

CHAPTER 3

GRATITUDE IN THOMAS AQUINAS: A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE OF ALIGNMENT WITH THE GOOD

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THIS ESSAY IS ADAPTED from a larger work that engages the subject of personal violence, understood as that which hinders human flourishing. The project as a whole considers how a specific reading of Thomas Aquinas's account of human nature (with attention to the Aristotelian and Proclean influences upon his thought) can guide us in our human task of adopting affirming rather than violent orientations toward others. Thomas's treatment of human existence is sensitive to both a horizontal orientation of human beings in their operations within the material world and a vertical orientation of human beings in their status as created, dependent beings—a sensitivity nurtured by the influences of Aristotle's account of human nature, Proclean Neoplatonism, and Scripture. The project addresses the account of human flourishing that such a reading of Thomas provides (a flourishing in which nature and grace collaborate), what violence against such a vision of human flourishing would entail, and how we can shape our dispositions and concrete practices to affirm the flourishing of our neighbors.

However, even with such a reflective commitment to the flourishing of others in hand, a subsequent problem emerges: people can, and often do, 'fall away' from the good that they intend to inhabit and enact. That is, this project concerns the further problem of the ordinary ways in which people of good will do harm to the people around them in the world, even in contrast to a vision of the good they have come to know and love. The

project examines varying things that can contribute to such a loss of connection to the divine good that is our principle (including the constellation of problems associated in Thomas with the notion of *acedia*, or torpor). It considers how alienation of the soul from the natural orientation of the intellect to grasp the good of the universe as good (*synderesis*), and of the will to love that good (*complacentia*) can cause the human agent to mistake one thing for its opposite, and go into act with those false apprehensions in hand.¹ That is, a person in such a state of disconnect can falsely view what they might otherwise repudiate as violence to be instead an instrument of their own good, with tragic results.

Where this essay picks up the narrative, the issue at hand is how we can maintain our connection with the good, and even restore it when it has waned. Through this lens we will consider, as a spiritual exercise, the efficacy of gratitude as a disposition that helps to align a person's orientation to divine good. In this essay I presuppose an initial connection with and orientation to the good as divine gift (a theme established in earlier chapters of the larger project), and I go on from there to consider how human activity subsequently affects the reception and realization of that gift.

The situation this essay is addressing may be compared to a technological device that has poor connectivity with the radio, cellular, or WiFi signal that it needs. It does no good to focus on the immediate problem of why the device won't do the things we expect it to, or does them badly. It won't help to refer to the reliability of past connectivity. The appropriate response would be to reposition/reorient the device such that it can receive the signal in the present—sometimes by changing position, sometimes by refreshing the receptivity by turning off and on again, etc. One needs to reawaken the device exactly as a receiver before it can return to its status as a doer. Similarly, it will not do to simply direct oneself, however strictly, to 'just do' the things we know but aren't doing. People can be dismayed when they discover that they have 'fallen away' from practices of charity, respect, or justice, for example, that once were important to them—practices and

1. Aquinas, *ST Ia.79.xii; IaIIae.94.i.ad2* (re: *synderesis*); *ST IaIIae.3.v.co; 25.ii.co* (re: *complacentia*). All references to Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* in this essay: Latin text based on the Leonine Edition, 1888–1906; English translation by Laurence Shapcote of the English Dominican Province; accessed at: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST>.

We see this disorientation addressed in Thomas's commentary on Isaiah 5:20 "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" – *Vae qui dicitis malum bonum et bonum malum, ponentes tenebras lucem et lucem tenebras, ponentes amarum in dulce et dulce in amarum*. Thomas identifies the first phrase with the practical effect in act, the second with the effect on the intellect, and the third with the effect on the affections; see: Aquinas, *Commentaria cursoria super Isaiam* ch.5, l.3, n.192.

values that they have known and loved. If that is a person's reality, but they on some level wish it were otherwise, possibly they have to some degree 'lost the signal' of the divine good. Before they can re-establish themselves in the activities of participating the good—i.e., in *doing* the good—they need to be reawakened simply as a recipient of the good. My claim is that varying human activities of gratitude do this very thing. Gratitude most basically, and far more importantly than any 'behaving nicely' aspect of it, postures a person specifically *as* a recipient of a good from a source outside of themselves. It quite literally re-aligns the soul to the source of their good. The further claim of this text is that we access this source of the good through relational, social, and sacred contexts that constitute human beings' place in the universe. The positioning of ourselves toward (or within) these contexts precisely as sources of our good is the human art of gratitude.

A helpful distinction to clarify my claim regarding the efficacy of gratitude can be made between the notions of "grateful *for*" and "grateful *to*." In the view of this work, the former is an affirmation of the goodness of a gift itself—related to the key Thomistic notion of *complacentia*;² the latter is the active orientation of a person *as* a receiver of a gift *toward* the source of that good bestowed. The former is more properly identified as a disposition; the latter, an activity—taken together, they constitute a 'dispositional activity.' In one sense, the former is conceptually and experientially prior to the latter—we have to engage both the goodness of something and the givenness of something before we can express appreciation to the source of the gift.³ This would seem to be the natural order of operations in gratitude. However, in another sense, the act of turning oneself toward a benefactor as a source of bestowed good is a positional/relational activity that is available to us even when the 'knowing and loving' disposition of the first mode has failed—i.e., when a person has 'fallen away' from a good they have known

2. Properly speaking, gratefulness for a specific gift already given indicates 'joy' or 'enjoyment.' A disposition of gratefulness for life itself, and the goodness of the universe—understood as gift in the cosmic sense—indicates *complacentia*. What enjoyment and *complacentia* have in common, Frederick Crowe explains, is the loving of the good that is an affective response to the good that *is*, contrasted with the desire entailed in the pursuit of a good that is absent. Frederick E. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," *Theological Studies* (Baltimore) 20, no.1 (1959): 1–39, at 18. See: Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae*.28.ii and iii.

3. For the insight of this first articulation of the distinction I am indebted to Jeremy Wilkins (Boston College). Ref.: 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, "Conversatio" session 30 May 2017, examining Aquinas's *ST IIaIIae*.23.vi.ad 1. . My articulation of a subsequent implication of itNOTE TO THE EDITOR: please replace this dash with a space. Thank you. is in response.

and loved.⁴ It is the claim of this project that ‘gratitude to’ in this way can work retro-actively, as it were, to reawaken the ‘gratitude for’ that is entailed in human participation of the good.⁵ Gratitude-to can be undertaken as an ‘intervention’ to reestablish gratitude-for.

Therefore, in this essay I consider gratitude as the activity of identifying and aligning oneself specifically *as* an ongoing recipient of good from exterior sources, and specifically *to* those sources. I will start with an examination of Thomas’s treatment of gratitude in general. Then, I will go on to examine concrete contexts in which Thomas envisions and explores varying activities of gratitude—first, in terms of gratitude toward God, and second, in terms of gratitude toward other humans. Following in the steps of earlier work in the thesis, I will create an abbreviated inventory of activities and orientations that a Thomistic account of gratitude prompts us to regard as contra-violent ways of living in the world. Thus, the discourse, while relying upon Thomas’s theoretical account of gratitude and human existence, will be oriented intentionally toward the practical—and will, for that reason, not be exhaustive nor absolute in its conclusions. I hope to suggest, in the spirit of a spiritual exercise, a view of human cognitive/affective activities that could be fruitful in the human work of ordering ourselves to the good, and thereby loving and affirming our neighbor.

4. To some, distinguishing these aspects of gratitude can seem artificial, or even nonsensical, given that experientially the two often occur simultaneously. An example may help illustrate the distinction and illumine the connection to the question of this essay. Think of a young person opening a birthday gift. Sometimes they tear right into the gift and experience the excitement of gratitude-for before they learn who it was from, and then subsequently experience gratitude-to. Sometimes they read the card carefully and experience gratitude-to right alongside the gratitude-for. Sometimes the experience of receiving a gift from someone the young person feels especially safe around and loved by informs the receiving itself, such that a prevenient gratitude-to marks the gift already as something to be valued and enjoyed, something to be grateful-for. This last possibility becomes especially significant when a young person is for some reason ‘off their game,’ in a bad mood, or in some way disposed to be ungracious. In terms of this study’s consideration of the ethical-ontological significance of loving and participating in the divine good given to us as gift, it is just such a situation that we are especially interested in.

5. Though this has been stated in a number of ways, it bears repeating: in Thomas, restoration of the basic view of the universe as good and as divine gift—the *complacentia* that is the effect of charity in the soul—after it has been diminished by mortal sin requires some degree of divine intervention and grace. It is this thesis’s reading of Thomas, moreover, that such divine benevolence and assistance paradigmatically reaches individual persons through secondary human causes, contexts, and activities (note: though outside-the-natural miracles are recognized in Thomas, surely the notion of humans mediating divine bestowals of grace is itself a wonder).

Thomas's general account of gratitude (ST IIaIIae, Q106)⁶

In Thomas, gratitude is the properly human disposition toward the fact that our being, indeed the whole universe, comes to us as gift.⁷ In a technical sense it is correct to say that Thomas bases his treatment of gratitude on an Aristotelian sense of the act of repaying favors.⁸ However, in this aspect of human experience we see Thomas taking his cue from Seneca and Cicero more than from Aristotle—there is much in his account that shows sensitivity to the emotional and psychological contours of interpersonal relations of giving and receiving. It is these factors that will enliven the possibilities of gratitude as an orientation of receptive alignment toward the good, in contrast with a transactional activity of keeping accounts of indebtedness clear.

Thomas starts his treatment of gratitude, Question 106 of the *Secunda secundae*, by placing the activity of giving thanks in the context of debts to be paid (whether to God, to human fathers, to the sources of generally-bestowed favors, or to the sources of particular favors).⁹ However, invoking Seneca, Thomas contrasts repayment that is animated by indebtedness with that which is animated by gratitude.¹⁰ Repayment that is animated by gratitude arises from an “affection of the heart,” distinct from the mere intent to return payment for a benefit given—thus, Thomas quotes, Seneca asks and advises: “Do you wish to repay a favor? Receive it graciously.”¹¹ Again, Seneca is shown to assert that “Who receives a favor gratefully, has already begun to pay it back.”¹² Drawing also from Cicero, Thomas explains (in a separate treatment on how gratitude is related to justice) that what is proper to gratitude is “recollecting the friendship and kindness shown by others,” and desiring to give a gift in return.¹³

6. In the work of this section, I am deeply indebted to the insights and generous conversations of the participants in the 2017 Aquinas Studium, held in Toronto, Ontario, which assembled to examine Thomas's treatment of gratitude as it appears in *Summa Theologiae* IIaIIae.106, primarily, and which was guided by the leadership of Bob Sweetman.

7. Aquinas, SCG I.81; ST I.45; I.90–91. As has been shown, the affective response of *complacentia* presupposes acknowledgement (pre-reflective) of the good that is and is therefore a condition of this grateful orientation.

8. E.g.: Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.iii.ad3 and ad5.

9. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.i.co.

10. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.iv.sc.

11. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.iv.co (*Unde Seneca dicit, in II de Benefic., vis reddere beneficium? Benigne accipe*).

12. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.iii.ad5 (*Unde Seneca dicit, in II de Benefic., qui grate beneficium accipit, primam eius pensionem solvit*).

13. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.80.co (*Et sic adiungitur iustitiae gratia, in qua, ut Tullius dicit, amicitiarum et officiorum alterius memoria, remunerandi voluntas continetur*

This animation of the act of repayment by the disposition of gratitude displays what Gilles Mongeau describes as the contrast between a mercantile/legal economy and a gift-based economy (the latter being the context Thomas has in mind in these texts), a distinction he states should shape our reading of the ‘repayment’ under consideration in Q. 106.¹⁴ In a gift economy, the notion of *debitum*, or that which is owed to be repaid, is relational rather than strictly transactional. We see this in Thomas’s treatment of gratitude. First, insofar as gratitude is a part of justice, it is classified by Thomas as one of the virtues by which a person is directed outward toward another person—the aspect of a gift most to be kept in mind and honored is the beneficent activity of the other person, including the context and nature of the relation, rather than the amount or kind of the gift.¹⁵ The primary act of gratitude, as a relation between effect and cause, is the turning of the receiver toward the giver as to a principle of some good, rather than the repayment itself.¹⁶ Sweetman observes (remarking on Aristotle’s admonition to show gratitude to our predecessors, and Thomas’s appropriation of it in the discipline of *sacra doctrina*): “‘To be grateful’ marks out an orientation of the whole person toward the persons who have given us what they had to give; a cherishing them for the gift they have given.”¹⁷ further, gratitude is seen to be relational rather than transactional insofar as the receiver wishes to pay back more than was originally given—i.e., a grateful person, wishing to repay the ‘gratis’ disposition of the giver rather than the amount of the gift bestowed, aims to freely repay over and above what was originally given.¹⁸

alterius). Notice here the role of ‘recollecting.’ Thomas makes a similar connection in his treatment in *ST IIaIIae.106.iii.ad5*, where he states that the most simple form of repayment can be that “the kindness that [the benefactor] has done should be held in memory” (*memoria debet haberi praestiti beneficii. Ut patet per philosophum, in IX Ethic.*)—a statement he connects to Aristotle at *EN IV.3.1165b32–3*.

14. Mongeau, 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, “Conversatio” session of 5/31, regarding Aquinas *ST IIaIIae.106.i*. Mongeau discusses the pastoral, moral, and social-justice challenges that the transition in 11th and 12th century Europe toward a monetized merchant economy presented. See also Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 50–53. See also C. Stephen Jaeger on the “favor relationships” prevalent in both court and monastic life (and seen in the teacher-student relations of the cathedral schools) in the 11th and 12th centuries, and which had shaped the world in which Thomas lived, thought, and worked. Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, 103–6.

15. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.v.ad2*. Thomas shows that, just as in the case of giving a gift, gratitude is a matter more of the receiver’s heart toward the giver than of their ability or lack thereof to make exact repayment (*iii.ad5*).

16. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.iii.co*.

17. Sweetman, “Gratitude and the Movement of Being ‘Outward,’” Introductory address to the 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, (29 May 2017), 3.

18. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.vi.co*.

Thomas explains this overturning of the scales by grounding the ‘transaction’ of gratitude in the ‘relation’ of charity between friends: “The debt of gratitude flows from charity, which the more it is paid the more it is due, according to Romans 13:8, ‘Owe no man anything, but to love one another.’”¹⁹

The relational nature of the gratitude is seen also in the etymology at work in the constellation of terms Thomas employs.²⁰ Insofar as Thomas uses *gratia* for both grace and gratitude, the grace of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver are placed in conversation with each other—they are the participating poles in the event of giving. Further, the grace of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver have the same ‘essence’—i.e., they both indicate an act that is freely undertaken, a good that is freely done or given.²¹ A ‘gift economy,’ or gift-based relations, typically operate within the grammatical notion of second-person relations—while it is possible to be an anonymous giver, or the grateful beneficiary of a good the giver was unaware of bestowing, or even a recipient of a good without knowing to whom one is indebted for it, the flowering of the good as given seems to call for a mutual, subjective awareness between both participants in the event.²²

Finally, the relational nature of gratitude is illustrated by an interesting wordplay that Thomas offers in his treatment of *how* the grateful and the ungrateful persons act. In the fourth article (of Q. 106), we saw that the grateful person receives a gift ‘graciously.’ We can notice here the term rendered as ‘graciously’ by the Dominican translators is *benigne*, which, along with the related term *benignitas*, Thomas illumines as the quality of ‘good fire’ which melts the heart toward another.²³ In the third article, Thomas asserts, rather strongly, that “It is the height of malevolence to refuse to

19. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.vi.ad2* (*debitum gratitudinis ex caritate derivatur, quae, quanto plus solvitur, tanto magis debetur, secundum illud Rom. XIII, nemini quidquam debeatis, nisi ut invicem diligatis*).

20. For example, (drawn from *ST IIaIIae.106*—comparisons here are made using the translations of the Dominican Fathers): in article one, Thomas uses *gratia* for ‘thankfulness,’ and *gratitudo* for ‘gratitude’; in article 2, Thomas renders ‘thanksgiving’ as *gratiarum actio*, and ‘grace’ as *gratia*; in article 3, we see Thomas use *grate* for the sense of ‘gratefully’; and in article 4, quoting Seneca, Thomas uses the plural *grates* (‘thanks’) for ‘gratitude.’

21. Sweetman, “Gratitude and the Movement of Being ‘Outward,’” 6. For Sweetman, this proportionality comes out especially in the second article of *ST IIaIIae.106*.

22. A theological extension of this claim can be seen in the observation (made recently by a young student) that the efficacy of the freely-given, sufficient, redemptive work of the cross does at the same time entail, or is conditioned by, some degree of awareness/knowledge of that gift on the part of the human recipient.

23. See Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Galatas lectura* 5.6.332. English translation by Fabian R. Larcher (Albany, NY: Magi, 1966).

recognize a kindness.”²⁴ It is interesting to note that Thomas’s term, which the translators read as ‘malevolence,’ is *malignitas*—an ‘evil fire’ that might be envisioned as scorching both the possessor of it and those around them. Whether the wordplay is intentional on Thomas’s part or not, the parallel usage illumines his understanding of gratitude, and the lack of it, as an active, relational, and even *efficient* event. Gratitude is not merely a conclusion to an earlier event—it is a subsequent happening of its own that introduces a fresh instance of effective causality into the history of interpersonal human relations.

Concrete contexts of gratitude, part 1: Gratitude toward God (with special reference to selections from Thomas’s treatise on religion, found in ST IIaIIae, QQ 81–91)

For Thomas, as for Proclus, gratitude is due “primarily and chiefly [to] God, in that He is the first principle of all our goods.”²⁵ It is interesting to note that Thomas does not find it philosophically awkward nor theologically unfitting to put that cosmic debt in the same frame as the debts of gratitude we owe our parents and other human benefactors, pointing to what Sweetman identifies as a “continuum” of grace.²⁶ We note that, for Thomas, the divine gifts of grace are never meant to be seen as alien incursions, but as graced collaborations with the conditions of human life.²⁷ Similarly, our grateful response to God for the goods of being does not take us ‘outside’ of the natural world, but is grounded in our lives as contingent, material beings. That is, we should expect to find that what we ‘pay back’ to God even for his divine gifts is in origin and nature an interweaving of the human and divine.

Thomas shows sensitivity to this contingent, particular nature of human gratitude, in two distinct locations in his treatment of the subject. First, he states that since we are talking about *actions* of gratitude, we should expect to see that expressions of gratitude would reference the present context, rather than general ideals or universal notions of benevolence: “Since actions are about singulars, in matters of action, we have to take note of what is such here and now, rather than of what is such absolutely, as the Philosopher

24. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.iii.ad3 (*Summae malignitatis est non vocare beneficium*).

25. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.i.co (*In Deo autem primo et principaliter invenitur causa debiti, eo quod ipse est primum principium omnium bonorum nostrorum*).

26. Aquinas, ST IIaIIae.106.i.co; Sweetman, “Gratitude and the Movement of Being ‘Outward,’” 6.

27. Aquinas, ST IaIIae.60.ii; IIaIIae.45.ii; IaIIae.112.i; I.43.v.ad2; I.12.xiii.ad3. Ref: Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge in Aquinas,” 63–65.

observes (Ethic. iii) in treating of the voluntary and the involuntary.”²⁸ It is not surprising that on the theme of grateful actions insofar as they are *actions* Thomas takes his cue from Aristotle. Second, Thomas shows that we should expect such singular actions to be sensitive to the modes of the people involved: “Hence the natural order requires that he who has received a favor should, by repaying the favor, turn to his benefactor according to the mode of each.”²⁹ Specifically, Thomas is here speaking of the mode of the benefactor to whom one wishes to make appropriate repayment, but the principle he is using applies to the mode of the person making the repayment as well, as he shows in his response to the fifth objection of this article.³⁰

In both passages, these basic principles of human operation remind us that the virtue of gratitude, even when expressed toward God, will be contextualized by our human mode of being. That is, even the attempt to ‘reconnect with the source of our good’ is not an exercise in transcendence. Rather, it is an exercise of belief in the sacred significance of human contexts, and in a basic continuity between divine goods and contingent particulars. A first item for our inventory of contra-violent applications of gratitude, therefore, is an insistence that language of gratitude, even (or perhaps especially) toward the divine, should be expressed in terms of particulars rather than universals.³¹

We will examine Thomas’s treatment of human repayments of gratitude to the divine, first, in his set of questions in the *Secunda secundae* on the forms of religion and what they entail. In these discussions, Thomas shows that human gratitude to God preeminently takes the form of giving oneself to God—i.e., devotion.³² Since we are keeping our eye on the human

28. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.ii.co* (*Et quia actus circa singularia sunt, in his quae agenda sunt magis consideratur quod est hic vel nunc tale, quam quod est simpliciter tale, sicut philosophus dicit, in III Ethic., de voluntario et involuntario*).

29. In other words, ‘in a way that is appropriate to each.’ See Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.iii.co* (*Et ideo naturalis ordo requirit ut ille qui suscipit beneficium, per gratiarum recompensationem convertatur ad benefactorem, secundum modum utriusque*).

30. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.106.iii.ad5*: “A poor man is certainly not ungrateful if he does what he can. For since kindness depends on the heart rather than on the deed, so too gratitude depends chiefly on the heart” (*etiam pauper ingratus non est si faciat quod possit, sicut enim beneficium magis in affectu consistit quam in effectu, ita etiam et recompensatio magis in affectu consistit*).

31. I am indebted to Gilles Mongeau for his passionate, exemplary, and winsome emphasis upon the significance of this principle in a Thomistic, biblical view of the world. See, for example, his centering of concrete cultural contexts in his description of spiritual formation: Gilles Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom: The Summa theologiae as Spiritual Pedagogy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015), esp. at 90.

32. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.82.i.co*.

particularity of gratitude, we should ask: what exactly is happening in the activity of ‘giving oneself to God’? Thomas discusses this notion in a number of ways—we will examine three.

First, in Q 83 of our selected text, Thomas shows that gratitude as devotion is expressed through the activity of prayer, insofar as a person so doing “subjects himself to Him, and by praying confesses that he needs Him as the Author of his goods.”³³ This depiction of prayer recalls Thomas’s observation that, reduced to its simplest terms, gratitude is holding the kindness one has been shown in the memory.³⁴ Thus, human beings show gratitude to God, and give themselves to him, by devoting their minds to the remembrance of his generous outpouring of goodness. An example of this kind of devotion is seen in Thomas’s commentary on Psalm 28—a psalm of thanks to God at the completion of the tabernacle. Regarding the phrase in verse 2: “bring to the lord glory to his name,” Thomas states that the purpose of such prayer is “that we may recognize him as the beginning of every good of ours and the end to which all things must be referred.”³⁵

Second, Thomas discusses, in Q 85, the large category of sacrifices that human beings make to the divine. He first addresses the formal, ritualized sacrifices that are determined by one’s place in a community.³⁶ In his discussion of this location in Thomas, Sweetman connects this notion of communal rituals of devotion with the previously identified notion of gratitude as holding the giving of good in the memory. He states that a modern moral problem for sacred communities is the “loss of memory around the ‘ought’ of simply being human.”³⁷ That is, the diminishing of participation in sacred communal ritual may be a result of a moral failure to ‘hold in memory’ the degree to which we as human beings possess and enjoy the good proper to our being as a gift.

33. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.83.iii.co* (*Per orationem autem homo Deo reverentiam exhibet, inquantum scilicet se ei subiicit, et profitetur orando se eo indigere sicut auctore suorum bonorum*).

34. Aquinas *ST IIaIIae.106.iii.ad5* (. . . *memoria debet haberi praestiti beneficii. Ut patet per philosophum, in IX Ethic.*); ref: Aristotle, *EN IV.3.1165b32–3*.

35. Psalm 28:2, from the Douay-Rheims English translation of the Vulgate (*afferte Domino gloriam nomini ejus*); Aquinas, *In psalmos Davidis expositio*, 28.258 (*ut cognoscamus eum principium omnium bonorum nostrorum, et finem, in quem omnia sunt referenda*) ; English translation by Albert Marie Surmanski and Maria Veritas Marks, Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, accessed at: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Psalm..>

36. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.85.iv.co*. I.e., Thomas addresses the varying sacrifices of those who were in communities governed by the Old Law, the New Law, or which were not under either but had obligations based on who they lived among.

37. Sweetman, 2017 Aquinas Studium, “Conversatio” session of 5/31, regarding Aquinas *ST IIaIIae.85.iv.co*.

Thomas goes on, however, to address a secondary version of sacrifice, by which “the outward actions of the other virtues are performed out of reverence for God.”³⁸ Notice here the prioritizing of the ‘to’ aspect of the virtuous act over the substance of the act itself—it is the *orientation* of the virtuous act (i.e., toward God, as reverence to the source of the good) that makes the act an instance of grateful devotion. It is in this way that an active attention to the moral life—a practical theological task that entails properly understanding the ways in which divine truths apply to contingent particulars—is a giving of oneself to God. It is an activity of gratitude. Applying Sweetman’s observation to this secondary notion of sacrifice, we could state further that lack of interest in the human vocation to mediate the divine good within the created world (i.e., as moral virtue) could also be an effect of a moral loss of memory.

Combining the first and second kinds of giving of oneself that we have seen in Thomas, we can add to our inventory of contra-violence what we might call personal rituals of moral memory. Rituals, envisioned in this way, are planned, specifically-undertaken acts (whether private or communal) by which we either hold in our minds the remembrance of divine goods bestowed (an ‘interior’ activity of gratitude), or translate a universal virtue into a particular act (an ‘exterior’ activity of gratitude)—*both* versions enacted from the perspective of recognizing how we are upheld in our very being by such divine bestowals. Specifically, we are referring to *the practices themselves* as contra-violent interventions, rather than the feelings one would hope to stir up by them. While we would not want to encourage ‘soulless’ activities as such, we are suggesting that activities of intentional ‘gratitude *to*’ can be taken up for the end of awakening a person’s connection with what one is ‘grateful *for*.’ We will return to this item when we address contexts of gratitude directed toward other human beings.

Third, Thomas shows gratitude as giving oneself to God through adhering to him. Recalling that our problem under consideration is ‘falling back’ from the good, this aspect of devotion can at first glance appear unhelpfully circular in terms of our inquiry—i.e., if one is adhering to God, then one is precisely *not* falling away, yes? Said another way, the solution to the problem of falling away can’t just be a restatement of the virtue of not falling away. However, Thomas does indeed give us more than that on this theme, particularly in Q. 82 of our selected text. In the third article of this question, Thomas considers factors at work in both adhering to God and in falling away from him:

38. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.85.iv.co* (*Aliud vero est exterius sacrificium quando actus exteriores aliarum virtutum in divinam reverentiam assumuntur*).

The one [kind of consideration] is the consideration of God's goodness and loving kindness, according to Psalm 72:28, "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God": and this consideration wakens love ['Dilectio,' the interior act of charity; cf. 27] which is the proximate cause of devotion. The other consideration is that of man's own shortcomings, on account of which he needs to lean on God, according to Psalm 120:1–2, "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me: my help is from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth"; and this consideration shuts out presumption whereby man is hindered from submitting to God, because he leans on His strength.³⁹

We notice here Thomas identifying three things about a person's adhering to God. First, it is a personal good to that individual—i.e., it contributes to their flourishing as a human being. Second, it functions to *awaken* (a theme of key interest to our work in this chapter) charity. Third, charity is the proximate cause of adhering to God in devotion. Thomas himself notices the circularity implied in this way of speaking—devotion seems to be the cause and also the effect of charity (we see him proposing this very challenge in the first two objections to the second article). His response to this challenge starts with an analogy of friendship (for which he has precedent—see *IaIIae.23.i.co*). Thomas observes that "charity both causes devotion (inasmuch as love makes one ready to serve one's friend) and feeds on devotion."⁴⁰ If one is already a 'believer' in the mysterious supremacy of charity, this statement reads as an engaging aphorism. However, as with many aphorisms, if one is looking for an *explanation* of how something is so, the statement is less satisfying. Thomas, however, seems to notice this as well, and goes on: "Even so all friendship is safeguarded and increased by the practice and consideration of friendly deeds."⁴¹ The relevance of this

39. Aquinas, *ST IaIIae.82.iii.co* (*Una quidem quae est ex parte divinae bonitatis et beneficiorum ipsius, secundum illud Psalm., mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est, ponere in domino Deo spem meam. Et haec consideratio excitat dilectionem, quae est proxima devotionis causa. Alia vero est ex parte hominis considerantis suos defectus, ex quibus indiget ut Deo innitatur, secundum illud Psalm., levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi. Auxilium meum a domino, qui fecit caelum et terram. Et haec consideratio excludit praesumptionem, per quam aliquis impeditur ne Deo se subiiciat, dum suae virtuti innititur*).

40. Aquinas, *ST IaIIae.82.ii.ad2* (*caritas et devotionem causat, inquantum ex amore aliquis redditur promptus ad serviendum amico; et etiam per devotionem caritas nutritur*).

41. Aquinas, *ST IaIIae.82.ii.ad2* (*sicut et quaelibet amicitia conservatur et augetur per amicabilem operum exercitium et meditationem*).

additional statement to our work in this section can hardly be expressed strongly enough. Here we see recourse to *both* versions of our proposed intervention of ritual: the consideration of friendly deeds, and the practice of them. Further, we notice that these human activities do not *cause* friendship/charity (Thomas must be careful to locate the origin of charity in God—i.e., as the work of the Spirit within the human soul), but they do have an effectiveness in terms of *safeguarding* and even *increasing* the presence of charity in our lives. They are ‘to’ activities that undergird the feeling of friendship/charity ‘for’ someone—even God. Thomas reiterates this collaboration in terms of charity and religion (understood as human acts of devotion): “It belongs immediately to charity that man should give himself to God, adhering to Him by a union of the spirit; but it belongs immediately to religion, and, through the medium of religion, to charity which is the principle of religion, that man should give himself to God for certain works of Divine worship.”⁴² Here we see again the mediating, secondarily-efficient, role of human activity (the ‘to’ actions) in relation to divine goods (the ‘for’ by which the actions are of the kind they are). Charity, as the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human soul, is the form, or the essence, of a human being’s adherence to God, but human acts of devotion are the medium through which that adherence is enacted in the world.

In terms of our contra-violent inventory, adherence through charity is not a separate intervention to add to the list. Rather, as a result of the examination of this third species of devotion, we will add to the previous inventory item, and restate it as so: Individuals can establish charity-informed rituals of moral memory, whether interior (as acts of holding kindnesses bestowed in the mind), or exterior (as concrete acts of virtue toward other persons)—rituals that function to awaken the soul to the debt of good that we owe for every aspect of our being. In this way, our Thomistic account of gratitude as a contra-violent orientation now entails, as it absolutely should, the formal role of charity.

Concrete contexts of gratitude, part 2: the ‘sacred’ activities of clarificatio and convenientia

In the previous section, we considered gratitude specifically as oriented toward God, the source of human good. We worked to contextualize human acts of gratitude toward God within the modes of human operations and

42. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.82.ii.ad1* (*ad caritatem pertinet immediate quod homo tradat seipsum Deo adhaerendo ei per quandam spiritus unionem. Sed quod homo tradat seipsum Deo ad aliqua opera divini cultus, hoc immediate pertinet ad religionem, mediate autem ad caritatem, quae est religionis principium*).

experience, and considered how those activities might function as contra-violent interventions within the problem of falling away from the good. Specifically, we considered particular acts of repayment of the good to its divine source. In this section we will add to the landscape of our work, by changing its orientation. We will consider the contours of gratitude when oriented toward *particular* sources of good—i.e., the people around us. That is, we will consider how aligning ourselves to other human beings as a source of good relates to the problem of falling away from the good.⁴³ A device that we will use is the consideration of how human beings act as mediations of the divine good, especially in contexts where they imitate the workings of the Holy Spirit and the Word/Son among human beings.⁴⁴ Insofar as human beings mediate the divine activity for each other, and assist each other in the task of being aligned as grateful recipients of the divine good, such contexts of ‘grateful to’ activity can be understood as ‘sacred.’ Our guiding thread into this line of inquiry will be the notion of wonder/*admiratio*—i.e., approaching another person as a sacred mystery. The activities that will be examined as paralleling the workings of the Word and the Spirit are the hermeneutical/rhetorical strategies of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*, employed by Thomas and his monastic brothers in the practice of *sacra doctrina*. We will conclude by considering how these concrete, ‘sacred activities’ are works of gratitude that align us to the good, and thus function as contra-violent interventions.

Wonder, we recall, is for Aristotle the starting point of philosophy.⁴⁵ Aristotle enlarges this statement to say that “even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of Wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonders.”⁴⁶ That is, poets are, in a sense, philosophers. Aquinas’s commentary on this location reverses the statement:

And since wonder was the motive which led men to philosophy, it is evident that the philosopher is, in a sense, a philo-myth, i.e., a lover of myth, as is characteristic of the poets. Hence the first men to deal with the principles of things in a mythical way, such

43. To clarify, in the previous section we considered the mediating role of actions toward other people in the expression of our gratitude for God. In this section the direction is reversed. We are considering the role of interactions with other people as mediating the divine bestowal of good toward us.

44. We must keep in mind, however, as we proceed with the work of this section, that it is almost always a mistake to absolutize a distinction between the work of persons of the Trinity. In the case of our inquiry the work of the Spirit and of the Son entail reference to the other.

45. Aristotle, *MET* I.2.982b12–13.

46. Aristotle, *MET* I.2.982b19–20.

as Perseus and certain others who were the seven sages, were called the theologizing poets. Now the reason why the philosopher is compared to the poet is that both are concerned with wonders.⁴⁷

Philosophers are, in a sense, poets—they are concerned with wonders. This admittedly attractive imaging of the work of philosophy (what academic wouldn't like to be thought of as a poet?) carries significant philosophical weight for the good life in general. Framed in the terms of our inquiry, when we connect Thomas's statement with our sense of gratitude as the consummate 'human art' we can see that it illumines for us a contra-violent orientation toward other people. Fundamentally, wonder is associated with an encounter with something that one can't understand. Thomas states: "Now wonder is a kind of desire for knowledge; a desire which comes to man when he sees an effect of which the cause either is unknown to him, or surpasses his knowledge or faculty of understanding."⁴⁸ A *violent* response to something we don't understand (shown in chapter 3 of the larger thesis) sees such an object as flawed—if it is not understood, it must in some way be unintelligible, either in itself or in relation to the viewer (i.e., either irrational/nonrational, or radically 'other'). This can be understood also as a person 'falling away' from the *particular* good of another person (a theme developed in chapter 5 of the thesis). The significance of this claim in a Thomistic account of the world is dramatic, given the interwoven connection that Thomas makes between humanity's proximate goods and God as its ultimate good.⁴⁹ To fall away from a proximate, especially human, good is to a degree falling away from God as the ultimate source of the good.

47. Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* I.3.55 (*Et ex quo admiratio fuit causa inducens ad philosophiam, patet quod philosophus est aliquialiter philomythes, idest amator fabulae, quod proprium est poetarum. Unde primi, qui per modum quemdam fabularem de principiis rerum tractaverunt, dicti sunt poetae theologizantes, sicut fuit Perseus, et quidam alii, qui fuerunt septem sapientes. Causa autem, quare philosophus comparatur poetae, est ista, quia uterque circa miranda versatur. Nam fabulae, circa quas versantur poetae, ex quibusdam mirabilibus constituuntur. Ipsi etiam philosophi ex admiratione moti sunt ad philosophandum*). English translation by John P. Rowan. Chicago: Regnery, 1961. Edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Metaph>.

48. Aquinas, *ST IaIIae*.32.viii.co (*Est autem admiratio desiderium quoddam sciendi, quod in homine contingit ex hoc quod videt effectum et ignorat causam, vel ex hoc quod causa talis effectus excedit cognitionem aut facultatem ipsius*).

49. Aquinas, *SCG* III.117.3 and 6; *ST IaIIae*.25.i.co; I.103.ii.co. Thomas also addresses the preeminent case of this principle of identity as that of Christ and the Father, e.g., *Commentaria cursoria super Ioannem* 14.L4.3.

In contrast to this ‘violent’ orientation to a perplexing other, wonder assumes that the viewer’s lack of understanding resides in an *excess* of meaning belonging to the thing encountered. The account of the thing, i.e., that which would render it intelligible, is either not possessed by the viewer (excessive of quantity), or escapes the manner of operation by which the viewer is approaching the situation (excessive of quality). To the philosopher-poet, this excess is a source not of alienation, but of delight, as we see when Thomas continues his thought: “Consequently wonder is a cause of pleasure [*delectationis*], in so far as it includes a hope of getting the knowledge which one desires to have.”⁵⁰ It is interesting to note that, in Aristotle’s description of the great-souled man in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the great man is not given to wonder, specifically because nothing to him seems great in that way.⁵¹ He does, in the *Rhetoric*, concede that “learning and wondering are pleasant,” though he locates those activities within the contexts of “acts of imitation” (such as painting, sculpture, and—unsurprisingly—poetry) or “hairbreadth escapes from perils.”⁵² In Aquinas, however, the proper orientation of the philosopher-poet to the difficult-to-understand other is to approach them as mystery—i.e., as a source of delight, and as an invitation to expand (quantitatively, or even qualitatively) so as to be able to receive the excess. In terms of our inquiry, we can say that insofar as such a mysterious other is held as a presumed instance or source of some good and, even more, as a potential agent of change in the viewer, wonder is indeed a form of gratitude.

Given this account of gratitude as wonder, however, what does this mean for concrete practices? How do we actively approach another person, especially one who is to some degree initially inexplicable to us? It is certainly better to marvel at the difference than to alienate the person on account of it, but surely a genuinely contra-violent orientation will entail bridging the gap of intelligibility in some concrete way, while still leaving room for

50. Aquinas, *ST IaIIae.32.viii.co* (*Et ideo admiratio est causa delectationis inquantum habet adiunctam spem consequendi cognitionem eius quod scire desiderat*).

51. Aristotle, *EN IV.3.1125a3*. Again, Aquinas ‘softens’ this statement by framing it in terms of exteriority/interiority: the great-souled man is not easily impressed with exterior things “because his whole life is busy with internal goods, which are truly great” (*Sed magnanimo non est aliquid magnum eorum quae exterius occurrere possunt, quia tota intentio sua versatur circa interiora bona, quae sunt vere magna*) – Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum IV.10.777*; English translation by C. I. Litzinger. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964, Lander: WY, Aquinas Institute, accessed at: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Eth..>

52. Aristotle, *RHE I.11.1371b4–12*. I find this nod to the pleasure of swashbuckling adventure a delight in itself.

the other to be embraced as mystery.⁵³ Since we have already framed this question in terms of an inquiry of the other, it seems fitting to turn for help to the methods and strategies Thomas uses when approaching the difficult mysteries of theology. Two aspects of Thomas's scholarly method that seem particularly relevant to an orientation of wonder, and therefore gratitude, toward an object of inquiry are the principles of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*. We will examine these principles as case studies in orientations of gratitude toward mystery, drawing especially from Mongeau's account of the pedagogical-rhetorical method Thomas employs in his *Summa theologiae*.⁵⁴

First, let us briefly contextualize these two principles into the larger setting of medieval scholarly method. We can first note that these are principles of rhetoric.⁵⁵ Mongeau reminds us that rhetoric (as framed by Aristotle) "promotes connaturality with the good and the beautiful *in a particular situation*."⁵⁶ We can therefore further observe that, insofar as rhetoric presses its audience to 'read' the good and the beautiful in terms of their own contexts, rhetoric entails hermeneutics. Finally, recalling that Thomas's vision of scholarly inquiry arises from the medieval cathedral-schools modality of *aemulatio*, we can consider the hermeneutical modes of the student/reader as corresponding to, or continuous with, the rhetorical modes of the teacher/rhetor.⁵⁷ This collaboration is important to our work

53. Note that Thomas's inclusion of hope in *ST IaIIae*32.viii.co, mentioned above, precludes stopping our engagement with a mysterious other at a simple 'celebration of difference.' Truly treating a different other as mystery, in a Thomistic sense, requires making the necessary effort and changes in ourselves so that the other person is not held off as 'radically other.'

54. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 87–90 and 155–62.

55. Mongeau's reading of Thomas's rhetoric emphasizes *praxis*—i.e., what things are to be *done*, especially in terms of one's social, cultural, and religious contexts (Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 4). Mongeau sees this press toward practical contextualization as an application of what Lonergan correctly discerns in his reading of Thomas. Mongeau, "Bernard Lonergan as Interpreter of Aquinas: A Complex Relation," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia – The Realms of Insight: Bernard Lonergan and Philosophy* (Oct–Dec, 2007): 1049–1069, esp. at 1068–69.

56. Mongeau, "Mystery on the Move: Aquinas's Theological Method as Transforming Wisdom," *The Thomist* 80 (2016): 285–300, at 297, emphasis mine. Ref: Aristotle, *RHE* I.1.1356a1–35.

57. Sweetman notes that in the cathedral schools of medieval Europe, the student's gratitude toward the teacher was expressed as *aemulatio*, a form of 'competition' between friends by which they would strive to outdo the other in virtue. Sweetman, "Aemulatio and the Practice of Scholarly Friendship in Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* and His and Heloise's Subsequent Exchanges," unpublished paper delivered at the conference "A Sacrifice of Praise: Liturgy, Prayer, and Hymnody at the Center of Life" sponsored by Villanova University (Wayne, PA on 14 October 2017) 3–4. See also, Sweetman, "The Circle of Gift and Gratitude and the Calling of the Teacher-Scholar," paper given

of considering how (re)connection to the good can be mediated in concrete, human contexts—and how those can be ‘sacred’ insofar as they imitate the preeminent workings of the Word and the Spirit.⁵⁸ We will first examine the rhetorical-hermeneutical principle of *clarificatio*. As we go, keep in mind the guiding thread in these ‘case studies’—we are considering the orientation of an individual toward mystery, such that they view the excess of meaning gratefully, i.e., as gift, rather than violently, as radically ‘other.’

Mongeau explains *clarificatio* as the medieval appreciation for explicit manifestation of what is structurally at work in a context, whether in Gothic architecture or in scholastic argument, especially where such might be naturally hidden or easy to overlook.⁵⁹ Simply put, *clarificatio* as a rhetorical method means making abundantly clear what one is doing and how. In Thomas’s *sacra doctrina*, this strategy can take the form of a structural preference on the one hand for “short simple sentences arranged for effect (‘punch’), where emphasis is directed to maximizing the expressivity of the final word or words on the question,” and on the other hand the complex practices of “internal cross-referencing by means of *analepses* and *prolepses*, to make explicit the returns backward and the leaps forward which the *ductus* of the composition requires of thinking.”⁶⁰ *Clarificatio* can be illumined by comparison with the related quality of *claritas*—which, as one of the conditions of the intelligibility of the beautiful, entails “communicativeness of itself to a perceiver.”⁶¹ Similarly, the merit, and operative range, of *clarificatio* is reflected in the soul’s delight when mysteries are well-represented in alternate forms of language such as fables, which, Sweetman observes, are delightful precisely because the soul enjoys the hermeneutical work of *collatio*—piecing things together. Thomas states: “When the wonder has been well transposed into a representation delight appears, because reason is delighted in acts of putting one thing together with another (*collatione*).”⁶²

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58. Mongeau observes that, in Thomas’s pedagogy, “the interpersonal relation between master and pupil [functions] as a mediating structure of knowledge,” and that in this work, the teacher imitates, or participates, the work of the Holy Spirit. Mongeau, “Mystery on the Move,” 295; and *Embracing Wisdom*, 77–79.

59. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 88–89.

60. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 89.

61. Mongeau, “Mystery on the Move,” 293.

62. Aquinas, *Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Timotheum lectura* cap. 4 l.2 (*Unde in miro bene repraesentato videtur delectatio, quia ratio delectatur in collatione*). See also *ST IaIIae*.32.viii.co, where Thomas states “For the mind finds joy in juxtaposing one thing with respect to another, since to put together one thing and another is a proper and

From the teacher/rhetorical perspective, one of the active modes of *clarificatio* is *manuductio*—i.e., leading by the hand.⁶³ That is, the teacher does not simply utilize the pedagogical structures of pointing toward the truth—they inhabit them, engaging the student in living acts of guidance, leading the ‘by the hand.’ Putting the teacher’s activity of manuduction together with the *collatio* of the student, we see the work of approaching a mystery as an intimate, shared task participated both by one who is working to make the good clear and communicative, and by another who is working to piece together the collected bits into a cohesive, intelligible narrative—a shared stance of gratitude toward the wonder of a mysterious other.

Significantly, this *clarificatio* by manuduction is precisely the work that is attributed to the Word/Son in relation to human beings. Quite literally and practically, Christ hand-led his disciples by his own teaching to the truth of the gospel, which they in turn wrote down and handed on to others (a divine work that is imitated by preachers).⁶⁴ Theologically, manuduction is also an imagery that is used to speak of the redemptive effect of the Incarnation upon human beings—i.e., that it is precisely through his humanity that Christ ‘takes us by the hand’ and leads us to God.⁶⁵ Thomas explains:

Yet such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of Divine things by means of certain sensible objects known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the words of the Preface [Preface for Christmastide], “that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible.” Wherefore matters relating to Christ’s humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as a guiding hand.⁶⁶

connatural act of reason as the philosopher says in the *Poetics*” (*gaudet enim anima in collatione unius ad alterum, quia conferre unum alteri est proprius et connaturalis actus rationis, ut philosophus dicit in sua poetica*). Translations, and commentary, by Sweetman, in “Aquinas on Narrative and Reflective Understanding,” unpublished paper given at the conference “Scriptural Imagination” sponsored by Villanova University, Wayne PA (11 October 2015), 10–11.

63. Mongeau, in conversation with the work of Peter Candler, discusses Thomas’s work in the *Summa Theologiae* as manuduction—the process of a teacher guiding the student ‘by the hand’ through the developmental processes of gaining truth. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 5–6.

64. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 179.

65. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, translated by Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 110.

66. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.82.iii.ad2* (*Sed ex debilitate mentis humanae est quod sicut indiget manuduci ad cognitionem divinorum, ita ad dilectionem, per aliqua sensibilia nobis nota. Inter quae praecipuum est humanitas Christi, secundum quod in praefatione*

Though Thomas does show rather extensively that a work of the Holy Spirit is to illumine the truth of Christ for human beings (hence our caution earlier against overly-separating the works of the Son and the Spirit),⁶⁷ in this case it is the guiding hand of Christ's humanity by which he makes God the Father known to us that is significant. In terms of human beings imitating and mediating this work of Christ, we should understand all humanity as sacred in this way, insofar as it is capable of participating in the nature of Christ, and therefore individual persons are capable of leading one another, through solidarity in the concrete details of their own humanity, to the love of the good that is God. The irreducibly complex modes of human experience in the world provide a rich multiplicity of concrete contexts and opportunities for activities of wonder-infused *clarificatio* to occur.

Our second of the rhetorical-hermeneutical principles related to an orientation of wonder, and therefore gratitude, in Thomistic inquiry that we will examine is *convenientia*. Properly speaking, the term *convenientia* conveys the idea of 'fittingness'—it characterizes the structure of certain arguments Thomas makes when addressing mysteries.⁶⁸ Mongeau, however, sees the employing of *convenientia* in Thomas's work not merely as finding the best idea for an argument but as the introduction of "a new disposition of the student or reader" when faced with mysteries.⁶⁹ He observes that the rhetorical merit of *convenientia* lies less in its relation to the logic of an argument (which may, he states, leave the reader unsatisfied) than in its function as "intellectual therapy," whereby new possibilities of perspective toward the text are opened to the student/reader.⁷⁰ That is, the notion of *convenientia* signals a pedagogical invitation to shift one's horizon—it provides, as it were, 'permission' to set aside intellectual rubrics that require truth to be categorized with no remainder, and to look for an approach that better aligns with the contours of the truth as it appears before us for consideration.⁷¹ This hermeneutical strategy can be understood as stirring up humble gratitude is for us the other precisely as encountered, on their own terms, lest the integrity of their narrative be compromised by our attempts to stretch or reframe it to fit our own ways of viewing the world.

dicatur, ut dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur. Et ideo ea quae pertinent ad Christi humanitatem, per modum cuiusdam manuductionis).

67. For example, see Aquinas, SCG IV.21.5, referencing John 15:15.

68. For example, see Aquinas, ST III.1.

69. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 156.

70. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 156.

71. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 155.

Mongeau demonstrates this interpretation of *convenientia* by examining Thomas's argument in the example of Q. 1 in the *Tertia Pars*, on the reason for the Incarnation. In the third article, Thomas addresses whether the Incarnation would still have happened if man had not sinned. Thomas's response, reduced, observes that we can only know what actually happened in history, and should thus limit ourselves to the reasons given in scripture for why they did.⁷² Mongeau reads Thomas's decision "to stay within the concrete and historically revealed" as an application of *convenientia*—i.e., it is 'fitting' that we should avoid speculations about what would have happened if things were other than as they are. Further, however, Thomas's decision illumines the pedagogical mindset at work within the ostensibly rhetorical-hermeneutical mode of *convenientia*. Mongeau states:

This [decision] fits into the trust of *convenientia* and serves to discipline the spirit of inquiry into a proper humility before the mystery. By contrast, the proponents of an either/or solution are revealed to have eliminated the paradox or tension in the mystery by a kind of intellectual pride.⁷³

We see here that *convenientia* is as much about shaping the student/reader's orientation to divine mystery as it is about providing a sound explanation of a difficulty. As a rhetorical-hermeneutical-pedagogical mode, *convenientia* helps place a student/reader within an "appropriate horizon"—i.e., one informed by gratitude—for approaching and understanding mystery.⁷⁴

Mongeau identifies another aspect of *convenientia* visible in Thomas's method in the fifth article, where he is addressing the issue of the historical timing of the Incarnation (one that is hinted at in the previous example). There, Mongeau observes, within Aquinas's reasons of fittingness he "proposes multiple ways of understanding God's pedagogical wisdom."⁷⁵ This openness to multiple possibilities is another manifestation of the humility appropriate to *convenientia* (in the previous example, this appeared as the rejection of inappropriate "either/or" solutions). Such an orientation renders the student/reader "able to integrate the excess of intelligibility contained in the mysteries of faith while orienting reason to a humble and respectful

72. Aquinas, *ST* III.1.iii.co.

73. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 158.

74. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 162.

75. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 159.

stance before them.”⁷⁶ Mongeau concludes: “In this way, Thomas makes room for the beautiful, which is the splendor of truth.”⁷⁷

It is this last statement—i.e., the image of *convenientia* as making room within the student/reader for the beautiful and the true—that is particularly significant in terms of humans imitating and mediating divine ways of moving among human beings. In Thomas, this ‘making of room’ in a person for the good is the work of the Holy Spirit. Again (as with *clarificatio*), we should recognize that scholarly momentum leans toward associating the notion of *convenientia*/convenientia/fittingness with the second person of the Trinity, rather than the Spirit. Mongeau states: “Theological argumentation is a participation in the process of redemption which the Incarnation operates, and arguments from *convenientia* are the privileged pedagogical instrument of this participation.”⁷⁸ However, in this study we have considered the mode of *convenientia* in its operation of broadening the heart of the student/reader, of opening up ‘space’ within the soul for the good. We see this activity preeminently enacted by the Holy Spirit in Thomas’s commentary on the gospel of John. In his commentary on John 14:26, Thomas states:

Next he mentions the effect of the Holy Spirit, saying, *he will teach you all things*. Just as the effect of the mission of the Son was to lead us to the Father, so the effect of the mission of the Holy Spirit is to lead the faithful to the Son. Now the Son, once he is begotten Wisdom, is truth itself: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). And so the effect of this kind of mission is to make us sharers in the divine wisdom and knowers of the truth. The Son, since he is the Word, gives teaching to us; but the Holy Spirit enables us to grasp it.⁷⁹

76. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 161. Mongeau is here engaging the work of Gilbert Narcisse on this theme in *Les raisons de Dieu. arguments de convenance et esthétique théologique selon saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Fribourg, Suisse, 1997).

77. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 161.

78. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 162.

79. Aquinas, *Commentaria cursoria super Ioannem* 14.L6.1958 (*Consequenter agit de effectu spiritus sancti: dicens ille vos docebit omnia. Nam, sicut effectus missionis filii fuit ducere ad patrem, ita effectus missionis spiritus sancti est ducere fideles ad filium. Filius autem, cum sit ipsa sapientia genita, est ipsa veritas; supra XIV, 6: ego sum via, veritas et vita. Et ideo effectus missionis huiusmodi est ut faciat homines participes divinae sapientiae, et cognitores veritatis. Filius ergo tradit nobis doctrinam, cum sit verbum; sed spiritus sanctus doctrinae eius nos capaces facit*); English translation by Fabian R. Larcher, revised and edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Ioan>. .

First, we can notice immediately the reference to the work of the Son that we have examined: manuduction (“lead us to the Father”). Second, we also see the work of the Son and the Spirit shown in a collaboration to “make us sharers in the divine wisdom and knowers of the truth.” Finally, and most significantly to the specific work of our *convenientia* case study, we see that the work of the Spirit is rendered as making us “able to grasp” the divine truth. When we examine Thomas’s Latin for this notion, we see the work of the Spirit identified as *nos capaces facit*. Though the translated sense of ‘capacity’ does indeed imply abilities and faculties (such as ‘grasping truth’), we also might consider an extended sense, without doing violence to the text, in which *capaces* is understood as ‘space’ or ‘room.’ Thomas explains that the Spirit does this through its presence in the listener’s heart—a presence which entails an infusion of divine charity.⁸⁰ In this way, we can identify the work of the Spirit as making room in the soul for the good. Most properly, this is the truth of Christ—but in a sense of the world as a Neoplatonic hierarchy of goods (which Thomas holds to, as we have seen in chapter 4), this would include all of the goods that are conditions for human thriving. The posture of *convenientia*, therefore, is a rhetorical-hermeneutical-pedagogical openness to being enlarged in our souls toward the good—a posture of ‘intellectual charity,’ or ‘intellectual gratitude,’ which approaches even the person who is a mystery to us as a particular manifestation of the divine good, and an opportunity to be open toward the goodness of God. Any human participation in that activity is an imitation and mediation of the work of the Holy Spirit in human lives.

Turning to the final element of our work in this section, how shall we articulate these rhetorical-hermeneutical pedagogical. Thank you. strategies, activities which imitate the workings of the Word and the Spirit among human beings, in concrete terms of common human experience that operate as modes of gratitude? How are interactions between human individuals, especially when they are mysterious or perplexing to each other, to be animated by the principles of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*? How can we frame the work of this section in a specific contra-violent intervention?

First, let us note what our starting point of wonder has contributed: approaching the ‘unknown other’ as mystery, and therefore a source of delight, rather than as unintelligible. Second, we can note that in both strategies of *clarificatio* and *convenientia* there is an essential element of humility and openness toward the other. A ‘reader/listener’ must set aside the impulses to reduce the intelligible possibilities of the other either out of pride, or out of a false sense of loyalty to the sufficiency of a set of moral, intellectual, or

80. Aquinas, Aquinas, *Commentaria cursoria super Ioannem* 14.L6.1958.

theological categories. Excess of meaning is not a hermeneutical or moral disaster—it is a gift. A gift that a person must be ‘led by the hand’ to, by the shared humanity of the participating individuals. A gift that the person must make room for in their heart and (perhaps what is more difficult) in their mind. On this last point, we should state explicitly what has been implied: the act of approaching another with ‘intellectual-relational charity’ is quintessentially a receptive act, a making space *in ourselves* in which the other can unpack their thoughts and self-identity in the safety of love.

Here we now can see how interpersonal activities of gratitude are ‘sacred’ undertakings. Making room for another human being in one’s soul, and accepting their offer to do the same, are acts of creational hospitality. That is, the naturally incomplete condition of finite, creaturely existence means that our being is always in a state of being divinely added to. (As Kerr frames it, God “without annulling or withdrawing anything given can always give more.”⁸¹) The relevance of this principle for our immediate inquiry is that such creational bestowings can be mediated by one human being to another, precisely in their shared-but-perplexingly-different humanity. The ordinary contexts of human life provide limitless opportunities to experience other people in the ‘excess of meaning’ presented by their individuality. To live contra-violently, we must learn to pay attention to how specific aspects of a person’s humanity (personal, social, political, theological, etc.) interact with our established categories for processing life, and to treat as mystery and gift the ‘remainders’ that don’t fit—i.e., receive them gratefully as creational bestowals of being. It is in the intention and discomfort of these very spaces that a person is presented with the opportunity to ‘re-align’ themselves with the good they had become presumptuous of, and even fallen away from. Within such particular, concrete instances of ‘resting’ and ‘enjoying’ the good that is another, just as a good in itself, we can be simultaneously refreshed in the *complacentia affectus* that orients us to the divine good that is our principle.⁸² Further, just as with the ‘continuum’ within which the teacher’s and the student’s activities collaborate and coalesce, so the lines between

81. Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 146–7. Kerr adds Eric Mascall’s statement: “Creation is a most intimate and incessant donation of the creature to itself by God.” See E.L. Mascall, *Via Media: An essay in theological synthesis* (London: Longman, Green, 1956), 155.

82. While formally, the love of God is prior to love of our neighbor, Thomas in his articles on charity shows that the two are interwoven, especially insofar as the knowledge of our neighbor can lead to the knowledge of God. Aquinas, *ST IIaIIae.25.i.co* (regarding love of God and neighbor as specifically the same act); *26.ii.co* (regarding the intermingling of the loves); *26.ii.ad1* (regarding love of other persons as the first objects of love); *27.iv.co* (regarding the order of love from God to others, and the order of knowledge from others to God).

whether the ‘gift’ of excess of meaning is located more in the sharing of it or in the receiving of it are beautifully blurred—recall that for Thomas *gratia* indicates the grace both of giving and receiving. Whether we are participating in the ‘leading by the hand’ or the ‘making room,’ the effect is a living, human connection to the good. Insofar as such activities are undertaken in the spirit of charity, they are graced.

Our third contra-violent intervention of gratitude, therefore, can be stated thus: In any concrete human encounter, especially those in which the other is perplexing to you, pay attention to where the excess of meaning is, and treat it as gift—either in your receiving the other into yourself or in allowing the other person to serve as host to you.

Conclusion: An inventory of interventions of gratitude

We began our work in this essay with the problem of how individuals can become re-aligned to a good they have known and loved but have fallen away from. We understood such a falling away from the good as causing the individual to enact violence toward the people around them, whether or not they intend to. That is, a diminishing of *complacentia boni* disrupts the soul’s natural relation to the good (especially insofar as it is the affective correlative to *synderesis*, the soul’s natural ‘grasp’ of the good of the world), such that a person becomes capable of undertaking evil as though it were their good. In this essay, we have examined how an orientation of gratitude can have an efficient effect upon an individual’s connection to the good, or their attempt to re-establish it—an effect that we framed as a ‘reversal’ of the natural priority of interior, dispositional-acts of ‘gratitude for’ over exterior, concrete acts of ‘gratitude to.’ This framing required an understanding of gratitude as act-centered, rather than emotion-centered. That is, we considered how intentionally undertaken, exterior acts of ‘gratitude to’ can function efficiently as interventions to re-awaken the soul to the interior, dispositional-acts of ‘gratitude for,’ effecting a re-alignment of the individual as a receiver of the good, and thus with the good itself as known and loved.

In this task, we have articulated the following three interventions of gratitude:

- Language of gratitude, even (or perhaps especially) toward the divine, should be expressed in terms of particulars rather than universals.
- Individuals can establish charity-informed rituals of moral memory, whether interior (as acts of holding kindnesses bestowed in the mind), or exterior (as concrete acts of virtue toward other persons)—rituals

that function to awaken the soul to the debt of good that we owe for every aspect of our being.

- In any concrete human encounter, especially those in which the other is perplexing to you, pay attention to where the excess of meaning is, and treat it as gift—either in your receiving the other into yourself or in allowing the other person to serve as host to you.

In concluding this study in the contra-violent potential of gratitude, it is fitting to end with a brief reflection by Bob Sweetman, whose extensive and sensitive work so deeply informed the direction of this essay, on the wonder of life as gift:

The great cosmic drama revealed by Scripture is played out in the ordinary patterns of human living, including all the pedestrian occasions that trigger the giving of gifts and their reception. There, *in concreto*, in our care for the seemingly little and insignificant situations of our lives, the cosmic drama is played out; it is there that we work out our salvation in fear and trembling in the conviction that God is at work in us in our living, enabling us to work and to will for his good pleasure.⁸³

It is to be hoped that this study will contribute to varying discourses about human flourishing, first by way of a spiritual exercise suggesting how concrete activities of gratitude can aid individuals in recovering a diminished rest in the good—and how those concrete activities can be shared with other persons, mediating even the divine good for one another. The expanding of the provisional ‘inventory’ begun in this essay, especially through the lenses of specific disciplines, would be an ideal outcome of this project. Second, as a broader aim, we hope to stir reflection on the more subtle and confounding aspects of personal violence—those that can be enacted even by people who hold to values of charity and justice. In this human task of being ever more conformed to the image of God, this project recognizes as gift the Thomistic account of graced human nature – both the *manuductio* provided by that account itself and by the subsequent communities of grace that continue the work.

83. Sweetman, “Aquinas on Gratitude and the Shaping of Graced Living,” paper given as part of a series of faculty development seminars held at King’s University in Edmonton AB, funded by the Templeton Foundation, and organized by the grant holder Joshua Harris of the Philosophy Department of King’s University (9 August 2021), 4.

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