

A Philosophical Commentary on the Conceptual Contributions of Contemporary Filipino Thomists to Neo-Thomism

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Abstract: Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, noted that heretical sectors have declared that they could easily battle against Catholic defenders had it not been for the arguments of St. Thomas Aquinas. For this reason, he exhorted carefully selected teachers to implant to their students the excellence of his philosophy. Filipino philosophers, in adherence to this call, or even inadvertently done out of interest, ventured into the study of Thomistic Philosophy and has commented for the clarification of certain texts, its application to contemporary problems, or even expositions of some colleagues as regards this issue. This paper responds to this encyclical's call, and to the UST Department of Philosophy's thrust towards Filipino and Aristotelian-Thomistic research endeavors by conceptually exposing and commenting on the contributions of selected Filipino Thomistic philosophers such as Aureada, Angeles, Piñon, Cariño, Reyes, Aguas, Sagut, Quito, among others. This paper would expose one or two significant works of each philosopher. I would afterward provide some observational commonalities and insights as regards how their

arguments have contributed to the betterment of Thomistic philosophy in general. I would also suggest possible avenues to sustain interest in the field.

Keywords: Aquinas, Neo-Thomism, Filipino philosophy, cultural adaptations

INTRODUCTION

St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas have been the standard philosophical systems for Catholic academicians who wish to remain faithful to the interpretations of scripture and dogma following the tradition of both Plato and Aristotle, respectively. Robert Pasnau opines that there are consequences for the *Summa Theologiae* as a theological work.¹ This implies that whenever we deal with Thomism, we should bear in mind that while the Angelic Doctor is known as a theologian first before he ought to be treated as a philosopher, and while he was able to distinguish clearly what can be affirmed by both reason-alone and reason-with-faith, a lot of contemporary philosophers approach Thomism with caution.

Yet it would not be surprising that even the fact that St. Thomas was a Dominican can also create ripples on the intellectual attitude of his followers, described by Josef Pieper as “rational and sober.”² In this sense, we could surmise that St. Thomas did not really suppress the exhortations

¹ Robert Pasnau explains: “ST is a work of theology. This has two important consequences. First, and most apparently large parts of the work are concerned with issues that presuppose elements of Christian doctrine. The general topic of 3a, for premises that are not accessible to natural reason. Thus, the second part of Aquinas’s general treatment of human beings (QQ90-102) presupposes in many places the Genesis account of human creation. Although Aquinas is very much concerned with showing that this account is coherent, no attempt is made to demonstrate its truth.” See Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a 75-89* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10.

² Josef Pieper describes it thus: “But Dominic’s community, which soon became known as the Order of Preachers, was likewise distinct from the Franciscan Order founded almost simultaneously by St. Francis of Assisi—even though both foundations were a response to the same challenge. In the first place, Dominic’s order was an order of priests from the start (St. Francis was never a priest); in the second place, it was altogether unromantic in its origins, was of rational and sober complexion; in the third place, it did not reject culture and science in principle (as did St. Francis). Instead, it expressly turned its attention to the first universities of the Western world. And the university students above all, as well as their teachers, poured into the newly founded order—a remarkable and exciting fact.” See Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 27.

of St. Augustine; rather, he supplemented the latter by providing an intellectual interpretation of the Catholic faith utilizing another philosopher—bringing the best out of both Plato and Aristotle to the fore of theological exegesis. It is from this spirit of Thomism that became the basis of this writer as regards possible contributions by Filipino Thomists by way of building blocks and snippets of ideas added to this philosophical field.

CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Jovito Cariño has raised an issue which can pose a dilemma to some apologists of Catholic dogma utilizing the philosophies of some of the doctors of the Church. He referred to a quote from *Fides et Ratio* where St. John Paul II has clarified that the Church has no official philosopher and, as such, does not canonize one over another—a peculiar way in introducing an article. While this point is already known, remembering it at the onset is an invitation and a call for openness and acceptance of other opinions outside of one’s comfort zone. This doesn’t make him totally neutral though because he would continue to argue as regards the crucial role of St. Thomas Aquinas through the latter’s creative fidelity. To place this in context, he posits a unique premise that clarifies the role of the medieval spirit, far from being commonly known as the dark ages, but rather being actually better termed as “ages of light.”³ From this alone, including the reasons expounded to justify it (specifically by exploring the philosophies of Roger Bacon, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Saint Augustine), he has

³ Jovito Cariño explains: “In the preceding discussion, I disputed the notion which caricatured medieval ages as the ‘dark ages’ and in its place suggested the alternative description ‘ages of light.’ I advanced this claim by using the medieval science of optics as an illustration and in the process demonstrated how the revision of Catholic medieval philosophical thought was carried out by its adherents, most notably, by St. Thomas Aquinas. In his own way, St. Thomas contributed to the medieval discourse on the problematics of sight and light by adopting the categories not of the experimental sciences and mathematics but of Aristotelian philosophy.” Thus, we observe that such nomenclature is based on perspective. See Jovito Cariño, “St. Thomas Aquinas and the Revision of Catholic Philosophy,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, LV:65 (May-August 2020), 297.

contributed significantly to the field of Philosophical Hermeneutics. Contextualizing within this milieu, he draws out two unique characteristics from the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor, placing into fore his propensity towards creative thinking, veering away from conventionalities whenever necessary, and his rigid adherence to rationality, establishing the coherence of what reason can provide and placing it within the service of the faith. Such creativity and adherence to rationality can be interpreted in the consideration that the Angelic Doctor is primarily a theologian and only secondarily a philosopher. Reason, for him, is a path for everyone to God, thus explaining rationality's ancillary function.⁴ This position, I think, does not downplay the content-based contributions of the Angelic Doctor in stabilizing the metaphysical foundations of the faith; rather, it enriches this conceptual role by emphasizing the attitudinal foundations of this Catholic apologetic-redoubt.

Antonio Piñon provided a clarification of one of the most controversial philosophical and theological issues of his time—how the Catholic laity should treat the exhortations of *Humanae Vitae*. There was quite a debate as regards this matter because some have argued that the encyclical infringes on the right of the married couple to determine their sexual relationship, while others have proposed different interpretations as regards the illocutionary force the exhortations exert on the faithful contained therein. While his analysis is constrained to those who at least believe in the supremacy of the pope, he nonetheless presented critical arguments that are unique as it joins the myriads of analyses on how the encyclical is to be interpreted. For some, the argument is fairly simple—if this is not an *ex-cathedra* pronouncement, the Catholics are not bound by

⁴ Specifically, this is done by way of wisdom. Mary Christine Ugobi-Onyemere explains: “Since the highest of all is parallel to truth in all its forms, for the intellect to discover wisdom at any level is to be true to itself, to be in its process of continuous perfection, and to attain the conformity with its judgment and composition about res. Hence, our search is geared towards the discovery of the intellect's realization of wisdom.” Mary Christine Ugobi-Onyemere, IHM, *The Knowledge of the First Principles in Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 328.

it under pain of moral sin. He argues that this is not so. Instead, he appeals on certain accepted beliefs of the Catholic faith that, when interposed with the issue at hand, would imply that such exhortation is different from any other in the light of the fact that it is the Vicar of Christ that pronounces it. He further clarifies the point that it is not merely infallibility from which obedience ought to emanate but from authority. And it is from here where he made his point that since the papal authority from which the pope is issuing his exhortations emanates not from any agreement but from the authority of God Himself, then even if such were not binding by way of excommunication, it would be by way of sin. In other words, it is authority from which moral obligation emanates, especially in matters where the command is firm.

Piñon reiterates that the content of *Humanae Vitae* pertains to the creation of life and thus the exhortations contain the pope's duty both to teach and to discipline. Thus, even though the fact remains that the pope did not provide any punishment or disciplinary action for refusal to accept the exhortations of the encyclical, his firm and clear regulation of action would make disobedience on the part of the Catholic Laity an instance of mortal sin. He nonetheless clarifies that since such is not pronounced *ex cathedra*, then *Humanae Vitae* is not to be treated as infallible, and as such, still open to debate and change. Nonetheless, current obedience is still required.⁵

⁵ Antonio Piñon provides the following reason: "The man who holds the notion of authority as the moral power or right to command or to act, cannot consistently claim for the individual the right to approve the commands or the acts prior to obeying the command or recognizing the validity of the act. This would invalidate authority at its roots. In other words, he is committed to the position that authority, at least when exercised fully, engenders in the subject the *moral obligation* to either obey the command or to recognize the validity of the act." See Antonio T. Piñon, "How to Think on the 'Humanae Vitae' and its Obligation on Catholics," in *DLSU Dialogue: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Cultural Studies*, 5:1 (1968).

The argument by Piñon is nonetheless essential today even as we celebrate the 57th anniversary of this encyclical. On the contrary, his arguments are more essential today because these can be analogically applied to novel issues such as how the Church can settle LGBTQ emotional and sexual relationships, as the once simple term “homosexual” has expanded its meaning and circumstance—such as whether married couples of the same sex are committing a sin as regards their sexual acts. This article further shows that the Scholastic methodology of creating distinctions to clarify matters remain relevant up until today.

Joel Sagut touches on one of the critiques of Scholasticism, specifically Thomism, that is more often repeated as the basis why a lot of contemporary philosophers have treated these ways of thinking as not only archaic, but more so irrelevant to today’s philosophical culture. This makes his response as significant as the irrelevance thrown upon the metaphysics of the Schoolmen. He referred to Heidegger’s critique of the latter’s concept of Being, taking advantage, at the same time, of their essence-existence debate to further bolster the claim that the approach utilized in the past had failed. He would clarify the Thomistic notion of Being; what Heidegger was actually criticizing; and on how the notion of freedom in St. Thomas Aquinas has preempted the solutions presented by Heidegger.

As expected, the most common criticism of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas stems from his being a Catholic and a saint first and foremost before he is considered as a philosopher. From this perspective, there is a critique that the metaphysics he espoused is a pseudo-philosophy because the Angelic Doctor is unable to un-equate God with Being, making such a mere expression of an onto-theology. For this reason, some of those who were convinced by this tried to “save” Aquinas by searching of clues by which he overcame metaphysics by moving away from it in the evolution of his philosophy. Sagut sees this problem as a misunderstanding caused by overemphasizing the role of the subject knower in understanding reality. It is for this reason—where the subject is made primary—why there is such a tendency to free Being from the notion of God, or to “overcome”

metaphysics.⁶ He clarifies, however, that *Destruktion* should not be construed as destroying any traditional notion of metaphysics, but rather, to show its limitation.

With intellectual mastery of Thomism, Sagut asserted that the criticisms of Heidegger were geared more towards the essentialist interpretation of Being, whereas the position of the Angelic Doctor was actually geared more on the metaphysics of *esse* with Heidegger missing the mark on such an interpretation of Being.⁷ Further, he also noted that the Angelic Doctor has superbly preempted Heidegger's notion of authenticity when the former discussed the role of freedom in human perfection.

Rarely do we see a local Thomist resolve two connected issues in one article. Reynaldo Reyes, doing exactly this, splendidly accomplished, utilizing the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor, in finding the golden mean between two theological concerns, to wit: the extrinsicism and intrinsicism debate on the grace-nature proportion; and the problem governing the relationship between infused and acquired virtues. While the Angelic Doctor has clarified that grace perfects nature, Thomists are not in

⁶ Determinism is partly to blame for this thinking. Ignacio Silva opines: "It is, thus, of great importance to understand the rise of this deterministic worldview associated with science, to see how God was left at the sidelines of the universe, and why theologians of the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries attempted to find ways to re-introduce God into the development of natural and human history." See Ignacio Silva, *Providence and Science in a World of Contingency: Thomas Aquinas' Metaphysics of Divine Action*, (London: Routledge, 2022), 23.

⁷ Joel Sagut avers: "We could however point out that Aquinas' *esse* is even given primacy, not just over essence, but also over *ens*. This is better illustrated in Aquinas' teaching on creation, whereby he goes beyond Aristotle's concept of change. In creation, Aquinas has clearly illustrated the importance of *esse* as the principle that brings into the open the reality of the *ens*. Creation bestows on *ens* its *esse*, making *ens* a reality. Moreover, we also notice that *esse*, for Aquinas, is more than the 'instantiation' of the essence. Otherwise, it is reduced to a mere mode of essence. *Esse* is the coming to-be from nothingness. For Aquinas, it is *esse* that defines the *ens*, that is, the *esse* makes essence a particular reality in a concrete *ens*." See Joel Sagut, "On the Question of Being: A Thomistic Response to Martin Heidegger's Critique Against Western Metaphysics," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, XLVI:138 (January 2011), 623.

agreement amongst themselves as to how such is effectuated. He tried to resolve two schools of thought, that of Karl Barth who tried to place a wedge between grace and nature, and that of Henri de Lubac who basically merged the two, arguing that the inclination to divine life is inherent and innate. Reyes masterfully resolved the two conflicting positions by, first of all, clarifying the various senses by which essence is understood—metaphysical, integral, and individual. He then proceeded to the ways in which human nature is and is not proportionate to grace. He then concluded with the introduction of the scholastic concept of obediential potency and on how it not only resolves the conflict between Barth and de Lubac, but also on how it clarifies the relation between infused and acquired virtues.⁸ While obediential potency has been discussed for centuries now, its use in such resolution is unique and substantially contributory to the field.

Father Aureada in two articles presented an exhaustive explanation of two concepts crucial to the understanding of grace—*natura* and *participatio*. It should be noted early on that his analysis is based on both philosophy and theology—in line with the truism that St. Thomas is primarily a theologian and only secondarily a philosopher. He begins by expounding upon the types of grace in Thomistic Theology, exposing the differences between uncreated and created grace, and habitual/ sanctifying and actual grace. Such is necessary to show that sanctifying grace is entitative, while actual grace is operative. Proceeding to *natura*, he differentiates three perspectives by which such concept is understood—human, cosmic, and divine. From such distinctions, he further discussed the ways by which *natura* is analogous, paving the way to a further analysis

⁸ Reynaldo Reyes concludes thus: “From the three metaphysical assumptions we infer the following conclusions: (1) That the acquired virtues are rooted in the natural potency, while Grace and its consequent infused virtues are rooted in obediential potency, and (2) since, acquired virtues are the ‘means’ toward the natural end, their corresponding infused virtues are the ‘means’ toward the Supernatural end.” See Reynaldo Reyes, “The Thomistic Metaphysics of Grace and the Infused Virtues,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, LV:65 (May-August 2020), 281.

of its theological implications. At this point, the discernible states of *natura humana* is exposed. He then moves to the other side, discussing divine nature and, theologically, the Blessed Trinity, leading to a more succinct view on how God can be said to be a person. He then meticulously expounds on how the *Natura Divina* perfects the human person and on how it becomes the source of eternal life, and on how each Person of the Blessed Trinity becomes man's exemplar primus. In this first article, he had already established the often problematic relation between *Natura Divina* and *natura humana*.⁹ While this has been done superbly, there remains the question as to the role of participation in such relation. Thus, he moves on to the second article.

Rightly, the second article deals with *participatio* because the nature of this relationship needs to be clarified inasmuch as man is an image of God. Uniquely, Aureada started his analysis by clarifying what participation by *natura humana* of *Natura Divina* is not—neither quasi-quantitative, nor a similar possession of life, nor accidental, nor mere imitation, nor natural, nor virtual, nor abstract, nor moral. He then moves on to how Catholics perceive theological *participatio*, clarifying the manner in which grace exceeds the nature of man, making the relationship a supernatural one. What follows is a detailed discussion of the various implications surrounding the issue as to whether grace ought to be conceived as analogical by proper proportionality or analogical by intrinsic attribution. Such is important because a proper resolution would bring to a clearer understanding of how man is said to be an image of God, or how

⁹ Jose Antonio Aureada explains this relationship thus: “Viewed from the question of a personal relationship, we affirm that since graced participation in man is an assimilation of the *natura humana* (person, i.e., an individual substance with a nature empowered to know and love) to the *natura divina* (as such and in its triune personality), and since man's participation in the trinitarian activity *ad intra* implies, in the ultimate analysis, possession and resting in the beloved, by appropriation, *natura humana* is called to participate in the loving unitive activity *ad intra* of the divine Person, the Holy Spirit.” See Jose Antonio E. Aureada, O.P., “Concept of Grace in St. Thomas Aquinas (I),” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 29:86 (1994), 226.

the *ens per participationem* can be considered as an *imago*¹⁰ of the *ens per essentiam*. His contribution here is radical in the sense that, before such assertions, Thomists had been accepting casually that graced participation is one of proper proportionality, noting that *natura divina* and the trinitarian nature of God makes Him an *exemplar primus* of *natura humana*. Such similitude, for him, could thus be better explained as attributive.

The clarifications of Aureada delves boldly into a deeper understanding of grace that falls into the classic debate as to whether God's special relation to man not only as a creature, but as a creature that shares in God's Intellect and Will, is one of proportion or by attribution. His articles on the clarification of the critical concepts of Thomistic notions on nature and grace is a valuable contribution to this continuing discussion.

Jove Jim Aguas tackled a topic commonly associated with Karol Wojtyla—the role of the human person in our contemporary world. This time, he centered on a controversial topic of human dignity. As such, this is, for him, paradoxical because in today's world, it is man who is both the victim of evil and also its perpetrator. This article has an underlying belief that violence can be prevented once the human person properly assesses the value of his dignity, and such was expertly presented by the author, noting that both St. Thomas Aquinas centered on the objective analysis of the human person while Wojtyla focuses more on the subjective.

To understand this concept, Aguas clarifies first and foremost that a proper understanding of essence as the source of human dignity is important, including the notion that the soul is the substantial form of

¹⁰ Aureada explains this concept: “The *imago supernaturalis Dei*, an effect of sanctifying grace in man, is different, but not disparate, from the *imago naturalis Dei*. In this elevated state, man is supernaturally capable of knowing and loving God imperfectly by the theological virtues of faith and love, and perfectly once he comes face to face with him in the Beatific Vision.” Let us take note of the notion of difference yet not, at the same time, disparate—strengthening his position as regards the analogical relationship between the two images. See Jose Antonio E. Aureada, O.P., “Concept of Grace in St. Thomas Aquinas (II),” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 29:87 (1994), 433.

man¹¹ and, as such, did not emanate from the parents but from God Himself. While man is a person—defined as an individual substance of a rational nature—the metaphysical understanding of man must also be contextualized to his circumstances.¹² Following the example of the sufferings during Wojtyla’s time, both Nazism and Communism had degraded the understanding of the human person, making them subservient to the interests of the state. The only way to liberate man from the dangers of these philosophies was to oppose them conceptually. In this sense, Aguas notes that the problem overflows to the practical, political, and ethical.

Aguas reiterates that subjectivity has been left out of philosophical discussions because of the antinomies that distracted such endeavor, such as idealism and realism. Wojtyla resolves this under the light and guidance of both St. Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler, with the former emphasizing the development of one’s spiritual well-being, and the latter with the phenomenological understanding of the person. Seen in this way, man relates to the world as a spiritual being who transcends physical boundaries. It is in such spirituality that man becomes self-manifesting,

¹¹ John F. Wippel explains: “Thomas insists that without the addition of a distinct act of existing (*actus essendi*), no such essence would actually exist. He presents this theory in the well-known c. 4 of his *De ente et essentia*, and in many other contexts as well. From this it follows that there is a twofold act-potency composition within every corporeal substance, or as he puts it in his *De spiritualibus creaturis*, article 1, a twofold actuality and a twofold potentiality. At one level, prime matter is potency with respect to its substantial form, and the substantial form is the act of that thing’s matter.” See John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas III* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 177.

¹² In another article, Jove Jim Aguas opines that such definition, while simple but profound, remains challenged. He expounds: “The Boethian definition of person is simple but profound in meaning. Although there have been many definitions or explanations about the essence of the person, such definition, although too abstract, has validity even in our days. St. Thomas accepted this definition. But there are others, however, who reject it for a variety of reasons, arguing that man is a mystery which defies any definition.” Jove Jim Aguas, “Affirming the Human Person and Human Dignity: A Rereading of Aquinas,” in *Unitas*, 75:4 (2002), 567.

self-communicative, and self-transcending. In this sense, man becomes, through such spirituality, a social being. It leads him to respect human dignity because he sees such spirituality in other people. In other words, Aguas reiterates that it is grounded on the understanding that the essence of man is sourced from God Himself. As such, man being an image of God becomes of the foundation of human dignity. Aguas notes that there are other philosophers who have touched on human dignity. But it is nonetheless the emphasis on differences that becomes the source of violence in society because if man is truly aware of their commonality as children of God, then respect of the human dignity of each naturally follows.¹³

Mark Joseph Calano masterfully discusses the different modes of understanding analogia as a means to which the relationship between God and man is explained—this time by way of similarity and dissimilarity, or by way of being and difference. While traditionally, *being* was given preferential option in explaining reality by metaphysics, he offers an alternative view, through the eyes of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. As regards the former, he explains the thought paradigm of Levinas where thought is equated in speech—one that defines the ethical relationship with the other. In this sense, there would no metaphysical understanding of God unless such is fathomed in the light of one’s ethical relationship with the other. Further, from another viewpoint, the understanding of God is made more manifest by the different between the other and God Himself, making analogy of difference and ethics as the path to knowing the nature and attributes of God. Derrida, however, sees in this

¹³ Jove Jim Aguas concludes: “The notions of human person and human dignity transcend ideological, cultural and political differences. Regardless of color, religion, creed and belief, we are all human persons and we all enjoy the same dignity. Such essence and dignity of the human person are shared and must be enjoyed by all peoples, they are what transcend the limits posed by the differences.” This is what most racists forget—our common human essence that serves as the foundation of dignity. See Jove Jim Aguas, “The Notions of the Human Person and Human Dignity in Aquinas and Wojtyla,” in *Kritike*, 3:1 (June 2009), 58-59.

difference as the place where God is hidden, and it is through the other that God is un-concealed or revealed. It is also through the other and the understanding of its resemblance with the supreme being where a dialogue with God is possible.

Following Derrida, Calano notes that such a resemblance is strange indeed, in the sense that it gives us a trace of God when understood in the proper perspective, or in the light of analogia of the other with the Face. From this, it can be said that God is better known as an Other, rather than as a Substance as was commonly referred to by traditional metaphysics. Any language about God is understood within the play upon which it is uttered, or more specifically within the play of difference, leading to the exposition of a real structure between the relations between the knower, God, and the other. He reiterates the position of Derrida that the *logos* regulates such *analogia* without being subjected to it.

Calano considered possibilities and impossibilities by which analogy can play a role in the so-called overcoming of metaphysics. Instead, however, of interpreting such overcoming as suppression, he expertly explored the function of *analogia* in exposing the structural relationship between treating the other as a path to God. Such is done by looking at it as a continuous movement of convertibility and reversibility by understanding how analogia is interrupted by way of exploring differences.¹⁴ It brings into fore that there are avenues which traditional metaphysics has failed to see and that solutions could be explored without rejecting metaphysics as a whole.

For both the beginner who wants to have a clear introduction to the role of the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas in the contemporary world and the expert who wants to be briefed on the various schools of thought

¹⁴ Mark Joseph Calano explains this process: “In this sense, it can only be understood as an analogia that is always interrupted and disturbed. But once this interrupted analogia is further interrupted, it resumes again as an analogia between two or three or more absolute and incommensurable heterogeneities in a continuous movement of convertibility and reversibility.” See Mark Joseph Calano, “The [O]ther Analogia and the Trace of ‘God’,” in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 156-174.

surrounding the issue, this clear and direct article by Moses Aaron Angeles drives the point succinctly.¹⁵ He first clarified that even though there were philosophers who argued that the Angelic Doctor has the last say in the field of Metaphysics, including St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas actually never mentioned that his philosophy was such. Instead, his life and works exemplify an attitude of openness and acceptance of other paradigms of thought, and his followers ought to inculcate the same attitude. He mentioned that even Dominicans never closed their minds to novel things after reading and understanding the *Summa Theologiae*. Such over-adherence to his philosophy could not, however, be faulted at since his philosophy is so consistent and holistically clarifying that many are tempted to just accept it as a whole. Nonetheless, he mentioned authors given by Joseph Owens that followed St. Thomas yet noted that these philosophies were varied as regards interpretations of the Angelic Doctor. He noted various ways by which metaphysics were both criticized and defended, which includes discussions on how the school of thought in the Enlightenment contributed to such criticisms.

To settle the issue, Angeles first expounded on the various meanings of being, including some of its nuances where adherence to vague notions of substance tantamount to the recognition of essence, and consequently, the idea of being. From here, he also noted that the importance of understanding being is so crucial that even Heidegger was forced to reckon with it. Some simply reacted by setting one's faith beyond the reach of reason and, even internally, conflicts were resolved by stubbornly holding on to Platonic Idealism. Yet he is confident that St. Thomas has properly dealt with being by studying it *propter quid* or the methodology of considering what is prior *simpliciter*. He notes that this is the most scientific approach to the study of metaphysics.¹⁶

¹⁵, Moses Aaron T. Angeles, "Metaphysics after Aquinas," in *Kritike*, 1:2 (December 2007), 113-121.

¹⁶ This contention becomes true especially with sciences that belong to higher levels of abstraction. John Polkinghorne notes: "Disciplines with restricted access will have to

In order to provide a more comprehensive overview, Angeles enumerated the various schools of thought within Thomism itself through the eyes of John Knasas—Aristotelian Thomism (following Aristotle’s Act-Potency distinctions), Existential Thomism (with emphasis on being as *actus essendi*), and Transcendental Thomism (with emphasis on understanding being with reference to the Infinite Being). He ended with an exhortation to establish an open mind as the Angelic Doctor would have taught.

Emerita Quito tackled an already well-discussed issue in the philosophic-theological tradition—the seemingly conflicting interplay between human freedom and Divine causality and knowledge.¹⁷ In gist, there seems to be an impasse between the exercise of freedom and God’s foreknowledge of man’s future choices which, if pushed to its natural logical conclusion, would place limits to such alternatives, undermining the will’s supposed inability to go against such foreknowledge. Molinism, for instance, posits the idea that God has what they termed as “middle knowledge” through which, they argue, would resolve the seeming contradiction between God’s omniscience and human freedom. This school of thought explains that God, aside from foreknowledge, also knows counterfactuals—possible choices under certain circumstances. In this sense, God creates a world where counterfactuals are integrated into creation in such a way that it does not go against the plan in God’s predestination, such as a world where Judas actually chooses to betray Jesus to fulfill prophesy. Quito finds this absurd.

First, Quito explains that having God’s intervention as being prior to the will’s determination of itself would go against the omnipotence of

depend more heavily on non-empirical factors in the assessment of the interpretations they propose. Coherence and comprehensiveness are factors of the highest importance in the search for metaphysical understanding.” See John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 114.

¹⁷ See Emerita Quito, *The Will and its Relation to Divine Causality and Knowledge* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, The University of Santo Tomas Graduate School, March 1956).

God and having the will act without an ultimate cause; second, she points out that Molinism erroneously reverses dependence whereby God's will has to adjust to the decisions of his creatures, making him subservient to the latter; and third, with their belief that God is cooperating with the decisions of His creatures, comes the paradoxical scenario where God agrees and ultimately becomes an accomplice in the commission of sinful acts. She solves this by positing the position of the Angelic Doctor that sin as denoting both being and an action with a defect, whereby God can be considered as the author of the act of sin but not that of the defect caused by the will. She presented a series of progressive arguments to support this, to wit: first, if free will is in potency to all free volition, then God intrinsically premoves it; second, if simultaneous concursus is deemed repugnant as regards its consequences, then God premoves the free created will towards free volition; third, God premoves the will in such a way that He liberates it from potentiality to one infallible act (effectively predetermining the will); fourth, if no creature can act efficiently on the will, then God premoves it *per se*; fifth, if God can take away in the free will the indifference of potentiality without taking away the indifference of actuality, then He effectively premoves the will without necessarily taking away liberty.¹⁸ While Quito has explained away the rational arguments—powerful as they are—she has argued, nonetheless, that these are

¹⁸ This, however, does not make Quito (following the Angelic Doctor) a Medieval Libertarian because the influence of the intellect on the will does not affect the latter's liberty. Eleonore Stump clarifies: "Such different intuitions about what is needed for free will are reminiscent of medieval debates about the nature of the autonomy of a free will. Some Franciscans tended to suppose that a free will had to be independent of the intellect as well as of all external causal influence. Aquinas thought that the will is free just because of its connection with the intellect. For my purposes here, what is most important to see in this dispute is the nature of Aquinas's position within the genus of libertarian theories of free will. One can hold an incompatibilist theory of free will, as Aquinas does, without accepting the principle of alternative possibilities; one can maintain that the will is free in a way incompatible with causal determinism without espousing the Franciscan version of libertarianism." See Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas's Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will," in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. by Brian Davies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 291.

insufficient for various reasons, namely: first, that man's finite mind would be unable to fathom God's actuations from eternity; second, God, being the cause in *esse*, would have intents outside the purview of man, being limited by his intellectual powers; and third, that man's freedom emanates from God Himself, and thus must humbly submit to how He governs the universe. Here she masterfully balances the intellectual skills needed to understand the arguments the issues and debates surrounding free will and God's intervention in man's affairs, without compromising the need for the virtue requiring acquiescence and adoration to God.¹⁹

COMMONALITIES AND INSIGHTS

The above-mentioned articles expose, albeit generically and temporarily, some possible characterizations to Thomism based on the expositions of these Filipino academicians. One observation that can be gleaned from these arguments is that Filipino Thomists continue to interpret the writings of the Angelic Doctor from the eyes of the traditional Catholic faith. This is possibly due to the cultural leaning of the Philippines—at least still the majority—towards this religion; or possibly due to the fact that many of the scholars of Thomism came from Catholic universities in the country. Such can be seen more clearly with Piñon who reiterated the necessity for obedience even to the position of the Holy Father despite the fact that such an opinion has not been declared *ex cathedra*. This can also be seen with Aguas who utilized the philosophy of Pope John Paul II in establishing the foundation of human dignity. Although Calano and Angeles exposed various ways by which the Angelic Doctor and Thomism in general could

¹⁹ Her attitude follows the attitude exhorted by Pope John Paul II: "All of us must take great care not to allow ourselves to be tainted by the attitude of the Pharisee, which would seek to eliminate awareness of our limits and our sin. In our day, this attitude is expressed particularly in the attempt to adapt the moral norm to one's own capacities and personal interests, and even in the rejection of the very idea of a norm." See John Paul II, *Go in Peace: A Gift of Enduring Love*, ed. by Joseph Durepos, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 100.

be expressed and taught, they nonetheless did not digress significantly to alter the faith upon which the philosopher relied upon.

This observation does not, however, degrade the notion that Filipino Thomists were not aware of the philosophical issues in the global philosophical sphere. Many of the issues they tried to resolve originated from outside the country. Cariño reiterated this when he tried to reconcile the fact that the Church has no official philosopher, and that St. Thomas could act nonetheless as an inspiration for creative fidelity. Arguments extending the interpretation of *Humanae Vitae* is also a global issue during that time as the use of new contraceptives has been debated in a lot of legal jurisdictions. Other ideas such as the popularity of overcoming metaphysics and the theological issues surround grace has led to various schools of thought within Thomism itself. This only goes to show that Filipino Thomists were in tuned with these issues even before the internet age where digital academic interrelations were not yet feasible. The article of Quito, for instance, while it dealt with a common issue such as predestination, offered avenues for humility and acquiescence.

The aforementioned Thomists also seem to be consistent with one another, and at certain times, even support each other's positions. One of these is the position of Piñon to follow the Holy Pontiff even if he is just providing his opinion as long as there is enough illocutionary force in his exhortations; and Calano who introduced a novel interpretation of the overcoming of metaphysics—normally unacceptable to traditional Thomists. Nonetheless, despite utilizing contemporary philosophers (and not Thomists) he attempted to provide an interpretation of analogia by looking at convertibility and reversibility by way of difference, which if understood correctly, does not really digress significantly from the traditional positions, albeit even improving upon them. In addition to this, Angeles continues to opine that despite the differences in Thomistic schools of thought, there remains the spirit of St. Thomas alive in such disagreements. This opens up the possibility of diversions in interpretation without compromising the academic loyalty to the Angelic Doctor.

AVENUES FOR RENEWED INTEREST

While this study does not comprehensively discuss all of the Filipino Thomists due to space constraints, it nonetheless attempted to expose the positions of these selected Thomists in so far as possible without, the researcher hopes, compromising the integrity of each philosophical redoubt. With certain characterizations in place, it could be surmised that certain factors—like the Christian tendencies of the country, the Filipino culture of “hiya,” and academic background from Catholic schools may have contributed to the observation that Filipino Thomism does not digress significantly from the Catholic faith, deals with global issues on Thomism, and as a whole is bereft of serious internal differences and conflicts. There is a call for improvements in these areas while, at the same time, an exhortation to continue the tradition of utilizing the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas in contemporary Filipino cultural, political, and academic circumstances.

Development in these areas, especially in integrative methodology, can also lead to the much-awaited Filipinization of philosophy in general in the country by way of Thomistic Filipinization. Two reasons can be given for such exhortation: first, the country is predominantly Catholic, hence the best philosophy to represent its religious and cultural uniqueness is by way of Thomistic philosophy; and second, Thomism, being founded on Aristotelian philosophy, is the most scientifically-acceptable philosophy, because the Hellenic philosophy is not only one of the first comprehensive precursor of the scientific study of Biology, the *a posteriori* method utilized by the Philosopher was extensively used in the *Summa Theologiae* of the Angelic Doctor. As regards the first, many of the values which Filipinos have nurtured during the Spanish occupation up until now, could lead to a better version and application of Thomism insofar as the latter adjusts to these beneficial characteristics, providing rational justifications for Filipino hospitality, for instance. It could also lead to more good habits by Filipinos by predisposing them towards perfecting Filipino emotive

affections by way of the rational methodologies offered by Thomism. By establishing a harmonious relationship between the Thomistic framework and Filipino culture, both would proceed forward with mutual benefit. It is thus encouraged that Filipinos, being Catholics, continue with applied interpretations of the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor.

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