleichen Vernünfteleien über die Geheimnisse der Religion untersagt sind. – Das Wort Geheimniss bedeutete, in den ersten Zeiten des Christentums, ganz etwas anders, als wir jetzt darunter verstehen; und die Ausbildung geoffenbarter Wahrheiten in Vernunftwahrheiten ist schlechterdings notwendig, wenn dem menschlichen Geschlechte damit geholfen sein soll. Als sie geoffenbart wurden, waren sie freilich noch keine Vernunftwahrheiten; aber sie wurden geoffenbart, um es zu werden.” It is to be noted that while Gilson rendered Lessing’s *geoffenbarte Wahrheiten* as *vérités religieuses*, the term has further morphed into “great religious truths” in Downes’s translation. Also, Lessing’s words *um es zu werden* and Gilson’s correct rendering as *afin de les devenir* are rendered as “that they might become so” in the published translation.

The reality of this process – of Christianity “providing philosophers with more rational truth than they found in philosophy” – must have been especially evident to those who underwent it at the very moment of their undergoing it [17|20] in the early days of Christianity. When *Justin Martyr* († c. 165) came to Platonism after several disappointing masters, he perceived a great improvement; but he then went on to discover the wisdom of ancient “prophets” who had been witness to the truth rather than demonstrating it. This seemed to Justin the only certain and profitable philosophy and indeed the only sensible way and proper motive to become a philosopher at all [20-1|23-5]. Once accepted by faith, this prophetic wisdom proved to satisfy reason like nothing else. This was not to deny all truth to all previous philosophies; on the contrary, the concept of natural knowledge of God and of a moral law was gladly propounded. All truth is Christian, regardless of who speaks it; but Christian believers are in the very best philosophical position available. First and greatest among the assets of Christian belief is that it is an effective way of salvation [25|28]. Second, it offers an escape from the perennial “contradictions of the philosophers” [27|30]. *Lactantius* (†c. 325) conceives true philosophy as faith-based eclecticism, or “directed reason” [28|32].⁷ *Augustine* (354-430), too, was greatly impressed by the usefulness of believing (*de utilitate credendi*) “even for the very purpose of assuring the rationality of reason” [28|32]. Much later, *Anselm* (1033-1109) gave his classical formulation of the primacy of faith, *Credo ut intelligam*. What he sought was not faith through understanding, but understanding through faith. Faith is the way to understanding – it is the (potentially successful) search for understanding. No assurance of the rationality of reason is possible unless reason scrutinizes the rationality of faith [29|33]. French philosopher *Maine de Biran* (1766-1824), as a latter-day Justin or Anselm, represented a position that can be summarized as *intellectus quaerens intellectum per fidem* [30|34-5]. Still, faith has never been and should never be treated as a higher form of knowledge – comparable yet more advanced. The real ascent, according to Anselm, is *from faith to understanding* and then on to (*beatific*) *vision* [31|35].

It is not in its *texture* but in its *constitution* that Christian Philosophy admits and receives revelation, or the supernatural [32|37, cf. 37|40-1];⁸ **revelation is considered as an indispensable auxiliary to reason** [33|37]. Philosophy is a genus encompassing Christian Philosophy as a species. The species comprises several sub-species which are united by common characteristics: they have a preference for issues relevant to conducting a religious life, while leaving other

⁷ French: “raison dirigée”.

⁸ Downes translates *l'oeuvre de sa constitution* [32] as “the work of its construction”, and *la constitution* [37] as “the constitution”.

issues alone as objects of *vana* (or *turpis*) *curiositas*. The relevant issues might be described as “**the doctrine concerning God and man, and man’s relations with God**”. This guideline or program enables the Christian philosopher to achieve order and unity [34-5|38-9]. Likely enough, the history of philosophy would have taken a different course if certain philosophers had not been Christians; and for all the rational “texture” of their systems, their work is likely to bear **the mark of their faith as it influenced “the conduct of their thought”** [37|41].⁹ Tracing this influence on metaphysics may serve as a kind of demonstration that Christian philosophy really exists.

III. BEING AND NECESSITY

[39-62 | 42-63]

The term “Supreme Being”, a popular 18th-century title for God, encapsulates “many ages of reflection on Christian teaching” [39|42]. The ancient Greeks did go some way toward monotheism but never went the whole way. Polytheism proved harder to eliminate (if such elimination was attempted at all) than anthropomorphism. Wherever **monotheism** was frankly accepted, i.e. in the Christian world, it was quick to take centre stage as the principle of principles. Greek philosophy, even in its most eminent thinkers Plato and Aristotle [40-2|44-6], never “attained to the essential truth which the Hebrew Bible delivers at one stroke and without the merest shadow of proof” [43|46] – *Deuteronomy 6:4*.¹⁰ If there is a God, then surely He is the only one there is: by the 17th century this was a self-evident truth which it never occurred to anyone to put in doubt. It is “one of those rational truths, and the first of all in importance, which did not enter philosophy by way of reason” [44|47].

The fact is that the ancient Greeks never attained to such an idea of **God’s nature** as would have ruled out the existence of more than a single God. Thus Plato asserted that a god’s “degree of divinity is proportional to its degree of being”; for a Christian, there are no degrees of divinity. Plato never uses the word “being” in a sense exclusively reserved for God; the divine is wherever there is being [46|48-9].¹¹ Aristotle was incurably polytheistic [48|50]. Again, in contrast, the Hebrew Bible had all along asserted that **Being is God’s proper name**, thus

⁹ French: “la conduite de leur pensée”. Gilson seems to mean the same as when he spoke of *un exercice chrétien de la raison* or “a Christian exercise of reason” [10|12]. Cf. C. S. Lewis on Anselm, Descartes and the Ontological Proof in his essay “The Language of Religion”. But exactly how to define and distinguish *texture* and *conduite*?

¹⁰ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

¹¹ And, as C. S. Lewis might have added, Plato conceived of the Good as “beyond Being”.

posing “the principle from which henceforth the whole of Christian philosophy will be suspended” [50|51] – *Exodus 3:14*.¹²

Duns Scotus (1266-1308), in *De primo rerum omnium* I.1, perfectly illustrates how God’s self-revelation as “I AM WHO I AM”, once accepted direct from the Bible, soon prods the Christian philosopher into working his way from faith to understanding – and from understanding God as Being to understanding God as the True, or Total, or One and Only Being. As St. Bonaventure (1217-74) said, “this fog is the mind’s illumination” *ipsa caligo est menti illuminatio* [53|53]. Christian thinkers have been aware that no human *concept* of being could ever exhaust the reality of this Being or, at best, capture more than a mere *mode* of being. Nevertheless, efforts have been made to **find expressions for the “contents” of this “I AM”**. By and large, this has resulted in the two mutually implying concepts of God’s *perfection* and His *infinity*, developed from the idea of God’s “aseity”.¹³

Inevitably, this line of thinking was to result in a **new proof for God’s existence**: “To consider the non-existence of God as inconceivable only makes sense within the Christian perspective that identifies God with Being.” This “ontological proof” was first formulated by Anselm [58|59ff]. As he suggested, the inherent necessity of this Being is such that it is reflected in the very idea which humans have of Him [59|60]. However, Anselm was mistaken in thinking that the “necessity of affirming God” is by itself deductive proof of His existence. In fact, this “necessity of affirming God” is merely the starting point for an act of inference to God – that is, for the proof or argument as developed by Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Descartes and Malebranche. Medieval and early modern thinkers were at one in affirming “the **metaphysical primacy of being**” and the resulting “**identity of essence and existence in God**” [61|61]. A proper ontological proof is an “induction *a posteriori* from the content of our idea of God”; it intends to answer the question, as yet unanswered by any epistemology, “what is the sufficient cause for a being that is capable of conceiving the idea of being and of reading there the necessary inclusion of existence within essence.” [62|62].¹⁴

¹² “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.’”

¹³ From Latin *aseitas*, “of-himself-ness”; cf. *a se < > ab alio*.

¹⁴ French: “quelle est la raison suffisante d’un être capable de concevoir l’idée d’être et d’y lire l’inclusion nécessaire de l’existence dans l’essence.” Downes’s translation is doubly and seriously amiss: “If ... we seek the sufficient reason of a being capable of conceiving the idea of being, *and there read the inclusion* of essence in existence, we are dealing with a question which *must remain* an open one in any epistemology” (faulty parts here italicized). Gilson’s text seems itself ambiguous about the precise antecedent of *y* in *et d’y lire* (“and of reading there”).

God is not only *Being*, or the only *true* Being; He is *immutable*: a property derived from *Malachi 3:6*.¹⁵ On this view, all such “beings” as we may be naturally familiar with are merely derivative, or failed or lesser forms of being, as shown by their mutability and impermanence. This is why Aristotle came to such prominence in Christian philosophy: his philosophy is “essentially an analysis of becoming and of its metaphysical conditions” [65|65]. Indeed, one of the most obvious historical instances of Christianity welcoming Greek thought while going beyond it and deepening it is the way it **radicalized Aristotle’s notion of contingency**. A distinction was introduced between essence and existence (first mentioned by Guillaume d’Auvergne, †1249), and **God was defined as the only being whose existence was identical with his essence**. All other things exist not because existing is of their essence, but merely because God has willed them to exist. God has caused them not only to be *what* they are, but caused them *to be*. They could conceivably have not-been [66|67-8].

The reason why **Plato and Aristotle** never got as far as this is that they **lacked the authoritative unphilosophical statement of *Genesis 1:1***.¹⁶ Plato’s influence was so strong that even Jewish philosopher Philo (who certainly knew his Hebrew Bible) failed to develop a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. “It seems, then, that the Jewish religious tradition has not yielded its philosophical fruit until it got grafted on the Christian stock” [68-9n1|439n3]. Thomas Aquinas in his countless references to “the Philosopher” (Aristotle) never attributes the notion of creation to him and never uses the words *create* and *creation* in describing Aristotle’s (or Plato’s) doctrine of the origin of the world [69|69]; he only speaks of *causing* and *cause*. Plato’s demiurge “gives the universe everything, except for existence itself” [68|68]. “What kept Aristotle from conceiving creation was precisely the lack of its principle” [71|69]. This principle once propounded, it took no particularly brilliant thinkers and no great tradition of speculation for its significance to be perceived. It is very much as if contingency as conceived by the Greeks was doomed to remain “in the order of intelligibility and becoming” [72|71] until the great pronouncements “I AM THAT I AM” and “In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth” got abroad; after that, contingency soon came to encompass the very *existence* of everything except God. **Everything came to depend on “the liberty of a will that wills it”** rather than on “the necessity of a self-thinking thought” [73|71]. God’s glory was proclaimed not only by the heavens, but by the very existence of anything whatever.

¹⁵ “I the LORD do not change.” Perhaps also James 1:17, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

¹⁶ “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Once more,¹⁷ this development was bound to affect thinking about **proofs for God's existence**. "First-cause" arguments henceforth were to be, at least implicitly, **arguments for a Creator**. "The causal relation connecting nature to God is envisaged in the order and on the plane of existence itself" [74|73]. Causes are by definition more "perfect" than their results. Aquinas introduces his "Five Ways" by a reference to Exodus 3:14. His First Cause is not a "Love that moves the stars" as a *final* cause (i.e. the beloved, an object of love) but as an *efficient* cause (i.e. the lover, a subject of love), and as one that causes the very existence of every thing and of all order. The proof for a Prime Mover thus comes to be, or comes to necessarily involve, a proof for God's existence, even while Aristotle's words seem to be repeated verbatim [77-8|76-7].

"**Finalism**" (belief in final causes) may have been discredited by inexperienced defenders. It must nevertheless be realized that proofs from Finality – that is, from the "orientation" of any mechanism – do not construe God as nature's Engineer-in-Chief, any more than First-Mover proofs construe God as nature's Power Station [79|79]. Paley's Watch only makes sense "when we rise from the level of making to that of creating": the marvel in question is not this or that particular "wonder of nature", but the *existence of order*. What is under discussion is **the causality with which God confers order**, regardless of whether we ever come or might come to understand the mechanism in question. Christian philosophy essentially excludes all merely physical proofs for God's existence, only admitting physico-metaphysical proofs, i.e. such as are based on "Being as such".¹⁸ "In raising our thoughts to the consideration of Him Who Is, Christianity revealed to metaphysics the true nature of its proper object" [81|80].

Plato and Aristotle seem "not to have discerned the plain sense of the notions which they were the first to formulate, because they failed to deepen the problem of existence¹⁹ in such a way as **to go beyond the level of intelligibility and touch that of existence**" [83|82]. However, they were on the right track, and so there was real progress in going beyond them. They stopped on the brink of the doctrine of Essence and Existence as identical in God and different in all the rest. This doctrine is the fundamental truth of Thomistic philosophy and, we may say, of all Christian philosophy.

¹⁷ cf. Ch. III, p. 58.

¹⁸ French: "Être en tant qu'êtré".

¹⁹ i.e. the question how things could exist without being permanent.

If God=Being, then why should there be anything besides? This problem did not exist for the ancient Greeks. (And it is an insoluble problem only for “critical idealists” like Kant: see his Fourth Antinomy; for the “realist rationalist”²⁰ it is evident *a priori* that a solution must exist.) [85-6|84-5]. If the idea of God is to justify the co-existence of creatures and their Creator, **two questions** need to be addressed. First, a conceivable reason must be found why Being should ever produce being(s); second, the relation between the two must be somehow made intelligible.

1. For medieval thinkers, **“being is the very root of causality”** [87|86]. Fleshing out this idea philosophically is heavy work, but an easy and legitimate way to *envisage* it is the frankly anthropomorphic way: to conceive it as analogical with how we humans can ourselves be causes, and actually are causes. This is legitimate insofar as it would be foolish to ignore the only mode of being which we know from the inside. **The one typically human causality is the rational sort**, which implies that man can contain within himself the representations of possible effects of his own acts. It is indeed the only way in which a man’s acts and products could ever be *his*. For medieval thinkers, “to be” was essentially an active verb. Being was the primary act, and all other acts were “secondary acts” [90|90], the operations of “beings”. On this view, **to create is to cause being**. All caused beings *have* their being while God alone *is* His being. Beings are secondary causes since they are secondary beings. Creating is exclusive to God [91|90].

2. The reason we cannot conceive the act of creating is that we cannot create; and there is a similar problem about conceiving the “nature or cause”²¹ of creating. St. Thomas, taking up a point of Augustine, demonstrated that the creative act can have neither an internal nor an external cause [93|91]. **God’s will is not caused** any more than His Being; but His will does have an object, namely, his own Being or perfection. **His Being or perfection, as an object of will, is his goodness**. This goodness is what God necessarily and only wills; and it is only in relation to this will that he wills anything besides (which indeed He does) – *quia Deus bonus est, sumus* (Aquinas); and: *bonum est diffusum sui et communicativem* [94-5|93-4]. A very notable philosophical step forward from ancient philosophy is made here, in that Goodness is conceived (by Aquinas) as an *aspect* of being. Thus **Goodness is no longer seen as beyond being** – as not only Plato [cf. 46|48] but even the earlier Christian thinker called Dionysius had seen it. Unmistakably, the metaphysic of Exodus is here affecting the course of the history of

²⁰ Such as Gilson?

²¹ Also, “the why of creation” – *le pourquoi de la création* [92|91]. In what follows here, Gilson does not take up this “similar problem” as one which is at all distinguished from the first. It does get a fuller treatment in Chapter VII.

philosophy. **Goodness as an aspect of Being explains how Being can find itself invited to exert its causative power** – that is, find itself caused to create. “The perfection of [God’s] actuality, conceived as good, invites Him to communicate this actuality freely to the being of its possible effects” [95|94].

If causality consists in a “gift of being”, the relation between cause and effect is necessarily analogical (*Omne agens agit sibi simile* [97|95]). “Being” and “caused Being” are incommensurable, and precisely therefore they are “compossible”. “In its existence and substantially²² ... **the creature is an analogue of its Creator** [98|96]. Logical thought itself depends on assuming analogies [98-9|96-7], since all classification assumes it. Analogy, whether or not we regard it as primitive, obsolete, *sauvage*, etc., very likely reflects “certain imperious necessities of human thought” [100|98]. Resemblance is only one type of analogy. Each of Rembrandt’s paintings bears his stamp, regardless of its subject: it is this sort of recognition of the master’s stroke which is involved in the search for “vestiges” of God in His creation. Sober thinkers like Aquinas, while affirming what Newman later called the “sacramental character of the Christian world”, would not accept most of “the resemblances accumulated by the great meditatives”; yet he did allow himself “to see in the substance, form, and order co-essential with things the mark of the Triune God Who is their Author” [101|99]. Thirteenth-century Scholasticism undertook an exploration of God’s work on different lines from the older analogical thinking, without intentions of competing with it or opposing it. Exploring things as concrete beings rather than symbols, it sought to express the world’s analogy to God “in precise laws and in definite metaphysical conceptions” [102|101]. **Physical causality stands to creation as beings to Being and time to eternity**” [103|101].

The moral reason for creation is, inevitably, found *within* God; and it is a “final cause” [103|102]. It should be noted that “egoism” is a very faulty metaphor for God’s self-love. While secondary beings will always more or less “expand while realizing themselves”, **creating is “the act of a good which [being already perfect] has no good to acquire.”** “Giving itself” is the only mode in which it can act [104|103].²³

“Born of a final cause, the universe is necessarily impregnated with finality” [105|104]. While efficient causes are, and will ever remain, a proper object of inquiry, the “virgin” of Contemplation, despised as barren by Francis Bacon, ought nevertheless to keep her primacy and indeed keep vigil over the world’s very intelligibility [106|104; cf. 81|80]. If the question is raised whether there is any “Why” to the world, men do well to look inward and see that man himself is “living testimony to the presence of finality in the universe” [107|105]. This may be considered naïve; and surely anthropomorphism often takes pretty naïve shapes

²² French: “dans son existence et substantiellement.”

²³ French: “l’Être ... ne peut plus agir que pour se donner.”

in practice. The truly desperate *naïveté*, however, is in denying and ignoring finality altogether in the name of a method – science – which has from the outset forbidden itself to take finality into account. It is only natural that Christian thinkers felt at home with Plato and Aristotle, and no less natural that Christian thinkers completed Plato’s and Aristotle’s work. **Christian finalism is an “immediate corollary from the idea of creation”**, and “the notion of final cause only gets its full sense in a universe that depends from the liberty of the God of the Bible and the Gospel” [109|106].

VI. CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM

[110-132 | 108-127]

Equating Christianity with its supposedly world-denying tendencies and “heroes of the interior life” [111|109] is a widespread error. Undeniably, at least since the second century there has been such a thing as “Christian optimism”. Its cornerstone has been **Genesis 1:31**: “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.” Irenaeus (†c. 202) clearly stated that Christian optimism is a corollary from the Christian idea of creation [112|110]. Two centuries later, the non-philosophical input from Genesis may well have prevented Augustine from yielding to Neo-Platonic suggestions that evil is reducible to matter and matter verges on non-being; Augustine refused to accept that matter could be both bad and created. He converted the “religious optimism” of Exodus 3:14 into “metaphysical optimism”, asserting that even the mere unrealized capacity of matter to receive form is to be reckoned among the varieties of goodness. **Matter is good**: so it must be God’s work (*contra* Manichaeans); matter is God’s work: so it must be good (*contra* Plotinus) [115-16|112].

The idea of creation also offers a “solution” to **the problem of evil**. Change, novelty, decay, and gradations of goodness, are all entailed by the existence of (material or immaterial) *beings*, as resulting and distinguished from Being. It is actually through spirit, not through matter, that the thing properly called evil ever got and still gets a foothold in the world [117-18|114].²⁴ The dangerous possibility for created beings to unmake themselves can become a practical reality in the moral sphere alone, i.e. among beings who are allowed to assist their Creator in guarding against that very danger.

Augustine’s view found definitive expression when St. Thomas showed that the radical distinction between creatures and their Creator is found in the configuration of *essence and existence* rather than in that of matter and form. However, **Augustine** already had a fully fledged conception of evil as “the lesser

²⁴ Cf. C. S. Lewis: “There’s nothing specially fine about simply being a spirit. The Devil is a spirit” (*Perelandra*, Ch. 7).

good” and of good as “the subject of evil” [119|115]. He was not denying that “that which in the rest of nature remains mere privation and corruption” becomes misery among rational beings [121|116-17], i.e. among men. Created “in God’s image”, they have the gifts of rationality, a will, and liberty. Free will is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for man’s greatest good: enjoying God. **Sin is, essentially, the free choice of any lesser good**, offering “the sorry spectacle of beings in revolt against Being” [122|118].²⁵ The story of the Fall, as referred to in *Romans 5:12*,²⁶ is yet another instance of revelation providing a fact which opens up an otherwise closed new direction for reason to explore. “All that is called evil is either sin or a punishment of sin” – Augustine, *Enchiridion* xxiv-xxv [124|119].

What remains to be explained is how human free will could ever get corrupted unless it contained some corruption from the outset – which original corruption would have to be the Creator’s work. On this issue, Christianity may seem to cut a pessimistic figure after all, at least when confronted with Pelagianism. However, freedom could never be real, and could never be the good it is, without implying the real possibility of this corruption. The relevant question is **why God should create free beings**. The answer is: because they are not only the noblest ornaments of Creation but, after God, its Final Cause [126|121]. Christianity thus remains fundamentally optimistic. The only peril threatening a will is “the metaphysical contingency inseparable from the state of being created – a pure *possibility*, without the least rudiment of actuality, and which not only *could* have but perhaps *ought to* have never actualized itself” [127|121-2].²⁷ Christianity thus reduces evil to an “avoidable accident” and relegates it “**to the margins of the fundamental good which is the universe**” [127|122].

Any general depreciation of “the world”, far from being an original and defining feature of Christianity, is rather an error inspired by Luther, Calvin, or Jansenius [127|122]. In contrast, Augustine’s work features “genuine eulogies of fallen nature” [128|122]. **For Aquinas, “corrupted nature” was a contradiction in terms** [129|124]. As regards *human* nature, the good that was supposedly corrupted takes three forms:

²⁵ Cf. C. S. Lewis: “a solecism against the grammar of being” (*The Problem of Pain*, Ch. 3).

²⁶ “... just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned ...”

²⁷ Downes translates the last clause as: “...a possibility that not only could have remained unactualized but ought to have done so.” The full sentence in French reads: “Le seul péril qui menace une telle nature [i.e. une volonté], c’est donc la contingence métaphysique inséparable de l’état d’être créé, une pure *possibilité*, sans le moindre rudiment d’existence actuelle, et qui non seulement aurait pu, mais aurait dû ne jamais s’actualiser” (with a note giving a quotation from Augustine’s *Contra Julianum*). On contingency see also Ch. IV [66|67-8].

1. its constitution as a reasonable animal: this remains unaffected by the Fall.
2. its natural inclination towards good: this is diminished, but not suppressed.
3. its gift, by grace, of “original justice”: this is quite lost, but it falls outside the scope of nature.

It is easy to exaggerate the extent to which the Renaissance “discovered” and valued nature after many centuries of undue depreciation. The spirit of Medieval philosophy, precisely because it was a Christian spirit, was actually in deep agreement with certain positive aspirations of the Renaissance. “The true Christian sentiment toward nature is affirmed throughout the Psalms and in the Song of the Three Young Men in the Furnace” [130|126]. **St. Francis** is the perfect representative of **Christian optimism and asceticism as two sides of the same coin**. The relevant question about nature is not whether she is good or bad, but “whether she is self-sufficient and whether she suffices” [132|127].²⁸ The answer is No. “In that sense, if optimism consists in neither denying nor accepting evil but in facing and fighting it, then we may legitimately speak of Christian optimism”.

VII. THE GLORY OF GOD

[133-152 | 128-147]

One of the hardest problems for medieval Christian philosophers – and one on which their *progress* has been particularly evident – is how created being is related to the uncreated One Being.²⁹ In the late 17th century, Malebranche [133|129] suggested that the great sin for creatures is *independence*, including all their longing and striving for it. And indeed, the “radical contingency” of all creation puts it in a position of “absolute dependence on the necessary Being”. This Being is the source of the existence, the substantiality and the causality of each secondary being [134|129]. But if all this is granted, the philosophical problem is that it is not the whole story. Creatures are not nothing. The “secret” which both raises and answers this problem is that it is “**not in spite of its ontological dependence that the creature is really something, since if it is something it is so precisely in virtue of this very dependence**” [135|130]. It is, surely, *only* in God that (as St Paul says in Acts 17:28) we have “our life, movement and being”: but then, indeed, we *have* these things.

Augustine was already keen to assert that God governs not by supplanting created things and their efficacy but, rather, *through* them and their proper operations. This leaves us with the unanswered question how a created universe could

²⁸ French: “si elle se suffit et si elle suffit.” Downes here translates *la nature* as “the world”.

²⁹ The question has been left partly unsolved (see note 21, above.)

be full of secondary causes; but in the 13th century St. **Thomas** suggested that we do better to ask how it could have been otherwise. The really odd thing for “fecundity itself” would have been to create a universe of sterility. If created beings are analogous to the One Being, so is their efficacy. [136|131; cf. 103|101].

Thus far, all medieval philosophers were agreed. However, there has also been a perennial difference between the two metaphysical positions represented by Augustine and Aquinas. This difference seems to stem from an underlying difference in “religious sentiment” regarding “God’s glory” – a difference which is perhaps historical rather than perennial. It concerns the precise extent of “**the causality and efficacy that God concedes to creatures, and, in particular, to men**” [136-7|132].

1. AUGUSTINE, much as he sang the praises of creation even in its fallen state [cf. 128|122], remained loth to accord to nature any semblance of perfection and self-sufficiency. In a sense, he was the progenitor of all later “God-of-the-gaps” thinking. With Augustine, “the supernatural dependence of beings in the order of grace and their natural dependence in the order of existence tend to run to a **strict limitation of their efficacy**” [138|134]. Our misery testifies to God’s grandeur more eloquently than our own grandeur does, since our grandeur may falsely suggest independency. In line with a threefold division of the problem as provided by Aquinas, we may analyse Augustine’s view into

– a doctrine of “*seminal reasons*” (a term adopted from Stoicism and Neoplatonism): on causality in the physical domain. Augustine suggested that God created Heaven and earth not only *ex nihilo* but in a single act and instant, rather than in six days (which he took metaphorically, with the seventh day representing all history since the creation). So-called secondary causes are mere prods for “latent virtualities” which God put into matter at the moment of creation [140|135];

– a doctrine of *truth*: on causality in the domain of knowledge. “A created intellect cannot give being to anything necessary, i.e. to any veritable being”, so that the fact that we do in fact attain to necessary truths must be explained from divine illumination [141-2|136-7];³⁰

– a doctrine of *virtue*: on causality in the moral domain. This takes the same form as the previous. “I need to receive from the divine embrace the seeds of virtue as much as those of the sciences” (Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* II.10.29)³¹ [142-3|137-8].

³⁰ French: “...tout jugement vrai suppose une illumination naturelle de la pensée par Dieu” (*naturelle* seems to be out of place here: p. 143 has phrases *l’étreinte divine* and *l’illumination divine* in apparently parallel positions and functions.)

³¹ Cf. C. S. Lewis’s “argument from reason” and “moral argument” and his habitual presentation of them as twin arguments.

2. For AQUINAS, each of the three doctrines had the same inconvenience: “nature herself does nothing”. There is nothing in these doctrines to convince us that beings are real beings and causes are real causes [143-4|138-9]. On the Thomistic view, then,

- **secondary causes are participations in the divine causality;**
- divine illumination consists in the gift, to men, of an intellect that suffices for producing truth (while the denial of this gift is “the foundation³² of Augustinian noetics” [145|139-40]);
- virtues are acquired by a “practical reason” which is likewise a “participation in the divine light” [146|140].

In each of the latter two cases, the **human intellect is “a participated likeness of the uncreated light in which the Ideas are contained”** [146|140].

Some 13th-century Augustinians responded somewhat vigorously³³ against the Thomistic view, in which God, as they felt, receded much too far from the world and men. On closer inspection, though, the only real difference between the two positions is that “the Thomistic God has shown Himself to be more generous than Augustine’s” [147|141]. In Thomism, “the notion of divine likeness comes to penetrate for the first time to the very bosom of nature, beyond order, number and beauty, embracing and impregnating her physical structure and annexing the very efficacy of her causality.” Aquinas corrects Augustine in the name of Augustine’s own principles, and “**reinstat[ing] creation in the whole plenitude of its rights**, because it is from the grandeur of the work that we know the maker’s grandeur” [148|141].

This restoration starts from the “principle of principles” [God=Being; cf. Ch. III] with its corollary that all secondary, created being, in whatever way or measure, is partly unrealized. Created beings therefore always remain susceptible to improvement, i.e. increased resemblance to God. For any creature to advance from potential being or goodness to actual being or goodness must involve the exercise of its proper operations. This means that creatures must resemble God in His quality not only of Being but of Cause, too. There is a superficial resemblance here with Aristotle’s view of things as “moving to acquire their proper substantiality” as they imitate the divine perfection of the Unmoved Mover; in fact, on the Christian view, causality is a result and analogue of creation and so continues creation. **To be a cause is to “serve as an instrument in the work of creation”** [150|144]. Insisting on the advance of beings toward perfection and on their efficacy is not to detract from God’s glory but rather to “exalt it in exalting them” [150|144]. **Vilifying Nature is a philosophical error and an injustice to God.**

³² French: “le fonds même”. Perhaps *fonds* should be *fond*.

³³ French: “un peu vive”.

This Thomistic assertion of a universe which is good yet incomplete and which therefore tends to “conquer its good by accomplishing its being” [152], and the implied “redressment” of Augustine’s ideas on illumination and seminal reasons, lie “precisely in the true line of Christian tradition” [152|146].³⁴ Scriptural quotations as used by these thinkers are not mere ornaments but, rather, clear **signs of “the aid that revelation brings to reason”** [153|146]. The correction to Augustine is itself a case of advance toward perfection; the medieval thinkers were aware of being collaborators on a single project.

VIII. CHRISTIAN PROVIDENCE

[154-174 | 148-167]

Plato’s doctrine of Providence (as found in *Laws X*) is the nearest relative or precursor in ancient Greek philosophy of the Christian doctrine. Plato insisted that nothing whatever escapes the (ultimately benevolent) care of the gods for human affairs. Their actual “providence”, however, consists in an inexorable set of laws which humans will be wise to observe [154-5|148-50]. – This doctrine, while useful as a *praeparatio evangelica*, was radically changed by Christian thinkers when the “**fundamental relation of made things to their maker**” [156|150] was brought to bear on it. The Psalmist “feared” a personal Lord, on Whose will our whole existence and destiny depended. This is a far cry from Plato’s reasonable acknowledgement of an immutable mechanism [157|151]. The Old-Testament “election of Israel” resulting from the divine will developed into the election of all mankind³⁵ in Christianity. The Creator’s power takes the guise of His Fatherhood: Our Father in Heaven [158|152]. From the outset, **the Christian concept of God as Providence was firmly grounded in the notion of God as Creator**: as Athenagoras asserted in the second century, He could not be one without being the other [160|153]).

The Platonic concept of “**Ideas**”, while remaining very much in use, was likewise assimilated to Christian theology, notably by Augustine. In his view, all Ideas are eternally present in God as immutable and necessary “**expressions of the possible participations in God**” [161|154]. Therefore, since Ideas are objects of knowledge [cf. 169|161], and creation is an act of will, everything in the universe is “foreseen, willed, ordered, and nothing happens by chance” [163|156]. Once again, creating the world and governing it became almost equivalent.

³⁴ French: “sont exactement dans l’axe de la tradition chrétienne.”

³⁵ French: “élection de l’humanité tout entière” [158]. But is this actually a Biblical concept? Or is Gilson conflating Israel’s “election” with the “calling” or “promise” which came to be extended “to the ends of the earth”? “Universal election” seems a contradiction in terms.

Many centuries later, St Thomas specified the way in which the “Ideas” were of God’s essence and served as the models for all created things. **Ideas are God’s essence under its aspect of opportunity for created beings somehow to participate in its perfection.** As there is a vast variety of such opportunities, there is a vast variety of possible creatures. There are in God as many Ideas as there are creatures, representing God’s perfect knowledge of His own existence. God Himself alone exists without any such “ideal” model for participation. In this scheme, Ideas have no meaning except in relation to possible creation, and all Ideas are of such things as are “susceptible of an existence of their own” [164|158]. This is a momentous difference with the Platonic Ideas, which exist quite independently of whether any god or anything else exists at all. Moreover, the **Christian “Ideas” are the originals or models of concrete things, never of abstractions.** “God knows all things, but He knows them as they are, because they are as He knows them ... Ideas only appear with the possibility of creation and as expressions of the relation of possible creatures to the creative essence”. The Ideas in God are, “above all” [cf. 169n2|461n17], Ideas of *individual beings*, “because *they* are truly real and it is in them that accidents, species and genera subsist” [165|159].

Bonaventure suggested that the Ideas in God are not merely “known” (as Thomas had it) but are being *expressed* [167|159]; Duns Scotus held them to be “the creatures themselves as creatable by God and existing in Him by their concepts, conceived as possibles” [167-8|160]. Such slight nuances do not hide the “fundamental unity of Christian thought”, since they invariably affirm that “the Heavenly Father, precisely because He has drawn forth all things from nonentity, cannot be conceived other than as a Providence” (cf. Wisdom 14:3) [168|160]. With a divine Idea behind each creature, **God’s knowledge “necessarily extends as far as his causality”** [169|161]. That is, God sees and knows everything – sees, indeed, *every single thing*, especially individual things. Yet since “the particular is inseparable from its order, the order of the work [of creation] is part of the work” [169|161].

Augustine’s view of Providence receives its fully articulated, perfectly clear and conscious expression in a passage of St. Thomas’s *Contra gentiles* (III.1) [170|161-2].

God has willed each creature; and His will, combined with perfect knowledge, is to direct them all “to Himself”, i.e. to make His own perfection available for participation by each of all possible recipients. **Rational creatures** have a special position and hence enjoy a special kind of providence. Men, by their nature, are rational beings and therefore, in some measure, free masters of their own actions; by their destiny they are, through their operations, to “attain the last end of universal nature in knowledge and love” [172|164]. They are thus **eminently capable to participate in God’s perfection.** This is why they stand to the rest of creation as an end to a means, or as an army’s fighting troops to the auxiliary ser-

vices. Also, being immortal, they are distinguished from the rest by achieving their intended participation not only as a species but **as individuals**. Again, as rational creatures they have the privilege of some degree of participation in God's providence, rather than merely undergoing it as other creatures do. **Human prevision stands to God's providence as human causality stands to divine creation**" [cf. 103|101]. In fact, humans exert **a modicum of governing power** over themselves and the rest of creation. "God is not just controlling man by His providence but associates man with it": while all other creatures "only participate in God's providence inasmuch as they are subjected to it" [174n1|461n25], man "is governed by it and governs himself, and not only himself but all the rest as well. In a word, and to say all, each human being is a *person*" [173|166]. As St. Thomas says in *Contra Gentiles* III.113, "All lower providence ... is subjected to divine providence as the higher one. Governing the acts of a rational creature, then, inasmuch as they are personal acts, pertains to divine providence" [174n1|461n25]. Here the notion of **Personhood** makes its decisive appearance in Christian thought. In addition to the profound change in the concept of Ideas and of Providence, this makes for a radical anthropological innovation as compared with the ancient Greek idea of man.

IX. CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

[175-193 | 168-188]

Man's intimate and radical dependence on God, in Christian thought, marks a radical departure both from Plato's and from Aristotle's account of man – in spite of much terminological similarity. **Christianity's relationship with both Plato and Aristotle has been fruitful but uneasy**. The uneasiness is reflected by the way Christianity's reputation of mere world-forsaking spirituality contrasts with its actual celebration of the body and love for material creation as found in some of its greatest thinkers; also, in the historical progression from accepting Plato to accepting Aristotle as the main pagan philosophical authority.

Christianity started out as an assertion and **promise of resurrection for complete human individuals**. The immortality of the soul was not by itself an issue: the soul might or might not be dead until the resurrection. What was preached and believed was "the permanence and eminent value of the individual as such", that is, of "the concrete being, made of body and soul, which is called man" [177|171]. The **substantial unity of the human composite** was thus of crucial importance, and the question of immortality was at first subsidiary to that of resurrection. Under Platonic influence, though, it was soon recognized that there were "compelling philosophical reasons" for affirming the soul's immortality. The problem then became that of conceiving the immortality of the soul while assuring the future destiny of the body [179|172]. **Plato was strong on the**

soul's immortality, but weak on man's unity. Augustine, while never ceasing to "affirm" this unity, was frankly embarrassed when it came to "justifying" it [181|175]. What was certain was that a Christian could never construe the natural unity of body and soul as resulting from some mishap or Fall. "Since the issue was the salvation of the whole man, Christian philosophy could hardly propose to save the soul from the body, but rather to save the body through the soul." Man had to be a "substantial composite" [181|175]. How to develop this accepted idea philosophically? This problem did not come within sight of a solution until the early 13th century, when Aristotle's definition of the soul as "the act or form of an organized body having life potentially" got currency.

To be sure, Aristotle himself had not been quite at ease about his own account of the intellect as "a principle of operations independent of the body in its exercise and hence superior to what would be a simple substantial form" [183|177]; and for Christians the immortality merely of the intellect was an inadmissible limitation of the doctrine of resurrection. Nevertheless **Aristotle was strong on unity, but weak on immortality.** Thus the challenge became to rescue "the Platonic immortality of the soul and the Aristotelian unity of the human composite" and to find **a solution beyond mere eclecticism.** Albertus Magnus and others did not get beyond eclecticism [186|180]. The Arab philosophers Averroes and Avicenna, by and large, only helped to preserve the two horns of the dilemma [184-5|178-9].

It was **St. Thomas** who at last provided the combined justification for the two principles in a way which "necessarily flowed from these principles" themselves [186|181]: and this is an exquisite example of Christian philosophy since **the solution became more Christian precisely in becoming more philosophical** [187|182]. Avicenna taught (and Albertus more or less accepted) a definition of the soul as "a substance exerting the function of a form" [185|180]; but this failed to account for any necessary union of soul and body, and it is a line of thought that leads to Descartes. In contrast, Thomas's "soul" is "a form possessing and conferring substantiality" [187|182], i.e. a *substantial form* [188|183, 190|185, 192n1|463n19].³⁶ This concept had always been implicit in Aristotle's philosophy although Aristotle himself never used it. As Thomas recognized, even for Aristotle's early followers some "substances" were pure "forms", and these forms were substances precisely in virtue of their pure-formality: the purer, the

³⁶ The same term, although it is a key term in the present exposition of St. Thomas's thought, seems to be used in a different sense in the passage on p. 183|177 about Aristotle's "intellect", where this intellect is said to be *supérieur à ce que serait une simple forme substantielle* ("superior to any mere substantial form") and hence a problem if man is to be conceived as a single unified being.

more formal, and thus the more substantial [188|183].³⁷ A key issue for Thomas, then, was to show that the human soul is a substance, i.e. that she “subsists”.³⁸ He did show this by way of a sort of “argument from reason”³⁹ for the soul’s existence (or subsistence), developed from an Augustinian argument for the soul’s immateriality (which by the 13th century had ceased to be an issue). What Thomas argued was that “the human intellect must be considered as an incorporeal substance in its being as well as in its operations” [189-90|185]. This point settled, it just had to be obvious that souls are substantial forms. They are related to Aristotle’s “separate Intelligences” and hence to angels [188n2]⁴⁰ but, within this class, substantial forms are of the comparatively weak, inferior kind which “**could not subsist save as the forms of certain bodies**” [191|186]. Unlike the higher kinds, souls are spiritual substances which are merely dazzled and struck down when confronted with “pure intelligibles”, so that they cannot apprehend them. All the same, souls are at least “open to the intelligibility involved in matter” [191|186]. This means that if a soul is to get in touch with the world of bodies, it *needs* the intermediation of a body. Thus these lower-order substantial forms become, since they *must* become, the forms of bodies.⁴¹

A man can therefore not be equated with his soul. This substantial form – the human soul – “is only a part of man”. The intellect, an incorporeal substance, is the form of the human body [190-1|185-6]. For St. Thomas, man is not a fusion of two substances producing a third. The thinking or feeling subject is not a man’s intellect or sensibility, but a *man*. On the basis of this observation (which is indeed an *observation*, not an inference or deduction), Thomas asserts that **there is a single human substance, which “owes its whole substantiality to that of its soul”** [192|187] – “a complex substance which owes its substantiality to only one of its constituent principles” [193|188].

³⁷ A substance is “something that subsists”; cf. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*. I.75.2 Sed contra: “Natura ergo mentis humanae ...etiam est substantia, scilicet aliquid subsistens.”

³⁸ In this context, it is hard to see how the meaning of *subsist* differs from that of *exist*.

³⁹ The name first used for C. S. Lewis’s version of this argument by its critic John Beversluis (*C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*, 1985), and given some further currency by its defender Victor Reppert (*C. S. Lewis’s Dangerous Idea: In Defense of the Argument from Reason*, 2003).

⁴⁰ This note is not included in Downes’s translation.

⁴¹ See C. S. Lewis’s miniature anthropology in the penultimate poem of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, last stanza, where the term “substantial form” appears. Characteristically for Lewis, he is mainly concerned to note one advantage of the human condition over the angelic.

The Greeks, never denying the reality of the individual, opened the way for Christian **recognition of the eminent worth of the human person**. Even so, a great deal of speculative effort was still required for a philosophically justified “metaphysic of the person” to arise from the metaphysical principles which Plato and Aristotle had certainly had “in their hands” [195|190]. For **Plato**, the various degrees of excellence as found in various human individuals are all a matter of fuller or lesser participation in the ideal type of humanity – which is their single common reality. For **Aristotle**, the individual alone can be said to properly exist;⁴² nevertheless, the multiplicity of passing individuals is a mere substitute for the unity of the species, which endures even while it does not “subsist” [196|191].

This depreciation of the individual soon came under attack from many Christian thinkers. One early example is Athenagoras. Having shown that the resurrection of the body is neither impossible to God nor unworthy of Him, he pointed out that man’s final cause – contemplation of God’s perfection and of the beauty of His works – necessarily implies that there is an afterlife in which it is achieved. Nor could it be achieved by a disembodied soul; and this means that the body is going to be resurrected. The Christian gospel required that the human individual became “the protagonist of a drama which is that of his own destiny”. Neither our existence nor our non-existence is in our power. Such **foreseen, willed, elected and indestructible existence of the individual** was wholly alien to both Plato and Aristotle. It represents an original contribution to philosophy which Christian thinkers found themselves constrained to make if they were to give a rational justification of Christian hope [197|193].

This thought was further developed along two lines, each of which consisted in an attempt to solve a problem inherited from Aristotle. The simpler and less satisfying solution was the one proposed by **Duns Scotus** [199|195]. For Aristotle, individuality resulted not from an individual’s “form” but from its “matter”. The form was literally *speci-fic*, “making the species”, and therefore was invariable – otherwise it would make no species. The insoluble problem here was that matter can’t begin to have its individuating power unless it has (to some extent) already been “formed”, i.e. individuated. Introducing individual differences on the part of the forms spelled ruin for the unity of the species. Duns Scotus, as an heir to this problem and **aiming to rescue the unity of the human species, actually ended up profoundly modifying the notion of that unity**. On his view, the soul is never *a* soul but always *this* soul, essentially individual and as such conferring individuality on the whole man. Human individuality was thus assured: the individual’s humanity was not.

⁴² Not, apparently, to “subsist”.

St. Thomas avoided this outcome by sticking more closely to Aristotle while maintaining his notion of the soul as a “substantial form” [cf. Chap. IX]. For St. Thomas, a man is an individual because he cannot subdivide into smaller units each of which partakes of its (human) nature. The individuality (“in-divisibility”) is compatible with man’s composite nature as body and soul if this composite nature is seen to result from the substantial-form nature of the soul. Without human bodies, there are no human individuals; yet it is not the body which confers dignity on the individual, or defines its originality [204|200]. **Matter is the principle of individuation** in man as in any individual, **but matter is not, in man, the principle of his individuality**. “The soul is an individual form, although not precisely *as* form,⁴³ and it is the subsistence of this individual form which, bestowing its own proper existence upon matter, permits the individual to subsist” [205|200-1].

In further defining this peculiar type of individuality, the concept of *personality* is indispensable. Boethius, in a treatise on the two natures of Christ, had supplied the seminal definition of a person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia*. **Reason** is the key element in the kind of dignity that is called personhood; **Liberty** is its key practical consequence. In man, “the actuality of the reasonable soul, in communicating itself to the body, determines the existence of an individual who is a person, so that **the individual soul possesses personality as by definition**” [208|202]. The usual relation of means to end, as obtaining for other individuals with respect to their species, is reversed in the case of man as conceived by St. Thomas. **Nature’s aim (or the human species’ aim) is here “the multiplication of human individuals”** [209|203] **rather than the endurance of the species**. The person “is constituted in being and exists in virtue of the sole fact that an intellect, a principle of free determinations, is united to a matter so as to constitute a rational substance” [209|203-4].⁴⁴

For medieval thinkers, “to be a person is to participate in one of the highest excellences of the divine being” [210|205]; yet in modern eyes the medievals may seem to have done curiously little to develop the idea of human personhood. They developed the concept of personhood mainly with regard to God, not least to the God of Exodus 3:14 (cf. Bonaventure on John 8:38, *Ecce personalis distinctio: Exodi tertio, ego sum, qui sum*). St. Thomas asserted that *persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura* (*S.T.* I.29.3 Resp.) [211|206] – and clearly no ultimate perfection was to be achieved in earthly conditions. Personhood with respect to man is therefore usually discussed in terms not of free action but of *rationality*, both theoretical and practical.

⁴³ Cf. 205n2|465n6], “...human souls ... are not individual as forms, but only as subsisting and forms of *this* substance which, apart from matter, would not exist.”

⁴⁴ Downes’s translation. French: “se trouve posée dans l’existence du seul fait qu’un intellect, principe de déterminations libres, est uni à une matière pour constituer une substance raisonnable.”

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTERS I-X: “If it is to Scripture that we owe our having a philosophy which is Christian, it is to the Greek tradition that Christianity owes its having a philosophy at all” [212|207]. The spirit of *medieval* philosophy may be usefully identified with the spirit of *Christian* philosophy, at least as a way to distinguish it from its esteemed predecessor. The distinction is surely relevant for purposes of interpretation.

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