

The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the *Liber de Causis* & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus¹

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CONDEMNED BY THE SAINTS?

“In the human, there is only one form, the rational soul, without any other substantial form.” On the 30th of April 1286, a regent master of the University of Oxford and of the University of Paris condemned that proposition, as the eighth and last of “new opinions”, the one from which all the other “heresies” he listed followed.² This Aristotelian teaching of the unicity of substantial form is Aquinas’, is at the centre of and essential to his philosophical theology. Indeed, Bernard Blankenhorn judges that, though not the first to posit it, “Thomas seems to have been the first to follow through on the unicity of form’s major doctrinal

1. A shorter version of this paper was delivered to the “International workshop *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum: Ancient and modern readers*” at the University of Oxford on 21 July 2016. For the fundamental argument concerning the transformations and transmissions of Aristotle within and by the Peripatetic and Neoplatonic traditions, Hellenic, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian to Albertus Magnus and Aquinas, and Thomas’ extension and completion of one side of Albert’s magnificent edifice, I have returned to Edward Booth, O. P., *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, Cambridge Studies in medieval life and thought III, 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), a work of deep scholarship and philosophical genius. To Fr Booth this essay is dedicated. I am most grateful to Dr Maria Burger of the Albertus Magnus Institut, Cologne, for invaluable nuances, corrections, and modifications, and, from Cambridge University, to Evan King for crucial information and transforming discussions, and Dr Dragos Calma for searching critical questions.

2. *Registrum epistolarum fratris Ioannis Peckham* as quoted and translated into French in Alain Boureau, *Théologie, science et censure au XIII^e siècle. Le cas de Jean Peckham*, *L’âne d’or* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999), 7–9: “In homine est tantum una forma scilicet anima rationalis et nulla alia forma substantialis. Ex qua opinione sequi videntur omnes haereses supradicte.”

consequences."³ Consequently, on this occasion, and indeed, from at least 1267 frequently, when the Franciscans and the ecclesiastical authorities attacked the Aristotelianism of the Faculties of Arts of Paris and of Oxford, they had Aquinas also in their sights.⁴ Thomas' critical but positive espousal of what was now judged by the Franciscans to have conceded too much to the philosophy of the Artisans was soon being defended against them by his Dominican brothers, including his old teacher Albert the Great, his person having been rescued from inquisition by the same providence which would snatch away Meister Eckhart fifty years later.

The Franciscan Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham, who excommunicated as heretics the "pertinaces defensores" of the eight articles among the masters of Oxford, had studied in Paris under Bonaventure. The Seraphic combination of Aristotle, Augustine, and Dionysius was different from Thomas', and retained "all the elements" of the Augustinian plurality of forms in the human,⁵ providing an easy philosophical way to the immortality of the individual human soul. While Archbishop Peckham's legal basis for the judgment of "obstinate", necessary for condemnation as heretics, has been credibly questioned, because the unicity of form had not been formally censured in these terms previously, the Archbishop had on his side articles condemned in Paris on

3. Bernard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 221.

4. See Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Albert and Thomas. Selected Writings*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 226; J.F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277," *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 233–72; Boureau, *Théologie*, 58–63; Fergus Kerr, "Thomas Aquinas," *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G.R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 201–20 at 207–8; Isabel Iribarren, "'Responsio secundum Thomam' and the Search for an Early Thomistic School," *Vivarium* 39:2 (2001): 253–96; Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 143–80 & idem, *Raison et Foi: Archéologie d'une crise d'Albert le Grand à Jean-Paul II, L'ordre philosophique* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 174–230 (correcting an error in *Penser*); Catherine König-Pralong, *Avènement de l'aristotélisme en terre chrétienne: L'essence et la matière entre Thomas d'Aquin et Guillaume d'Ockham, Études de philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 188–243; John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 137–55 & Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, translated by J.G. Trabbid and R.W. Nutt (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2016), 371–78, 396–400.

5. Boureau, *Théologie*, 53.

March 7, 1277, those condemned by his Dominican predecessor in the See of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby, at Oxford on the 18th of March in that year, and Peckham's reiteration of this condemnation in his exchanges with the University in 1284.⁶

The intensity of the condemnations was matched by their brevity and by the sharpness of their complete reversal. In 1313, on May 6, by the Bull *Fidei catholicae fundamento*, Pope Clement Vth promulgated the decree of the Council of Vienne reprobating, "as erroneous and hostile to the Catholic Faith, every doctrine or position either with the temerity to assert or to raise doubts that the substance of the rational or intellective soul is not truly and *per se* the form of the human body".⁷ In consequence, Catherine König-Pralong remarks: "After having been condemned twice, the position once defended by Thomas Aquinas will now carry, in effect, the palm of orthodoxy."⁸ We know the other 14th century developments: Thomas' canonization and the lifting of the condemnation of 1277 so far as it seemed to touch him.

These matched the ecclesiastical efforts to have Aristotle taught and studied about 100 years after Pope Gregory IX warned in 1228 against the philosophical novelties coming from the Arabs. He thereby renewed, as also in 1231 with *Parens scientiarum*, a modified version of the Parisian bans on the teaching of Aristotle's natural treatises and the commentaries on them begun in 1210.⁹ This reversal on Aristotle is as significant as *Fidei catholicae fundamento* because Aquinas did not undertake his commentaries on

6. Articles 114 & 116 in *La Condamnation Parisienne de 1277*, nouvelle éd. du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire par David Piché, Sic et Non (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 112–15; for articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 16 of Archbishop Kilwardby's condemnation, see Boureau, *Théologie*, 63

7. Boureau, *Théologie*, 326–27. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Edition 31 (1957), 481: "Porro doctrinam omnem seu positionem temere assertentem, aut vertentem in dubium, quod substantia animae rationalis seu intellectivae vere ac per se humani corporis non sit forma, velut erroneam ac veritati catholicae inimicam fidei, praedicto sacro approbante Concilio reprobamus...". See Christopher Upham, "The Influence of Aquinas," *Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, edited Brian Davies & Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 518; Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 400.

8. König-Pralong, *Avènement*, 188.

9. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 400, König-Pralong, *Avènement*, 188, Alain de Libera, *La philosophie médiévale*, 2^e éd. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), 365–70 & Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* [1st ed. 1955] (London: Sheed and Ward, 1980), 244–45, 471.

The Philosopher as part of his professional teaching duties, he was a theologian. Some of the expositions served his theological work, but this student of Albert, continuing his spirit and work, sought, as Pasquale Porro observes: “to engage with the complete system of the sciences, ... he remained convinced ... that a good theologian must be, in the first place, a person of science in general ... never neglecting engagement with the profane sciences”.¹⁰ Rather than being the enemy of the Aristotelians, “he immediately stands out as a model” for them. Himself determining the terrain, he becomes “an almost indispensable point of reference in his approach to Aristotle.”¹¹ In the 16th century Aquinas was proclaimed *Doctor Ecclesiae*. And then, with *Aeterni patris* in 1879, *Cum hoc sit* of 1880, *Pascendi* of 1907, *Doctoris Angelici* of 1914, his philosophical “mentality” (*ad mentem*) and doctrines, without need of other scholastic doctors, were more and more imposed on Catholic philosophers and theologians.¹²

Crucially none of these victories and approbations were given to Aquinas himself! His circumstances were the bans on the teaching of Aristotle renewed up to 1263 which were followed by the condemnations beginning in 1270. Not only the habits of almost eight centuries of Augustinian Latin Christendom stood against him, with authorities defending that with bans and condemnations, but sanctified reason also seemed opposed to the path on which he set out.

10. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 340.

11. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 372. This understanding of the integrity of philosophical work, goes with the demonstration by Adriano Oliva that Aquinas judged of the philosophers that “*Preclara ingenia*” are led to a real, even if incomplete and anguished, *felicitas*, to which philosophy and the lives of her servants are ordered. Because “*c’est par sa nature même que l’homme aime Dieu plus que soi-même d’un amour d’amitié*”, by devoting themselves to contemplation as “*ratio uita*”, philosophers can develop “*amor amicitiae*” for God. And “*Dieu ... s’il aime le sage païen, c’est qu’il lui donne la gratia gratum faciens*” so that he can realise that friendship. Adriano Oliva, “*La contemplation des philosophes selon Thomas d’Aquin*”, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 96 (2012): 585–662 at 589.

12. For the Papal actions see Wayne J. Hankey, “Pope Leo’s Purposes and St. Thomas’ Platonism,” *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero*, in *Atti dell’ VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, 8 vols., ed. A. Piolanti, viii, Studi Tomistici 17 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 39–52; Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 18–19; Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 403–404. For the unravelling 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.

The issue for Archbishop Peckham appears with the greatest clarity in a letter he sent to the Bishop of Lincoln on the 1st of June, 1285. In respect to Dominican opinions on the unity of form, he opposes: “the profane novelties of the language introduced into the heights of theology for twenty years” ... “almost totally contrary to the most solid and healthy doctrine of the sons of St Francis like Alexander of Hales, of blessed memory, and Bonaventure. ... It destroys and enervates everything which Augustine teaches on the eternal laws, the immutable light, the faculties of the soul, and the seminal reasons.”¹³ Peckham repeats again and again that these opinions are contrary both to reason and philosophy, on the one hand, and to the testimony of the saints, on the other.

Perspective requires us to step back from the fight between the dogs of Dominic and Francis and recollect that Latin Christendom was fundamentally, dominantly, and close to exclusively, Augustinian theologically, philosophically, and in its spiritualities almost from the death of the great Bishop of Hippo into the 13th century, and, without the “exclusively”, would remain so with a major revival at the religious and philosophical origins of modernity. In consequence, the philosophical world Aquinas entered was far more Platonist than Aristotelian and its Platonism was much more Plotinian than Proclean.¹⁴ The human mind is

13. Peckham to the Bishop of Lincoln, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 1, ed. H. Denifle (Paris, 1889), §523, pp. 634–35: After referring direly to the punishment of Chore “Moses resistentes”, he goes on to the opinions of some Dominicans in England “de unitate forme” and writes: “Preterea noverit ipse, quod philosophorum studia minime reprobamus, quatinus mysteriis theologicis famulantur, set profanas vocum novitates, que contra philosophicam veritatem sunt in sanctorum injuriam citra viginti annos in altitudines theologicas introducte, abjectis et vilipensis sanctorum assertionibus evidenter. Que sit ergo solidior et sanior doctrina, vel filiorum beati Francisci, sancte scilicet memorie fratris Alexandri ac fratris Bonaventure et consimilium, qui in suis tractatibus ab omni calumnia alienis sanctis et philosophis innituntur, vel illa novella quasi tota contraria, que quidquid docet Augustinus de regulis eternis, de luce incommutabilis, de potentiis anime, de rationibus seminalibus inditis materie, et consimilibus innumeris destruit pro viribus et enervet, pugnat verborum inferens toti mundo”. It is translated in Boureau, *Théologie*, 30–1 and slightly differently in François-Xavier Putallaz, *Figures Franciscaines de Bonaventure à Duns Scot*, Initiations au Moyen Âge (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 46–7.

14. There is an excellent very short outline of the difference between these two Platonisms in the medieval Latin context in Richard Schenk, O.P., “From Providence to Grace: Thomas Aquinas and the Platonisms of the Mid-thirteenth Century,” *Nova et Vetera* 3:2 (2005): 307–20.

introspectively experienced as incorporeal substance. What is self-knowing by nature is image of, and has immediate contact with, the Divine Trinitarian self-relation. Its truthful and certain knowledge is by “the eternal laws and the immutable light” of the Divine Verbum with which it has unmediated contact comparable to the presence of *NOUS* to the human soul in Plotinus.¹⁵ Crucially, human ontology and our mode of knowledge are coordinate. If the soul is the form of the single human substance, and it is the necessity and proper good of our nature to know by turning to the sensible without intellectual intuition, Aquinas’ fixed, interminably repeated Aristotelian doctrine, everything is changed, as Peckham perceived.¹⁶

How did Aquinas have the audacity to, as Peckham puts it, “reject and scorn the evident assertions of the saints”?, by whom he intends, above all, Augustine. I assume that Thomas could not have moved from an almost universally held philosophical theology with the sanction of the saints without equal or even superior holy sanction for his revolutionary Aristotelian philosophical framework. And, indeed, he did not. To the embarrassment of modern scholars, whose books constructing the history of philosophy Albert and Aquinas had not the fortune, or misfortune, to have read before reading the texts themselves, their Dionysius accorded with their Aristotle. It has taken more than two centuries since the setting of Plato against the Platonisms, including Aristotle’s, to restore some openness to what Albert and Thomas perceived. A less prejudiced study of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and, most importantly, of Proclus has been crucial to enabling us to see what Albert and Thomas discerned.¹⁷

15. See Robert Crouse, “Knowledge”, *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 486–88 & Wayne J. Hankey, “Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self,” *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001): 65–88 at 74–6 & 84–5.

16. A detailed description of both sides and of what is at issue is magisterially given in Édouard H. Wéber, o.p., *La Personne humaine au xiii^e siècle. L’avènement chez les maîtres parisiens de l’acception moderne de l’homme*, Bibliothèque thomiste 46 (Paris: Vrin, 1991) which happily has a very useful and profound summary in Alain de Libera, “Une Anthropologie de la grâce. Sur *La Personne humaine au xiii^e siècle* d’É.-H. Wéber,” *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques* 77 (1993): 241–54.

17. See Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic* which defines and surpasses the problematic, especially, 205–27; Wayne J. Hankey, “Thomas’ Neoplatonic Histories: His following of Simplicius,” *Dionysius* 20 (2002): 153–78 & idem, “*Participatio divini luminis*, Aquinas’ doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 149–78 look at Aquinas within the traditional concordist structure, Lloyd P.

Edward Booth's study, published in 1983, of the fate of Aristotle's "aporetic ontology", where substance is both generic and radically individual, concludes with Thomas' philosophical theology as "The 'Aufhebung' of radical Aristotelian ontology into a Pseudodionysian-Proclean ontology of 'Esse'."¹⁸ The direction Proclus gave Platonism, when corrected and extended by Islamic and Christian monotheists, most authoritatively and importantly, but by no means exclusively,¹⁹ for Aquinas by way of the *Liber de causis* and the *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum*, enables the recuperation of Aristotle's ontology of individual substance. Fr Booth wrote: "Asserting God himself to be 'ipsum esse' in the manner of Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas saw each thing as directly dependent on him. ... The ontology of Thomas is neither pure radical Aristotelianism, nor pure Cryptoprocleanism [as in the *Liber* and Dionysius]: it is a combination of both."²⁰ "Thomas's ontology should not be regarded as primarily Cryptoproclean, and its openness to Aristotelian thought not a concession, still less a contradiction, but a development of Aristotelian virtualities, existing particularly in Pseudo-Dionysius's ontology. Thomas's Aristotelian ontology is a prolongation and development of Pseudo-Dionysius's Aristotelianisation of Proclus's ontology."²¹ Fr Blankenhorn's *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas*, published last year, discerns that

Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) belongs to a torrent of recent books remaking the concord in respect to Aristotle and Plato; "Introduction" in Pauliina Remes and Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 3–5 is up-to-date on the consequences for "Neoplatonism".

18. Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 205.

19. Boethius is very important as well as Arabic philosopher - theologians from al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Ghazali, to Averroes and Moses Maimonides. Boethius frequently occurs in the same places within the arguments of Albert and Aquinas of particular interest to our present study.

20. Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 215.

21. Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 218; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters xlvii (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995), 257–65 has Dionysius play the same role for Aquinas. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," *Christian Origins : Theology, rhetoric and community*, edited by Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, Studies in Christian Origins (London: Routledge, 1998), 139–84 at 171–72.

the fundamental turning point is “the advent [in Albert] of a new anthropology [with]... an Aristotelian-Dionysian emphasis on the soul-body unity,” and Fr Blankenhorn writes easily of “Proclean-Dionysian” and “Aristotle-Dionysius” fusions.²² Equally, Pasquale Porro, in *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, translation out this year, writes that “Thomas ascribes to Pseudo-Dionysius ... [what] is actually a combination of Aristotelianism and Pseudo-Dionysius (and indirectly Proclean Neo-Platonism).”²³

From the beginning to the end of Aquinas’ writing, it is clear that for him the required sanction for his revolution, so appalling to Archbishop Peckham, came from “Blessed Dionysius”, about whom he notes in his *Sentences Commentary*: “Dionysius ... qui discipulus Pauli fuit, et dicitur ejus visiones scripsisse.”²⁴ In the preface to his *Super Mysticam Theologiam Dionysii*, Albert ascribes to that book the mode of “Scripture, which is attained by divine inspiration and cannot be subject to error”. Thus Dionysius becomes “a quasi-biblical author”.²⁵ The *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum* possesses an authority for Aquinas surpassed only by Sacred Scripture and never loses it. The judgment of Vivian Boland is correct: “Dionysius must be interpreted always as a Catholic believer ... In Saint Thomas’ [very late] commentary on the *Liber de causis* ‘the faith’ [still] tells against Proclus and against ‘platonic positions’, against the ‘Auctor’, against Aristotle but never against Dionysius who remains for Saint Thomas an authoritative source for what the faith teaches.”²⁶ Augustine, *imbutus* with the doctrine of the *Platoniorum*,²⁷ which “he follows so far as this is possible to

22. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 124 and 222–23.

23. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

24. Aquinas, *In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, [herein after *Super Sent.*], lib. 2 d. 10 q. 1 a. 2 co. The whole passage, well worth considering, is: “Unde patet quod haec positio rationabilior est: tum quia Dionysius hoc tradit, qui discipulus Pauli fuit, et dicitur ejus visiones scripsisse; unde eum frequenter in auctorem inducit, et praecipue in divisione hierarchiarum, et, sicut in 13 cap. Caelest. Hier. innuit, haec positio vulgata erat tempore primitivae Ecclesiae: tum etiam quia dictis philosophorum magis consonat, ut ab eis ea quae contra fidem non sunt, accipiamus, aliis resecatis.” For Aquinas, I usually use the online texts at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org>. When I am using another text it will be clear from the citation.

25. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 157.

26. Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God According to St. Thomas Aquinas. Sources and Synthesis*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought LXIX (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 310.

27. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 84 a. 5 co.: “Augustinus, qui doctrinis Platon-

be done in accord with the truth of the faith",²⁸ is counterbalanced, understood through, and contained within a Dionysius who follows Aristotle, according to the same limiting condition.

Aquinas learned the congruence of Aristotle and Dionysius, being initiated by Albertus into what Alain de Libera called "La 'voie' d'Albert: le péripatétisme dionysien",²⁹ when, from 1245, he was his student first in Paris and, then, crucially, in Cologne, where Albert, "le plus grand commentateur dionysien du XIII^e siècle",³⁰ commented on both the entire *Dionysian corpus* and works of Aristotle.³¹ There, de Libera judges: "[Albert] made from the *corpus* of Denys an alternative, on the whole, to the scholastic *corpus* of magisterial and university theology. This is the most important innovation of Albert: to have answered 'Yes' to the question of knowing if the works of Denys 'suffice' to fulfill the obligations of the theologian's *métier*, if they cover, in summary, the entirety of "the theological task", of the *negotium theologicum*."³² To this

icorum imbutus fuerat, si qua invenit fidei accommoda in eorum dictis, assumpsit; quae vero invenit fidei nostrae adversa, in melius commutavit."

28. Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae De Veritate*, Textum adaequatum Leonino 1972 edito (Busa), q. 21 a. 4 ad 3: "Augustinus in multis opinionem Platonis sequitur, quantum fieri potest secundum fidei veritatem"; idem, *Quaestio Disputata de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, ed. J. Cos, Commissio Leonina: vol. 24, 2 (Rome/Paris, 2000), 10 ad 8, p. 113, lines 515–16: "Augustinus autem, Platonem secutus quantum fides Catholica patiebatur"; in consequence of this limit, he judges that Augustine may recite doctrines he does not assert. Idem, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 77 a. 5 ad 3: "In multis autem quae ad philosophiam pertinent, Augustinus utitur opinionibus Platonis, non asserendo, sed recitando."

29. A subtitle used by Alain de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique, Albert le Grand, Problèmes et Controverses* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 239. See also "L'intention philosophique d'Albert : d'Aristote à Denys et retour", pp. 178–84, where de Libera treats Albert on *Liber de causis*, prop. 4.

30. de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 73.

31. For the dates and order of the Dionysian commentaries, see Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De divinis nominibus*, ed. Paul Simon, Cologne edition, Vol. 37. Pt 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972) [herein after *Super De divinis nominibus*], vi, with the modifications required by M. Burger, "Thomas Aquinas's Glosses on the Dionysius Commentaries of Albert the Great in Codex 30 of the Cologne Cathedral Library", ed. L. Honnefelder, H. Möhle, S. Bullido del Barrio, *Via Alberti. Texte - Quellen - Interpretationen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2009), 561–82 and É.-H. Wéber, "L'interprétation par Albert le Grand de la Théologie mystique de Denys Ps-Areopagite," *Albertus Magnus Doctor Universalis*, ed. Gerbert Meyer and Albert Zimmernan, Walberberger Studien 6 (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1980), 409–39.

32. de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 277–78.

theological *corpus* Albert matched the peripatetic philosophy.³³

There is no evidence that Aquinas undertook to repeat Albert's innovation, and he notoriously, and to his peril, engaged positively as well as critically with the Artisans;³⁴ nonetheless, what Thomas took over from Albert on the structure of theology appears in his *Summa theologiae*. It is ordered "secundum quod materia patietur",³⁵ and begins, as Dionysius teaches him expositing the divine names must, "Lumine divinae revelationis", i.e. from God's theology.³⁶ Crucially, for Aquinas, *Sacra Scriptura* is another name for *Sacra Doctrina* and "se fonde directement sur révélation divine."³⁷ "Scripture's *raison d'être* [that of Sacred Doctrine] is positive knowledge of God that moves towards final beatitude,"³⁸ which itself is by knowledge. This comes out right at the beginning of the *Summa*,³⁹ and ultimately determines his interpretation of Dionysius, just as Dionysius is preeminently the teacher of Sacred Doctrine and determines its structure and character.

Thus, overall, and in many of its divisions, this *Summa* has the *remaining* (μὲν, "in Deo continentur omnia"⁴⁰), going-out (πρὸς, "out of Deum")

33. On Albert's Aristotelianism in the context of this investigation, and Aquinas' following of it, see Wéber, *La Personne humaine*, 121–98.

34. See, for example, Wayne J. Hankey, "Why Philosophy Abides for Aquinas," *The Heythrop Journal*, 42:3 (2001): 329–48.

35. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae, prooemium*.

36. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 ad 2. Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus Expositio*, ed. C. Pera (Turin: Marietti, 1950) [herein after *In De divinis nominibus*], I, i, § 13, p. 7: "Soli autem Deo convenit perfecte cognoscere seipsum secundum id quod est. Nullus igitur potest vere loqui de Deo vel cogitare nisi in quantum a Deo revelatur."

37. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 1 a. 2 ad 2: "revelatio divina processit, super quam fundatur sacra Scriptura seu doctrina." See Adriano Oliva, "Doctrina et sacra doctrina chez Thomas d'Aquin," *Vera Doctrina*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 123 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 35–61 at 51.

38. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 323.

39. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co: "Finem autem oportet esse praecognitum hominibus, qui suas intentiones et actiones debent ordinare in finem. Unde necessarium fuit homini ad salutem, quod ei nota fierent quaedam per revelationem divinam, quae rationem humanam excedunt. ... Necessarium igitur fuit, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, quae per rationem investigantur, sacram doctrinam per revelationem haberi."

40. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, iii, § 986, p. 368: "per Deum manent omnia, sicut per causam conservantem; in Deo continentur omnia, sicut effectus in causa; et ad Deum convertuntur omnia, sicut ad finem et adimplentur, idest perficiuntur omnia: ultima enim rei perfectio est ex eo quod attingit proprium

exitus), return (επιστροφή, *reditus*, “ad Deum convertuntur omnia”) form of the *Dionysian corpus* as Albert explained it in his *Super De divinis nominibus*. The *Divine Names* looks at God “according to the outflow of caused things from the cause”; the *Mystical Theology’s* perspective is “the resolution of caused things into the cause”.⁴¹ Further it begins its *de deo* with the Dionysian names of the divine substance,⁴² also arranged in the remaining, *exitus, redivit* circle in the *De divinis nominibus*. Imitating it, and in accord with two principles in it, they begin with the divine simplicity (Question 3) and return to that under the form of unity (Question 11).

Aquinas and Dionysius start with the simplicity of the monad according to a Proclean principle Thomas states in his *Exposition* of the *Divine Names*: “unum habet rationem principii”.⁴³ They return to unity as the inclusive perfection to which the conversion of the divine simplicity upon itself arrives.⁴⁴ When commenting on the *Liber de causis*, Thomas exhibits the Proclean logic on which this conversion depends. Aquinas orders his consideration of God in Himself by the *de deo uno* and *de deo trino* division he also finds in the *De Divinis Nominibus*. He understands Dionysius to say that he separated the consideration of the undifferentiated and the differentiated names into distinct treatises;⁴⁵ a practice he is evidently imitating and he

finem.” Importantly, he sees Dionysius as completing Paul in Romans 2: “ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia, quibus tribus Dionysius duo addit, scilicet: a quo et ad quem.”

41. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 1, p. 2, lines 37–48: “Haec autem nomina possunt dupliciter considerari: aut secundum effluxum causatorum a causa, participantium rationem nominis per posterius, et sic agitur de eis in libro isto, aut secundum quod ex resolutione causatorum in causam relinquitur ignotum significatum nominis, prout est in causa, propter modum eminentem ipsius causae, et sic agitur de ipsis in libro DE MYSTICA THEOLOGIA.” I quote the translation in Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 151.

42. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 14, pr.: “eorum quae ad divinam substantiam pertinent”.

43. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, II, ii, §143, p. 46. See also, II, ii, §135, p. 45.

44. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, iii, §989, p. 368; XIII, ii, §980, p. 364; & XIII, iii, §986, p. 368, quoted above.

45. See Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, I, i, §§ 1–3; II, i, § 110, §121, §§126–27; II, ii, §141–2. Wayne J. Hankey, “The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of St. Thomas’ *Summa Theologiae*,” *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani*, ed. L. Obertello (Roma: Herder, 1981), 367–75; Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. F.A. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46–7; Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 322.

begins with *de deo uno*. When he arrives at creatures, he is explicit that he uses a triad he finds in Dionysius, and later identifies as Proclean,⁴⁶ to structure the treatment of spiritual beings.⁴⁷ Even the famous, “*gratia non tollat naturam sed perficiat*,” relating natural reason and the light of grace, grounding the fundamental *quid pro quo* of his system and which is found with that in the *Summa*’s first Question (articles 1 and 8 respectively),⁴⁸ comes from Proclus by way of Dionysius and Albert, as Richard Schenk has shown.⁴⁹

Because grace completes rather than destroys nature, in return for yielding to gracious revelation when their grasp is exceeded, “*philosophicae disciplinae tractant secundum quod sunt cognoscibilia lumine naturalis rationis*”⁵⁰ and have their own integrity securely established in the substantiality of the human.

46. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 75 pr: “Secundum Dionysium, XI cap. Angel. Hier., tria inveniuntur in substantiis spiritualibus, scilicet essentia, virtus et operatio”; Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 60, D (Rome 1968), cap. 20, p. D79, lines 304–10: “Relinquitur igitur quod huiusmodi substantiae operatio, et per consequens substantia, omnino sit extra omnem temporalem successionem. Unde et Proclus dicit, quod omnis intellectus in aeternitate substantiam habet, et potentiam et operationem; et in Lib. de causis dicitur, quod intelligentia parificatur aeternitati.” The *De Substantiis Separatis* brings Dionysius, the Liber and Proclus into agreement.

47. See Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself, Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs / Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 / 2000), 3–12; idem, “Aquinas and the Platonists,” *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, edited by Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoener, with the assistance of Pieter Th. van Wingerden (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 279–324 at 319; idem, *Aquinas’ Neoplatonism in the Summa Theologiae on God. A Short Introduction*. South Bend, Indiana, St Augustine’s Press, in press.

48. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co & ad 2 and I^a q. 1 a. 8 ad 2.

49. Schenk, “From Providence to Grace”: 311–20. He writes: “This is especially evident in Thomas’s use of Dionysius’ axiom on providence from *De divinis nominibus* IV, 33. In his commentary on the work, written sometime in the 1260’s, Thomas follows closely in the sense of Proclus and Dionysius: ‘Providence preserves the nature of every given thing. And because rational creatures, according to their nature, are defectible and able to be defective and to fail through free will, it does not pertain to divine providence to impede that mobility’. What is striking is the consistency of Thomas’ use of the axiom and the notion of *per-se-mobilitas* outside of his commentary. Thomas seems to have settled on the direction of his thought on this matter as early as during the lectures he heard on Dionysius by Albert between 1248 and 1252.” See Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 217–21.

50. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 ad 2.

As Aquinas will learn from the Iamblichan-Proclean tradition by means of Simplicius,⁵¹ because it conforms to the humble necessity of human nature, Aristotle's way to the separate substances from sensible things is "manifestior et certior".⁵² For Thomas, as indeed for Albert, though more totally, "quod dicit Dionysius, I cap. caelestis hierarchiae, *impossibile est nobis aliter lucere divinum radium, nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum*"⁵³ describes the necessity of the Aristotelian turn to the sensible. This origination from sense, and Aristotle's insistence on the conversion to the phantasm,⁵⁴ limit what can be reached; there is no intuition of separate substance for Aquinas; knowledge of their essence is beyond us *in hac vita*.

For Albert and Thomas, Aristotle, as well as Dionysius, is a negative theologian. The compensation is persuasive certainty in respect to what we do know. Thus, Thomas can assert in the *De Veritate*: 'we discover that God exists', "rationibus irrefragabilibus etiam a philosophis probatum".⁵⁵ Importantly, the confidence comes from the same Paul whose knowledge of the separate substances Dionysius passed on. Aquinas is assured by his Epistle to the Romans that God is able to be known by humans through

51. Aquinas, *de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, 3 co., p. 40, lines 275–82: "Harum autem duarum opinionum diuersitas ex hoc procedit quod quidam ad inquirendam ueritatem de natura rerum processerunt ex rationibus intelligibilibus: et hoc fuit proprium Platoniorum, quidam uero ex rebus sensibilibus: et hoc fuit proprium philosophie Aristotilis, ut dicit Simplicius in *Commento super Praedicamenta*." Aquinas appears to be referring to the Prologue of Simplicius' *Commentary*; see *Commentaire sur les Catégories d'Aristote*, Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke, ed. A. Pattin, 2 volumes, Corpus Latinorum commentariorum in Aristotelem Graecorum 1-2 (vol. 1, Louvain/Paris, 1971, vol. 2, Leiden, 1975), prologus, p. 8, line 74–p. 9, line 85.

52. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 2, D 44, lines 11–13: "Et ideo Aristoteles manifestiori et certiori via processit ad investigandum substantias a materia separatas, scilicet per viam motus." Compare *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 2 a. 3 co.: "Prima autem et manifestior via est, quae sumitur ex parte motus."

53. According to the *Index Thomisticus* Aquinas quotes this passage thirteen times. This is its form at Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 1 a. 9 co.

54. Aquinas, *Sententia libri De Anima*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 45, 1 (Rome / Paris, 1984), III, iv, p. 223, lines 244–45: "Non enim intelligit aliquid sine fantasmate"; III, vi, p. 231, lines 130–35: "concludit ulterius, quod, si fantasmata se habent ad animam intellectiuam sicut sensibile ad sensum, sicut sensus non potest sentire sine sensibili, ita anima non potest intelligere sine fantasmate." He wrote this commentary at about the same time he was writing that on the *Divine Names*. Both use Simplicius, *On the Categories*.

55. Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 12; see also q. 14 a. 9 resp. & ad 9.

creatures: "Videtur quod Deus possit cognosci per creaturas ab homine. Rom. 1, 20: invisibilia Dei a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur."⁵⁶ Aquinas continues Albert's Dionysian-Aristotelian affirmation of the human substance as a soul-body unity, but moves beyond him by requiring the operations of grace adapt themselves more fully to the integrity of that nature.⁵⁷

After he left Cologne, Thomas' understanding of how the concord of Dionysius and the Philosopher worked underwent mind shaking changes which we must outline,⁵⁸ and he will break out of important particulars of Albert's way of putting things together. Nonetheless, Thomas never ceases to hold to fundamentals he learned as Albert's student.⁵⁹ A comparison of Albert's commentaries on the *Dionysian*

56. Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 3 q. 1 a. 3 arg. 1. He concedes this argument.

57. See Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 126 & 216–48. On this difference between Albert and Aquinas, see Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht, *Théologie négative et noms divins chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Bibliothèque thomiste LVII (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 473–74; Alain de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 72–118, 248–51, 262–86; Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes": passim, the treatment of Albert is minimal but precise, see 595–96, 604, n45: "La position de Thomas est beaucoup plus radicale que celle d'Albert de Grand", and 625; Marenbon, *Pagans*, 126–59 & 162–78.

58. For a sharp outline of the differences, see Alain de Libera, "Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin interprètes du *Liber de Causis*," *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques* 74 (1990): 347–78.

59. Generally in this paper, I shall prescind from the differences in detail between Albert and Aquinas especially two on which there is a huge scholarship, namely, how they understand the relation between being and intellect as manifest in their different interpretations of the *Liber de causis*, prop. 4 and how their interpretations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* diverge with results for the two-fold human end and for the relation of philosophy and revealed theology. Prop. 4 is "Prima rerum creaturarum est esse et non est ante ipsam creaturam aliud". For the text see Aquinas, *Super Librum De Causis Expositio*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, 2nd edition corrigée (Paris: Vrin, 2002) [herein after *Super De causis*], p. 26. Notable moments in the scholarship on this question are Leo Sweeney, "The Meaning of *Esse* in Albert the Great's Texts on Creation in the *Summa de Creaturis* and *Scripta Super Sententias*," *Albert the Great: Commemorative Essays*, ed. F.J. Kovak and R W Shahan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 65–95; Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 180–85, 199–204, 209–18, 220–52, 262–65; Cristina D'Ancona-Costa, "La doctrine de la creation 'mediante intelligentia' dans le *Liber de Causis* et dans ses sources," *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques* 76 (1992): 209–33; Thérèse Bonin, *Creation As Emanation. The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's On The Causes And The Procession Of The Universe*, Publications in Medieval Studies, The Medieval Institute, University of Notre Dame XXIX (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 35–52; Thomas d'Aquin, *Commentaire du Livre des causis*, Introduit, traduit et commenté Béatrice et Jérôme Decossas (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 148–56 & 229–51;

corpus with Thomas' on the *De divinis nominibus* confirms this,⁶⁰ as does work like that of Fr Booth, and those following a similar path, which see in Thomas' thought a development on Albert's foundation.⁶¹ His conviction of the agreement of the Philosopher, of the author of the Propositions of the *Liber de causis*, of Dionysius, and of Catholic truth survives from his discipleship to his most historically and philosophically sophisticated magisterial writings. Indeed, it is set out most clearly in his very late (c 1272) *Super Librum de Causis Expositio* and *De Substantiis Separatis*, after he knows the Arabic derivation of the *Liber* from the *Elements* of Proclus. So close are Dionysius and the *Liber de causis* in the eyes of Aquinas that, in his ultimate and best informed analysis Aquinas even suggests that the author of the *Liber* is dependent on Dionysius.⁶²

In Aquinas' *Sentences Commentary*, his first systematic and his largest work, delivered and redacted in Paris between 1252 and 1256, immediately after leaving Albert in Cologne,⁶³ the Christian authority of the *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum* is matched, in the subordinate natural reason, by the authority of "the Philosopher", Aristotle. Besides Aristotle's writings, in respect to many of the highest metaphysical matters which they both treat, Aquinas makes great use of the *Liber de causis*, which, when he was commenting on the *Sentences*, and for some time later, he, along with the University of Paris and Albert, while Aquinas studied with him, attributed to Aristotle.⁶⁴ Generally, though not universally, in Aquinas, the *Liber de*

Pasquale Porro, "The University of Paris in the thirteenth century", in Stephen Gersh, ed., *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 264–98 at 278–86. On the two-fold human end, there are Christian Trottmann, *La vision béatifique des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1995), 243–317; Denis J.M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1997), which does not treat Albert; de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 174–298; and Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes".

60. For such a comparison *in extenso* see Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 335–478 and Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 227–36.

61. See Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 205–6.

62. Aquinas, *Super de causis*, prop. 4, p. 33, lines 11–2: "supra dictum est secundum sententiam DIONYSII, quam videtur sequi AUCTOR huius libri."

63. For these and the previous dates of Thomas' works I am using the Chronology in Porro's *Thomas Aquinas*, 439–44.

64. Examples from Aquinas abound, see Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 8 q. 1 a. 3 s. c. 1, which nicely unites Dionysius and the *Liber*: "Contra, secundum Dionysium, divina attributa non innotescunt nobis nisi ex eorum participationibus, quibus a creaturis participantur. Sed inter omnes alias participationes esse prius est, ut

causis, which modified Proclus and Plotinus for Islamic philosophers in much the same ways in which the *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum* modified them for Christians,⁶⁵ unites with Aristotle to provide with Dionysius the systematic structure and the hermeneutic within which Thomas' Augustine must live.⁶⁶ This is a new philosophy blessed because it is followed by a saint with whose theological teachings, even on matters of faith, it mostly coheres.

THE PLAN OF THIS PAPER

St Thomas, and even more St Thomas and St Albert together, are of unequalled authority for philosophy, especially the relation of philosophy and revelation, within the Catholic Church.⁶⁷ Describing their agreement on the accord of the greatest sacred authority apart from Holy Scripture, the greatest philosophical authority, and the truth of the Catholic faith, and how their views evolved and diverged are both matters of great importance and beyond being contained in this article. Instead of the uncontainable, I shall subordinate St Albert to his great pupil by confining the treatment of

dicitur 5 cap. *de Div. Nom.* his verbis: ante alias ipsius, scilicet Dei, participationes, esse positum est. Cui etiam dictum philosophi consonat *Lib. de causis*: prima rerum creatarum est esse. Ergo videtur quod, secundum rationem intelligendi, in Deo esse sit ante alia attributa, et qui est inter alia nomina." See Appendix 4 for more texts of Aquinas and some of Albert; there are more texts of Albert in Appendix 1.

65. See most recently, John M. Dillon, "Dionysius the Areopagite" and Cristina D'Ancona, "The Liber de causis", Gersh, ed., *Interpreting Proclus*, 111–24 & 137–61. Her chapter gives a list of her indispensable publications on the *Liber*; one which exhibits nicely the crucial triadic concord is "Saint Thomas lecteur du 'Liber de causis'," *Revue thomiste* XCII (1992): 785–817. This Aquinas also discerned gradually and exhibited both in his *In De divinis nominibus & Super librum de causis expositio*; see Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas and the Platonists," 310–19.

66. See, generally, Hankey, *God in Himself*; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21-24 septembre 1994*, édités Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 405–38, especially 424–38; & idem, "Reading Augustine through Dionysius: Aquinas' correction of one Platonism by another," *Aquinas the Augustinian*, edited Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), Chapter 10, 243–57.

67. See de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, which maintains that the position endorsed by the Pontiff as Aquinas' is in fact that of Albert, and Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas at the Origins of Secular Humanism? Sources and innovation in *Summa Theologiae* 1.1.1," *Nova et Vetera*, 5:1 (2007): 17–40.

his position to that of the period when he taught Aquinas, primarily using his commentaries on the *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum*, written out and annotated by St Thomas. Because he seemed to have recognized the greatness of his pupil and defended his positions after his death, I suppose that St Albert will be willing to render this service. In consequence, the next part of this paper will set out the common position of Albert and Aquinas as exhibited in these commentaries by Albert and in Aquinas' early writings, especially his commentaries on the *Sentences* and on the *De Trinitate* of Boethius.

My third part will be devoted to Aquinas' *Exposition of the De Divinis Nominibus*. Certainly in an important degree because of what he has learned from Simplicius *On the Categories of Aristotle*, and probably from a preliminary reading of Moerbeke's translation of the *Elements*, in it Aquinas sees and exposes the Platonism of Dionysius. Given the framework he adopted from Albert, this recognition must have been disturbing and will be groundbreaking. Thus, this *Exposition* has some peculiar characteristics which require us to consider it on its own. This is not furthered by the absence of a Leonine text and is thus modestly attempted.

My fourth and concluding part will be a brief outline of Aquinas' grand concordance worked out at the end of his teaching with the benefit not only of the *Elements* of Proclus, but also of Aristotelian commentaries by Simplicius, Ammonius, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, and of a paraphrase of the *De Anima* by Themistius.⁶⁸ In his *Exposition of the Liber de causis* and *De Substantiis separatis*, for both of which we have fine critical editions, the Proclean derivation of the *Liber* is confronted and the Platonism of Dionysius accepted, things Albert never did. The result is a concord of a predominantly Proclean Plato, Aristotle, the Auctor of the *Liber*, Dionysius, and the truth of the Catholic faith. This grand new synthesis, which contained the appropriate doctrinal corrections, made Aquinas, along with Albert, a father of the most speculative developments of the Rhineland Dominicans, like Eckhart and Berthold of Moosburg, and of their heirs like Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino in the next two centuries. For these the culmination was Proclus, as "reproducing or

68. See René-Antoine Gauthier in Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Posteriorum*, Editio altera retractata, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina, vol. I* 2 (Commissio Leonina / Vrin: Rome / Paris, 1989), 55*

imitiating ... the philosophical principles, the 'Platonic theology' of Dionysius the Areopagite, 'the greatest of all the Platonists'." (I quote Michael Allen on the great Florentine Neoplatonist).⁶⁹

"Dionysius autem fere ubique sequitur Aristotelem, ut patet diligenter inspicienti libros ejus"⁷⁰

"Dionysius nearly everywhere follows Aristotle". For this judgement, which, although revised later, is crucial to establishing Thomas' system, the great Thomist scholar Marie-Dominique Chenu supposed Aquinas "to have been duped by certain external resemblances".⁷¹ However, Chenu's criticism accords neither with what we now regard as the characteristics of the Proclean philosophy relative to which Dionysius worked, nor with the modifications he made to it, nor does it agree with what Aquinas tells us. Thomas wrote that Dionysius' following was clear to those who diligently examined his books, and we have every reason to suppose that he did just that, crucially, studying them closely, together with the works of Aristotle, under Albert in Cologne. Edward Booth writes: "Thomas' remark on Pseudo-Dionysius in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* ... provides evidence that the association of peripatetic ontology with an ontology of independence in being, was arrived at from a systematic comparison of his thought with Aristotle's: 'Dionysius autem fere ubique ...' This investigation no doubt included his study of Albert's method of receiving peripatetic thought into a Pseudodionysian context."⁷²

In Albert's *studium* not only would Aquinas have heard

69. Michael J.B. Allen, "Marsilio Ficino," in Gersh, ed., *Interpreting Proclus*, 353–79 at 353; on the roles of Albert and Aquinas in the medieval reception of Proclus, see de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*; Wayne J. Hankey, "Misrepresenting Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Dionysian Polemic: Eriugena and Nicholas of Cusa versus Vladimir Lossky and Jean-Luc Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:4 (2008): 683–703 at 683–94; Carlos Steel, "William of Moerbeke, translator of Proclus", 247–63; Pasquale Porro, "The University of Paris in the thirteenth century", 264–98, & Markus Führer and Stephen Gersh, "Dietrich of Freiberg and Berthold of Moosburg", 299–318, all in Gersh, ed., *Interpreting Proclus*, at 249, 266–69, 284–94, 309.

70. Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 2 d. 14 q. 1 a. 2 co.

71. J.-P. Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin. Sa personne et son œuvre*, Pensée antique et médiévale, Vestigia 13 (Paris / Fribourg: Cerf / Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1993), 186.

72. See Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 220–21.

the Aristotelian and Dionysian doctrines being brought into accord “fere ubique”, but also on the particular matter Aquinas was treating when he made the remark.⁷³ That is, the nature of heavenly bodies: are they composed of four elements, and thus are like sublunar bodies, or of five, and therefore different? Aquinas determines that Dionysius follows Aristotle: “ipse separat corpora caelestia ab aliis corporibus”, and Thomas places himself on the same side as these two greatest authorities in their different competencies, leaving other “expositors of scripture”, of whom he names Basil and Augustine, who followed Plato, on the other.⁷⁴ In respect to the metaphysical, physical, and theological questions involved in the nature of the heavens and their motions, when commenting on the *Dionysian corpus* in lectures Aquinas heard—and more than heard—, Albert united the *Liber de causis*, attributed to the Philosopher, Aristotle’s *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and *De Caelo* with Dionysius’ positions, just as Aquinas would himself do in the *Sentences Commentary*, and not only there.⁷⁵

It is not because of lack of effort by his disciples that little, indeed less and less, though known with greater precision and scientific certainty, is agreed now about Thomas’ life.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the

73. See, for example, Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 2, p. 67, line 19–p. 69, line 15; ch. 4, p. 125, lines 6–20; ch. 4, p. 144, line 10–p. 155, line 72; especially ch. 4, p. 148, line 45–p. 149, line 27; ch. 4, p. 280, line 67–p. 281, line 54; ch. 9, p. 392, line 20–p. 393, line 76; ch. 13, p. 440, line 15–p. 441, line 63.

74. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2 d. 14 q. 1 a. 2 co.: “circa hanc quaestionem fuit philosophorum diversa positio. Omnes enim ante Aristotelem posuerunt, caelum esse de natura quatuor elementorum. Aristoteles autem primus hanc viam improbavit, et posuit caelum esse quintam essentiam sine gravitate et levitate et aliis contrariis, ut patet in 1 caeli et mundi; et propter efficaciam rationum ejus, posteriores philosophi consenserunt sibi; unde nunc omnes opinionem ejus sequuntur. Similiter etiam expositores sacrae Scripturae in hoc diversificati sunt, secundum quod diversorum philosophorum sectatores fuerunt, a quibus in philosophicis eruditi sunt. Basilius enim et Augustinus et plures sanctorum sequuntur in philosophicis quae ad fidem non spectant, opiniones Platonis: et ideo ponunt caelum de natura quatuor elementorum. Dionysius autem fere ubique sequitur Aristotelem, ut patet diligenter insipienti libros ejus: unde ipse separat corpora caelestia ab aliis corporibus. Et ideo hanc positionem sequens dico, quod caelum non est de natura quatuor elementorum, sed est quintum corpus.”

75. See Appendix 1 for instances of Albert uniting the *Liber de causis*, Aristotle, and Dionysius in his Dionysian Commentaries.

76. For the matters at issue in this essay, I am dependent on James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino: His Life, Thought and Works* (Oxford: Basil Blackell, 1975), surpassed on several important points; Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas*; Torrell, *Initiation*;

following, crucial to this investigation, seem generally accepted: after a preliminary Arts education in Naples where he was introduced to Aristotle as received from the Arabs, probably with Averroes' interpretation, Aquinas travelled from Italy in 1246 with the Master General of the Dominicans to study under, and eventually to assist, Albertus Magnus. This discipleship began in Paris, where he continued his Arts, that is to say, philosophical education, overwhelmingly Aristotle with the Arabic so-called 'Peripatetics', especially Avicenna, influenced by the work in the Faculty dedicated to this, but taught to Dominicans in Paris in the *studium* of the Order. From Paris Thomas accompanied Albert to Cologne where the great German founded a Dominican *studium* in 1248 in which "he made the works of Dionysius and Aristotle the foundational texts".⁷⁷ All of Albert's Dionysian commentaries date from this period, when he "deliberately chose to place the Greek father's entire corpus at the heart of the formation program."⁷⁸ There, evidently, Aquinas studied Aristotle and Dionysius intensively at the same time, and closely compared their doctrines.

A demonstration that Thomas diligently inspected the writings of both authors are texts of Albert's commentaries on the *Dionysian corpus* and his lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle. For the former we have Thomas' autographs, written out for Albert as his assistant.⁷⁹ Thus "he copied the whole set of Albert's [Dionysian] commentaries by hand" and also inserted annotations.⁸⁰ For the latter we have what Dr Maria Burger judges to be a *reportatio* written by Thomas.⁸¹ She points out that, importantly

Adriano Oliva, *Les débuts de l'enseignement de Thomas d'Aquin et sa conception de la Sacra Doctrina*, Bibliothèque thomiste LVIII (Paris: Vrin, 2006); idem, "La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d'Aquin: Introduction historique et littéraire", *Χώρα REAM*, 7-8. 2009-2010, 217-53; Ruedi Imbach et Adriano Oliva, *La philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin, Repères* (Paris: Vrin, 2009); Burger, "Thomas Aquinas's Glosses"; Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*; & Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*.

77. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 122.

78. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 122.

79. Oliva, *Les débuts*, 207-24; Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 5.

80. Burger, "Thomas Aquinas's", 562 & 569.

81. Wilhelmus de Tocco, "Posthac autem praedictus Magister Albertus cum librum Ethicorum cum quaestionibus legeret, Frater Thomas Magistri lecturam studiose collegit, et redigit in scriptis opus, stylo disertum, subtilitate profundum, sicut a fonte tanti Doctoris haurire potuit, qui in scientia omnem hominem in sui temporis aetate praecessit." Albertus Magnus, *Super Ethica*, ed. Wilhelm Kübel,

for the differences which evolved between their ways of thinking, Albert did not start his commentaries on the whole Aristotelian *corpus* until he began with the *Physics* in 1251-1252, soon after that Thomas left for Paris. She stresses that “when Albert was commenting on the texts of Aristotle, and finally on the *Liber de causis* (approximately between 1251 and 1267), Thomas was in Paris and in Italy. So their ways like their thinking were separated.”⁸²

From Cologne, Thomas returned to Paris and “in the autumn of 1251 or at the latest 1252 commenced his career of teaching at the University of Paris by cursive reading [that is lectures giving a quick literal sketch] two books of the Bible”,⁸³ Isaiah and Jeremiah, an exercise the University required of religious before permitting them to read the *Sentences*. It was in his commentary on the second Book that he made his observation about Dionysius’ following of Aristotle, “during the academic year 1252-53” or the next,⁸⁴ when he was still strongly under the influence of his time with Albert. The sets of lectures on the Bible and the *Sentences* constituted the fundamental steps to obtaining the *licentia docendi*, the status of *magister*, and a chair. They were serious business. The *Sentences Commentary* reflects the system Aquinas was constructing as he taught. What connection, distinction and opposition of Aristotle (with the *Liber de causis*), Augustine, and Dionysius would Aquinas have learned from Albert between 1246 and 1252?

If we judge, as I think we should, that his study in Cologne of Aristotle, together with the whole *Dionysian corpus*, accompanied by the explication of Albert, is the single most important element in Thomas’ formation, the turn of Albert from Augustine in this period is also crucial to answering the question I am asking. It is outlined in Fr Blankenhorn’s book on Dionysian mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas; he writes:

Cologne edition, Vol. 14, Pt 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1968-70), Prolegomena, p. I, lines 35-41. Cod. Vat. lat. 722 f.209r: “Istae sunt questiones ffratris Alberti ordinis predicatorum quas collegit ffrater tomas de aquino.” (ibid. p. I, lines 55-57 et p. VIII, lines 75-77). I owe all this to Dr Burger.

82. Dr Maria Burger in a email message to me on August 17, 2016, for which I am most grateful.

83. Adriano Oliva, “Frère Thomas d’Aquin, universitaire”, *Université, Église, Culture. L’Université Catholique au Moyen Âge*, éd. Pierre Hurtubise (Paris: Fédération Internationale des Universités Catholiques, 2007), 233-68 at 235.

84. Oliva, “Frère Thomas d’Aquin, universitaire”, 235.

From the first pages of the *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy* Albert quietly announces the advent of a new anthropology that moves away from key aspects of his previous Augustinianism and toward an Aristotelian-Dionysian emphasis on the soul-body unity.⁸⁵

I quote him further at length because Aquinas adopts all these positions and we may find them in early works like the commentaries on the *Sentences* and Boethius' *De Trinitate*, as well as in later works like the *Summa theologiae*:

[Previously in Albert's *Sentences Commentary*, in doctrine associated with Augustine,] the intellect is more or less proportioned to know spiritual realities directly. ... In contrast, the Dionysian commentaries present a vision of the human intellect naturally at home in the material cosmos. The divine light comes to us through the sensible veils of the liturgy and physical creation because all of our knowledge naturally begins with sense experience.⁸⁶

Fr Blankenhorn quotes Albert's *Commentary on the Caelestial Hierarchy*, a text to which Aquinas often refers on this epistemological point,⁸⁷ there Albert cites the Philosopher: "our intellect is in potency only to those things which can be perceived through sensibles, but it is in potency to spiritual things proportionally through some light superadded to nature, namely grace or glory."⁸⁸ "[This superadded light] enables us ... to take full advantage of sensible mediations ... of God's revelation poured out through the liturgical veils (in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*), the Bible, and creation (in the *Divine Names*). ... Albert seems to realize that Dionysian negative theology is closely intertwined with a vision of human cognition as properly mediated through the body."⁸⁹

Here again Aquinas will follow, linking Dionysian apophatism with Aristotle's comparison in *Metaphysics* 2 of our intellect in respect to the most intelligible to the eyes of the bat (or owl or night

85. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 124.

86. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 125.

87. See Appendix 2: *Caelestial Hierarchy*: "quod impossibile est nobis aliter lucere divinum radium, nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum" in Aquinas.

88. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De caelesti hierarchia*, ed. Paul Simon and Wilhelm Kübel, Cologne edition, Vol. 36, Pt 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1993) [herein after *Super De caelesti hierarchia*], ch. 6, p. 84, lines 28–32 as translated by Fr Blankenhorn. We can find the same doctrine in many places in Aquinas. See Appendix 3, Aquinas on Divine Revelation according to our mode of knowing.

89. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 125–26.

bird) in the light of day.⁹⁰ This is a crucially important association because it makes the hiddenness of God the result of the weakness of our intellect and of the inadequacy of creatures as media in respect to the most intelligible and thus determines the interpretation of Dionysius. We must consider it further in what follows.

I cannot do better at this point than to quote Fr Blankenhorn's translation of Albert's *Super Mysticam Theologiam*. Explicating the Dionysian knowing by unknowing, Albert responds to an objection taken from Augustine that the highest things, including God, are known in the highest way, they are in the soul through its own essence (*sunt in anima per sui essentiam*)⁹¹. Albert replies that the vision of God:

has much non-vision because of the object's eminence, as the Philosopher says. Yet it must be known that Augustine's saying is false (*dictum Augustini habet calumniam*). For in order that something be known, ... it [must] be informed by its form and so brought into act. ... Hence, the Philosopher says that the intellect understands itself as it understands other things.⁹²

The accord of Aristotle and Dionysius on the matters we have considered so far is largely discerned by comparing the *Dionysian corpus* and texts now regarded as coming from Aristotle, but the *Liber de causis* is the third leg of a tripod assembled by Albert and bequeathed to Aquinas. So important is it for the completeness of Albert's Peripatetic system that, after the appearance of Moerbeke's translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in 1268,

90. Of the many instances I quote Aquinas *Super Sent.*, lib. 4 d. 49 q. 2 a. 6 ad 3: "quod aliquid potest esse per se magis intelligibile, quod tamen est minus intelligibile intellectui alicui; quod de nostro intellectu manifeste apparet. Facultas enim intellectus nostri determinatur ad formas sensibiles quae per intellectum agentem fiunt intellectae in actu, eo quod phantasmata hoc modo se habent ad intellectum nostrum sicut sensibilia ad sensum, ut dicitur in 3 de anima; et ideo oportet quod in omne illud quod intellectus noster intelligit, naturaliter manuducatur per formas sensibiles, ut etiam Dionysius dicit; et quia substantiae separatae, quae sunt per se maxime intelligibiles, excedunt genus formarum sensibilibus; ideo intellectus noster invenitur debilis ad cognitionem earum; propter quod dicitur in 2 Metaph., quod intellectus noster se habet ad manifestissima naturae, sicut oculus noctuae ad solem." See Appendix 5 for more.

91. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysii Mysticam Theologiam*, ed. Paul Simon, Cologne edition, Vol. 37, Pt 2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978) [herein after *Super Mysticam Theologiam*], ch. 2, p. 466, lines 52–8.

92. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 127, translating Albert, *Super Mysticam Theologiam*, ch. 2, p. 467, lines 3–11.

which Albert knew and used in his late (in two parts from 1268) *Summa theologiae*,⁹³ he never attributed the *Liber de causis* to the Platonists. In contrast to Aquinas' *Super Librum de causis*, in Albert's "Aristotelian paraphrase" of the *Liber*, the *De Causis et Processu Universitatis a Prima Causa*, "apparently composed between 1264 and 1271,"⁹⁴ he makes no use of Proclus. Probably because of a mixture of philosophical reasons and an absence of sources—he seems never to have read Simplicius—does he ever acknowledge its Platonic derivation in the way Aquinas did.⁹⁵

In contrast, he invents a theory of its authorship all his own which avoids admitting its Platonism.⁹⁶ As Dr Thérèse Bonin puts it: "Albert thought not just that the *Liber* was in some sense Aristotle's, but also that it was a very important Aristotelian text...[T]he *Liber de causis* contains the final word of the Peripatetic school on the final part of metaphysics."⁹⁷ According to Alain de Libera, Albert exhibited a "superb indifference" to its Platonism. Developing his own elaborate theory of its Peripatetic origins, he was able to maintain an "obstination herméneutique ... frappante".⁹⁸ De Libera is in accord with Bonin that, because of the important role the *Liber* plays in his conception of the theology of Aristotle, and because of his commitment to his own theory of the origins of the *Liber*, "même après la traduction des *Éléments de théologie*, Albert n'a pas renoncé à sa thèse."⁹⁹ In his version of Neoplatonic Peripateticism "l'univers du *Liber de causis* et de ses satellites lui

93. Steel, "Guillaume de Moerbeke," 66.

94. Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 5; see, on the character of the work, de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 70–87 and 151–59.

95. Dr Burger, to whom I owe the notice that he had not read Simplicius, stresses the differences between Aquinas' and Albert's sources and when they had them.

96. Albertus Magnus, *De Causis et Processu Universitatis a Prima Causa*, ed. W. Fauser, *Opera Omnia*, 17/2 (Cologne: Aschendorff, 1993), lib. 2, tract. 1, cap. 1, and lib. 2, tract. 5, cap. 24; on Albert's theory of the origin of the treatise see de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 74–87 and Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 120, note 5; Wayne J. Hankey, "Ab uno simplici non est nisi unum: The Place of Natural and Necessary Emanation in Aquinas' Doctrine of Creation," *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought: Essays Presented to the Rev'd Dr Robert D. Crouse*, edited by Michael Treschow, Willemien Otten and Walter Hannam, *Studies in Intellectual History* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 309–33 at 314–17.

97. Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 4.

98. de Libera, "Albert le Grand et Thomas": 351 & 362.

99. de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 80.

suffisait" for the role played for others by the *Elements of Theology*.¹⁰⁰

As a result of its Arabic transformations, which were preceded by Byzantine developments requiring that Neoplatonism be hidden within commentary on Aristotle, the thought of the Stagarite appears in the Latin West as: "un corpus philosophique total, où toute la pensée hellénistique, profondément néoplatonicienne, s'était glissée — parfois subrepticement."¹⁰¹ Thus, Albertus Magnus assimilates Platonism into a moment within Peripatetic thought. The other side of this is that the Aristotle of Albert and Aquinas is profoundly Neoplatonised.¹⁰² De Libera comments that in *le péripatétisme arab* to which their Aristotle belonged:

*Il n'y a plus à concilier Aristote et Platon, car Aristote lui-même a absorbé le platonisme, non plus certes le platonisme de Platon, mais celui du Plotinus Arabus et du Proclus Arabus. Le fruit de cette improbable assimilation est le péripatétisme arab.*¹⁰³

Does it make a difference then that Albert places Platonism within his self-consciously Peripatetic system, refusing to identify crucial elements of it as Platonist? Or that, refusing this, Aquinas insists instead on picking out the Platonic aspects, both in form and content, of works all agree to be important, and, indeed, to place the works, as well as the styles and doctrines, within a history of philosophy where Plato and Aristotle are indubitably the greatest figures?

This placing must, in fact, affect the content of a theology and philosophy which proceeds, as these do, by the reconciliation of

100. de Libera, *Raison et foi*, 298.

101. Alain de Libera, *Penser*, 20. See also Ewert H. Cousins, "The Indirect Influence of the Koran on the Notion of Reason in the Christian Thought of the Thirteenth Century," *Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Filosofía Medieval*, 2 vols (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1979), i, 651–56 and G. Endress, "The New and Improved Platonic Theology. Proclus Arabus and Arabic Islamic Philosophy," in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13-16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink*, éd. A.Ph. Segonds et C. Steel, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, De Wulf-Mansion Centre, Series 1, XXVI (Leuven / Paris: Leuven University Press / Les Belles Lettres, 2000), 553–70.

102. Alain de Libera, "Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin, 347–78; idem, "Albert le Grand et le platonisme. de la doctrine de idées à la théorie des trois états de l'universel," *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. E.P. Bos and P.A. Meijer, *Philosophia Antiqua* 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 89–119; Thérèse Bonin, *Creation As Emanation*, and Wayne J. Hankey, "Thomas' Neoplatonic Histories": 153–78.

103. Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age*, Des travaux (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 117.

positions given in the inherited tradition and its current exponents. For evidence of this interplay and its significance, we need only refer to the complaint of Archbishop Peckham with which we began, or the refusal of Albertus Magnus to acknowledge the Proclean source of the *Liber de causis*, to say nothing of how long it has taken to get Thomists to admit the Platonic character of Aquinas' thought,¹⁰⁴ or followers of Dionysius to acknowledge his debt to Proclus.¹⁰⁵

**"PLERUM UTITUR STILO ET MODO LOQUENDI QUO UTEBANTUR
PLATONICI"**¹⁰⁶

Sometime after the end of March 1266, when William of Moerbeke had finished his translation of Simplicius *On the Categories of Aristotle*,¹⁰⁷ Thomas composed an *Exposition of the On the Divine Names of Dionysius*. This was about the same time Thomas started using Moerbeke's new translations or revisions of Aristotle, incontestably "le premier à utiliser", rather than ones he and Albert had worked with in common, as well as Moerbeke's translations of the Greek commentators, importantly, some even before they were complete.¹⁰⁸ Themistius and Simplicius show up in another exposition written at this time, Thomas' *Sententia libri De Anima*, which uses the *translatio nova* of Aristotle; his *In De divinis nominibus* uses the new translation and Simplicius *On the Categories* with its comparison of Platonic and Aristotelian approaches and its defence of the former against what Simplicius (as well as Proclus and Ammonius, both of whose works Aquinas would come to know) regarded as the unjustified attacks of Aristotle and of the

104. See generally, Giorgio Pini, "The Development of Aquinas's Thought," *Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, edited Brian Davies & Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 37, 491–510 at 491–92 and Wayne J. Hankey, "Self and Cosmos in Becoming Deiform: Neoplatonic Paradigms for Reform by Self-Knowledge from Augustine to Aquinas," *Reforming the Church Before Modernity: Patterns, Problems and Approaches*, edited by Christopher M. Bellitto and Louis I. Hamilton (Aldershot, England/ Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Press, 2005), Chapter 3, 39–60; idem, "Pope Leo's Purposes".

105. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Misrepresenting Neoplatonism".

106. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, pr.

107. Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories*, xi.

108. Carlos Steel, "Guillaume de Moerbeke et saint Thomas," in *Guillaume de Moerbeke: Recueil d'étude à l'occasion du 700^e anniversaire de sa mort (1286)*, édité J. Brams et W. Vanhamel (Leuven: University Press, 1989), 57–82 at 62–5 and 73–5 and on the use of incomplete translations, Steel, "William of Moerbeke," 255.

Peripatetics. Along with these changes in the resources for his work, and partly in play with them, Thomas' own way of thinking was maturing. He had begun his *Summa theologiae* ordered differently than the scholastic structures for theology in which he had been forced to fit his teaching; as we have seen, essentials of his ordering *secundum quod materia patietur* he found in the work of Dionysius he was expositing along with Aristotle's *De Anima* at this time.

In the Proœmium of the Dionysius *Exposition*, Aquinas both showed a change in his own judgments and made a revolutionary break with Albert, and perhaps, if Fr Blankenhorn is right, "medieval Latin Christendom", by declaring "much of the style and way of thinking of Dionysius was that used by the Platonists" and by going on, within his analysis of the text, to identify Platonist positions taken by St Paul's Athenian convert. Fr Blankenhorn suggests that this is "a possible first" in the Latin West.¹⁰⁹ If, as we have seen, Albert refused to make the *Liber de causis* Proclean, still less would he have admitted the Platonism of Dionysius whose *corpus* was the Christian side of his Peripatetic philosophical theological synthesis.

Fr Blankenhorn notes that in his *Super De divinis nominibus* Albert states "that Dionysius smashes the Platonists' erroneous notion of the divine processions (e.g. being, life) as gods, the only reference to the Platonists in the work."¹¹⁰ This is not perfectly exact, just before this, also in Chapter 11, Albert raised as an objection: "non sit per-se-vita, sed quod hoc ponere sapiat errorem platonicum, qui ponebat omnes formas naturales separatas per se existentes et primo", and the Platonists are mentioned again when Aristotle is credited with mocking the natural separate forms, just as Dionysius smashed the divine ones.¹¹¹ However, these are all part of the same argument, and thus Fr Blankenhorn's point stands. Certainly Albert does not identify Dionysius' modes as Platonist. Indeed, Albert associates the *Platonici* here with idolatry: the "Hesiodistae" are "idolatrae" who posit an "idol of peace". Aristotle's criticism is that the Platonists are constructing gods. According to Albert, the principles of Plato and of the disciples of Hesiod are "substantias idolatrae" which they said to be gods, following the error of

109. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 326.

110. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 11, p. 424, line 80–p. 425, line 36, quoted in part below; Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 326, n22.

111. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 11, p. 423, lines 69–72.

their “magistri vel carnales patres”.¹¹² Nonetheless, Aquinas painstakingly worked out the Platonism of both the *Liber de causis* and the *De Divinis Nominibus*, beginning with the latter.

The greatest question Proclean Platonism raised for Aquinas is one which must be the first concern of a Christian monotheist, as it was for the monotheist who constructed the *Liber de causis*: can Proclus’ hierarchy of hypostasized abstractions be reconciled with the one God? In the Proœmium of his *In De divinis nominibus*, Aquinas raises this question in general terms, he gives a qualified “yes”, and, thereby distancing himself from Albert, he depicts Dionysius as if he had given the same answer. This compels the question: Had Thomas read Moerbeke’s translation of the *Elements* before expounding *On the Divine Names*? Approaching that, let us look at the Proœmium and the judgments it outlines.

First, in the Proœmium, when he is placing *On the Divine Names* in relation to Dionysius’ other treatises as he understands these, Thomas tells us that in all of them, culminating in the *Mystical Theology*, “quod Deus est remaneat occultum et ignotum”, “cum excedat omne illud quod a nobis apprehenditur, nobis remanet ignotum.”¹¹³ On this both he and Albert unite Dionysius, Aristotle and the *Liber de causis*. Having insisted throughout his *Exposition* that the hiddenness of God is owed to the inadequacy of the creature, in its treatment of the final Chapter of the *Divine Names*, Aquinas indicates that he knows the Proclean position (spoken of as posited by the “Platonici”), for which God is unknowable in principle, and that Dionysius rejects it.¹¹⁴ Later, in his *Super Librum de causis*, Aquinas will take great care to distinguish what he represents as the common position in accord with the Catholic

112. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 11, p. 424, line 83–p. 425, line 30. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, III, iv, 1000a9-18.

113. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, proœmium §1, p. 1.

114. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, iii, §§993–94, p. 369: “Quod quidem dico occultum non propter sui defectum, sed quia existit supra omnem et rationem humanam et mentem angelicam. ... Ita et essentia deitatis est occulta, quia est praeter omnes vias, quas ratio aut mens creata excogitare potest. Est autem considerandum quod Platonici posuerunt Deum summum esse quidem super ens et super vitam et super intellectum, non tamen super ipsum bonum quod ponebant primum principium. Sed ad hoc excludendum, Dionysius subdit quod neque ipsum nomen bonitatis afferimus ad divinam praedicationem.” I quote more of this passage in the last part of this paper. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 378–83 is most useful on this matter.

faith, which for Aquinas demands that humans ultimately have vision of the divine essence¹¹⁵; there Aristotle leads the way against Proclean Platonism on this matter. It is important to see in this part of this article how the most fundamental teachings of Aristotle are maintained by Aquinas both as bases of his thought and also as correctives of the Platonic doctrines and modes he is now presenting. Equally, in the last part of this article, it will be important to see how the most dangerous Platonic positions become for Aquinas necessary both to establishing Aristotelian science and to correcting its errors on the numbers and kinds of separate substances.¹¹⁶

Second, Aquinas discerns something about Platonism which will endure in his teaching, increase in importance, and be crucial to the conciliation of Plato and Aristotle. He sees that the Dionysian “way of speaking,” which includes technical philosophical language, for example, a potentially disastrous failure to distinguish between non-being and privation,¹¹⁷ and style, were those used by the Platonists.¹¹⁸ The “obscure” style, in which, evidently, Dionysius and the Platonists agree, may be a bad teaching method, but it has its good uses. Further, this analysis suggests a hermeneutical strategy, one used by the Neoplatonists for reconciling positions which seem contradictory. These conciliators include Simplicius, as well as his teacher Ammonius, whose commentary on the *Peri Hermeneias* Moerbeke finished translating at Viterbo on the 12th of September of 1268, by which time Aquinas had left the Papal Court with the *Elements* of Proclus “in his baggage”¹¹⁹. Bound with Ammonias was

115. On what made this a necessity of Catholic faith for Aquinas, his solution and the alternatives, including that of Albert, see C. Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*, 175–260.

116. See my “Aquinas and the Platonists,” 310–19 and “Thomas’ Neoplatonic Histories”: 166–75.

117. See Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IV, ii, §§295–98, pp. 96–9, and Appendix 7.

118. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, proemium §2, pp. 1–2: “Est autem considerandum quod beatus Dionysius in omnibus libris suis obscuro utitur stilo. Quod quidem non ex imperitia fecit, sed ex industria ut sacra et divina dogmata ab irrisione infidelium occultaret. Accidit etiam difficultas in praedictis libris, ex multis: primo, quidem, quia plerumque utitur stilo et modo loquendi quo utebantur Platonici, qui apud modernos est inconusuetus.”

119. Ammonius, *Commentaire sur le Peri Hermeneias d’Aristote. Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, édition critique et étude sur l’utilisation du Commentaire dans l’oeuvre de saint Thomas par G. Verbeke, *Corpus Latinum Commentariorum in Aris-*

the second commentary of Boethius (another determined conciliator, who was also dependent upon but probably not a student of Ammonius) on the same book. Both underlie Thomas' unfinished *Expositio Libri Peryermenias* (1270-1271). Simplicius, Ammonius, and Boethius supply Aquinas with rich treasuries for knowledge of their predecessors in the context of a concordance strategy.¹²⁰

In the Procœmium Thomas' justifies the obscurity because it enables sacred things to be hidden from the derision of infidels. Following Simplicius, Aquinas will tell us that obscure and poetic speech is both Platonic and suitable to theology, but that Aristotle and his followers interpret and refute it as if Plato were speaking literally. Albert, who was among those whom Aquinas followed in distinguishing a possible metaphorical truth of Plato's philosophical arguments from the literal falsity Aristotle criticised, did not give Plato the benefit of this difference. Both René-Antoine Gauthier and Dag Hasse note that Albert gets his characterisation from Averroes (as, in part, does Aquinas). Hasse writes that Albert judged: "If Plato is read according to the sense of his words, then Aristotle's counterarguments hold." He comments: "Here we encounter a mode of reading Plato's philosophical language which is inspired by Averroes, as the wording of Albertus's passage shows. It contains the phrase 'sicut verba sonant' a rare Latin expression for 'literally', which Albertus inherits from Averroes Latinus."¹²¹ Aquinas derives this language and characterisation from both Albert and Averroes.

While Thomas will normally side with Aristotle in the literal dispute, nonetheless, room is left for a concord should letter be replaced by intention. As Aquinas more and more looks at the history of philosophy through the Greek commentators translated by Moerbeke, he comes more and more to think with the conciliators like Simplicius and Ammonius, and not only to find the Aristotelian literalism inappropriate, but also to seek with the Platonists the truth

totelem Graecorum 2 (Louvain/Paris: 1961), vii & Steel, "William of Moerbeke," 249.

120. René-Antoine Gauthier in Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Peryermenias*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Editio altera retractata, Commissio Leonina: *Opera Omnia Sancti Thomae de Aquino*, vol. 1, pars 1 (Rome: 1989), 81*-88*.

121. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Plato arabico-latinus: Philosophy—Wisdom Literature—Occult Sciences," *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, edited by Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, with the assistance of Pieter Th. van Wingerden (Berlin—New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 31–65 at 38.

under the fables and metaphors.¹²² His treatment of the passage on the “Hesiodistae” and Plato when commenting on Book III of the *Metaphysics* is interesting to us in this context as well. Although Albert says nothing about it in his *Metaphysica*, as we have seen, he refers to it in his *Super De Divinis Nominibus* in a passage we shall examine for a third time shortly. Citing Simplicius *On the Categories*, Aquinas tells us “that there were among the Greeks, or philosophers of nature, certain students of wisdom, such as Orpheus, Hesiod and certain others, who were concerned with the gods and hid the truth about the gods under a cloak of fables, just as Plato hid philosophical truth under mathematics.” He follows Aristotle in criticising this procedure “because the truth hidden under the story is known only to the one who constructed it”. Nonetheless, Aquinas continues with Aristotle to consider how “something of the truth could be concealed under this story.”¹²³ With Albert there is nothing

122. On this in his *In De Caelo et Mundo Expositio* and *Sententia libri de Anima*, see Hankey, “Why Philosophy Abides”: 333–34. Here I give the same references and add some of the many possible more, Aquinas, *In Aristotelis Libros de Caelo et Mundo Expositio*, in idem, *In Aristotelis Libros de Caelo et Mundo, de Generatione et Corruptione, Meteorologicorum Expositio*, ed. R.M. Spiazzi (Turin/ Rome: Marietti, 1952), I, xxii, §§227–228, p. 108–109; I, xxiii, §233, p. 112. At III, ii, §§553–54, p. 282, Aquinas notes the view of Simplicius that Parmenides and Melissus are treated: “secundum ea quae exterius ex eorum verbis apparebant, ne aliqui, superficialiter intelligentes, deciperentur: secundum autem rei veritatem, intentio horum philosophorum erat quod ipsum ens” and refers to Hesiod as “unus de theologis poetis, qui divina sub tegumentis quarundam fabularum tradiderunt”. Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, ed. M.R. Cathala and R.M. Spiazzi (Turin / Rome: Marietti, 1964), I, iv, §§82–4, p. 25. Aquinas, *In Octo Libros Physicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, ed. P.M. Maggiolo (Turin/ Rome: Marietti, 1965), I, xv, §138, p. 68, Aristotle is detected taking Plato’s metaphors literally. Aquinas, *Sententia libri de Anima*, I, viii, at 407a2, lines 1–13, p. 38: “Posita opinione Platonis, hic Aristoteles reprobatur eam. Ubi notandum est, quod plerumque quando reprobatur opiniones Platonis, non reprobatur eas quantum ad intentionem Platonis, sed quantum ad sonum verborum eius. Quod ideo facit, quia Plato habuit malum modum docendi. Omnia enim figurate dicit, et per symbola docet: intendens aliud per verba, quam sonent ipsa verba; sicut quod dixit animam esse circulum. Et ideo ne aliquis propter ipsa verba incidat in errorem, Aristoteles disputat contra eum quantum ad id quod verba eius sonant.” Gauthier’s note on sources refers us to Averroes, Albert’s *De homine* (about 1243), Themistius, Philoponus, and Simplicius *On the Categories*. For Aquinas’ more sympathetic stance see my “Thomas’ Neoplatonic Histories”: 175–78 and my “Aquinas and the Platonists,” 310–19.

123. Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, III, xi, §§468–9, p. 131: “apud Graecos, aut naturales philosophos, fuerunt quidam sapientiae studentes, qui deis se intromiserunt

of “students of wisdom” hiding truths about the gods, in contrast, as we saw, he uses Aristotle here to lump the Platonists with idolaters.

Third, we come to the major concern of the Prooemium, the truth and error of Platonic abstraction. Aquinas writes:

The Platonists, wishing to reduce all composed or material things into the simple and abstract, posit separate forms, saying there is a man outside matter, and similarly a horse, etc. ... Not only do the Platonists treat the ultimate species of natural things according to this kind of abstraction, but even the greatest universals: good, being and unity. For they posit a first one which is itself the essence of goodness, and unity and being, which we call God, and they say that all other things are called good or one or entities by derivation from this first. Hence this first they named good itself or the good through itself or the principally good or the super-good or even the goodness of all goods or indeed goodness or essence and substance, in that mode by which the separate man is set out. These ideas of the Platonists are consonant neither with the reason of the faith nor the truth, in the measure that they consist of separate forms of things in nature, but so far as they spoke of the first principle of things, their opinion is most true and consonant with Christian faith. Thus Dionysius names God sometimes good itself or super-good or the principle good or the goodness of all good. And similarly he names God super-life itself, the super-substantial, the divine thearchy itself, that is the divine principle because indeed in some creatures the name of God is received according to a kind of participation.¹²⁴

occultantes veritatem divinatorum sub quodam tegmine fabularum, sicut Orpheus, Hesiodus et quidam alii: sicut etiam Plato occultavit veritatem philosophiae sub mathematicis, ut dicit Simplicius in commento praedicamentorum. ... Si enim per fabulas veritas obumbretur, non potest sciri quid verum sub fabula lateat, nisi ab eo qui fabulam comfixerit. ... Potuit autem sub hac fabula aliquid veritatis occulte latere, ut scilicet ...”

124. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, proemium §2, p. 2: “Platonici enim omnia composita vel materialia, volentes reducere in principia simplicia et abstracta, posuerunt species rerum separatas, dicentes quod est homo extra materiam, et similiter equus, et sic de aliis speciebus naturalium rerum. ... Nec solum huiusmodi abstractione Platonici considerabant circa ultimas species rerum naturalium, sed etiam circa maxime communia, quae sunt bonum, unum et ens. Ponebant, enim, unum primum quod est ipsa essentia bonitatis et unitatis et esse, quod dicimus Deum et quod omnia alia dicuntur bona vel una vel entia per derivationem ab illo primo. Unde illud primum nominabant ipsum bonum vel per se bonum vel principale bonum vel superbonum vel etiam bonitatem omnium bonorum seu etiam bonitatem aut essentiam et substantiam, eo modo quo de homine separato expositum est. Haec igitur Platoniorum ratio fidei non consonat nec veritati, quantum ad hoc quod continet de speciebus naturalibus separatis, sed quantum ad id quod dicebant de primo rerum principio, verissima est eorum opinio et fidei Christianae consona.

This is usefully compared with Albert's statement covering the same matters in his only mentions of the *Platonici* in the *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus*, the same place in which he refers to *Metaphysics* III and the "Hesiodistae". There he tells us that: Seduced by an error like that of "Hesiodistae", idolaters, the Platonists "posited some forms, having in themselves natural existence, of all sensible forms, creative of sensible forms, for example, a certain separate man who was the cause of all men...." Albert claims that "Aristotle mocked this in *Metaphysics* III" comparing it to constructing gods. Aristotle's mocking goes with Dionysius crushing "per-se-vita et essentia", as separately causes of being coordinate with existing things, saying there is "only one super substantial esse, namely, God who is the principle".¹²⁵

Thus, Aquinas in his Prooemium and Albert in his *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus* treat compactly the same two matters. And Aquinas' condemnation of separate forms of natural things as "ratio fidei non consonat" may recall Albert's strong association of the Platonic teaching with idolatry. These resemblances provide evidence that, as Fr Blankenhorn opines, Aquinas had "his complete personal notes of Albert's Dionysian lectures before him as he commented the Areopagite."¹²⁶ The other side of this coin is that Aquinas' differences from Albert acquire more significance and are more likely to indicate self-

Unde Dionysius Deum nominat quandoque ipsum quidem bonum aut superbonum aut principale bonum aut bonitatem omnis boni. Et similiter nominat ipsum supervitam, supersubstantiam et ipsam deitatem thearchicam, idest principalem deitatem, quia etiam in quibusdam creaturis recipitur nomen deitatis secundum quamdam participationem."

125. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 11, p. 425, lines 2-20: "Platonici etiam quasi simili errore seducti ponebant omnium formarum sensibilium quasdam formas per se habentes naturale esse, factivas formarum sensibilium, sicut hominem quendam separatum, qui erat causa omnium hominum, et bovem quendam omnium bonum. Unde Aristoteles irridet eum in iii metaphysicae, dicens, quod sua opinio fuit similis sermoni deos esse fingentium. Utrorumque ergo errorem beatus Dionysius elidens dicit: Non dicimus per-seesse, quod est causa, quod sunt omnia, secundum quod 'per se' opponitur ad 'ab alio', esse quandam substantiam divinam aut angelicam quasi particulatam, quae separatim sit causa essendi, quae sit de coordinatione existentium. Solum enim ipsum supersubstantiale esse, scilicet divinum, est principium, in quantum non ab alio habet, et substantia, in quantum est causa quodammodo univoca et formalis essendi, et causa fundens esse, quod omnia existentia sunt. Neque aliam deitatem dicimus vitae generativam etc.: planum est."

126. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 319.

conscious intention. This applies here. Having, in common with Albert, rejected abstracted universals of the world of nature, as necessary or useful for knowledge, or in agreement with the faith or truth, in strong contrast, Aquinas makes them both *verissima* and *fidei Christianae consona* in divinity. Expositing divinity in the *Divine Names*, Aquinas devotes much effort to explaining the Platonic teaching and the extent to which Dionysius agrees with it as well as corrects it. And this is only a beginning.

Aquinas will continue this analysis of Platonism, while comparing the *Liber de causis* and the *Elements* of Proclus in his *Super Librum de causis* and will take it still further in the *De Substantiis Separatis*.¹²⁷ One might say that, in his *Super Librum de causis*, he provides the references to the *Liber* and the *Elements* necessary for his depiction of Platonism entirely and surprisingly missing in his *In De Divinis Nominibus*. He brings the concordance and correction involved to a completion in his treatise *De Substantiis Separatis*, but also in other works. At the same time, step by step, with alterations as his sources and judgement change, Thomas is developing and setting out a progressive history of philosophy which gives Plato and Platonic abstraction a necessary place both in our arriving at science and in the right understanding of separate substance. It is a reconciling history and, on both of these matters, and, in respect to divinity, the correction of Aristotle, on whom both Dionysius and Aquinas depend, is required and supplied. The result is complexity and ambiguity.

Midway in his *Exposition of the Divine Names* Thomas writes:

The Platonists, whom in this book Dionysius imitates much, before all composed participants, posited separated realities existing *per se*, so that before individual humans, who participate humanity, they set up a separated man existing without matter of whom by

127. In the last he sets out an aspect of Proclean Platonism not mentioned in either of the two *Expositions* we are considering, namely the role of mathematics. The *De Substantiis Separatis* represents Plato as positing two *genera* of entities abstracted from sensible things in accord with two modes of abstraction: "mathematicals and universals which he called forms or ideas" (*mathematica et universalia quae species sive ideas nominabat*). Because with mathematics we apprehend many things under one species (*plura unius speciei*), whereas with forms the universal is unique (*homo in universali acceptus secundum speciem est unus tantum*), Plato is represented as establishing a hierarchy in which mathematical are intermediate between the forms and sensibles (*media inter species seu ideas et sensibilia*). Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 1, p. D42, lines 80–104.

participation singular humans were named. And similarly they said that, before these living composites, there would be a kind of separated life, from which, by participation, all living things lived, which they called life *per se*; and likewise *per se* wisdom and *per se* being [*esse*]. Indeed, these separated principles they laid down as mutually distinct in respect to the First Principle which they called the *per se* good, and the *per se* one. Dionysius agrees with them in one way, and disagrees in another. He agrees in that he too posits life existing separately *per se*, and likewise wisdom, and being, and other things of this kind. He dissents from them, however, in this; he does not say that these separated principles are diverse entities [*esse diversa*], but that they are in fact one principle, which is God.¹²⁸

In the last analysis, what Aquinas wishes to teach on this matter is here. By their abstractions the Platonists add intelligibility both to the structure of creation and the divine being and, by adopting them, Dionysius increases knowledge. The insistence that they are aspects of a single principle and are united in its creative activity comes from Aristotle. Aquinas takes great pains to be sure we see that Dionysius is with the Philosopher on this, because there lies the consonance of both with the Catholic faith.

The fundamental Platonic distinction which confers benefits and dangers for theology Aquinas states in the enormous Fourth Chapter of his *Exposition of the Divine Names*. The Chapter concerns the Good and comes where it does among the names because they are governed by the logic of emanation and “the common principle of all processions is the good”.¹²⁹ The treatment is in

128. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, V, i, § 634, p. 235: “Platonici, quos multum in hoc opere Dionysius imitatur, ante omnia participantia compositionem, posuerunt separata per se existentia, quae a compositis participantur; sicut ante homines singulares qui participant humanitatem, composuerunt hominem separatam sine materia existentem, cuius participatione singulares homines dicuntur. Et similiter dicebant quod, ante ista viventia composita, esset quaedam vita separata, cuius participatione cuncta viventia vivunt, quam vocabant per se vitam; et similiter per se sapientiam et per se esse. Haec autem separata principia ponebant ab invicem diversa a primo principio quod nominabant per se bonum et per se unum. Dionysius autem in aliquo eis consentit et in aliquo dissentit; consentit quidem cum eis in hoc quod ponit vitam separatam per se existentem et similiter sapientiam et esse et alia huiusmodi; dissentit autem ab eis in hoc quod ista principia separata non dicit esse diversa, sed unum principium quod est Deus.” For discussions see Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 77 and John Milbank, “Can a Gift be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic,” *Modern Theology*, 11 (1995): 143 with notes.

129. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IV, i, §261, p. 87: “Principium autem commune omnium harum processionum bonum est.”

accord with the Platonic way of thinking outlined in the Procœmium: "Because the divine Essence itself is goodness itself, which does not happen in other things: God is good through his own essence and all other things by participation".¹³⁰ Thus, near the beginning, he makes the governing method clear: "In respect to separate substances, the Platonists distinguish objects of understanding (*intelligibilia*) from states of understanding (*intellectualibus*)."¹³¹ Later, when comparing the *Liber de causis* and the *Dionysian corpus* with *The Elements of Theology* in his *Super Librum de causis*, and in the *De Substantiis Separatis*, dependent on it, Thomas sets out a full picture of the many levels in the Platonic spiritual cosmos. Deriving his explanation from Proclus, he explains in his *Super De causis* that the most universal forms are called "gods" because of their universal causality,¹³² and that the "order of gods, that is, of ideal forms (*formarum idealium*) has an order among itself corresponding to the order of the universality of forms."¹³³ He tells us in the same work that Dionysius corrects this position in the Fifth Chapter of *Divine Names*: "For it must be said that all these [*per se* goodness, *per se* being, *per se* life] are essentially the one first cause of all from which things participate all perfections of this kind."¹³⁴

130. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IV, i, §269, p. 87: "quia ipsa divina Essentia est ipsa bonitas, quod in aliis rebus non contingit: Deus enim est bonus per suam essentiam, omnia vero alia per participationem."

131. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IV, i, §276, p. 88: "Platonici in substantiis separatis distinguerunt intelligibilia ab intellectualibus."

132. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 3, p. 18, lines 8–23: "Plato posuit universales rerum formas separatas per se subsistentes. Et, quia huiusmodi formae universales universalem quamdam causalitatem, secundum ipsum, habent supra particularia entia quae ipsas participant, ideo omnes huiusmodi formas sic subsistentes deos vocabat; nam hoc nomen Deus universalem quamdam providentiam et causalitatem importat. Inter has autem formas hunc ordinem ponebat quod quanto aliqua forma est universalior, tanto est magis simplex et prior causa; participatur enim a posterioribus formis, sicut si ponamus animal participari ab homine et vitam ab animali et sic inde; ultimum autem quod ab omnibus participatur et ipsum nihil aliud participat, est ipsum unum et bonum separatum quod dicebat summum Deum et primam omnium causam. Unde et in libro Procli inducitur propositio CXVI, talis: omnis Deus participabilis est, id est participat, excepto uno."

133. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 19, p. 106, lines 4–7: "secundum Platonicos quadruplex ordo invenitur in rebus. Primus erat ordo deorum, id est formarum idealium inter quas erat ordo secundum ordinem universalitatis formarum."

134. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 3, p. 20, lines 5–11: "Hanc autem positionem corrigat Dionysius quantum ad hoc quod ponebant ordinatim diversas formas

Evidently then, we find the essentials of Proclean Platonism on this crucial matter set out in the *In De Divinis Nominibus*, and indeed, there we find: “He [Dionysius] excludes the error of some Platonists who analyze universal effects into more intelligible causes. And because they saw the effect of the good to be the most universal, they said that its cause was the very good itself which poured out goodness into all things, and under these they posited another cause which gave life, and so with other things they posited principles of this kind which they called ‘gods’.”¹³⁵ Dionysius makes the crucial correction of turning these gods into names of one principle.¹³⁶

Expositing Dionysius’ Eleventh Chapter, On Peace, Thomas discerns Dionysius making the same point about these Platonic “gods”, “creators, as if they operated through themselves for the production of things”, as Albert made, but without the language of idolatry. Indeed, for Aquinas, taking away what is erroneous, Dionysius brings out what is true in such Platonic talk: “they are speaking of God who is the one supersubstantial principle and cause of all; and God is called *per se* life or *per se* being, neither because he lives by participation of some life, nor by participation of some being, but because he himself is his own act of living (*vivere*) and his own life and exceeds all being and life which is participated by creatures, and is the existing principle of living and being for all.”¹³⁷ Throughout his *In De Divinis Nominibus*, Aquinas

separatas quas deos dicebant, ut scilicet aliud esset per se bonitas et aliud per se esse et aliud per se vita et sic de aliis. Oportet enim dicere quod omnia ista sunt essentialiter ipsa prima omnium causa a qua res participant omnes huiusmodi perfectiones, et sic non ponemus multos deos sed unum.”

135. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, V, i, §612, p. 232: “excludit errorem quorundam Platoniorum qui universales effectus in intelligibiliores causas reducebant. Et quia videbant effectum boni universalissimum esse, dicebant suam causam esse ipsum bonum quod effundit bonitatem in omnia, et sub ea ponebant aliam causam quae dat vitam et sic de aliis et huiusmodi principia dicebant deos.”

136. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, V, i, §613, p. 232: “nomina... unius Principii”.

137. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XI, iv, §§933–34, pp. 346–47: “non dicimus esse aliquas essentias et hypostasies separatas quae sint principia rerum et creatrices earum, quas Platonici dixerunt esse deos existentium et creatores, quasi per se operantes ad rerum productionem. Huiusmodi autem deos, si vere et proprie loqui volumus, dicamus non existere in rebus; neque illi qui tales deos posuerunt, per aliquam certitudinem scientiae hoc invenerunt aut ipsi aut patres eorum; quia neque primi Platonici neque posteriores, huius rei scientiam per certas et firmas scientias accipere potuerunt, sed per quasdam humanas rationes decepti sunt ad opinandum. Deinde, cum dicit: sed per se esse et cetera, excluso errore, solvit secundum

makes clear that this divine causality takes place not by a Platonic separation of the *intelligibilia* from the *intellectualibus*, but because the intelligible object and the intellectual subject are identical in God: “For God, although he is, in his own essence, one, however, by understanding his own unity and potentiality (*virtutem*) he knows whatever exists in him virtually”.¹³⁸ This enables God to be the single cause both of the whole common existence (“*Deum esse causam totius esse communis*”) and of what is proper to each individual (“*causam proprietatis uniuscuiusque*”).¹³⁹ The two are contained in one act of his self-knowledge.¹⁴⁰ That the Dionysian notion of how God knows is Aristotle’s, Aquinas makes clear in the *Super Liber de causis* and *De Substantiis Separatis*.

Three places in the first, where Thomas explicitly refers to Book Λ of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, are illuminating. Taking them in the order they appear, the first has Dionysius agree that the soul has both its essence and its intellectuality from the first cause because he holds that the very goodness, being, life and wisdom of things are not other from one another “but are one and the same which is God” from whom they all derive. “Hence, in Book 12 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle expressly attributes to God

veritatem; et dicit quod per se esse et per se vita et huiusmodi, dupliciter dicuntur: uno modo, dicuntur de Deo qui est unum supersubstantiale principium omnium et causa; et dicitur Deus per se vita vel per se ens, quia non vivit participatione alicuius vitae neque est per participationem alicuius esse, sed ipse est suum vivere et sua vita et excedens omne esse et omnem vitam quae participatur a creaturis et existens principium vivendi et essendi omnibus.”

138. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, V, iii, §665, p. 249: “Deus enim, etsi sit in essentia sua unus, tamen intelligendo suam unitatem et virtutem, cognoscit quidquid in eo virtualiter existit. Sic igitur cognoscit ex ipso posse procedere res diversas; huiusmodi igitur quae cognoscit ex se posse prodire rationes intellectae dicuntur.” We find the same in Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 7, p. 338, lines 18–22: “oportet quod cognoscendo se cognoscat omnia alia.”

139. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, V, iii, §664, p. 249: “Sed Dionysius, sicut dixerat Deum esse causam totius esse communis, ita dixerat eum esse causam proprietatis uniuscuiusque, unde conseqebatur quod in ipso Deo essent omnium entium exemplaria.” Aquinas is largely repeating this and § 665 from Albert, see Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysii Epistulas*, ed. Paul Simon, Cologne edition, Vol. 37, Pt 2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978) [herein after *Super Epistulas*], Epistle 9, p. 531, lines 55–64: “una cognitio omnium cognitionum divina cognitio quantum ad se, inquantum ipse cognoscendo se cognoscit omnia alia, quia est principium proprium uniuscuiusque rei.” For more of Albert see Appendix 1.

140. See, especially on this, Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*.

both the act of intelligence and of life, saying that he is life and intelligence, so that he excludes the Platonic position we have been treating."¹⁴¹ He goes on to show in what limited sense the Platonic doctrine can be true. Thus, the unity of the subject and object of thought in Aristotle's self-thinking God is the ground of God being the cause of both subject and nature in the soul.

The second passage begins with the Proclean dependence of the hierarchy of intellects on the hierarchy of separate forms, because the intellects participate the separate intelligibles in order to understand. "But following the view of Aristotle," Aquinas writes, "which on this matter is more consonant with the Christian faith," we do not posit separate forms above intellects "other than the separate good itself to which the whole universe is ordered as to an external good, as is said in Book 12 of the *Metaphysics*." Separate intellects get what they know from participation in the first separate form, "pure goodness which is God himself". He encompasses all perfections: "For he alone knows all things through his essence." Aquinas concludes this passage with Dionysius who says in the 7th Chapter of the *Divine Names* that "from the divine wisdom itself the intelligibles and the intellectual powers of the angelic minds have simple and blessed understanding."¹⁴²

141. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 3, p. 24, lines 4–12: "oportet ergo dicere quod, a prima causa a qua habet essentiam, habet etiam intellectualitatem. Et hoc concordat sententiae Dionysii supra positae, scilicet quod non aliud sit ipsum bonum, ipsum esse et ipsa vita et ipsa sapientia, sed unum et idem quod est Deus, a quo derivatur in res et quod sint et quod vivant et quod intelligant, ut ipse ibidem ostendit. Unde et Aristoteles, in XII metaphysicae, signanter Deo attribuit et intelligere et vivere, dicens quod ipse est vita et intelligentia, ut excludat praedictas Platonicas positiones."

142. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 10, p. 67, l. 19–p. 68, l. 16: "Circa primum igitur considerandum est quod, sicut supra iam diximus, Platonici, ponentes formas rerum separatas, sub harum formarum ordine ponebant ordinem intellectuum. Quia enim omnis cognitio fit per assimilationem intellectus ad rem intellectam, necesse erat quod intellectus separati ad intelligendum participarent formas abstractas; et huiusmodi participationes formarum sunt istae formae vel species intelligibiles de quibus hic dicitur. Sed quia, secundum sententiam Aristotelis quae circa hoc est magis consona fidei Christianae, non ponimus alias formas separatas supra intellectuum ordinem, sed ipsum bonum separatum ad quod totum universum ordinatur sicut ad bonum extrinsecum, ut dicitur in XII metaphysicae, oportet nos dicere quod, sicut Platonici dicebant intellectus separatos ex participatione diversarum formarum separatarum diversas intelligibiles species consequi, ita nos dicamus quod consequuntur huiusmodi intelligibiles species ex participatione

Thus, the unity of the subject and object of thought in Aristotle's self-thinking makes God the sum of all perfections and the cause of both the knowing and what is known in angels.

In this context the third passage from the *Super Librum de causis* needs no explanation:

Because, according to the thought of Aristotle, which in this matter is more in concord with Catholic teaching [than that of Proclus] we do not set up many forms above intellect but one only which is the first cause, it is necessary to say that just as it is being itself, it is life itself and the first intellect. Thus, Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 12 proves that the first cause knows itself only not because knowledge of other things is not lacking to it, but also because its intellect, in order to understand, is not informed by another intelligible form but by itself. In this way, the higher separate intellects inasmuch as they are close to it understand themselves both through their essence and through participation in a superior nature.¹⁴³

In the *De Substantiis Separatis*, when, having treated how Plato and Aristotle agree, in Chapter Four Thomas considers their differences, he turns from the Platonic gods as separate intelligible forms to Aristotle where the highest God is "both understanding

primae formae separatae, quae est bonitas pura, scilicet Dei. Ipse enim Deus est ipsa bonitas et ipsum esse, in seipso virtualiter comprehendens omnium entium perfectiones. Nam ipse solus per essentiam suam omnia cognoscit absque participatione alicuius alterius formae; inferiores vero intellectus, cum eorum substantiae sint finitae, non possunt per suam essentiam omnia cognoscere, sed ad habendum rerum cognitionem necesse est quod, ex participatione causae primae, speciebus intelligibilibus receptis res intelligant. Unde Dionysius dicit VII capitulo de divinis nominibus, quod ex ipsa divina sapientia intelligibiles et intellectuales angelicarum mentium virtutes, simplices et beatos habent intellectus."

143. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 13, p. 83, lines 8–17: "Quia vero secundum sententiam Aristotelis, quae in hoc magis Catholicae doctrinae concordat, non ponimus multas formas supra intellectus sed unam solam quae est causa prima, oportet dicere quod, sicut ipsa est ipsum esse, ita est ipsa vita et ipse intellectus primus. Unde et Aristoteles in XII metaphysicae probat quod intelligit seipsum tantum, non ita quod desit ei cognitio aliarum rerum, sed quia intellectus eius non informatur ad intelligendum alia specie intelligibili nisi seipso. Sic igitur superiores intellectus separati, tanquam ei propinqui, intelligunt seipsos et per suam essentiam et per participationem superioris naturae." We note Albert teaching the same with the same judgment about Aristotle. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 2, p. 73, lines 41–2: "Et ideo sequimur opinionem Aristotelis, quae magis videtur catholica" & ch. 7, p. 338, lines 18–22: "si deus habet sapientiam a rebus et non accipit aliquid a rebus ... oportet quod cognoscendo se cognoscat omnia alia, sicut dicit Dionysius et etiam philosophus in XI Metaphysicae."

and understood (*intelligens et intellectum*), thus the highest God would understand not by participation in something higher that would be his perfection but through his own essence."¹⁴⁴

Having looked at the three chief subjects Aquinas touched in his *Prooemium*, we are now situated to answer two questions. How does Thomas differ from his teacher? and Has he read the *Elements of Theology*? Let us start with the first.

Both Fr Humbrecht and Fr Booth have compared the commentaries of *On the Divine Names* of Albert and Aquinas in detail. The conclusions of the two scholars do not differ greatly and for both the continuity is more evident than the differences. Fr Booth's comparison specified three themes of Albert important for Aquinas: "the presence of different *rationes* in God, their unification in God, and a conception of God as 'substantifier' of all things." He continues: "Thomas's conception of *esse* enabled him both to reduce the *rationes* in God to the simplicity of his *esse*, and to reduce the communication of perfections to the communication of *esse* to each individual thing."¹⁴⁵ This development is at the heart of Thomas' move beyond Albert. The issue between them comes out through another condemnation; this one concerned the beatific vision, the ultimate end of spiritual creatures.

The Bishop of Paris, William of Auvergne, on the 13th of January, 1241, damned 10 propositions; the first was: "Quod divina essentia in se nec ab homine nec ab angelo videbitur."¹⁴⁶ The most subtle, and perhaps the most important, difference between Aquinas and Albert, so far as understanding what they are doing to Dionysius' thought in their reception of it, occurs in how they deal with the issues this Parisian condemnation pushes upon them. They are philosophical, theological, and linguistic, they include the weight

144. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 4, p. D 47, lines 15–9: "Aristoteles vero universalia separata non ponens, unum solum ordinem rerum posuit supra caelorum animas, in quorum etiam ordine primum esse posuit summum Deum sicut et Plato summum Deum primum esse posuit in ordine specierum, quasi summus Deus sit ipsa idea unius et boni. Hunc autem ordinem Aristoteles posuit utrumque habere: ut scilicet esset intelligens et intellectum; ita scilicet, quod summus Deus intelligeret non participatione alicuius superioris, quod esset eius perfectio, sed per essentiam suam."

145. Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 236.

146. *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 1, §128, p. 170. For text and circumstances, see Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*, 175–97.

given to authorities and how they are understood, what philosophy can and cannot attain, whether the good is identical with being, and if union with God is by knowledge. We cannot deal with them more than cursively here. Happily, in succession to, and building on, the work of Hyacinthe Dondaine, Édouard Wéber, Christian Trottmann, and Ysabel de Andia (to which he makes ample reference), the issues are dealt with carefully by Fr Blankenhorn in *The Mystery of Union*,¹⁴⁷ and we shall use his conclusions.

The direction, and the difficulty of clear discernment, may be signalled by a linguistic fact and the limits of what it signifies. Albert uses the language of theophany prolifically: in his *Divine Names* commentary more than 10 times, more than 40 in the Dionysian commentaries over all, and more than twice that in his works as a whole.¹⁴⁸ Aquinas uses it once in his entire *oeuvre*, and that early, in his *Sentences Commentary*, then never again. This language belongs to the Greek apophatism of Dionysius, and of the Eastern Fathers, and is brought to the Latin West especially by the translations and works of the much suspected Eriugena. Albert knows that the Irishman holds a problematic understanding of theophany and Aquinas judges him heretical on the knowability of God.¹⁴⁹ If all is theophany, all is appearance of the divine, but, the Good, or the First itself, is beyond being and being known, as Plato puts it.¹⁵⁰ So in his *Quaestiones* (1245-48), Albert writes: "Dionysius ponit theophanias; et theophania divina similitudo

147. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 101-18, 124-30, 291-94, 318-83.

148. See Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*, 295-302; Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 101-10.

149. Albert, *Summa Theologiae sive de mirabili scientia Dei I*, ed. Dionysius Siedler, Cologne edition, Vol. 34, Pt 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), p. 40, lines 3-11: "Ad hoc dixerunt Iohannes Scotus et Iohannes Sarracenus in commentis super hierarchiam Dionysii, quod creatus intellectus non potest in deum cognoscendo nisi in theoriis et theophaniis; ... theophanias autem lumina intellectualia per influentiam a deo in angelos descendencia et incircumscripsum lumen, quod deus est, quantum possibile est, manifestantia." Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos lectura*, Textum Taurini 1953 editum, cap. 1.l. 6, §85: "Dicendum quod quidam de primis studentibus in libris Dionysii, volens salvare et dictum apostoli et dictum Gregorii, dixit quod Angeli inferiores non vident Deum per essentiam, cum non sint assistentes. Et iste fuit Ioannes Scotus, qui primo commentatus est in libros Dionysii. Sed haec opinio haeretica est, quia cum beatitudo perficiatur in visione Dei, sequeretur quod Angeli inferiores non videntes Deum per essentiam, non essent beati."

150. Plato, *Republic VI*, 509b: "epekeina".

est, non ipse deus; in theophaniis autem dicit quosdam beatorum deum videre."¹⁵¹ From the beginning of his writing, in the first question of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas teaches that "the contemplation of God, by which he is seen immediately through his essence, is perfect, is what will be *in patria*, and that this is possible for humans is the supposition of faith."¹⁵² In the *Summa theologiae*, with Augustine as his authority, Aquinas argues that our not ultimately seeing the essence of God would be contrary to both faith and reason, rendering rationality vain.¹⁵³

If Albert uses the language of theophany and Aquinas eschews it, we might reasonably suppose that on this matter Aquinas deserted Albert and Dionysius and sided with Augustine. However, in fact, as we have seen, Albert is fully aware of the problem with the language of theophany, and, because he was dilating on these while Thomas was his student, Aquinas certainly learned about these problems from him. Further, in the same period, Albert makes the kind of statements Aquinas does about the creature's immediate seeing of God. Thus, his solution to the problem he raised about Dionysian theophany is that all angels "vident immediate et superiores et inferiores."¹⁵⁴ Also in the *Quaestiones*, Albert writes: "Dicendum, quod deus in patria videbitur per essentiam ab angelis et sanctis, quam non mediantibus aliquibus speciebus ut similitudinibus intellectibus gloriosis obiciet, sed sicut sibi ipsi se obicit."¹⁵⁵ Far

151. Albert, *Quaestiones*, ed. Albert Fries, Wilhelm Kübel, and Henryk Anzulewicz, Cologne edition, Vol. 25, Pt 2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1993), p. 95, lines 21–3.

152. Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, L.2 q. 1 a. 1 co.: "Contemplatio autem Dei est dupliciter. Una per creaturas, quae imperfecta est, ratione jam dicta, in qua contemplatione philosophus, felicitatem contemplativam posuit, quae tamen est felicitas viae; et ad hanc ordinatur tota cognitio philosophica, quae ex rationibus creaturarum procedit. Est alia Dei contemplatio, qua videtur immediate per suam essentiam; et haec perfecta est, quae erit in patria et est homini possibilis secundum fidei suppositionem."

153. See for example, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^o q. 12 a. 1 co.: "quod est maxime cognoscibile in se, alicui intellectui cognoscibile non est, propter excessum intelligibilis supra intellectum, sicut sol, qui est maxime visibilis, videri non potest a vespertione, propter excessum luminis. Hoc igitur attendentes, quidam posuerunt quod nullus intellectus creatus essentiam Dei videre potest. ... Quod est alienum a fide. ... Similiter etiam est praeter rationem. ... Si igitur intellectus rationalis creaturae pertingere non possit ad primam causam rerum, remanebit inane desiderium naturae."

154. Albert, *Quaestiones*, p. 95, lines 43–4.

155. Albert, *Quaestiones*, p. 98, lines 32–5.

from being a mistaken direction, Albert uses and transforms the notion of theophany in order to save the truth of Dionysian and Eastern apophatism. At the same time, he constructs a doctrine of beatitude which both conforms to the ecclesiastical demands and does not fall into the errors of the extreme kataphatism of the neo-Augustinians associated with the condemnation of 1241. How does the language of theophany serve these ends?

Reverting to Edward Booth's statement will help answering this question. Theophany keeps the "rationes" between creatures and the esse—so it will play out another way in the Byzantine theology of the divine "energies". Fr Blankenhorn, writing of Albert, puts it like this:

Everything comes down to the nature of the theophanies. Albert's response [to Chrysostom positing an infinite distance between God's substance and finite minds, bridged through theophanies] takes us back to the Areopagite's divine powers, which are the object of affirmative names. Albert holds that every theophany is a partial revelation of some divine attribute. He then specifies that God's substance is (partly) seen in any of his attributes. ... The unspoken premise is that God's substance is inseparable from his attributes.¹⁵⁶

In his *Super De caelesti hierarchia*, explaining a text of Hugh of St Victor, Albert says that "'theophania' is said in four ways": 1) vision, by which we are led to God by the likeness and unlikeness of corporeal forms, 2) when by the divine light, which is not God, something which is not God is seen, 3) when, in the divine light, which is not God, God is seen immediately by a light strengthening intellect, 4) when in the light which is God, God is seen, thus God will be both light and object.¹⁵⁷ Only the last

156. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 101.

157. Albert, *Super De caelesti hierarchia*, cap. 1, p. 71, lines 12–31: "theophania quatuor modis dicitur: primo modo visio, quae est per corporales formas similitudine dissimili ducentes in deum, in qua necessarium non est lumen divinum esse, sed tantum ductio in deum; secundo modo dicitur, quando lumine divino, quod non est deus, videtur aliquid quod non est deus, sicut Ieremias vidit ollam succensam lumine divino, intelligens per hoc destructionem Ierusalem; tertio modo, ut est in usu loquentium, quando in lumine divino, quod non est deus, videtur obiectum, quod vere est deus, non in lumine sicut in medio, sicut videtur res in sua imagine, sed sub lumine confortante intellectum videtur immediate deus; quarto modo, quando in lumine, quod est deus, videtur obiectum, quod est deus, sicut dicit Hugo de sancto Victore; sic deus ipse est in quolibet beato ut lumen quoddam, participatione sui faciens eum sui similitudinem, et in tali similitudine dei visio dicitur theophania; sic enim idem deus erit lumen et obiectum, sed obiectum, prout est in se, lumen

two belong to our vision *in patria*. Fr Blankenhorn tells us that for Albert in his *Sentences Commentary*: “theophany as a double gift of uncreated light that is God’s manifesting himself and a created gift of glory disposing us. ... [and this teaching] is Albert’s original contribution, which forms the cornerstone of his new synthesis.”¹⁵⁸ We might add that, without “theophania”, Aquinas will follow Albert on the crucial role of the strengthening created grace.

By the way of the understanding conveyed in his use of “theophania”, Albert gets both mediation and immediacy. Thus in *Quaestiones*: “theophania non dicit lumen medium inter videntem et deum, quod sit species dei, sed dicit lumen confortans videntem, sicut oculus confortatur a lumine, quod est de compositione oculi ... Unde ex hoc non habetur, quod deus immediate non videatur.”¹⁵⁹ Equally in his *Summa theologiae*, he writes of the vision of glory: “Haec tamen media non tegunt vel deferunt vel distare faciunt videntem et visibile, sed visivam potentiam confortant et perficiunt ad videndum. Et ideo sic *per medium videre non opponitur ad immediate videre*, sed stat cum ipso.”¹⁶⁰ Fr Blankenhorn comments:

Albert proposes a new theological category, the created light of glory, the keystone that fuses what he holds to be of lasting value in the Greek and Latin patristic traditions. He saves Greek apophatism by proposing a new type of created grace! The double theophany incorporated the Dionysian notion of God’s self-communication at the hinge of this Greco-Latin eschatology.¹⁶¹

So, returning to our comparison of Albert and Aquinas on the *Dionysian corpus*, in his *Super De divinis nominibus*, we find Albert in “a hierarchy of created glory”¹⁶² combining *theophania*, immediate knowledge of God, and “diverse intellects strengthened diversely for seeing God.”¹⁶³

vero, prout est participatus a beatis.”

158. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 102.

159. Albert, *Quaestiones*, p. 95, lines 55–61. Emphasis mine.

160. Albert, *Summa Theologiae*, p. 47, lines 22–7. Emphasis mine.

161. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 106–7, citing Édouard Wéber, “L’interprétation par Albert le Grand de la *Théologie Mystique* de Denys le ps-Aréopagite,” *Albertus Magnus: Doctor universalis, 1280/1980*, ed. Gerbert Meyer and Albert Zimmerman (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1980), 409–39 at 431–32.

162. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 135.

163. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, cap. 13, p. 448, lines 38–48: “Sed intellectus attingendo ad substantiam ipsius cognoscit ipsum vel in sua similitudine, sicut in via per speculum et in aenigmate, vel immediate, sicut in patria. Ad hunc autem

Although he establishes the foundation on which Aquinas will build, the weights the two Dominicans give the knowledge and ignorance of God are different. Albert comes down more strongly for Greek apophatism. Some of the indications of difference are small. For example, the place of Maimonides in their works. By Fr Blankenhorn's account, the simplicity of the divine name for Maimonides "leaves the mind with an utterly simple notion" which Albert embraces.¹⁶⁴ This enthusiasm shows up in the *Super De divinis nominibus*, where Maimonides is cited 57 times by Albert.¹⁶⁵ By contrast, in Aquinas' *Exposition* of the same treatise, he is not cited once. The reason may appear from Aquinas' understanding of Maimonides as expressed in the first part of the *Summa theologiae* written at about the same time as the *Exposition*. Rabbi Moyses is mostly "cum Platone concordans" and naming God is more for the sake of "removendum a Deo" than for positing anything. This accords with what Aquinas said of Rabbi Moyses from the beginning in his *Sentences Commentary*, names are used of God not analogically but "aequivoce pure."¹⁶⁶ Protecting the ultimate knowability of the First and the positive content of the names of God as denoting the divine substance, Thomas understands Dionysius through the identity of thought and being in Aristotle rather than through a Proclean elevation of the First above both. Looking at Dionysius through the doctrine of a figure, Maimonides, whom he regards as Platonic and far too apophatic, would not be useful.¹⁶⁷

tactum proportionatus est intellectus non adhuc per suam naturam, sed per lumen gloriae descendens in ipsum, confortans eum et elevans eum supra suam naturam, et hoc dicitur theophania et participatione videri, secundum quod diversi intellectus diversimode confortantur ad videndum deum, et sic etiam non significatur nisi nomine attingente ad ipsum."

164. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 114.

165. Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 472.

166. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 13 a. 2 co.: "omnia nomina ... magis inventa sunt ad aliquid removendum a Deo, quam ad aliquid ponendum in ipso, ... Et hoc posuit Rabbi Moyses." See Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 67, 554–56. *Ibid.*, I^a q. 66 a. 1 ad 5: "Rabbi Moyses, in aliis cum Platone concordans". Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 2 q. 1 a. 3 co.: "omnia nomina quae dicuntur de Deo et creaturis, dicantur aequivoce. et hoc expresse dicit Rabbi Moyses." Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia*, Textum Taurini 1953 editum (Busa), q. 7 a. 7 co.: "Quidam autem aliter dixerunt, quod de Deo et creatura nihil praedicatur analogice, sed aequivoce pure. Et huius opinionis est Rabbi Moyses, ut ex suis dictis patet. Ista autem opinio non potest esse vera ..."

167. See Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 7 a. 5 co.: "Dicendum quod: quidam posuerunt, quod ista nomina dicta de Deo, non significant divinam substantiam, quod maxime

Albert, when explicating the *De divinis nominibus* (as indeed elsewhere), speaks of humans arriving at “quia” knowledge, that God is, in contrast to “quid”, the understanding of what God is. Aquinas confines this limitation to our knowledge *in hac vita*, when our knowing and naming depends on creatures.¹⁶⁸ While Albert’s stronger emphasis on the apophatic is indicated, on examination, this linguistic difference turns out as much to conceal as to expose a subtle doctrinal distinction. If Fr Blankenhorn is right that, perhaps owing to an Eriugenian passage in his sources, Albert is distinguishing partial or *quia* knowing from comprehensive knowledge of God identified with *quid est*, then Aquinas is one with his teacher on the fundamental point.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, “Thomas takes some difference from his teacher, as he often chooses a somewhat more kataphatic reading of Dionysius, with less emphasis on God’s incomprehensibility (which he never denies) and more emphasis on the real, partial, indirect knowledge that we attain ... (a theme also found in Albert).”¹⁷⁰

By way of these subtle differences, we return to the big one, the Platonism of Dionysius. Probably about 1272, when he wrote the last question of his *Quaestiones Disputatae De Malo*, Aquinas produced his final judgement on the matter and he was definite about the philosophical allegiance of the Areopagite: “Dionysius qui in plurimis fuit sectator sententiae Platonice.”¹⁷¹ Dionysius was now within the same philosophical tradition where Albert and Thomas had placed Augustine.

We have an agreed *terminus a quo* for Thomas’ rebellion because

expresse dicit Rabbi Moyses.” Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 472, writes that Thomas wishes to “dégager Denys de l’attraction d’une pensée plus radicale encore que la sienne.” See Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 201: “Faced with a choice between the two principal proponents of the negative way known to medieval Scholasticism—Pseudo-Dionysius and Maimonides—Thomas opts for the former.” and *Ibid.*, 139–40. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 311.

168. Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 425–26. For Albert at length see *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 7, p. 356, line 33–p. 357, line 7, quoted in Appendix 6 with the other texts in that Appendix, & Frances Ruello *Les Noms Divins et leurs raisons selon Saint Albert le Grand, Commentateur du de Divinis Nominibus*, Bibliothèque Thomiste (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1963), pp. 98–103. My thanks to Evan King for much help here.

169. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 149, 167, 300–1, 352–53, 456.

170. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 356.

171. See Appendix 7.

March 1266 is when William of Moerbeke completed his translation of Simplicius *On the Categories* of Aristotle. Scholars agree that Thomas' *In De divinis nominibus* contains at least two quotations from the Simplicius *Commentary*, and he has adopted features of its characterisation of the Platonic style.¹⁷² However, neither the purpose of the *Exposition* nor the date of its writing are agreed by scholars. Many authoritative voices have made the 18th of May 1268, when Moerbeke finished his translation of the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus, the *terminus ad quem* on the grounds that the *Elements* are not referred to in it.¹⁷³ However, in fact, as we have seen, there is thorough continuity between Thomas' treatment of Platonism in the *Dionysius Commentary* and the two subsequent works where he acknowledges using the *Elements*. This forces a reconsideration of the reasons given for fixing the terminal date.

There are problems with the prevailing reasoning. One is that, as we have noted above, Moerbeke seems to have given incomplete translations to Aquinas. With their proximity in Italy in the crucial period, Thomas is likely to have seen parts of the *Elements'* translation before William had perfected it. More importantly, Aquinas is very sparing in acknowledged quotations of the *Elements*; they occur only in his *Super librum de causis expositio*, which shows detailed and careful reading of it,¹⁷⁴ and in the last chapter of his *De Substantiis Separatis*.¹⁷⁵ There may also be an unacknowledged quotation in his *Commentary on Colossians*.¹⁷⁶ More critical editions

172. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 191: "in one of the chapters, William of Moerbeke's translation of Aristotle's *Categories* is quoted at least twice." One quotation may be found at *In De divinis nominibus*, V, i; the Simplicius text is quoted by Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic*, 59. On Aquinas' use of Simplicius to understand Platonic style and way of speaking see Hankey, "Thomas' Neoplatonic Histories": 175–76, & idem, "Aquinas and the Platonists," 293–94 and Michael Chase, "The Medieval Posterity of Simplicius' Commentary on the *Categories*: Thomas Aquinas and al-Farabi," *Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Categories*, ed. Lloyd A. Newton (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 9–29 at 16–7.

173. Led by Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 382, they include Steel, "William of Moerbeke," 249 (implicit), Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 378 (implicit), Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 191 (implicit). I have not tried to make this list complete.

174. See Steel, "William of Moerbeke," 255.

175. Saffrey in Aquinas, *Super De Causis*, xxxiv; Porro, "The University of Paris in the thirteenth century", 267.

176. Tugwell, *Albert*, 247, note 472 and *Super Epistolam ad Colossenses Lectura* in the Cai edition, p. 134, §§41 and 42. However, Torrell, *Initiation*, 368 note 22, judges

of his works are required before we can achieve greater certainty by way of verbal reiterations. Crucially, we lack a Leonine edition of the *In De divinis nominibus*. As far as its date is concerned, I am most compelled by the way the structure and content of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa theologiae* is dependent on Thomas' understanding of the *On the Divine Names*; I have outlined this above. Just as scholars argue from the continuities between the *Sententia libri De Anima* and the *Summa theologiae* for dating them at the same time,¹⁷⁷ I think it likely that he was working simultaneously on the *Dionysius Commentary* and the *de deo* of the *Summa*. Leaving undetermined the precise date of the *Exposition*, the question of whether Aquinas had read the *Elements* when he wrote it is important for determining its character. Several scholars suppose he had and I join them.¹⁷⁸

Besides the ones I have already advanced, I bring two more considerations. First, the way "unum habet rationem principii" is understood in the *In De divinis nominibus*, and, second, Thomas' handling of references to sources and commentators in it.

Unum habet rationem principii occurs twice in this *Exposition*, as I have indicated above when outlining the connection between the structure of the *Summa theologiae* and Dionysius' *On the Divine Names*, as Aquinas explains it. The first instance is at the beginning

that Dionysius and the *Liber* are adequate to explain the quotation.

177. See, for example, René Gauthier in Aquinas, *Sententia libri de Anima*, 288*–89* and the dependent judgment by Passau in Thomas Aquinas, *A Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, trans. Robert Pasnau (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1999), xiv–xviii.

178. See Tugwell, *Albert*, 256: Versus Weisheipl "the commentary as it stands, cannot be earlier than 1268–69, since Thomas clearly alludes to Proclus"; Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IV, ii, §296, p. 96: "Item, considerandum est, secundum Platonicos, quod quanto aliqua causa est altior, tanto ad plura se extendit eius causalitas," C. Pera takes the reference to the Platonici to refer to Proclus *Elements*, propositions 57 & 70. These references he gets from Thomas himself, *Liber de causis*, Prop. 1, page 5, lines 16–17: "Proclus proponit in duabus propositionibus, primum in LVI propositione sui libri, quae talis est: omne quod a secundis producitur, et a prioribus et causalioribus producitur eminentius, a quibus et secunda producebantur; alia vero proponit in sequenti propositione quae talis est: omnis causa et ante causatum operatur et post ipsum plurimum est substitutiva." R.J. Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism. A Study of the Plato and Platonic Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), 176–83 uses the Moerbeke *Elements* to explain Aquinas' reference to Platonici in 16 places, in most Proclus is the only given source; Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 410, 425. I have not tried to make this list complete.

when Aquinas is explaining Dionysius' starting point.¹⁷⁹ The second is at the end, in Chapter Thirteen, when Dionysius' conclusion with the names "Perfect and One" is being explained by way of the principle of conversion. Simplicity converts upon itself as Unity.¹⁸⁰ We find one possessing the nature of the principle again in his *Sententia Metaphysicorum*.¹⁸¹ There, as also when it supplies the logic of conversion, he makes reference to the Platonists, but in neither case to Proclus. However, when in his *Super De causis* Aquinas asserts that "Simplicity pertains to the nature (*ratio*) of unity",¹⁸² *Elements* Prop. 127 is quoted: "omne divinum simplex prime est et maxime, et propter hoc maxime per se sufficiens."¹⁸³

The One begins Proclus' *Elements*, the dependence of all multitude upon it is insisted from the start, as well as that all else flows from it and participates it, but that it participates nothing. These, its character as beginning and end of all procession and multiplication, and the dialectical reduction of multitude to unity are brought out as explanations in Thomas' *In De divinis nominibus* when he discusses the place of unity in the treatise. So, at the beginning, we have: "omnis multitudo rerum a principio primo effluat, primum principium, secundum quod in se consideratur, unum est".¹⁸⁴ When he is concluding we find: "unum quod est omnium causa ... est ante omnem multitudinem, ... nulla enim

179. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, II, ii, §143, p. 46: "Et hoc dicit quia unum habet rationem principii. Unum autem est unum secundum quod in seipso indivisum est; hoc autem est illud quod retinet proprietatem suae naturae. Quasi dicat quod ipse, in quantum est unitas, est principium super omne principium, habens in se suam proprietatem qua supra omnia existit."

180. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, ii, §980, p. 364: "unum quinque modis habet rationem principii" and XIII, iii, §989, p. 368: "secundum rationem unius, ita quod convertamur a multis creaturis quae participant unum, ad id quod vere unum est, scilicet Deum"; and see XIII, iii, §986, p. 368, quoted above.

181. Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, III, viii, §436, p. 122: "Unum secundum Platonicos maxime videtur habere speciem, id est rationem principii. Unum vero habet rationem indivisibilitatis, quia unum nihil est aliud quam ens indivisum."

182. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 21, p. 112, line 12–p. 113, line 6: "Ad cuius evidentiam accipiatur propositio CXXVII Procli, quae talis est: omne divinum simplex prime est et maxime, et propter hoc maxime per se sufficiens. Probat autem quod Deus sit prime et maxime simplex ex ratione unitatis: nam Deus est maxime unum cum sit prima unitas sicut et prima bonitas; simplicitas autem ad rationem unitatis pertinet."

183. See also Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^q q. 11 a. 1 s. c.

184. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, II, ii, §135, p. 45.

multitudo est quae non participet uno, quia omnia multa sunt unum secundum aliquid";¹⁸⁵ "omnia quocumque modo sint multa, conveniunt tamen in aliquo uno";¹⁸⁶ and "sine uno non invenitur aliqua multitudo, sed invenitur aliquod unum absque omni multitudine. Unum igitur est prius omni multitudine et principium eius."¹⁸⁷ Proclus *Elements*, Propositions 1 to 6, 21 & 24 suggest themselves immediately, but Aquinas could adduce others.

So, if Thomas had read the *Elements*, or at least a portion of it, when he expounded the *Divine Names*, why did he not say so? The character of his references there is puzzling not least because of the entire absence of citation of the *Liber de causis*. When Albert expounded the *Divine Names* there was no such inhibition,¹⁸⁸ and, when Aquinas commented on the *Liber*, he did not refrain from frequent reference to Dionysius. Happily as we try to solve these puzzles, we have the benefit of Fr Humbrecht's comparison of Albert and Aquinas on their citation of authorities and his relating this to their difference on the knowability of the divine essence. After noting that Aquinas' method of commentary is sparse in its use of authorities, Fr Humbrecht asks nonetheless "pourquoi le présent *Commentaire* en est si avare" and lists them: Aristotle 16, Augustine, 10, Boethius 3, Ignatius 1, Plato 4, his own *Celestial Hierarchy* 5, Damascene 1, Proclus, implicit via an unacknowledged quotation of the *Liber de causis* 1.¹⁸⁹ Besides the lack of Proclus and the *Liber de causis*, the most stunning omission is Maimonides, about which I wrote above.

As a Magister in the schools which taught by *lectio* and *disputatio*, Thomas was aware that persuasive argument depended not only on the questions posed and their order. This he is clear about in the Prologue to the *Summa theologiae* he is writing as he comments on the *De divinis nominibus*. Another factor is the authorities and their positions relative to which the Master's determination is established. In the *Summa theologiae* he was choosing these.¹⁹⁰

185. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, ii, §975, p. 363.

186. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, ii, §976, p. 364.

187. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, ii, §977, p. 364.

188. Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 1, p. 21, lines 39–40: "dicit PHILOSOPHUS IN LIBRO DE CAUSIS, quod intelligentia simplicatur ex bonitatis" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 7]. See Appendix 1 for many more examples.

189. Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 425–26.

190. Wayne J. Hankey, "Reading Augustine through Dionysius: Aquinas' cor-

It seems this was also the case in “le présent *Commentaire*” and Humbrecht has given us a convincing reason for the absence of Maimonides. Equally if Aquinas is aiming to bring out the monotheism of Dionysius, it would not help to look at him though Proclus. Like his successors, who also held to the connection to St Paul, Thomas must have supposed Proclus to be later than Dionysius, and so, while the *Liber de causis* might be explained as deriving from the *Elements*, this would not be a possible use of the Proclus text for the *De Divinis Nominibus*.¹⁹¹

The absence of references to the *Liber* reminds us that Aquinas is not being determined here by what he knows and doesn't know. He could not have avoided noticing the likenesses between the doctrine of the *Liber* and the *De Divinis Nominibus*; he is clear about them when he expounds the *Liber*. I judge that this absence goes with that of Proclus, but with a nuance. Let us recall our starting point in respect to this present *Commentary*. By looking at the *De Divinis Nominibus* through a Platonist lens, Aquinas is breaking out of the framework for the history of philosophy and theology he imbibed as a student of the great Albert. Before he is ready to examine the pinnacle of Albert's Peripatetic philosophy under the same scope, he needs to think things through. About four years later, his reflections have progressed and all is laid open in the *Super Librum de causis*.

Thus, the *Exposition of Blessed Dionysius On the Divine Names* begins an analysis which will not be completed until Thomas has carefully compared both it and the *Liber de causis* to the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus. Richard Schenk insightfully sums up the process and the result:

Thomas identified, *albeit* slowly, the Platonic provenience of the *Liber De causis* and *On the Divine Names*. Having once held both works for Aristotelian in character, Thomas begins his commentaries on these works only *after* recognizing their Platonic provenance; and yet Thomas' hermeneutic here is one chiefly of retrieval, not of suspicion. He does intend to brush the texts somewhat

rection of one Platonism by another,” *Aquinas the Augustinian*, edited by Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), Chapter 10, 243–57 at 253–57.

191. Humbrecht, *Théologie négative*, 426, gives two reasons for Thomas' choices: “Cela tient sans doute à la datation qu'il croit antérieure de Denys à tous ces auteurs: cela tient aussi à l'intention de celui-ci purifier le platonisme dans le sens du monothéisme.”

against their grain, but he is seeking in admittedly Platonic texts positive help for what he understands as his anti-Platonic (anti-receptionistic) program. After completing his commentary on Dionysius, perhaps sometime in the mid-1260's, Thomas continues to use the *Corpus Dionysiacum* intensely, citing this authority no less than 400 times in his subsequent work on the *Summa theologiae*.¹⁹²

After Aquinas came to think that the *Liber* was not by Aristotle but consisted of propositions and ideas taken from Proclus' *Elements of Theology* by Arabic philosophers, there was no change in his use of what he had learned from it—although of course he ceased crediting the doctrines to the Philosopher. I have observed:

If Aquinas were simply an anti-Platonic Aristotelian, his *Exposition of the Liber* ought to be filled with trauma, because it deals with his forced recognition that the summit of the Peripatetic system was, in fact, distilled from the most extreme of Platonists. Instead, the *Exposition* exhibits Thomas' customary calm. In the preface, the *Liber* is placed relative to Aristotle and the Gospel as if the change in authorship made no real difference. They are cited to reassert that happiness is attained through contemplation of the first causes by our highest faculty. From them, Aquinas passes to the *Liber* as belonging to the ultimate human study both in terms of when and why we ought to take up the consideration of separate substances. For Aquinas, the Proclean *Liber* still belongs at the top and to the purpose of the philosophical system. This is also where his great teacher Albert, at whose feet Aquinas had studied Dionysius in Cologne, and who is the father of the Rhineland Dominican Proclean mystics, placed it.¹⁹³

Fr Schenk is in accord:

The Proclean dimensions of the *Liber De causis*, recognized by Thomas after William of Moerbeke's translation in 1268 of Proclus' *Elementatio theologica*, continue to help Thomas to define the human being within a hierarchically conceived cosmos as the horizon of time and eternity, the border zone dividing the animal from the angelic and sharing attributes of both. This Proclean view of our place in the cosmic order strengthens Thomas' convictions about the necessary finitude of human knowledge and freedom.¹⁹⁴

192. Schenk, "From Providence to Grace": 311.

193. Hankey, "Misrepresenting": 690.

194. Schenk, "From Providence to Grace": 311.

"DIONYSIUS DICIT ... ET HOC EST QUOD [IN HOC LIBRO DE CAUSIS] DICITUR ... VEL SICUT PROCLUS EXPRESSIUS DICIT"¹⁹⁵ : The Last Accord : Plato, Aristotle, & Dionysius.

The comparison of Dionysius, the *Liber de Causis*, Proclus and Aristotle demanded by his *In De divinis nominibus*, Aquinas carried through a few years later, probably 1272,¹⁹⁶ in his *Super Librum de Causis Expositio*. For this, as Henry-Dominique Saffrey told us, "he had three books open in front of him: the text of the *Liber*, a manuscript of the *Elements*, and a Dionysian *corpus*."¹⁹⁷ There is no change in the positions or doctrines which he found in Dionysius, for which Dionysius gave weighty Christian authority as well as correction to those who erred, but these doctrines are affected by how they are placed within the history of philosophy. In consequence, it is of the greatest importance, first, that, as indicated in the title above, on some matters, Thomas finds Dionysius, the author of the *Liber*, and Proclus, in accord.¹⁹⁸

Second, beginning clearly in the *Summa theologiae*, that is, at least from the time when he was commenting on the *Divine Names*, Aquinas uses, as philosophical arguments, constructions of a progressive history of philosophy which, as Aristotle asserts,¹⁹⁹ moves in accord with the truth of things according to its own internal logic.²⁰⁰ In the

195. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 10, p. 69, lines 10–15.

196. Saffrey in Aquinas, *Super De causis*, xxxiv–xxxvi.

197. Saffrey in Aquinas, *Super De causis*, xxxvi.

198. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 10, p. 69, lines 10–4: "Unde Dionysius dicit IV capitulo de divinis nominibus, quod intellectus supermundane intelligunt et illuminantur secundum existentium rationes. Et hoc est quod dicitur quod intelligentia est plena formis vel, sicut Proclus expressius dicit, est plenitudo formarum"

199. M.F. Johnson "Aquinas' Changing Evaluation of Plato on Creation," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 66:1 (1992): 81–8; L. Dewan, 'St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Creation', *Dionysius* 15 (1991), 81–90; M.F. Johnson, 'Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle', *New Scholasticism* 63 (1989), 129–55 and Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas and the Platonists," 290.

200. Jan Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in its Historical Setting," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12–37 at 28. He discusses *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 44, art 2 where, considering creation, it is asked whether prime matter is caused by God. Other histories of a similar kind making the Platonists essential to crucial advances are at *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 84, arts 1 & 2 on how the human soul knows; Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia*, ed. P.M. Pession (Rome/ Turin: Marietti, 1965), q. 3, a. 5, p. 49 on the advance towards a knowledge of *creatio ex nihilo*; Aquinas, *In*

Metaphysics Aristotle had spoken of “the things themselves opening the way and compelling the first philosophers to seek”, and of the ancients being “compelled by the truth itself”.²⁰¹ Similarly, in the *Physics*, he finds the same philosophers “compelled as it were by the truth itself.”²⁰² In his expositions of the works, Thomas does not fail to notice these compulsions and he provides reasons for them from the relation of the human mind to truth.²⁰³

It is significant that these constructions use the new translations by Moerbeke of historically conscious and sophisticated Greek commentators like Simplicius, whose representations of the character of Platonism and Aristotelianism Aquinas employed in the *Divine Names Exposition*, and of Themistius. Further, from the beginning, they concern the related questions of prime matter and creation and of how humans know. We have in mind the crucial role Dionysius

Physicorum, VIII, ii, §975, p. 506, on the same; Aquinas, *de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, 10 ad 8 on Plato’s role in making science possible: “Plato vero discipulus eius consentiens antiquis philosophis quod sensibilia semper sunt in motu et fluxu, et quod virtus non habet certum iudicium de rebus, ad certitudinem scientiae stabiliendam, posuit quidem ex una parte species rerum separatas a sensibilibus et immobiles, de quibus dixit esse scientias.” This precedes Thomas on Augustine following Aristotle quoted above. Important for this history is Themistius’ paraphrase of the *De Anima* translated by Moerbeke. A different kind of history is told in his *De Unitate Intellectus* where the argument is largely an elaborate and polemical construction based on a myriad of sources.

201. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.3 984a18: “res ipsa viam fecit similiter et quaerere coegit” and 984b10: “ab ipsa veritate (velut aiebamus) coacti habitum quaesierunt principium.” Thomas’ text.

202. Aristotle, *Physics*, I.10 188b29-30: “tanquam ab ipsa ueritate coacti.” Thomas’ text.

203. Aquinas, *In Physica*, I, x, §79, p. 43: “Dicit ergo primo quod, sicut supra dictum est, multi philosophorum secuti sunt veritatem usque ad hoc, quod ponerent principia esse contraria. Quod quidem licet vere ponerent, non tamen quasi ab aliqua ratione moti hoc ponebant, sed sicut ab ipsa veritate coacti. Verum enim est bonum intellectus, ad quod naturaliter ordinatur: unde sicut res cognitione carentes mouentur ad suos fines absque ratione, ita interdum intellectus hominis quadam naturali inclinatione tendit in veritatem, licet rationem veritatis non percipiat.” Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, I, v, §93, p. 28: “ipsa rei evidens natura dedit eis viam ad veritatis cognitionem vel inventionem, et coegit eos quaerere dubitationem quamdam quae inducit in causam efficientem, quae talis est.” *Ibid.*, I, xii, §194, p. 57: “accipiat eam secundum rationem quam videtur ipse secutus, quasi quadam necessitate veritatis coactus, ut sequeretur eos, qui hanc rationem expriment.” & *Ibid.*, I, xvii, §272, p. 78: “Hoc autem Empedocles quasi ex necessitate veritatis coactus posuit aliquo alio expressius ista dicente, sed ipse manifeste non expressit.”

plays in Thomas' understanding of both. Proclus enters here too. In the article of the *Summa theologiae* just before his progressive history of how the necessity "ponere etiam materiam primam creatam ab universali causa entium"²⁰⁴ came to be understood, Aquinas tells us "Unde et Plato dixit quod necesse est ante omnem multitudinem ponere unitatem".²⁰⁵ This is the same Platonism he found in the *Divine Names*,²⁰⁶ and which he discussed in a way which showed that he, as well as Dionysius, had read the *Elements* of Proclus.

The third indication of the importance of these identifications appears so far as, in at least two of them, creation and human knowledge, Thomas reverses himself. He turns from judging that Aristotle teaches *creatio ex nihilo*, and that Plato does not, to uniting them on this. Moreover, this turn comes from understanding Plato through Proclus. The most simple is the highest and the most universal cause. Indeed, Aquinas thinks that for Proclus and Dionysius "Deus sit in fine simpliciter, id est maxime simplex."²⁰⁷ As Thomas explains how this is understood by Proclus and the Author of the *Liber de causis*, he gives the argument which will emerge in the *De Substantiis Separatis* as that in which Plato and Aristotle are united when teaching the *creatio ex nihilo*.²⁰⁸ In these

204. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^o q. 44 a. 2 co.

205. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^o q. 44 a. 1 co.

206. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, ii, §975, p. 363: "Sed ipse respondet quod unum quod est omnium causa, non est illud unum quod est pars multorum, quia illud unum est partiale et participatum, sed est ante omnem multitudinem, non solum ordine temporis et naturae, sed etiam ordine causae." and *Ibid.*, XIII, iii & IV, xxi.

207. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, l. 21: "Ad cuius evidentiam accipitur propositio CXXVII Procli, quae talis est: omne divinum simplex prime est et maxime, et propter hoc maxime per se sufficiens. Probat autem quod Deus sit prime et maxime simplex ex ratione unitatis: ... unde Deus in quantum est prime et maxime unum, in tantum etiam est prime et maxime simplex. ... Nam primo dicit quod unitas divina quae non est dispersa in multas partes, sed est unitas pura, est significatio huius quod Deus sit in fine simpliciter, id est maxime simplex." Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IX, iv, §844, p. 317: "Sic igitur, unitas simpliciter et immobilitatis pertinet ad rationem identitatis divinae."

208. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 3, p. 18, line 15–p. 22, l. 21: "quanto aliqua forma est universalior, tanto est magis simplex et prior causa; ... ultimum autem quod ab omnibus participatur et ipsum nihil aliud participat, est ipsum unum et bonum separatum quod dicebat summum Deum et primam omnium causam. Unde et in libro Procli inducitur propositio CXVI, talis: omnis Deus participabilis est, id est participat, excepto uno. ... Secundum hoc ergo Platonici ponebant quod id quod

progressive histories of reason, Platonism not only plays an essential part, but, in some, that part is a requisite for knowing. No longer is knowing explained simply by putting Aristotle against Plato, but rather, instead, by his standing on and altering Plato.

For Aquinas, Aristotle, and the late ancient Greek commentators Thomas came to know better and better, the physicists, the *antiqui philosophi*, used as their principle "like is known by like (*simile simili*)". In consequence, the object known is in the knower corporeally as it is in the known and the flux of the material world is flux in the knower. In fact nothing can be known.²⁰⁹ Plato moves truth forward by use of the same principle in order to teach, on the contrary, an immaterial knowing. Beginning with mind not matter, he posits as its object a matching immaterial separate form;²¹⁰ thus, knowledge attains the stability it requires.²¹¹ Aristotle steps forward, proceeding from where Plato arrived, by making what knows immaterial mind but then refusing the principle common to Plato and the physicists. For Aristotle, material things are known

est ipsum esse est causa existendi omnibus, ... unde Proclus dicit XVIII propositione sui libri: omne derivans esse aliis, ipsum prime est hoc quod tradit recipientibus derivationem. Cui sententiae concordat quod Aristoteles dicit in II metaphysicae quod id quod est primum et maxime ens est causa subsequentium." Idem, *Super De causis*, prop. 9, p. 59, lines 3–9: "Est autem propria operatio ipsius Dei quod sit universalis causa regitiva omnium, ut in 3 propositione habitum est; unde ad hanc operationem nihil pertinere potest nisi in quantum participat illud a prima causa sicut effectus eius. Quia vero causa prima est maxime una, quanto aliqua res fuerit magis simplex et una, tanto magis appropinquat ad causam primam et magis participat propriam operationem ipsius."

209. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 84 a. 1 co.: "primi philosophi qui de naturis rerum inquisiverunt, putaverunt nihil esse in mundo praeter corpus. Et quia videbant omnia corpora mobilia esse, et putabant ea in continuo fluxu esse, aestimaverunt quod nulla certitudo de rerum veritate haberi posset a nobis. Quod enim est in continuo fluxu, per certitudinem apprehendi non potest, quia prius labitur quam mente diiudicetur, sicut Heraclitus dixit quod non est possibile aquam fluvii currentis bis tangere, ut recitat philosophus in IV Metaphys."

210. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 84 a. 1 co.: "His autem superveniens Plato, ut posset salvare certam cognitionem veritatis a nobis per intellectum haberi, posuit praeter ista corporalia aliud genus entium a materia et motu separatum, quod nominabat species sive ideas", Ibid., I^a q. 84 a. 2 co.: "the nature of knowledge is opposite to the nature of materiality (*ratio cognitionis ex opposito se habet ad rationem materialitatis*)."

211. For a more complete version of the same argument, see Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 1, p. D41: "De opinionibus antiquorum et Platonis."

immaterially.²¹² In this way, however, the much abused doctrine of the separate forms turns out to be an essential development. Indeed, as we have seen the Proœmium to the *In De divinis nominibus* declare, it is true in respect to God: “de primo rerum principio, verissima est eorum opinio et fidei Christianae consona.”²¹³ As we shall see shortly, Aquinas represents the common (and true) doctrine of Aristotle and Plato on *creatio ex nihilo* in these terms.

A fourth aspect of Thomas’ placing of positions and texts in a history of philosophy also takes us to Dionysius. Thomas makes his own the search of his Neoplatonic and Peripatetic predecessors, pagan, Christian and Arabic, for a concord between Plato and Aristotle. There, he and they suppose that the truth, as far as philosophy can know it, is located. This concord, as he sets it out in his treatise *On Separate Substances*, contemporary with the *Super de Causis*, and possible as a result of the analysis it contains,²¹⁴ is given the authority of Dionysius:

Since therefore it has been shown what the foremost philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, believed about the spiritual substances as to their origin, the condition of their nature, their distinction and order of government, and in what respect others disagreed with them, through error, it remains to show what the teaching of the Christian religion holds about each individual point. For this

212. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a q. 84 a. 2 co.: “Relinquitur ergo quod oportet materialia cognita in cognoscente existere non materialiter, sed magis immaterialiter.” Strictly, according to Aquinas, there is likeness and unlikeness. Thomas’ own position is near to the one he ascribes to Boethius. Aquinas, *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 50 (Rome / Paris, 1992). *Expositio Capituli Secundi* (p. 133, lines 25–9): “duo quia modus quo aliqua discutiuntur debet congruere et rebus et nobis: nisi enim rebus congrueret, res intelligi non possent, nisi uero congrueret nobis, nos capere non possemus”, and *Super Librum de causis expositio*, prop. 8, p. 56, lines 9ff. where Thomas explains in what sense knowledge must be regarded both *ex parte cognoscentis* and *ex parte rei cognitae*: “ut modus cognitionis accipiatur ex parte cognoscentis, quia scilicet, quamvis causa prima sit superintellectualis, intelligentia non cognoscit eam superintellectualiter sed intellectualiter, et similiter, quamvis corpora sint materialia et sensibilia in seipsis, intelligentia tamen non cognoscit ea sensibilibus et materialiter sed intellectualiter. Si vero accipiatur modus cognitionis ex parte rei cognitae, sic cognoscit unumquodque prout est in seipso: cognoscit enim intelligentia quod causa prima est superintellectualiter in seipsa et quod res corporales habent in seipsis esse materiale.”

213. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, pr., p. 2.

214. Saffrey in Aquinas, *Super De causis*, xxxv.

purpose, we shall use especially the writings of Dionysius who excelled all others in teaching what pertains to spiritual substances.²¹⁵

In this accord, as we have seen, Dionysius sides with Aristotle against features of Proclean Platonism, but he is with the Platonists against Aristotle on the numbers and kinds of the separate substances.

We shall conclude before we reach Chapter 18 where Thomas outlines Dionysius' support for the common teaching of Plato and Aristotle. However, importantly, for the unity of Proclus, Aristotle and Dionysius, in Chapter 9, he treats the question of whether the spiritual substances were created and on this he unites the two greatest philosophers in another of his histories beginning with the Physicists. *Secundum sententiam Platonis et Aristotilis*:

It is necessary beyond the mode of coming to be, in which something becomes by the coming of form to matter [this doctrine he ascribed to the *Naturales*], to presuppose another origin of things, according as *esse* is bestowed on the whole universe of things (*toti universitati rerum*) by a first being which is its own being (*a primo ente quod est suum esse*).²¹⁶

Further on in the same chapter Thomas is completely explicit. He had made clear in his *De aeternitate mundi* that *creatio ex nihilo* and the eternity of the creature are compatible because "having been made and never not being are not contradictory".²¹⁷ Here, in *Caput 9: De opinione eorum qui dicunt substantias spirituales non esse creatas*, he says, it ought not to be thought that, because Plato and Aristotle held immaterial substances and the heavenly bodies always existed, "they denied to them a cause of their being (*causam essendi*)". They

215. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 18 p. D71, lines 3–12: "Quia igitur ostensum est quid de substantiis spiritualibus praecipui philosophi Plato et Aristoteles senserunt quantum ad earum originem, conditionem naturae, distinctionem et gubernationis ordinem, et in quo ab eis alii errantes dissenserunt; restat ostendere quid de singulis habeat Christianae religionis assertio. Ad quod utemur praecipue Dionysii documentis, qui super alios ea quae ad spirituales substantias pertinent excellentius tradidit."

216. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 57, lines 114–18: "Oportet igitur supra modum fieri quo aliquid fit, forma materiae adveniente, praeintelligere aliam rerum originem, secundum quod esse attribuitur toti universitati rerum a primo ente, quod est suum esse."

217. Aquinas, *De Aeternitate Mundi*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 43 (Rome, 1976), p. 88, lines 211–13: "Sic ergo patet quod in hoc quod dicitur, aliquid esse factum et nunquam non fuisse, non est intellectus aliqua repugnantia."

did not deviate from the Catholic faith by positing *increata*.²¹⁸

Thus, the Proclean Plato, Aristotle and Dionysius come together in the *De Substantiis Separatis*. Thomas' reasoning for the doctrine that God is the solitary cause of being for all things is Platonic, but he finds the same conclusions in Aristotle, and the crucial language is from Dionysius. The God who creates is "simplicissimum"; this characteristic he found Dionysius attributing to God in Chapter 9 of *On the Divine Names*.²¹⁹ It is necessary that the First Principle be *simplicissimum*, the rest follows:

this must of necessity be said to be not as participating in "to be" but as itself being "to be". But because subsistent 'to be' (*esse subsistens*) can be only one,... then necessarily all other things which are under it must exist as participants in 'to be'.²²⁰

His *Super De causis* shows that, having looked at Plato more and more in Neoplatonic terms, Thomas saw that for Platonists all is derived from one exalted absolutely simple First Principle. Even if the Platonists "posited many gods ordered under one" rather

218. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 58, lines 215–22: "Non ergo aestimandum est quod Plato et Aristoteles, propter hoc quod posuerunt substantias immateriales seu etiam caelestia corpora semper fuisse, eis subtraxerunt causam essendi. Non enim in hoc a sententia Catholicae fidei deviarunt, quod huiusmodi posuerunt increata, sed quia posuerunt ea semper fuisse, cuius contrarium fides Catholica tenet."

219. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IX, ii, §817, p. 306: "Quandoque vero variabilitatis principium est compositio alicuius rei ex diversis, sicut corpora mixta variabilia sunt, non solum quia sunt materialia, sed etiam quia sunt ex contrariis composita; et ad hoc excludendum dicit: simplicissimum." See I, ii, §51, p. 17: "secundum viam resolutionis, tendunt res a compositione in simplicitatem quae summe est in Deo; et quantum ad hoc dicit quod est eorum quae simplicificantur simplicitas. Secundum autem viam compositionis, tendunt res a multitudine in unitatem, dum ex multis fit unum. Unitas autem primo est in Deo; et quantum ad hoc dicit, et eorum quae uniuntur unitas." *Ibid.*, II, vi, §217, p. 68: "[Dionysius] dicit quod Deus, cum sit unum et det unum esse parti et toti et communi unitati et multitudini, in quantum omnis multitudo aliquo modo participat unum, ipse, inquam, sic existens unum et dans unitatem, supersubstantialiter est unum simpliciter, sicut bonum et ens; quia non est aliquid eorum quibus dat esse unum." The argument here is that of the initial propositions of the *Elements* of Proclus.

220. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 57, lines 103–10: "Cum enim necesse sit primum principium simplicissimum esse, necesse est quod non hoc modo esse ponatur quasi esse participans, sed quasi ipsum esse existens. Quia vero esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum, sicut supra habitum est, necesse est omnia alia quae sub ipso sunt, sic esse quasi esse participantia."

than as we do “positing one only having all things in itself”, everyone agrees “universality of causality belongs to God”.²²¹ The language and arguments in Chapter 9 of the *De Substantiis Separatis* are evidently Platonic or, if Aristotelian, they share common ground. “[I]n every order of causes, a universal cause must exist prior to the particular cause, since particular causes act only in the power of universal causes.”²²² “[I]f one should consider the order of things, he will always find that that which is most of a particular kind is always the cause of those things that come after it ... that which exists by accident must be reduced to that which exists through itself.”²²³ “[T]he First Principle which we call God is most a being.”²²⁴ “[W]e must understand that through its form, a generated thing receives its ‘to be’ from the universal cause of being. For the causes that are acting towards the production of determinate forms are causes of being only insofar as they act in the power of the first and universal principle of being.”²²⁵

Aquinas is not likely to have supposed that Aristotle was being subverted by this procedure. If we turn to his *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, which he wrote during the same period in which he produced the *Super de Causis* and *De Substantiis Separatis*, we find in the first book:

221. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 19, p. 106, lines 13–7: “Causalitas autem horum ad ordinem divinum pertinet, sive ponantur multi dii ordinati sub uno secundum Platonicos, sive unus tantum in se omnia habens secundum nos: universalitas enim causalitatis propria est Deo.” See *Super De causis*, prop. 3, prop. 9 & prop. 21 as quoted above. He sees the same when commenting on *The Divine Names: In De divinis nominibus*, XI, ii, §896, p. 335: “Deus totus ad se totum unitur ... [et] est omnino simplex; ... sic deitas procedit ad omnia per sui similitudines rebus communicatas, quod tamen tota manet intra seipsam, sicut sigillum quod imprimit suam imaginem et similitudinem diversis ceris et tamen idem manet identitate quod est.”

222. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 57, lines 119–20: “In omni causarum ordine necesse est universalem causam particulari praeexistere.”

223. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 57, lines 132–33: “Necesse est quod per accidens est, in id reduci quod per se est.”

224. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 57, line 146–p. D 58, line 150: “Si quis ordinem rerum consideret, semper inveniet id quod est maximum causam esse eorum quae sunt post ipsum; Primum autem principium, quod Deum dicimus, est maxime ens.”

225. Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, cap. 9, p. D 58, lines 174–79: “Oportet tamen intelligere quod per formam res generata esse participet ab universali essendi principio. Non enim causae agentes ad determinatas formas sunt causae essendi nisi in quantum agunt in virtute primi et universalis principii essendi.”

[I]f we speak of what is first in the whole universe, it must be the most perfect thing. ... It is also clear that the first of all things must be one that is most simple (*simplicissimum*); ... It was necessary, then, that the ancient philosophers should attribute both of these properties, the greatest perfection along with the greatest simplicity (*cum summa simplicitate maximam perfectionem*), to the first principle of the whole universe. However, these two properties cannot be simultaneously attributes of any corporeal principle. ... But this kind of opposition can be resolved only by maintaining that the first principle of things is incorporeal, because this principle will be the most simple (*simplicissimum*).²²⁶

In the second book of the *Metaphysics*, where Aquinas and Albert found Aristotle teaching what in Dionysius we call negative theology, we also find this Platonic gradation of being, simplicity and truth and their connection.

Now the term truth is not proper to one class of beings only, but is applied universally to all beings. ... It follows that whatever causes subsequent things to be true is itself most true (*verissimum*). ... Now this is necessary, because everything that is composite in nature and participates in being must ultimately have as its causes those things which have existence by their very essence. But all corporeal things are actual beings insofar as they participate in certain forms. Therefore a separate substance which is a form by its very essence must be the principle of corporeal substance. If we add to this conclusion the fact that first philosophy considers first causes, it then follows ... that first philosophy considers those things which are most true (*maxime vera*). Consequently this science is pre-eminently the science of truth. From these conclusions he draws a corollary: since those things which cause the being of other things are true in the highest degree, it follows that each thing is true insofar as it is a being.²²⁷

226. Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, I, xii, §188, p. 56 : "si loquamur de primo universi, oportet ipsum esse perfectissimum ... Constat etiam quod primum omnium oportet esse simplicissimum. ... Necessarium ergo erat antiquis naturalibus quod utrumque attribuerent primo principio totius universi, scilicet cum summa simplicitate maximam perfectionem. Haec autem duo non possunt simul attribui alicui principio corporali. ... Huiusmodi autem contrarietatis dissolutio haberi non potest, nisi ponendo primum entium principium incorporeum: quia hoc erit simplicissimum..."

227. Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, II, ii, §§294–98, p. 85: "Nomen autem veritatis non est proprium alicui speciei, sed se habet communiter ad omnia entia. Unde, quia illud quod est causa veritatis, est causa communicans cum effectu in nomine et ratione communi, sequitur quod illud, quod est posterioribus causa ut sint vera, sit verissimum. ... Et hoc est necessarium: quia necesse est ut omnia composita et participantia, reducantur in ea, quae sunt per essentiam, sicut in causas. Omnia autem corporalia sunt entia in actu, in quantum participant aliquas formas. Unde

These doctrines of Aristotle and Thomas' commentary immediately follow what in *Metaphysics* 2.1 helped, as we have seen, Albert and Thomas judge that Aristotle and Dionysius taught the same about our ignorance of separate substance and for the same reasons. Here Aristotle teaches Thomas:

those things which are most knowable by nature are those which are most actual, i.e., immaterial and unchangeable things, yet we know these least of all. Obviously, then, the difficulty experienced in knowing the truth is due principally to some weakness on the part of our intellect. From this it follows that our soul's intellectual power is related to those immaterial beings, which are by nature the most knowable of all, as the eyes of owls (*oculi nycticoracum*) are to the light of day, which they cannot see because their power of vision is weak, although they do see dimly lighted things.²²⁸

For Aquinas, the consonance of Aristotle and the Platonists includes the incomprehensibility of God. As he understands Aristotle, there is not only the beginning in sense for intellects adapted to this, there is also that the First cannot be included in a genus through which it could be defined and understood.²²⁹ There

nesse est substantiam separatam, quae est forma per suam essentiam, corporalis substantiae principium esse. Si ergo huic deductioni adiungamus, quod philosophia prima considerat primas causas, sequitur ut prius habitum est, quod ipsa considerat ea, quae sunt maxime vera. Unde ipsa est maxime scientia veritatis. Ex his autem infert quoddam corollarium. Cum enim ita sit, quod ea, quae sunt aliis causa essendi, sint maxime vera, sequitur quod unumquodque sicut se habet ad hoc quod sit, ita etiam se habet ad hoc quod habeat veritatem."

228. Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, II, i, §282, p. 82: "illa ... sunt autem maxime cognoscibilia secundum naturam suam, quae sunt maxime in actu, scilicet entia immaterialia et immobilia, quae tamen sunt maxime nobis ignota. Unde manifestum est, quod difficultas accidit in cognitione veritatis, maxime propter defectum intellectus nostri. Ex quo contingit, quod intellectus animae nostrae hoc modo se habet ad entia immaterialia, quae inter omnia sunt maxime manifesta secundum suam naturam, sicut se habent oculi nycticoracum ad lucem diei, quam videre non possunt, quamvis videant obscura." See also Appendix 1 and Appendix 5 on the "oculus noctuae" and the "oculus vespertilionis".

229. The second point comes out in his discussion of the relations of the sciences, analysis must come to an end with indemonstrable principles: Aquinas, *Super de Trinitate*, 6.4 *corpus*, p. 170, lines 112–13: "principia demonstrationum indemonstrabilia". Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Posteriorum*, I, ii, p. 11, lines 35–6: "Unde cum principium sit enunciatio quaedam, non potest de ipso praecognosci quid est, set solum quia verum est." When this structure is moved from logic to the cosmos as a whole, we arrive again at the hidden God. For a hint at how this happens see Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, I, ii, §51, pp. 17–8: "Est autem considerandum

is also, crucially, an important difference. Aquinas uses Proclus to explain why the superessential unity of the Platonic Principle is entirely beyond being known; it is not merely a question of our present mode of knowing.²³⁰ There is a great gulf fixed, in this regard, between Dionysius, the *Liber de causis* and Aristotle, on one side, and the *Platonici*, on the other. Their *causa prima* is unknowable because it *excedit etiam ipsum ens separatum*. In consequence, the First will be beyond being known not only in this life but at all. In contrast, *secundum rei veritatem*, a position which always includes Dionysius, “*causa prima est supra ens in quantum est ipsum esse infinitum.*”²³¹

Previously *In De divinis nominibus*, he made the same kind of opposition between the Platonists, on the one hand, and Dionysius (and we might add, Aristotle), on the other, when explaining “*essentia Deitatis est occulta*”. With the Aristotelian Dionysians, there are problems deriving from the starting point of our knowledge and the character of our ways of knowing.²³² For the others, he tells us: “*Platonici posuerunt Deum summum esse quidem super ens et super vitam et super intellectum, non tamen super ipsum bonum*

quod duplex processus invenitur in rebus, scilicet: resolutionis et compositionis; et secundum utrumque, tendunt res in divinam similitudinem. Nam secundum viam resolutionis, tendunt res a compositione in simplicitatem quae summe est in Deo; et quantum ad hoc dicit quod est eorum quae simplicificantur simplicitas. ... supersubstantialiter superprincipale principium universi principii. Non enim eodem modo est principium quo alia, sed eminentius; sic enim eminentius habet esse. Et ut universos Dei effectus simul comprehendat, subdit quod est bona traditio occulti. Manifestum est enim quod quaecumque in creaturis sunt, in Deo praeexistunt eminentius. Sed creaturae quidem manifestae sunt nobis, Deus autem occultus.” And see Eileen C. Sweeney, “Three notions of *resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 58:2 (1994): 197–241 with my “*Participatio divini luminis.*”

230. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 6, p. 44.

231. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 6, p. 47, lines 8–22. On Thomas’ assimilation of Dionysius’ doctrine to his own see O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 123, 275 and 132ff.

232. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII.iii. §§ 993–94, p. 369: “*Quod quidem dico occultum non propter sui defectum, sed quia existit supra omnem et rationem humanam et mentem angelicam. Et quia voce exprimuntur ea quae ratione vel mente capiuntur, ideo subdit quod illius occulti quod est super mentem et rationem, nec potest esse nomen simplex neque sermo compositus, exprimens ipsum ut in se est, sed in inviis est segregatum. Et loquitur ad similitudinem sensibilibus rerum, in quibus ea sunt occulta hominibus, quae sunt posita extra vias per quas homines transeunt. Ita et essentia deitatis est occulta, quia est praeter omnes vias, quas ratio aut mens creata excogitare potest.*”

quod ponebant primum principium."²³³ He goes on to assert his own doctrine that "in this present life our intellect is not so joined to God as to see his essence but so that it knows of God what he is not."²³⁴

Thomas puts Aristotle and Dionysius together on our incapacity for the most intelligible realities in his *Sentences Commentary*, and the owl of *Metaphysics* 2 flies in:

Something can be greatly intelligible in itself, but less intelligible to some intellect; a thing manifestly apparent in the case of our intellect. For our intellectual power is determined to sensible forms which, through the agent intellect, become things actually understood, in respect to this phantasms are related to our intellect in the way that sensible things are related to sense (as is said in *De Anima* Book 3); and therefore it is necessary that, in everything our intellect understands, it is naturally led by sensible forms, as Dionysius says; and, because separate substances, which are in themselves most intelligible, are above the genus of sensible forms, therefore, our intellect is found to be weak for knowing them; that is why it is said in Book 2 of the *Metaphysics* that our intellect is related to what is naturally most manifest as the eyes of an owl to the sun.²³⁵

When expousing Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 2 on our intellect's failure to know what is most intelligible, Aquinas brings us back to our starting point, the doctrine Archbishop Peckham condemned as the worst of all, the human soul is by nature the actuality of a body, its form.

Therefore, since the human soul occupies the lowest place in the order of intellective substances, it has the least intellective power; just as it is by nature the actuality of a body (*actus corporis*), ... In a similar way, it has a natural aptitude to know the truth about corporeal and sensible things. These are less knowable by nature because of their materiality, although they can be known by abstracting sensible forms from phantasms. And since this process of knowing truth befits the nature of the human soul insofar as it is the form of this kind of body (*forma talis corporis*), ... it is possible for the human soul, which is united to this kind of body, to know the truth about things only insofar as it can be elevated to the level of the things which it understands by abstracting from phantasms. However, by this process it cannot be elevated to the level of knowing the quiddities of immaterial substances because

233. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, iii, §994, p. 369.

234. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, iii, § 996, p. 370: "Ad ultimum autem anima nostra Deo coniungitur, ascendendo per negationes, in ultimis totorum, idest in supremis finibus universaliorum et excellentiorum creaturarum. Et quidem coniunctio animae ad Deum fit in quantum nobis possibile est nunc Deo coniungi: non enim coniungitur in praesenti intellectus noster Deo ut eius essentiam videat; sed ut cognoscat de Deo quid non est." See Appendix 6 for more of this text.

235. Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 4 d. 49 q. 2 a. 6 ad 3, quoted above.

these are not on the same level as sensible substances. Therefore it is impossible for the human soul, which is united to this kind of body, to apprehend separate substances by knowing their quiddities.²³⁶

There is no point in contradicting Archbishop Peckham by denying that this teaching “destroys and erodes ... everything which Augustine teaches on the eternal laws and the immutable light, the faculties of the soul”, nor can we escape the fact that, by binding soul to body and to the work and limits of abstraction from the sensible, this is a hard realism. If there was choosing, and the condemnation presupposes that, what did Albert and Thomas choose? Was it what Paul preached to Dionysius, “the Unknown God”?²³⁷

Considering “Whether ‘esse’ is properly predicated of God” in the First Book of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas tells us what remains at the end of the “via remotionis”. We deny regarding the “qui est”, the “absolute, undetermined by any addition”, “first corporal things, and, second, intellectual ones, such as goodness and wisdom as they are in creatures. Then there remains in our intellect that this exists, nothing more”. At the finish the wise man remains “in a kind of darkness of ignorance”. So far as this life is concerned, “by ignorance we are joined in the best way to God, as Dionysius says, and this is the kind of darkness in which God is said to dwell.”²³⁸

236. Aquinas, *In Metaphysicorum*, II, i, §285, p. 82: “Sic igitur, cum anima humana sit ultima in ordine substantiarum intellectivarum, minime participat de virtute intellectiva; et sicut ipsa quidem secundum naturam est actus corporis, ... ita habet naturalem aptitudinem ad cognoscendum corporalium et sensibilium veritatem, quae sunt minus cognoscibilia secundum suam naturam propter eorum materialitatem, sed tamen cognosci possunt per abstractionem sensibilium a phantasmatis. Et quia hic modus cognoscendi veritatem convenit naturae humanae animae secundum quod est forma talis corporis; quae autem sunt naturalia semper manent; impossibile est, quod anima humana huiusmodi corpori unita cognoscat de veritate rerum, nisi quantum potest elevari per ea quae abstrahendo a phantasmatis intelligit. Per haec autem nullo modo potest elevari ad cognoscendum quidditates immaterialium substantiarum, quae sunt improprietate istis substantiis sensibilibus. Unde impossibile est quod anima humana huiusmodi corpori unita, apprehendat substantias separatas cognoscendo de eis quod quid est.”

237. See Acts 17:23. See Charles Stang, “Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym”, *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, edited Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwood, 2009), 11–25.

238. Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 8 q. 1 a. 1 ad 4: “dicendum, quod alia omnia nomina dicunt esse determinatum et particulatum; sicut sapiens dicit aliquid esse; sed hoc nomen qui est dicit esse absolutum et indeterminatum per aliquid additum; et ideo dicit Damascenus quod non significat quid est Deus, sed significat quoddam pelagus substantiae infinitum, quasi non determinatum. Unde quando

When expositing the *Divine Names*, Aquinas tells us to what this present union with the darkness of God's habitation leads: "This joining of us to God [known as he is not], which is possible for us in this present life, is perfected when we arrive at knowing his being above the most excellent creatures."²³⁹ For Thomas, Dionysius was a guide to the darkness which is God's habitation and the most intense light. When commenting on I Timothy, Aquinas gives us the essentials of his doctrine on our ignorance and knowledge of God. The clouds and the darkness are in fact light: "Dionysius answers: "all darkness is inaccessible light." And hence that which is here called light and [in Exodus and Psalms] called darkness is the same; but darkness inasmuch as [God] is not seen, and light inasmuch as he is seen."²⁴⁰ Aristotle is not forgotten, the excessive excellence of the divine intelligibility is "sicut sol ab oculo noctuae." The cloud of darkness is the way into and the place of perfect knowledge.

in Deum procedimus per viam remotionis, primo negamus ab eo corporalia; et secundo etiam intellectualia, secundum quod inveniuntur in creaturis, ut bonitas et sapientia; et tunc remanet tantum in intellectu nostro, quia est, et nihil amplius: unde est sicut in quadam confusione. Ad ultimum autem etiam hoc ipsum esse, secundum quod est in creaturis, ab ipso removemus; et tunc remanet in quadam tenebra ignorantiae, secundum quam ignorantiam, quantum ad statum viae pertinet, optime Deo conjungimur, ut dicit Dionysius, et haec est quaedam caligo, in qua Deus habitare dicitur." Blankenhorn translates and comments on this passage at *The Mystery of Union*, 358.

239. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, iii, § 996, p. 370: "Unde haec coniunctio nostri ad Deum, quae nobis est in hac vita possibilis, perficitur quando devenimus ad hoc quod cognoscamus eum esse supra excellentissimas creaturas." See Appendix 6 for more of this text.

240. Aquinas, *Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Timotheum lectura*, Textum Taurini 1953 editum (Busa), cap. 6 l. 3: "Sed qualiter ergo Deus habitat lucem inaccessibilem? Et in Ps. XCVI, 2: nubes et caligo in circuitu eius; Ex. IX: Moyses accessit ad caliginem, in qua erat Deus. Respondet Dionysius: omnis caligo est inaccessibile lumen. Est ergo idem quod hic lumen, et ibi caligo; sed caligo est in quantum non videtur, lumen vero in quantum videtur. Sed aliquid est invisibile dupliciter. Uno modo propter se, sicut opacum; alio modo propter excedentiam eius, sicut sol ab oculo noctuae. Sic quaedam sunt nobis non conspicua propter defectum sui esse, et quaedam propter excedentiam eius; et sic Deus nobis quodammodo inaccessibilis est. Quem nullus hominum vidit. Si intelligatur de comprehensione, sic absolute verum est, etiam de Angelis, quia solus Deus comprehendit se." The passage is translated in part and commented on in Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union*, 372–73.

APPENDIX 1

ALBERT UNITING THE *LIBER DE CAUSIS*, ARISTOTLE, AND DIONYSIUS IN HIS DIONYSIAN COMMENTARIES. A SELECTION OF TEXTS.

Note: To reduce confusion when citing the *Liber de causis* I use the numbering of the propositions of Saffrey in Aquinas, *Super Librum De Causis Expositio*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, 2nd edition corrigée (Paris: Vrin, 2002). The problem of the numbering is explained in notes in Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, Guagliardo, Vincent A., O.P., Charles R. Hess, O.P., and Richard C. Taylor, trans., Thomas Aquinas in Translation 1 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), on pp. 28–9. After prop. 4 Aquinas' numbers are one greater than in the standard texts of the *Liber*.

ALBERT, *SUPER DE CAELESTI HIERARCHIA*:

ch. 1, p. 7, lines 14–79: "Unde dicitur in libro de causis, quod quanto intelligentia plures ... sicut 'sententia patrum' in xi metaphysicae dicitur sententia doctorum, qui genuerunt nos in scientia in dictis illuminationibus ... sicut enim quorundam visus corporalis ominino obtunditur lumine solis, ut vespertilionis;"

ch. 9, p. 151, lines 58–9: "secundum philosophum recipitur in eo per modum recipientis et non secundum facultatem dantis" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 10];

ch. 11, p. 170, lines 62–3: "quia omnis 'intelligentia est plena formis' secundum philosophum" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 10];

ch. 11, p. 175, lines 64–72: "sicut patet per philosophos, qui sic eos nominant, et similiter per dionysium ... et secundum fidem et secundum philosophos" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 9];

ch. 13, p. 206, lines 62–3: "philosophus etiam point, quod intelligentiae operantur in animabus nostris" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 14];

ALBERT, *SUPER DE DIVINIS NOMINIBUS*:

ch. 1, p. 21, lines 39–40: "dicit philosophus in libro de causis, quod intelligentia simplicatur ex bonitatis" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 7];

ch. 1, p. 29, lines 37–54: "*Melior omni sermone*: Hoc dicitur in libro de causis, quod 'causa prima superior est narratione' ... Et hoc convenit ei quod dicit philosophus, quod 'phantasia ...'" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 6 & Aristotle, *De Anima*, 1.3];

ch. 2, p. 73, lines 41–2: "Et ideo sequimur opinionem Aristotelis, quae magis videtur catholica";

ch. 3, p. 101, lines 35–7: "ens est ante bonum, ut dicit philosophus in libro de causis: 'Prima rerum creaturarum est esse'" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 4];

ch. 4, p. 121, lines 54–9: "secundum philosophos ... dicitur in libro de causis, quod anima est 'instrumentum intelligentiae'" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 3];

ch. 4, p. 125, lines 29–30: "commento libri de causis dicitur quod [intelligentiae] sunt compositae" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 9];

ch. 4, p. 165, lines 1–20: we have in order the *Metaphysics*, Dionysius, the *Liber de causis*, and the "Commentator in Libro de causis";

ch. 2, p. 43, lines 25–6; ch. 4, p. 115, lines 29–34 & ch. 5, p. 314, lines 7–10 are the same or very like and all refer to *Liber de causis*, prop. 18 comment (Aquinas' enumeration);

ch. 7, p. 338, lines 18–22: "si deus habet sapientiam a rebus et non accipit aliquid a rebus... oportet quod cognoscendo se cognoscat omnia alia, sicut dicit dionysius et etiam philosophus in xi metaphysicae. Aquinas teaches the same. Albert repeats the doctrine at Albert, *Super Epistulas*, Epistle 9, p. 531, lines 55–64 in a form Aquinas expands and repeats at Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, V, iii, §§ 664 & 665, p. 249.

Albert, *SUPER DE DIVINIS NOMINIBUS*

ch. 10, p. 396, lines 32–52, draws us from Boethius, through the *Liber de causis*, to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in presenting Dionysius' teaching on the relation of time and eternity—although unknown to Albert, the doctrine is essentially that of Proclus. Aquinas discovers this fact. Aquinas, *Super De causis*, prop. 2, p. 13, lines 5–8.

ALBERT, *SUPER MYSTICAM THEOLOGIAM*:

ch. 3, p. 471, lines 24–6: "nihil affirmamus de ipso secundum quod est, sed nominamus ipsum nomine sui causati, ut dicit philosophus" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 12 (comment)].

ALBERT, *SUPER EPISTULAS*:

Epistle 7, p. 505, lines 40–2: "Et ideo dicit philosophus, quod 'causa prima est super narrationem' et rationem" [*Liber de causis*, prop. 6].

APPENDIX 2

CAELESTIAL HIERARCHY: "QUOD IMPOSSIBILE EST NOBIS ALITER LUCERE DIVINUM RADIUM, NISI VARIETATE SACRORUM VELAMINUM CIRCUMVELATUM" IN AQUINAS.

The following sequences exhibit the connections in Aquinas' mind.

Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 35 q. 2 a. 2 qc. 2 arg. 1: "Sed impossibile est quod in statu viae cognoscamus sine obumbratione phantasmatum, ut philosophus ostendit in 3 de anima. Ergo intellectus non habet aliquem actum in via."

This is followed by *Super Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 35 q. 2 a. 2 qc. 2 arg. 2: "Praeterea, Dionysius dicit, 1 cap. *Cael. Hier.*, quod impossibile est nobis aliter lucere divinum radium, nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum. Sed ubicumque est cognoscere per aliqua velamina, oportet esse collationem, quae non ad intellectum sed ad rationem pertinet. Ergo non est possibile quod in statu viae sit nobis intellectus actus.

There is also this conjunction in Aquinas on the *De Trinitate*.

Super De Trinitate, pars 3 q. 6 a. 2 arg. 3: "Praeterea, divina nobis innotescunt maxime per illustrationem divini radii. Sed, sicut dicit Dionysius in 1 c. *caelestis hierarchiae*, impossibile est nobis aliter superlucere divinum radium nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum; et vocat sacra velamina sensibilium imagines. Ergo in divinis oportet ad imaginationes deduci."

Super De Trinitate, pars 3 q. 6 a. 2 arg. 4: "Praeterea, circa sensibilia oportet imaginabiliter versari. Sed divinatorum cognitionem ex sensibilibus effectibus accipimus, secundum illud Rom. 1: invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur. Ergo in divinis oportet ad imaginationes deduci."

Super De Trinitate, pars 3 q. 6 a. 2 arg. 5: "Praeterea, in cognoscitivis maxime regulamur per id quod est cognitionis principium, sicut in naturalibus per sensum, a quo nostra cognitio incipit. Sed principium intellectualis cognitionis in nobis est imaginatio, cum phantasmata hoc modo comparentur ad intellectum nostrum sicut colores ad visum, ut dicitur in III de anima. Ergo in divinis oportet ad imaginationem deduci."

The following sequence is from Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*: I^o q. 88 a. 1 ad 5: "eodem modo sensus cognoscit et superiora et inferiora corpora, scilicet per immutationem organi a sensibili. Non autem eodem modo intelliguntur a nobis substantiae materiales, quae intelliguntur per modum abstractionis; et substantiae immateriales, quae non possunt sic a nobis intelligi, quia non sunt earum aliqua phantasmata."

Ibid., I^o q. 88 a. 2 arg. 1: "Videtur quod intellectus noster per cognitionem rerum materialium possit pervenire ad intelligendum substantias immateriales. Dicit enim Dionysius, I cap. *Cael. Hier.*, quod non est possibile humanae menti ad immaterialem illam sursum excitari caelestium hierarchiarum contemplationem, nisi secundum se materiali manuactione utatur. Relinquitur ergo quod per materialia manuaduci possumus ad intelligendum substantias immateriales."

APPENDIX 3

AQUINAS ON DIVINE REVELATION ACCORDING TO OUR MODE OF KNOWING.

Here it is in his early *Commentary on the De Trinitate*: Aquinas, *Super De Trinitate*, pars 3 q. 6 a. 3 co. 2: "Unde de substantiis illis immaterialibus secundum statum viae nullo modo possumus scire quid est non solum per viam naturalis cognitionis, sed etiam nec per viam revelationis, quia divinae revelationis radius ad nos pervenit secundum modum nostrum, ut Dionysius dicit. Unde quamvis per revelationem elevemur ad aliquid cognoscendum, quod alias esset nobis ignotum, non tamen ad hoc quod alio modo cognoscamus nisi per sensibilia. Unde dicit Dionysius in 1 c. *caelestis hierarchiae* quod impossibile est nobis superlucere divinum radium nisi circumvelatum varietate sacrorum velaminum. Via autem quae est per sensibilia non sufficit ad ducendum in substantias immateriales secundum cognitionem quid est. Et sic restat quod formae immateriales non sunt nobis notae cognitione quid est, sed solummodo cognitione an est, sive naturali ratione ex effectibus creaturarum sive etiam revelatione quae est per similitudines a sensibilibus sumptas."

There is a nice drawing together of Aristotle, Dionysius and St Paul in this matter at *Super Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 35 q. 2 a. 2 qc. 1 co.: "intellectus secundum suum nomen importat cognitionem pertinentem ad intima rei. Unde cum sensus et imaginatio circa accidentia occupentur quae quasi circumstant essentiam rei, intellectus ad essentiam ejus pertingit. Unde secundum philosophum, objectum intellectus est quid. ... Sicut autem mens humana in essentiam rei non ingreditur nisi per accidentia, ita etiam in spiritualia non ingreditur nisi per corporalia, et sensibilium similitudines, ut Dionysius dicit. Unde fides quae spiritualia in speculo et aenigmatate quasi involuta tenere facit, humano modo mentem perficit; et ideo virtus est."

APPENDIX 4

AQUINAS AND ALBERT TEXTS ATTRIBUTING THE *LIBER DE CAUSIS* TO ARISTOTLE OR THE PHILOSOPHER

Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 8 q. 1 a. 3 s. c. 1, which nicely unites Dionysius and the *Liber*: “Contra, secundum Dionysium, divina attributa non innotescunt nobis nisi ex eorum participationibus, quibus a creaturis participantur. Sed inter omnes alias participationes esse prius est, ut dicitur 5 cap. *de Div. Nom.* his verbis: ante alias ipsius, scilicet Dei, participationes, esse positum est. Cui etiam dictum philosophi consonat *Lib. de causis*: prima rerum creaturarum est esse. Ergo videtur quod, secundum rationem intelligendi, in Deo esse sit ante alia attributa, et qui est inter alia nomina.”

So also with *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 22 q. 1 a. 1 arg. 1 where we have the *Liber* credited to The Philosopher: “Videtur quod Deus non sit nominabilis, per id quod dicit Dionysius de Deo loquens: omnibus autem universaliter incomprehensibilis est, et neque sensus ejus est, neque phantasma, neque opinio, neque nomen, neque sermo, neque tactus, neque scientia. Hoc etiam videtur per hoc quod dicit philosophus *Lib. de causis*: causa prima superior est narratione, et deficient lingua e narratione ejus.”

Albert and Aquinas distinguished the authorship of the propositions from that of the comment on them, see Albert, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 3, p. 101, lines 43–5: “Unde dicit COMMENTATOR super LIBRUM DE CAUSIS, quod ens est per creationem, bonum per informationem”; both ch. 4, p. 115, lines 29–34 & ch. 5, p. 314, lines 7–10 are the same and all refer to *Liber de causis*, prop. 18 comment (Aquinas’ enumeration).

For other texts of Albert see Appendix 1. Aquinas distinguishes the Philosopher and the Commentator in *Super Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 1 q. 1 a. 1 arg. 2: “Praeterea, illud quod est perfectum in esse, non unitur alicui unione essentiali: unio enim essentialis est ex actu et potentia, vel ex forma et materia; quorum utrumque est imperfectum in esse. Ergo quod omnibus modis perfectum est, nullo modo alteri uniri potest: quod enim perfectissimum est, additionem non recipit, cum nihil sibi desit. Sed Deus est omnibus modis perfectus, quia in se omnem perfectionem praehabet, ut dicit Dionysius, et etiam philosophus, et Commentator ejus. Ergo ipse unibilis alteri non est.” I take the reference to be to the *Liber de causis*, probably prop. 20 but 3 & 4 are also possible.

APPENDIX 5

ARISTOTLE THE NEGATIVE THEOLOGIAN: THE “OCULUS NOCTURAE” AND THE “OCULUS VESPERTILIONIS”

For Albert see texts quoted in Appendix 6.

There are many more places where Aquinas shows Aristotle the negative theologian, e.g. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 17 q. 1 a. 4 co.: “Respondeo dicendum, quod, secundum philosophum, aliquid dicitur esse difficile ad cognoscendum dupliciter: vel secundum se, vel quod ad nos. Dicendum est igitur quod ea quae per esse suum non sunt unum in materia, quantum in se est, sunt maxime nota; sed quo ad nos sunt difficillima ad cognoscendum; propter quod dicit philosophus quod intellectus noster se habet ad manifestissima naturae, sicut oculus vespertilionis ad lucem solis. Cujus ratio est, quia cum intellectus noster potentialis sit in potentia ad omnia intelligibilia, et ante intelligere non sit in actu aliquod eorum; ad hoc quod intelligat actu, oportet quod reducatur in actum per species acceptas a sensibus illustratas lumine intellectus agentis; quia, sicut dicit philosophus, sicut se habent colores ad visum, ita se habent phantasmata ad intellectum potentialem.”

Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1 cap. 3 n. 6-7: “Adhuc idem manifeste apparet ex defectu quem in rebus cognoscendis quotidie experimur. Rerum enim sensibulum plurimas proprietates ignoramus, earumque proprietatum quas sensu apprehendimus rationes perfecte in pluribus invenire non possumus. Multo igitur amplius illius excellentissimae substantiae omnia intelligibilia humana ratio investigare non sufficit. Huic etiam consonat dictum philosophi, qui in II *Metaphysicae*. asserit quod intellectus noster se habet ad prima entium, quae sunt manifestissima in natura, sicut oculus vespertilionis ad solem. Huic etiam veritati sacra Scriptura testimonium perhibet.”

Contra Gentiles, lib. 3 cap. 45 n. 5: “Si autem intellectus possibilis non est a corpore separatus secundum esse, ex hoc ipso quod est tali corpori unitus secundum esse, habet quandam necessarium ordinem ad materialia, ut nisi per illa ad aliorum cognitionem pervenire non possit. Unde non sequitur, si substantiae separatae sint in seipsis magis intelligibiles, quod propter hoc sint magis intelligibiles intellectui nostro. Et hoc demonstrant verba Aristotelis in II *metaphysicae*. Dicit enim ibidem quod difficultas intelligendi res illas accidit ex nobis, non ex illis: nam intellectus noster se habet ad manifestissima rerum sicut se habet oculus vespertilionis ad lucem solis. Unde, cum per materialia intellecta non possint intelligi substantiae separatae, ut supra ostensum est, sequetur quod intellectus possibilis noster nullo modo possit intelligere

substantias separatas.”

Contra Gentiles, lib. 3 cap. 45 n. 6: “Unde et Aristoteles, in III *de anima*, describens utrumque intellectum, dicit quod intellectus possibilis est quo est omnia fieri, agens vero quo est omnia facere; ut ad eadem utriusque potentia referri intelligatur, huius activa, illius passiva. Cum ergo substantiae separatae non sint factae intellectae in actu per intellectum agentem, sed solum materialia, ad haec sola se extendit possibilis intellectus. Non igitur per ipsum possumus intelligere substantias separatas.”

Contra Gentiles, lib. 3 cap. 45 n. 7: “Propter quod et Aristoteles congruo exemplo usus est: nam oculus vespertilionis nunquam potest videre lucem solis. Quamvis Averroes hoc exemplum depravare nitatur, dicens quod simile non est de intellectu nostro ad substantias separatas, et oculo vespertilionis ad lucem solis, quantum ad impossibilitatem, sed solum quantum ad difficultatem. Quod tali ratione probat ibidem. Quia si illa quae sunt intellecta secundum se, scilicet substantiae separatae, essent nobis impossibiles ad intelligendum, frustra essent: sicut si esset aliquod visibile quod nullo visu videri posset.”

Contra Gentiles, lib. 3 cap. 54 n. 9: “Divina enim substantia non sic est extra facultatem creati intellectus quasi aliquid omnino extraneum ab ipso, sicut est sonus a visu, vel substantia immaterialis a sensu, nam divina substantia est primum intelligibile, et totius intellectualis cognitionis principium: sed est extra facultatem intellectus creati sicut excedens virtutem eius, sicut excellentia sensibilibus sunt extra facultatem sensus. Unde et philosophus in II *Metaphys.*, dicit quod intellectus noster se habet ad rerum manifestissima sicut oculus noctuae ad lucem solis. Indiget igitur confortari intellectus creatus aliquo divino lumine ad hoc quod divinam essentiam videre possit.”

APPENDIX 6

ALBERT AND AQUINAS IN THEIR COMMENTARIES ON THE DIVINE NAMES ON KNOWLEDGE OF QUIA EST AND QUID EST IN RESPECT TO GOD

Albertus Magnus, *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 1, p. 2, lines 51-60: “dicendum, quod deus est simpliciter non notus nobis, secundum quid vero notus. Scimus enim de ipso tantum, quia est, et hoc indefinite ‘velut pelagus quoddam’, nescientes, quantum est et quantum non est; ‘quid’ vero ipsius et ‘propter quid’ nescimus, quod facit rem cognosci simpliciter. Et ideo secundum quod cognoscibilis est, sic est et nominabilis. Unde non intendit per haec nomina perfectam cognitionem facere de deo, sed sicut possibile est nobis. non notus nobis, secundum quid vero notus.”

Super De divinis nominibus, ch. 1, p. 10, lines 64-72: “Dicimus, quod substantiam dei, ‘quia est’, omnes beati videbunt; ‘quid’ autem sit, nullus intellectus creatus videre potest. Cum enim cognitio ‘quid est’ sit principalis causarum, oporteret, si cognosceret ‘quid est’, ut circumspicerentur termini essentiae eius. Et sic totum esse eius clauderetur in intellectu creato; et ita intellectus creatus esset maior deo, cum omne claudens sit maius eo quod clauditur: quod absurdum est.”

Super De divinis nominibus, ch. 1, p. 12, lines 28-35: “Praeterea, modo in statu viae cognoscimus de deo, quia est. Habemus tamen cognitionem imperfectam, perficitur autem in patria. Sed cognitio ‘quia’ non perficitur nisi cognitione ‘quid’ vel ‘propter quid’; ergo de deo in patria cognoscemus ‘quid’ vel ‘propter quid’. Quod autem sic cognoscitur, comprehenditur; ergo tunc comprehendemus deum; et sic idem quod prius.” An argument answered in the following: *Super De divinis nominibus*, ch. 1, p. 13, lines 53-7: “Ad id quod sequitur, dicendum, quod cognitio nostra perficitur non alia cognitione ‘quid’ vel ‘propter quid’, sed alio modo cognoscendi, quia videbimus ‘quid’ sine medio, quod nunc in aenigmate et speculo velatum videmus.”

Super De divinis nominibus, ch. 4, p. 266, lines 67-75: “Ad tertium dicendum, quod lumen divinum manifestum quidem est in se, sed occultum nobis, quia superat proportionem intellectus nostri, manifestatur autem quoad nos non secundum se in manifestante, quod quia est minus subtilis essentiae, facit in se videri lumen divinum velut magis accedens ad proportionem nostram, sicut radius solis manifestatur nobis in pariete, quem in ipso sole non potuimus inspicere.”

Super De divinis nominibus, ch. 7, p. 355, line 76-p. 356, line 2: “Item, ioh. i (18): ‘Deum nemo vidit unquam’; et constat, quod loquitur de intranea visione, quae est secundum intellectum, et per quam rationem nullus vidit, per eandem nullus videt nec videbit; ergo videtur, quod nos non possumus deum cognoscere per intellectum; constat autem, quod non alio modo.”

Super De divinis nominibus, ch. 7, p. 356, line 33-p. 357, line 7: “Dicendum, quod quaedam non possunt intelligi perfecto intellectu, ut dicit Avicenna, duplici ratione: aut propter eminentiam suae perfectionis, sicut deus, de quo dicit Philosophus, quod manifestissima rerum se habent ad intellectum nostrum sicut lumen solis ad oculum noctuae, aut propter defectum a perfectione, sicut potentia, ut materia et ea quae sunt semper admixta potentiae, ut motus et tempus. Et haec quidem dicuntur non comprehendi perfecto intellectu, quia cognoscimus de ipsis tantum

'quia est' et non 'quid est'; sed quicquid sit de aliis, de deo certum est, quod non cognoscimus de ipso 'quid est', sed tantum 'quia est', et hoc etiam confuse, quia intellectus noster non tangit terminum eius. Et si dicatur, quod 'quid est' non invenitur nisi in his quae habent diffinitionem, quae omnia sunt composita, deus autem simplex est et ita non habet 'quid est' et ita ignorantes 'quid est' ipsius nihil ipsius ignoramus, dicendum, quod non solum de diffinitis scimus 'quid est', quae habent quidditatem, quae explicatur per diffinitionem, sed etiam de quolibet diffinitionum, quorum unumquodque est quidditas ipsa, quae tamen tota clauditur nec accipitur per intellectum nostrum. Similiter et deus est quidditas et essentia quaedam, quamvis non habeat quidditatem per modum compositorum; tamen quidditas eius non clauditur nec accipitur in intellectu nostro, et ideo dicitur, quod nescimus de ipso 'quid est'. (1) Secundum hoc ergo dicendum ad primum, quod 'quia est' cuiuslibet rei et etiam dei proportionatum est intellectui nostro, quia per hoc habetur tantum quaedam confusa cognitio de re, et hoc cognoscimus de ipso; sed 'quid est' ipsius improportionatum est omni intellectui creato, et ideo hoc de ipso cognoscere non possumus. ... Non enim est aliqua pars rei, sed tantum accipitur per actionem intellectus ut ratio quaedam rei. (3) Ad tertium dicendum, quod auctoritas illa loquitur de cognitione 'quid est', qualiter nec summi angelorum umquam viderunt deum, sed ipse se solum hoc modo videt, ut dicit Chrysostomus. (4) Ad quartum dicendum, quod deus accipitur ab intellectu nostro ut principium, nec oportet, quod certissime et perfectissime cognoscatur, nisi esset principium proportionatum rebus et sibi; taliter autem non est deus."

Super De divinis nominibus, ch. 13, p. 448, lines 31-42: "Deus autem neque terminis terminatum est, quia simplex est, neque esse suum est comprehensum in aliquo, sed est actus purus, absolutus ab omni potentia, non receptus in aliquo secundum esse suum; et ideo intellectus non potest comprehendere ipsum, secundum 'quid est', neque nomen potest eum sic significare, exprimendo totum id quod est, et sic nulli proportionata est sua quidditas. Sed intellectus attingendo ad substantiam ipsius cognoscit ipsum vel in sua similitudine, sicut in via per speculum et in aenigmate, vel immediate, sicut in patria."

Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, I, i, §15, p. 7: "Veritas enim sacrae Scripturae est quoddam lumen per modum radii derivatum a prima veritate, quod quidem lumen non se extendit ad hoc quod per ipsum possumus videre Dei essentiam aut cognoscere omnia quae Deus in seipso cognoscit aut Angeli aut beati eius essentiam videntes, sed usque ad aliquem certum terminum vel mensuram, intelligibilia divinorum, lumine sacrae Scripturae manifestantur."

Ibid., §27, p. 9: "Sic igitur, secundum rationem Dionysii oportet dicere quod Deus et incomprehensibilis est omni intellectui et incontemplabilis nobis in sua essentia, quamdiu nostra cognitio alligata est rebus creatis, utpote nobis connaturalibus; et hoc est in statu viae."

Ibid., §34, p. 10: "Sic igitur deitas investigari posset, si aliqui accedentes ad cognitionem ipsius aliqua documenta, quasi vestigia quaedam, nobis reliquissent per quae ad videndum Deum accedere possemus. Sed hoc non est: vel quia nulli transierunt in ipsum, si referatur ad visionem comprehensivam, vel quia illi qui transierunt ad videndum Deum per essentiam, sicut beati omnes, non potuerunt nobis exprimere ipsam divinam essentiam. Unde et Paulus raptus ad tertium coelum, dicit se audivisse arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui, II Corinth. 12."

In De divinis nominibus, I, iii, §81, p. 27: "Dicit ergo, primo, quod, sicut dictum est in libro de theologicis hypotyposibus, ipsum per se unum, quod Deus est, quod est ignotum et supersubstantiale, idest super omnem substantiam et quod est ipsum bonum, idest ipsa essentia bonitatis et quod est ipsum quod est, idest ipsum per se esse, scilicet ipsam trinam unitatem, dico, in qua non est aliquis gradus, sed omnes tres per se sunt simul et aequaliter Deus et simul et aequaliter ipsum bonum, non quod filius sit umbra bonitatis sicut Origenes et Arius dixerunt, istud, inquam, secundum quod in se est, neque dicere, neque cogitare est possibile nobis; non enim possumus ipsam essentiam Dei, quae est unitas in Trinitate, in praesenti vita videre."

In De divinis nominibus, XIII, iii, §992, p. 369: "Sed tamen per gratiam non solum Angeli sed et nos pertingere poterimus ad videndum essentiam unius aeterni Dei, sed non ad comprehendendum."

Ibid., §996, pp. 369-70: "Primo enim anima nostra quasi exsuscitatur et consurgit a rebus materialibus, quae sunt animae nostrae connaturalia; puta, cum intelligimus Deum non esse aliquid sensibile aut materiale aut corporeum; et sic, anima nostra negando pergit per omnes divinos intellectus, idest per omnes ordines Angelorum, a quibus est segregatus Deus qui est super omne nomen et rationem et cogitationem. Ad ultimum autem anima nostra Deo coniungitur, ascendendo per negationes, in ultimis totorum, idest in supremis finibus universaliorum et excellentiorum creaturarum. Et quidem coniunctio animae ad Deum fit inquantum nobis possibile est nunc Deo coniungi: non enim coniungitur in praesenti intellectus noster Deo ut eius essentiam videat; sed ut cognoscat de Deo quid non est. Unde haec coniunctio nostri ad Deum, quae nobis est in hac vita possibilis, perficitur quando devenimus ad hoc quod cognoscamus eum esse supra excellentissimas creaturas."

APPENDIX 7

AQUINAS ON PLATO AND THE PLATONICI ON NON-BEING, PRIVATION, MATTER AND EVIL.

See Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, IV, ii, §§ 295–98, pp. 96–7, quoted here in part. It largely repeats portions of his exposition of cap. 3, p. 75, §§ 226–7, p. 75, which he reiterated at cap. 4, lect. 21, § 559, p. 207; I quote this in another context. At IV, ii, § 295, p. 96 we have: “Deinde, cum dicit: si autem et cetera, prosequitur de materia prima. Circa quod considerandum est quod Plato correxit errorem antiquorum naturalium, qui non distinxerunt inter materiam et formam in rebus generabilibus et corruptibilibus ... Unde tam ipse quam sui [Plato] sectatores materiam appellabant non-ens, propter privationem adiunctam. Et hoc modo loquendi etiam Dionysius utitur, quamvis secundum Aristotelem necessarium sit materiam a privatione distinguere.” Ibid., IV, xxi, § 559, p. 207, is significant because it shows Aquinas’ confusion about the history: “Circa primum, sciendum est quod apud multos antiquorum vulgariter dicebatur quod materia est secundum se mala et hoc ideo quia non distinguebant inter privationem et materiam; privatio autem est non-ens et malum. Unde, sicut Plato, dicebant materiam esse non-ens et ita quidem materiam esse secundum se malum. Sed Aristoteles in *I Physic.* dicit quod materia non est non-ens nec malum, nisi per accidens, idest ratione privationis quae ei accidit; et hoc est etiam quod hic Dionysius dicit quod in materia non est malum, secundum quod est materia ...” Here Aristotle and Dionysius agree against Plato because this is not Plato as Proclus. Does this indicate that, when writing the *In De Divinis Nominibus*, Aquinas had not thoroughly worked through the *Elements*? However, the Proclean teaching on matter is only indirectly knowable from that work, so it is unsafe to conclude too much. Another work from late in this period of his writing, the *Disputed Questions On Evil*, is more historically sophisticated and shows a close reading of Simplicius *On the Categories*, see for example, Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Malo*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 23 (Rome / Paris, 1982), q. 1 a. 1 ad 11, p. 7, line 367–p. 8, line 409. At q. 16 a. 1 ad 3, p. 283, lines 389–90, it judges that “Dionysius” “in plurimis fuit sectator sententiae Platonice” and sides with Augustine, and with Plotinus and the Platonists (as represented by Augustine and many others), in asserting the existence of demons which lie outside what he takes as Aristotle’s two-fold order of separated substances. Thomas thus understands the position he opposes to be what was held by *Perypathetici Aristotelis sectatores* (q. 16 a. 1 resp., p. 282, lines 285–305). This is in line with what he teaches in *De Substantiis Separatis* probably written at the same time. The *De Malo* repeats “Platonici non distinguebant inter materiam et privationem, ordinantes materiam cum non ente, dicebant, quod bonum ad plura se extendit quam ens” (q. 1 a. 2 co) and associates this with Dionysius, but there is no repetition of the identification of matter and evil. Neither is this repeated in the *Super Librum de causis* (which does reiterate “materia prima quam Plato coniungebat cum non ente, non distinguens inter materiam et privationem” on prop. 4, p. 27, line 22–p. 28, line 1) nor in the *De Substantiis Separatis*.