

Is Radical Orthodoxy Thomistic enough?

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The theological sensibility of Radical Orthodoxy in its quest to return to traditional sources of orthodoxy for a ‘radical’ critique of secular thought has particularly privileged the thought of Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) as the pinnacle of the ‘ancient way’ prior to the nominalistic ‘fall’ which entered with Duns Scotus. This paper however questions whether Radical Orthodoxy has been radically Thomistic enough in its metaphysics and particularly highlights the importance of first principles of knowledge such as the law of non-contradiction to Thomas Aquinas. Whereas Aquinas insisted that God cannot break the law of non-contradiction, key RO writers have argued that this law is somehow suspended in God. This paper argues that compromising the law of non-contradiction weakens RO’s critique of secularism and opens up the possibility of nihilism.

Key Words: Radical Orthodoxy, Thomas Aquinas, First Principles, Law of non-contradiction, nihilism, John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Johannes Hoff, Nicholas de Cusa, Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism.

There is a joke in Radical Orthodoxy circles that RO theologians in their praise of Aquinas have replaced an infallible Bible with an infallible text of the *Summa Theologiae*! Be that as it may, this article will examine whether or not Radical Orthodoxy has been radically Thomistic enough, or whether other sources have displaced the authority of Thomas. After Aquinas there have been competing ‘Thomisms’ which have been subject to the winds of philosophical change from the era in which they emerged and consequently each has emphasised certain aspects of his thought while occluding others.¹ Lest old Aquinas be

forgot, this article reassesses the place of first principles for Thomas’ system, which in the late modern Thomism of Radical Orthodoxy appear to have been superseded by a Cusanean tributary from the Neoplatonic river.² To demonstrate this turn I will be examining evidence from three authors associated with the Radical Orthodoxy sensibility, namely Catherine Pickstock, John Milbank and Johannes Hoff.

The Importance of First Principles for Aquinas

First let us examine the importance of first principles within Thomas’ theologi-

cal system. In two of his Aristotelian commentaries, the *Commentary on Metaphysics* and *Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Aquinas cites what Aristotle described as the ‘most certain’ of all the first principles of knowledge, namely: ‘that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect.’³

Lest we misunderstand him, in referring to the Law of non-contradiction as ‘most certain’, Aristotle did not intend to cast any doubt on the principle, as if to say it is the ‘most certain’ of a class of relatively doubtful principles. To the contrary, Aristotle goes on to assert that the Law of non-contradiction is a ‘necessary’ truth, whose denial is ‘impossible’. Though of course it is possible for people to ‘say’ that the same thing both ‘is’ and ‘is not’, it is impossible for people to actually believe this since it cannot be said *truly*.⁴ Following Kant,⁵ the status of this ‘most certain’ of all first principles has been fiercely contested,⁶ especially in regards to whether or not it is a metaphysical principle (applying to ‘things in themselves’) or simply a linguistic one.⁷ For Aristotle, the answer is clear:

Our present question is not whether it is possible for the same thing to be and not to be in regard to the locution, but whether it is possible in regard to the object.⁸

It is not within the scope of this article to discuss this question in depth, except in relation to Thomas’ position. Lest we be misled into the view that Aquinas is only describing Aristotle’s thought about first principles and bracketting out his own position in the commentaries on the Aristotelian texts,⁹ we can be left in no doubt from the bold language used in the unambiguously ‘Neoplatonic’ commentary, *In De Divinis Nominibus*, contained in a

passage which treats the nature of discursive knowledge. Here, Aquinas argues that even though the soul is engaged in a circular process of knowledge from sense evidence back to itself, where it is ‘rolled up’ according to its intellectual powers, this circularity does not result in scepticism, since ‘all that ratiocination is judged through resolution to first principles in which error does not occur and by which the soul is defended against error.’¹⁰

This position that the first principles of knowledge are infallible and thus the foundation of true knowledge is confirmed in a parallel reading from the Aristotelian commentary *In Peri Hermeneias*: ‘Perfect knowledge requires certitude, and this is why we cannot be said to know unless we know what cannot be otherwise.’¹¹

Now returning to the text of *De Divinis Nominibus*, Thomas continues:

The first principles themselves by the simple intellect are known without discursion, and for this reason the consideration of them because of their uniformity is named a circular convolution.¹²

This passage shows that first principles are known intuitively, contrary to the opinion of some modern Thomists such as Alasdair MacIntyre, who regard them as empirically based and capable of falsification.¹³ Though this may be the case for the principles of particular sciences, it is not true of the fundamental principles of science itself, such as the law of identity and the law of non-contradiction, which according to Thomas, are infallible and intuitive. He does not mean by that a pure Platonic intuition, which is only possible for an immaterial spirit such as an angel, but an intellect which sees into the nature of things by abstraction through the material, as he explains in more detail in

Summa Theologiae.¹⁴ Hence, though the first principles exist *a priori* as intelligibles, they are known by human beings in this life only by abstraction *a posteriori*.

Aquinas goes on in the same passage to embed this understanding of the soul's knowledge within a celestial hierarchy of knowledge which paradoxically terminates in the interminable circularity of God, who is 'above all existents and is maximally one and the same and is without principle'.¹⁵ This combination of Aristotelian and Platonic motifs is in fact typical of the Neoplatonism which Aquinas inherited, in which the two streams were never seen as incompatible.¹⁶ Porphyry, for example commented on Aristotelian logic in his *Isagoge*, which was an introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*.

Nevertheless some theologians within the Radical Orthodoxy sensibility have concluded that the Neoplatonist writer, Pseudo-Dionysius, the grandfather of Christian apophaticism, implies in his work, *The Divine Names*, that laws of logic such as the 'law of excluded middle' lie beyond any Divine application:

the divine unity is beyond being ...
the indivisible Trinity holds within
a shared undifferentiated unity...
the assertion of all things, the denial
of all things, that which is beyond
every assertion and denial.¹⁷

Since, according to Aristotle, in the same subject, 'affirmation and denial cannot be simultaneously true,'¹⁸ and 'Contradiction is an opposition that by its very nature allows no middle ground,'¹⁹ God seems to be an exception to 'the most certain' of Aristotle's principles. The first interpreter to read Pseudo-Dionysius in this way appears to have been John Scotus Eriugena who speaks of God as 'the opposition of oppositions, the contrary of contraries,' in whom are 'all similitude and

dissimilitude, all contraries and all oppositions.'²⁰

Furthermore, since the law of non-contradiction states 'that the same attribute cannot at the same *time* belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect,'²¹ how can this be relevant to a God who is, according to Dionysius, '*neither in time nor outside of time, but beyond both*.'²² The upshot of this seems to be that Dionysius conceives of the law of non-contradiction and the law of identity as inapplicable to God.²³

Nevertheless, Aquinas remains committed to Aristotle's formulation of the law of non-contradiction as is clear from his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia* where he discusses the question of what is possible for God. He agrees that in every contradiction is included a simultaneous affirmation and negation, which is impossible, since it cannot apply to the nature of a being that it both 'is' and 'is not'. Even God cannot cause what is impossible in this sense since:

he is the greatest actuality and the chief being. And so his action can only be terminated chiefly in being, and in non-being consequentially. And so he cannot cause affirmation and negation to be simultaneously true, or any things in which this kind of impossibility is included.²⁴

In summary, Aquinas is emphatic that 'it is in my opinion false'²⁵ to say that God can do the self-contradictory.

Nor is it even clear that Pseudo-Dionysius was denying this truth, for in a significant passage in *The Divine Names*, in which he deals with an objection to God's omnipotence from a certain 'Elymas', he refers to the Scriptural text that God 'cannot deny himself' (2 Tim. 2:13).²⁶ Denys' exegesis of this text reveals that he does not believe in an unqualified omnipotence

(for example the position later taken by Descartes). For God to deny himself would entail his falling from truth, and since, truth 'is being' (*on estin*),²⁷ this would also entail falling from being, which according to Dionysius, is impossible even for God: 'God cannot fall from being.'²⁸ The Greek text adds *kai* to *mh einai ouk estin*²⁹ which is literally 'and therefore is not not to be.'³⁰ Dionysius further explains that this is because of his perfect power: God cannot lack anything, including truth, knowledge or being. So if God cannot lack being we are led to conclude from this argument that even God cannot both be and not be at the same time.

So, although difficult to reconcile with other passages, in this passage, at least, Denys appears to see no conflict between God as transcendentally beyond everything he has made, including the power 'to be', and the fact that he cannot fall from truth or 'fall from being.' This cannot mean that God is subject to some higher principle to himself, which would present a kind of Euthyphro dilemma, but rather that God cannot fall from 'uncreated Being,' i.e. Himself. Indeed, this is how Aquinas understands him in his *Commentary on the Divine Names*: 'But this 'not to fall short of being' is the same as if he were to say that God is not non-being; by which is meant rather being itself [or that he himself is].'³¹

On this understanding God would have to in some sense BE the first principles of knowledge, at least analogically speaking, which are grounded in the tetragrammaton, I AM THAT I AM.³² In Thomistic terms, natural laws of reasoning, including the first principles, participate in the Eternal Reason.³³

After Aquinas, although positive predication about God continued in the line

of Denys the Carthusian who remained faithful to Aquinas³⁴, a more radically negative reading of Pseudo-Dionysius by Eriugena prevailed in his reception by mystical theologians such as Eckhart³⁵ and more especially Nicholas de Cusa in his doctrine of 'learned ignorance' and 'coincidence of opposites.' Furthermore both of these mystical writers followed Eriugena in pushing Dionysius into a more unambiguously monist direction.³⁶ They privileged a certain interpretation of Divine Simplicity as an absolute organising centre for their thought in which all apparent contradictions are resolved in an undifferentiated unity ('that simplicity where contradictories coincide').³⁷ It is significant that Aquinas resisted this Eastern drift by insisting that all names of God are not ultimately synonymous but predicate him substantially though imperfectly.³⁸

Catherine Pickstock

Eriugena, De Cusa and Eckhart are heirs to the Neoplatonism of Proclus, which Catherine Pickstock believes, allows for an interpretation of a Divine realm beyond created time and by extension, beyond the law of non-contradiction. For example, Proposition 2 of *The Elements of Theology* asserts: 'Everything which participates of The One, is both one and not one.'³⁹ Catherine Pickstock picks up this train of thought in an article on Radical Orthodoxy where she contends that if created being participates in the infinite this must mean that it enters into both identity and non-identity and thus the finite becomes simultaneously finite and infinite. This she argues is resolved in 'a higher harmony beyond logical opposition.'⁴⁰ If this is what Proclus meant then it is an unsound argument, because it does not follow from creaturely participa-

tion in the infinite that the creature enters into finite and infinite *at the same time and in the same respect*, and in fact Proclus suggest otherwise when he goes on to explain that if the participant in unity has some character other than oneness, ‘in virtue of that character it is not one, and so not unity unqualified’.⁴¹ Therefore we could reasonably conclude that the participant does not possess unity *in the same respect* as the One. Aquinas addresses this question in his commentary on the *Book of Causes*, which Aquinas had discovered was a commentary on a summary of the teachings of Proclus.⁴² In his treatment of proposition 4 that being is ‘composed of the finite and the infinite,’⁴³ Aquinas makes it clear that it is only Uncreated Being, which is *actually* infinite. Created being is *limited by its form*, that is *by its capacity to receive infinity*. We could say at best that created being is *potentially* infinite. Hence ‘the very being that it receives is finite.’⁴⁴ This is in harmony with Thomas’ most developed conception of analogy beyond a merely formal predication (as in Aristotle), to one based on metaphysical participation according to *prius et posterius* (a Neoplatonic development). The reason that created being does not enter into identity and non-identity with the infinite is because the unity entered into is not a univocal one. God is One *per prius* and the creature becomes one with Him *per posterium et per participationem*.⁴⁵ Consequently Pickstock’s argument fails to show that participation of the creature in the Creator is incompatible with the law of non-contradiction.

John Milbank

The second theologian we will examine is the father of Radical Orthodoxy, John Milbank. In his 2003 work *Being Recon-*

ciled: ontology and pardon, we find that Milbank has to appeal to Nicholas rather than to Thomas for the view that there can be exceptions to the law of identity. He thinks that to maintain a realist belief in universals and in analogical predication is incompatible with the law of identity as traditionally conceived.⁴⁶ This however seems an upside down method of reasoning, since first principles can neither be grounded in, nor disproved by, any prior principle. One argues *from* first principles, not *to* them and therefore they can only be demonstrated indirectly, for example through *reductio ad absurdum*.⁴⁷ They are the condition of possibility for any rational discourse at all. They are, by definition, more certain than any other belief, no matter how philosophically necessary or how incompatible they might appear with any secondary principle. All secondary principles are contingent on first principles as Aristotle and Aquinas recognised. The obscure must be interpreted in light of the clear, as in the Augustinian method of hermeneutics, and nothing is more self-evident than the law of identity itself.

Again though, as we have already seen in the case of Catherine Pickstock. Milbank’s charge that the law of identity is irreconcilable with a realist belief in universals, only obtains on a purely predicational understanding of universals and of analogy. But Aquinas does not believe in the existence of universals except as derived from Divine ideas in the one separated Principle of *Esse ipsum subsistens* where they exist *secundum prius et posterius*. This is his fundamental criticism of the *Platonicii*.⁴⁸ Thus a particular participates in its Divine idea somewhat apophatically as a derivative analogue. This means that Aquinas’ position eludes Milbank’s problem of the particular being

identical and non-identical to the universal at the same time and in the same (univocal) way.⁴⁹ Hence it is not that analogy is incompatible with the law of identity traditionally conceived, but rather that the law of identity is incompatible with the doctrine of analogy traditionally conceived when applied to the existence of universals, which is to say that the realist belief in universals is incoherent on the (merely) predicational model of analogy.⁵⁰ It is better then to philosophically clarify the doctrine of universals than it is to jettison belief in the law of identity.

The consequences of a theology of *coincidentia oppositorum* for Milbank's blend of Radical Orthodoxy are moving in a quasi-pantheistic direction. For example, John Milbank ultimately reconciles medieval hierarchy and democracy in Nicholas of Cusa through the 'equalisation' of the creature and the Creator by deification.

Indeed via the resurrected body of the Lamb in the heart of the eternal city, the Bride Jerusalem is equalised with God and drawn through deification entirely into the life of the Trinity.⁵¹

The higher the hierarchy rises, the more equal it becomes:

It is not that democracy is a compromise for here and now: it is rather that it can only finally arrive in the perfection of *concordantia* as deification. To eternalize democracy, and maintain its link with excellence rather than the mutual concessions of baseness, deification as the doctrine of the offer of equality with God is required.⁵²

However, for Thomas, one of the things which God cannot do (because it is self-contradictory), is for God to create God, or for the creature to become the Creator

or for God to be able to make anything equal to himself, so we read in Book 2 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*:

And from this it is clear that God cannot make God. For it is of the essence of a thing that its own being depends on another cause, and this is contrary to the nature of the being we call God...For the same reason God cannot make a thing equal to Himself; for a thing whose being does not depend on another is superior in being, and in other perfections, to that which depends on something else, such dependence pertaining to the nature of that which is made.⁵³

This axiom was to be compromised in Eriugena, Eckhart and Cusa, a genealogy to be extended into John Milbank's Radical Orthodoxy.

Johannes Hoff

In the third RO author of our inquiry, Johannes Hoff, the Cusanean turn is more explicit. In his book about Nicholas of Cusa: *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa*, Hoff asserts a necessity to 'deviate from Aquinas' and 'go beyond Aquinas' via Cusanus.⁵⁴ This includes a development of themes we have already encountered in both Pickstock and Milbank. While denying a charge of pantheism,⁵⁵ Hoff at the same time (coincidence of opposites?) embraces a monism of light that 'transcends the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived.'⁵⁶ He adopts Cusa's spinning top illustration to elucidate how a list of predicates written on a stationary circle would all be touched at the same time, including opposite predicates, if the top was spinning at infinite speed. It would appear to be 'at rest' in the coincidence of opposites. It is interesting to note *en passant* the political fruits of a doctrine of

‘coincidence of opposites’. In Cusa, this looked like a conciliarist who reverted to being an apologist for the primacy of the Pope by asserting that ‘the one chair of Peter is simultaneously located in Rome, Alexandria and Antioch’.⁵⁷ In RO it has spawned the curious ‘coincidence of opposites’, which are Red Toryism and Blue Labour!⁵⁸ It seems that on Hoff’s view, at the moment of infinity all distinctions blur into one, not only within God, but also between God and creatures.⁵⁹ Thomas could not have accepted this development in RO, unless it were reformulated in line with the wording of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) regarding the real distinction between God and the world: ‘God, being one sole, absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance, is to be declared as really and essentially distinct from the world.’⁶⁰

This real distinction is sometimes overlooked in a zeal to avoid ‘ontotheology’ – i.e. the reduction of the Deity to one among a number of beings within the universe. As a result the orthodox dogma of the real distinction can be easily stawmanned as ‘ontotheology’. However, in order to avoid the danger of monism or of any confusion between creature and Creator, for Aquinas, God may still be legitimately named an ‘individual’ *analogically* by virtue of his *incommunicability*.⁶¹ As Thomas explains in greater depth in his *Commentary on the Book of Causes*:

But the first cause is something individual, distinct from all others (*aliquid individualiter ens ab aliis distinctum*). Otherwise it would not have any activity. For it does not belong to universals either to act or to be acted upon. Therefore, it seems that it is necessary to say that the first cause has *ylatum*, i.e. something that receives being. But to this he responds that the *infinity*

of divine being, inasmuch as it is not limited through some recipient, takes in the first cause the place of the *ylatum* that is in other things. This is so because, just as in other things the individuation of a commonly received thing comes about through what the recipient is, so divine *goodness*, as well as being, is individuated by its very purity through the fact that it is not received in anything. Due to the fact that it is thus individuated by its own purity, it has the ability to *infuse the intelligence and other things with goodness*.⁶²

Furthermore, even within the Trinity there are hypostases which bear an analogical relation to Boethius’s definition of a ‘person’, viz, ‘*rationalis naturae individualis substantia*.’⁶³ For Aquinas these persons consist entirely in Divine ‘relations’ but as Gilles Emery points out from *De Potentia*, the term ‘relation’ has been deliberately chosen because of its technical meaning in Aristotle as the only type of ‘opposite’, which does not entail a contradiction or remove the alterior term.⁶⁴ Hence God is One in one sense (Transcendent Being) and three in a different sense (Transcendent relations) but not One and three *in the same sense*.

Hoff also uses an illustration of the icon of Veronica whose all seeing gaze simultaneously follows the viewers in opposite directions as an illustration of the violation of the law of non-contradiction in the Infinite Deity. He cites Cusa’s terminology of ‘an impossibility that coincides with necessity.’⁶⁵ An infinite God cannot be defined but escapes reduction to an indistinguishable darkness on the knowledge that ‘he, exceeds all relative determinations and oppositions by necessity’.⁶⁶ Thus Hoff substitutes the real distinctions between being and nothingness,

the creature and the Creator with his own mystical first principle of Divine knowledge, but it is difficult to see how useful this can be if Hoff's principle is not itself identical to itself and cannot be its own opposite at the same time! As Aristotle rightly discerned any denial of the law of non-contradiction must result in monism which is a disastrous result, since if everything is the same as its opposite, only one thing can exist.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Radical Orthodoxy does not need to go down this Cusanean *cul de sac*, since Aquinas already had a better solution to the problem of defining the Infinite while still preserving meaningful predication about God. Even though we may not know his definition, still God's effects of nature and grace can function as a working substitute for a definition in the *sacra divina* of which God is the Subject.⁶⁸ Thomas writes in *Summa Theologiae* that 'in demonstrating the existence of God from His effects, we may take for the middle term the meaning of the word 'God.'⁶⁹

Analogous terms contain a common meaning (*ratio communis*), but not a univocal one, which is based on the primary sense (*ratio propria*).⁷⁰ Hence the analogous term 'Being' refers primarily to God as *ipse esse subsistens* and to creatures by derivation and participation. Similarly Thomas' use of the term 'Truth' is analogically predicated of the human intellect, but is found in its proper nature (*ratio propria*) in the Divine intellect.⁷² If this were not the case there could be no true judgments about God based on correspondence (*adequatio*) between propositions and reality.⁷³ Duns Scotus had mistakenly thought that to avoid irrationality the law of non-contradiction must

apply to God univocally, since only a univocal concept 'possesses sufficient unity in itself, so that to affirm and deny it of one and the same thing would be a contradiction.'⁷⁴ He further insisted that a univocal concept must have sufficient unity to serve as the middle term of a syllogism or else collapse into equivocation.⁷⁵ However, we are not forced to choose between univocity or equivocation as we can plausibly maintain that there is a common core of meaning on an analogical model of theological language which has sufficient unity to preserve the adequacy of theological language and deny the existence of true contradictions.

As a development from the *ressourcement* movement associated with Henri de Lubac, Radical Orthodoxy is itself in need of returning again to its own Thomistic sources in order to renew itself. Leo XIII in his pastoral concern to guard the Church from the threat of modernism had urged his bishops to

be watchful that the doctrine of Thomas be drawn from his own fountains, or at least from those rivulets which, derived from the very fount, have thus far flowed, according the established agreement of learned men, pure and clear; be careful to guard the minds of youth from those which are said to flow thence, but in reality are gathered from strange and unwholesome streams.⁷⁶

Today, as Catherine Pickstock acknowledges in a postmodern context, the threat is nihilism.⁷⁷ But what is nihilism ultimately, if not the rejection of the twin laws of identity and non-contradiction? For without these first principles it would be possible to affirm that 'to be' is also and at the same time 'to be nothing'.⁷⁸ In Hegel, for example, this is expressed by

the nihilistic strategy of collapsing the dualistic opposition between something and nothing.⁷⁹ Aristotle had correctly predicted that after reducing to monism, the denial of the law of non-contradiction terminates its flow in the sea of silence, since there all propositions become devoid of meaningful content.⁸⁰ It is significant then, that John W. Montgomery targets the violation of the law of non-contradiction and its replacement with a ‘Hegelian’ dialectic in his devastating assault on the anti-philosophy of ‘death of God’ theologian Thomas J.J. Altizer in their famous 1967 debate.⁸¹ But a genealogy of modern nihilism can, we are arguing, be traced back much further to a philosophical ‘fall’ in the mutated Neoplatonism of

Eriugena, Eckhart and Cusa.⁸²

In countering the nihilistic *zeitgeist* then, it is essential for Radical Orthodoxy to be more radically Thomistic through recovering first principles of identity, non-contradiction, substance and sufficient reason not merely to be faithful to Thomas himself as a finite, historically contingent writer, but *a fortiori* to be faithful to *sacra doctrina* and *sacra scriptura* which is the Source of sources and *auctoritate auctoritatibus*.

For our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books, and not on the revelations (if any such there are) made to other doctors.⁸³

Notes

1. See Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002); Jurgen Mettenpenningen, *Nouvelle Theologie New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T & T Clark, 2010); Richard Peddicard, O.P., *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An introduction to the life and legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrangé*, O.P. (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2004), ch. 7. Wayne Hankey, ‘Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern cold and Postmodern hot’ in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (eds.), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 139-184.
2. This criticism is not universally true of all philosopher-theologians associated with RO, for example Conor Cunningham has not made this turn.
3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book IV, chs. 3 & 4, 1006a 18-1007b in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, tr. John P. Rowan, Preface by Ralph McInerney (South Bend, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 2007), Book 4, lesson 6, p. 220. See also Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2.72a7, 1005b-2-34 St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, tr. Richard Berquist (Dumb Ox Books, 2007), p. 25.
4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Gamma 3, tr. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 88.
5. Garrigou-Lagrangé addresses the Kant's agnostic antinomies in *God, His Existence and His Nature*, Vol. 2 (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1936).
6. For a survey of views see Graham Priest, J.C. Beall and Bradley Armour-Garb (eds.), *The Law of non-contradiction: New Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
7. For a robust defence of the metaphysical view see Tuomas E. Tahko, ‘The Law of non-contradiction as a Metaphysical Principle’ *The Australasian Journal of Logic* (2009), Vol. 7, pp. 32-47.
8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Gamma 3, tr. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (Penguin, 2004), p. 91.
9. For a recent defence of the continuity between Aristotle and Aquinas see Giles Emery OP and Matthew Levering (eds.), *Aristotle in Aquinas' Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Emery cites Marta Borgo in a footnote (p. ix, footnote 19) that Aquinas makes use of four different translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in his commentary on Lombard's first book of the *Sentences*.
10. Aquinas, *Expositio In De Divinis Nominibus*, tr. Harry C. Marsh, Appendix to ‘Cosmic Structure and the knowledge of God: Thomas Aquinas’ In *librum Beati Dionysii De Divinis Nominibus Expositio* (Ph.d. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1994), section 4, lines 43-56, pp. 367-368.
11. *In Peri Hermeneais*, I, lect. 8 cited in Norman Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 71.
12. Aquinas, *Expositio In De Divinis Nominibus*, section 4, lines 43-56, pp. 367-368.
13. “That first principles expressed as judgments are analytic does not, of course, entail that they are or could be known to be true *a priori*.” See Alasdair MacIntyre, ‘First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues’, in Kelvin Knight (ed.), *The MacIntyre Reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 184.

14. ST 1a, q. 85, a. 1. See also the discussion in Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His existence and His nature*, pp. 110-117.
15. Aquinas, *Expositio In De Divinis Nominibus*, section 4, lines 43-56, pp. 368. On the Neoplatonic continuum of knowledge see Eric D. Perl, *Theophany: the Neoplatonic philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), ch. 6.
16. See *De substantiis separatis* ch. 3-4. See also Wayne Hankey, 'Denys and Aquinas', p. 139-84; Paul E. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 56-57.
17. *The Divine Names*, ch. 2, par 641A in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, tr. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 61. See also *Mystical Theology* ch 1, par. 1000B, p. 136.
18. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, Book 1, lesson 5, b, p.25. See also Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, tr. E. M. Edghill, par. 9-14. [http:// philosophy.eserver.org/aristotle/on-interpretation.txt](http://philosophy.eserver.org/aristotle/on-interpretation.txt) [accessed May 17 2016]
19. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2.72a7 in Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, p. 25.
20. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. CXXII (Paris, 1853), *De Divisione Naturae*, col. 684D, cited in Paul E. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa*, p. 52.
21. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book IV, chs. 3 & 4, 1006a 18-1007b 18 in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book 4, lesson 6, p.220. See also Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2.72a7, 1005b-2-34 St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, p. 25.
22. 'It is not...eternity or time.' See Pseudo-Dionysius (*The Complete Works*) *The Mystical Theology* ch. 5, 1048A, p. 141. See also *The Divine Names*, ch. 5, 825B, p. 103: 'The categories of eternity and of time do not apply to him, since he transcends both and transcends whatever lies within them.'
23. So, for example, Catherine Pickstock, 'Duns Scotus', in Milbank and Oliver (ed.), *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), p. 130 on the basis that God is beyond created being (which includes time).
24. *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia*, q.1, a.3, tr. Richard J. Regan, *The Power of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 10.
25. Aquinas, *On the Eternity of the World*, tr. Ralph McInerny, *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (London: Penguin, 1998), p.712.
26. *The Divine Names*, ch. 8, par 893B in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, p. 112.
27. Terms which recall Aristotle – see endnote 1.
28. *The Divine Names*, ch. 8, par 893B, Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Work*, p.112. The language of 'falling' is reminiscent of *Divine Names* 4.34 which refers to the evil angels who 'have fallen away from the virtues proper to them'. See Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, p. 95.
29. Thomas Aquinas, *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, ed. C. Pera (Marietti, Taurini, 1950), p. 287.
30. "God cannot fall from Being since it is not possible for him not to be" tr. Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 202. O'Rourke considers this passage an 'exception' to Dionysius' normal discourse and accuses him of appealing to 'an evidence to which, on his own terms, he is not entitled.'
31. I am grateful to Father Joseph Vnuk for this literal translation of the Latin *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*. Ed. C. Pera, (Marietti, Taurini, 1950), ch. VIII, 1, 111, p. 288.
32. For further discussion of this point see Alan P. Darley, 'How does eternity affect the law of non-contradiction?' (*Heythrop Journal* online edition, Wiley-Blackwell, 14 March, 2013).
33. It is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law.' ST 1-2, q. 91, a.2, *resp.*
34. Denys the Carthusian, a later interpreter of Dionysius goes on to make use of Aquinas' argument to counter arguments by Albert the Great against the quidditative knowledge of God *in patria*. He also clears Dionysius of heresy because, in Denys' view, he teaches, an even more immediate cognition in the beatific vision above every created intelligible species. See Kent Emery, Jr., 'A Complete Reception of the Latin Corpus Dionysiacum: The Commentaries of Denys the Carthusian' in Boiadjev, Kapriev, Speer, 'Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter': *Societe Internationale pour l'Etude de la Philosophie Medievale, Recentes de Philosophie Medievale*, 9, Turnhout, Belgium (Brepols, 2000).
35. Pope John XXII cites as one of Eckhart's heresies the doctrine that: "Every distinction is alien to God, both in his nature and in the persons. The proof: since His nature itself is one (*una*) and this very One (*unum*), and each Person is one and this same One as the nature." See *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Volume 1*, ed. and tr. M.O'C. Walshe (Rockport: Element Books 1979), p. 1. Eriugena was also condemned in 1225 for inspiring heretical teachers in Southern France. See Paul E. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa*, p. 52.

36. So Eriugena writes of those who contemplate God that “the whole of their nature shall be changed into Very God.” See John Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae)*, Book 1, 451A, ed. and tr. I.P. Sheldon-Williams with the collaboration of Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968), pp. 56-57. Fabro commenting on the difference between the two streams writes, ‘Through his notion of intensive esse and the consequent distinction between esse and essence in creatures, Thomas not only emphasises the difference between esse and being, but he also succeeds in making God’s presence in creatures more active and meaningful than in the pantheistic theories of Dionysius, Avicenna, Eckhart, Cusanus, Spinoza and Hegel. Whereas in these latter theories God as being is the Act as the *Essence of essences*, in Thomas’ view God as *Esse per essentiam* is the principle and actuating cause of *esse per participationem*, which is the proper, actuating act of every real essence.’ See C. Fabro, ‘The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy’ tr. B.M. Bonansea *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 27, no. 3 (Philosophy Education Society, 1974), p. 484.
37. *On Learned Ignorance, Letter of the author to Lord Cardinal Julian, 264 in Nicholas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings*, tr. H. Lawrence Bond (Paulist Press, 1997), p. 206. Significantly, Cusa recommends both Eriugena’s and Eckhart’s writings in Nicholas de Cusa, *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, ed. Raymond Kilbanksy (Hamburg: Meiner, 1932), vol. II of *Opera Omnia*, pp. 21-26, cited in Paul E. and, *Nicholas of Cusa*, p. 52, 62. By contrast the influence of Aquinas on Cusa is minimal. See. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa*, pp. 57-58.
38. *ST 1a*, q. 13, a. 4.
39. ‘All that participates unity is one and not one’ (*pan to metexon tou enos kai en esti kai ouk en*) Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 2, p. 3.
40. Catherine Pickstock, “Duns Scotus”, p. 130.
41. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 2, p. 3.
42. Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* had been recently translated into Latin by William of Moerbeke. Thomas noticed the resemblance between these writings and their anonymous summary in *Liber de Causis*.
43. *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, p. 29.
44. *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, Section 30, p.33. See also *ST 1a*, q. 14, a.1, resp.; *Compendium Theologiae* ch. 215: ‘The capacity of any created nature is evidently finite. Even though it is able to receive an infinite good by way of knowledge and fruition, it does not receive that good infinitely.’ tr. Cyril Vollert S.J., *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology* by Saint Thomas Aquinas (Manchester: Sophia Institute, 1993), p. 259.
45. See C. Fabro, ‘The Intensive Hermeneutics’, pp. 484-485.
46. John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: ontology and pardon* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.135.
47. See for example Aristotle’s magisterial refutations of objections to the law of non-contradiction in *Metaphysics*, Gamma 3-6, pp. 88-106.
48. *De divinis nominibus, proemium*.
49. See *In 1 Sent.* d. 35, q. 1, a. 4.
50. See Alan P. Darley, ‘Predication or Participation? What is the nature of Aquinas’ Doctrine of Analogy?’ in *Heythrop Journal* 57, no. 2 (March, 2016), pp. 312-324. See also comments by C. Fabro, ‘The Intensive Hermeneutics’, p. 485.
51. John Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, p. 132.
52. *Idem*.
53. SCG, Bk 2, ch 25, (17-18). See also *ST 1a*, q. 12, a. 1. The recurring refrain in Dionysius ‘as far as possible’ in reference to union with God suggests that he would have agreed with Aquinas on this point eg. *CH 3.164D*; *CH 3. 165B*; *CH 9.2. 257C*; *EH 5. 501A*.
54. Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 40-41.
55. Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn*, p. 210.
56. Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn*, p. 42.
57. Cited in Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn*, p. 157.
58. See Phillip Blond, *Red Tory: How the left and right have broken Britain and how we can fix it* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).
59. Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn*, p.155.
60. “Deus, qui cum sit una singularis, simplex omnino et incommutabilis substantia spiritualis, praedicandus est re et essential a mundo distinctus.” R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *God, His existence and His nature*, Vol. 1, p.5.
61. SCG Bk 1, ch 26, esp. par 3. See also *ST 1*, q. 29, a. 3, ad 4.
62. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, Proposition 9, p. 72.
63. E.g. *ST 1a*, q. 29, a.1; *De Potentia* q. 9, a. 2, ad 6.
64. Gilles Emery OP, ‘Central Aristotelian Themes in Aquinas’ Trinitarian Theology’ in *Aristotle in Aquinas’ Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.5-6.
65. *Impossibilitas coincidet cum necessitate*. See Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn*, p.29.

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66. Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn*, p. 30.
67. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Gamma 3, 1007A, p.92.
68. *ST* 1a, 29, a. 3, ad. 4
69. *ST* 1a, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2, cited in Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His existence and His nature*, pp. 224-227.
70. Ralph McNerny, *Being and Predication* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), pp. 161-162.
71. *ST* 1a, q. 16, a 6, *resp.*
72. In the order of knowing, truth begins first in the human intellect as an abstraction and is applied analogically to other things and to the Divine intellect.
73. *ST* 1a, q. 16, a. 2 *resp.*; *De Veritate* 1, 3.
74. Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, tr. Allan Wolter (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 20.
75. *Idem.*
76. Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, 1879 cited in Richard Peddicord, O.P., *The Sacred Monster of Thomism*, pp. 33-35.
77. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), Preface xii.
78. So for example the nihilist, Jean Baudrillard writes that the era of simulation ‘is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials...It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real.’ This ‘precession of the simulacra’, the confusion of the fact with its model ‘..is that allows each time for all possible interpretations, even the most contradictory – all true, in the sense that their truth is to be exchanged, in the image of all models from which they derive, in a generalised cycle.’ *Simulacra and Simulation*, tr. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004), p. 2, 17.
79. Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), p. 107. ‘The Absolute, as he declares, is the identity of identity and non-identity (p. 109)’; ‘Dialectic will find *all* in contradiction (p.113)’.
80. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Gamma 3, ‘the position under attack has now shifted...nothing exists.’ 1008A; ‘our opponent is...saying nothing’, 1008B, pp. 95-96.
81. *The Altizer-Montgomery dialogue*, (Chicago, Illinois: IVP, 1967), pp. 22-28.
82. Conor Cunningham notes the historical connection between Hegel and the ‘death of God’ theologians and cites Rowan Williams in observing a continuity between Cusa and Hegel. Nevertheless Cunningham still regards Cusa as a traditional theologian. See, *Genealogy of Nihilism*, p. 102.
83. *ST* 1a, q. 1, 8, ad. 2. As a follower of Augustine who admitted to making errors in his *Retractiones* this was the only logical position to adopt.