

## Futurology 4

### Thomas Aquinas and Eschatology

I have puzzled over how to invite you, now, to enter the mood of functional research in this world of Thomas, and especially how to give you a sense of fresh beginning. There is Thomas's last shot at this topic of Last Things, around 1263, at the end of *Contra Gentiles*. The stuff in the Supplement of the *Summa Theologica* is, of course, just a patchwork from earlier work.<sup>1</sup> Finally it seemed best for me to be brief in venturing into Thomas, and to move round about the topic so as to close with some musings over pieces of his *Contra Gentiles* effort.<sup>2</sup>

But I did have larger ambitions of myself patching in contexts of functional research from Lonergan's lengthy ventures into Aquinas, all the way up to his discovery leap of 1965 during which he sub-leaped to his surreal reading of Thomas's first question of the *Summa*. Have I not said enough about that? By no means. But the **enough said** is to be the effort of implementing his great leap to cyclic efficiency, one that is to be slowly effective.

Still, my final choice of a start here is a **not enough said** nudge regarding the fresh start, the cyclic work to be done. So I begin with my walking in Dublin with Lonergan in 1961. He was up from Rome for a week, and that particular day he was on the trail of a pair of shoes. But we rambled the cosmos mentally as we headed into the center of the town, and one of the topics was Thomas cosmology in its fullness. Lonergan spoke eloquently about the consistency of Thomas. I was obviously not taking notes, indeed that was never part of our exchanges, but luckily there is a quotable piece that makes his point.<sup>3</sup> I simply put in here the final sentence to make his key point.

This much is said to show that St Thomas's position on the influence of heavenly bodies is far more reasonable than that of the cosmology manuals that hold all places to be indifferent and yet define local motion as a transition from potency to act.

Here we have Lonergan with **not enough said** in half a page to show Thomas's position.

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<sup>1</sup> Probably compiled by Fra Rainaldo da Piperno, a companion of Thomas, and gathered from Thomas's commentary – before Thomas was 30 years old – on the fourth book of *The Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, I close this series of nine essays with an effort to nudge towards a communal following, within the massive heuristics offered by Lonergan, of Thomas's pointings in those texts.

<sup>3</sup> I quoted the fragment in its entirety in *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, page 13 at footnote 13.

How is it to become enough said? Only within the maturity of a genetic science of cosmic systems in which Thomas's position will be seen as a half-way house between Aristotle and Lonergan. Moreover, I would claim a parallel in that statement to my view of positionings expressed in the previous chapter, when I talked of Catch 22. Lonergan's incomplete eschatology is surreal in that Aristotle and Aquinas were massively handicapped by stumbling, if magnificent, myths, but Lonergan managed to make the leap to an explanatory precision of cosmic meaning that placed him firmly in mystery.<sup>4</sup> Within that context of mystery all was grasped "quite clearly then."<sup>5</sup> Those three words, referenced in the note, are a possibility of a fresh beginning to the search for an eschatology that is rooted in your taking up the task of reading the two pages of *Insight* into which those three words lead.

I already alluded, in the previous essay,<sup>6</sup> to the conclusion of the second page there, page 537, where we reach a high point in Lonergan's self-revelation, and noted that it would be at the heart of this venture into Thomas. In the following essay we will leap to, or rather skim foggily round, another high-point, the paragraph I named as 60910.<sup>7</sup>

Curiously, there is another half-way house involved in our ramble. Roughly, the meaning of interpretation homed in on here is the halfway house that is the treatment given to the topic by Lonergan in chapter 7 of *Method in Theology*. Its elementary perspective fits our present effort. Interpretation there requires that we understand the object and oneself.<sup>8</sup> On understanding oneself Thomas was extravagantly brilliant. But did he understand the object, the finite cosmos? Well, he did the best he could, leaning on Aristotle, scriptures, the Councils, the Fathers of the Church, the emergent scholastic tradition. But how do I say, "quite clearly then," that he did thus

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<sup>4</sup> A central context here is Thesis 5 of *The Triune God: Doctrines*, University of Toronto Press, 2009, CWL 11, 577ff. Lonergan homes in on the inverse insight that focuses the mystery and allows clarity in the understanding of faith. This is a very existential poise that I regularly draw attention to by commenting on analogy as involving the triple affirmation expressed in the phrase, "affirmation, negation, eminence." One relates to the Divine Persons, especially Jesus, affirmatively and in friendly fashion. But always there is the negation and eminence, the core mood of one's pilgrim "critical method: method with respect to the ultimate" (*Insight*, 708), with respect for the ultimate "that places human efforts in a friendly universe" (*Method in Theology*, 117) weaved round us by Three UltiMates. So I talk of the core prayer, "Double You Three in me in all, Claspings, Cherishing, Calling, Craving, Christing." See *Posthumous* 12 "Claspings, Cherishing, Calling, Craving, Christing" and *Posthumous* 14 "Double You Three in His Story" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous.html>).

<sup>5</sup> The words are from the top line of page 536 of *Insight*.

<sup>6</sup> See note 12 of *Futurology* 3.

<sup>7</sup> The paragraph spans the turn of the page from 609 to 610 in *Insight*.

<sup>8</sup> *Method in Theology* chapter 7, section 2 deals with "Understanding the Object"; section 5 deals with "Understanding Oneself."

without knowing the object better than he did, and indeed, without knowing the self better than he did?<sup>9</sup>

Thomas would have found the two pages of our focus, *Insight* 536-537—even if turned into his familiar Latin—startlingly remote. Now, of course, he is bettered poised and can chuckle—are there chuckles in heaven?—about the final words of *Insight* page 357. His basic enterprise, understanding the universe, “this basic enterprise can free itself from the morass of pseudo problems that otherwise beset it.” He had inherited a bundle of those problems from Aristotle. Where were earthly things in the Kingdom of Aristotle’s Heavens? And where might be the Christian heaven? And what might be said of corruptibles in heaven? Sometimes, going against the traditional view about Thomas’s final silence, I like to muse that when he was heading towards those end-times questions in the *Summa Theologica* he got a larger sniff of the pseudo-problems and quit. Of course, there is another angle: he got a better whiff of the problem of communicating with the local talent and quit!

Thomas had some great stuff in the end of the fourth book of the previous *Summa Contra Gentiles*. A decade later was he in better shape to push on? I take two passages out of context here for us to muse over:

[a] “The incorruptible form bestows an incorruptible being on the body in spite of its composition from contraries, because in respect to corruption the matter of the human body will be entirely subject to the human soul. But the glory and power of the soul elevated to the divine vision will add something more ample to the body united to itself. For this body will be entirely subject to the soul—the divine power will achieve this—not only in regard to its being, but also in regard to its action, passion, movements, and bodily qualities. Therefore, just as the soul which enjoys the divine vision will be filled with a kind of spiritual lightness, so by a certain overflow from the soul to the body, the body will in its own way put on the lightness of glory.”<sup>10</sup>

[b] “Both wholly and in part, of course, the heavenly bodies have the nature to be everlasting. The elements, however, have it wholly, but not in part, for in part they are corruptible. Man, of course, has it in part, but not wholly: for

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<sup>9</sup> I recall now note 9 of *Futurology* 2, where I promised to take up Lonergan’s reaching for the mind of Aquinas in *Futurology* 4, at the time titled “Running with Thomas Aquinas,” but that was over-ambitious. It would take more than a short essay to tune, for example, into even the limited run regarding the **self that decides** that Lonergan mentioned on page 94 of *Grace and Freedom*, CWL 1: “sixty three articles in a row in the *Prima secundae*.”

<sup>10</sup> See note 26 in the Prologue.

the rational soul is incorruptible, the composite, corruptible. These, then, which in any way at all have an aptitude for being everlasting will abide in their substance in that last state of the world, and God in His power will supply what is wanting in their own weakness. But the other animals, the plants, and the mixed bodies, those entirely corruptible both wholly and in part, will not remain at all in that state of incorruption.”<sup>11</sup>

I have given you here two texts from Thomas. You have read these, I suppose, in some usual way. Now think back, or into, the project of these essays, the effort to get us thinking in terms of functional research. Then I hope you gradually find that the reading of the text changes. Think of the people reading cyclotronic output in physics, noting events that are interesting oddities. Think, once more, of Boyer finding those interesting oddities in a single text of Thomas and noting them to Lonergan.<sup>12</sup>

Interesting? They interested Lonergan and he ran with them for nearly two years to a doctorate. His run carried him through research, interpretation and history critically assessed. But note also that the research itself was a mighty task.<sup>13</sup> Would it not have been a great advantage if Boyer had done adequate research for him, so that Lonergan could plunge forward into interpretation? But push this now if you have the energy and fantasy to see the recasting of the task and its goal involved in this new stand, this new Standard Model, etc. etc.<sup>14</sup>

What, then, of the two texts I provide above? I do so, to you, with the same type of nudging that Boyer gave Lonergan. These are, from my Standard Model point of view, red hot pieces of Thomas’s reaching. My nudging is different from Boyer’s and your response is to be different from Lonergan: neither of these chaps had functional collaboration in mind, in Standard Model mind. The Standard Model mind then was indeed in a mess.

I have no doubt that Boyer and Lonergan rambled on a bit before Lonergan left Boyer’s room. We cannot have such a conversation here, but I ramble now one-sidedly, first by taking an illustration from one text, then by talking in general, then by homing in again on the two texts.

The illustration is from the end of the first text, caught by my heavy Standard Model: the phrase “by a certain overflow from the soul to the body.” I point to this, like Boyer, saying that this is a hot spot, a doctorate

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<sup>11</sup> *Summa Contra Gentiles IV*, Chapter 97, page 348 in the O’Neil translation cited in note 26 of the Prologue.

<sup>12</sup> *Grace and Freedom*, CWL 1, xviii.

<sup>13</sup> Lonergan spoke occasionally of not having the texts of Thomas, so piling up a mountain of hand-written notes. He spoke, too, of the advantage of this labor.

<sup>14</sup> I will push it in various ways in *Futurology 8*, “The 8-fold Cyclic Way Folds Other Ways.”

thesis. “Why?” you say, doubting that you could get three hundred pages of stuff out of this phrase. Well, says I, go back to the Latin for “by a certain flow”: “*per quandam redundantiam.*” This is a cover-up for Thomas of the hint of an insight that has not matured. It is a cousin of a similar hint that Lonergan identified in Thomas in *Verbum*:<sup>15</sup> what might Thomas mean by “by a certain natural resultance,” “*per naturalem quondam resultationem.*”<sup>16</sup> “Too nice a question to be undertaken here.”<sup>17</sup>

Well, that gives you a clue about reading, whether data of physics or data of minding. Neither can be done without being gripped by the up-to-date Standard Model. This brings me to my general comment, which can be no more than a layered invitation. To read Thomas on this “everlasting set-up” stuff in a contemporary mode you have to have ingested, been gripped by, the two *Insight* pages 536-537. Thomas is doing his best with a muddled grip on the object. Have you a better grip on the object so that, for instance, while you can laugh at Aristotle’s heavens, you have some idea of a decent answer to the question: “Suppose you get to the edge of space, could you stick your arm out?”

It will take a great deal of collaborative work in these next generations to lift a community of collaborators to the comeabout, comallya, of lines 29–33 of *Insight* 537.<sup>18</sup>

And now what if we home in line by line on the second specific text? Our conversation would not be serious without the shared Standard Model, or at least your having an incarnate acknowledgement of its absence, if not an effective aspiration for it. I’ll return to some more about the specifics in *Futurology* 7, “Time and Eternity.” All I can say briefly here is that Thomas has terrific hints here, especially if you are thinking within the lifts<sup>19</sup> that

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<sup>15</sup> See *CWL* 2, 144-49.

<sup>16</sup> I quote here the Latin text of the *Summa Theologica*, *Pars Prima*, q. 77, a. 7, *ad primam*, “whether one potency of the soul arises from another.” The previous article of q. 77 (“whether the potencies of the soul flow from its essence”) has, in its *ad tertium* the phrase “*per aliquam naturalem resultationem*,” a slight variation. I would associate this problem with the problem of there being another type of causation, named *historical causation* (See F.E. Crowe, *Christ and History: The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982*, Novalis, St. Paul University Ottawa, 2005: the index under *historical causality*). Further, and more subtly, I would connect this with the problem of genetic flow of meaning in history and with the Lonergan’s second canon of hermeneutics, all focused here on the character of Resurrection, Jesus and ours: but best leave further comment on that to the conclusion of the next essay.

<sup>17</sup> *CWL* 2, 145.

<sup>18</sup> It will also take a massive shift in structuring courses that parallel “successful science” (*Method in Theology*, 3), courses in which there has to be a massive amount of name-dropping instead of name-dropping. Further, I am thinking now of the need for a move to focused undergraduate work: but that is a complex village challenge.

<sup>19</sup> There is a very important point lurking here. The problems of eschatology derive mostly from the absence of a heuristics of the pilgrim stage of human life.

have been our topics in the last two essays, thinking—at home in chapters 5 and 8 of *Insight*—of things and species in a modern version of “corruptible.”<sup>20</sup> Then you, within the Tower community, can work your way to a decent heuristic view of what it is to “have the nature to be everlasting.” If the beheaded Lavoisier could manage to blink without his fuller thing-body,<sup>21</sup> what might we do when weaved into the neurodynamics of the risen Jesus, a circuminceding chemistry of more than a hundred billion of us, flexing our glory-light round without the need of plants or animals, bread or wine or arks or quarks, in a ClapsedHimSaid, “This is My Body”?

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<sup>20</sup> In brooding over the meaning of corruptible I would recommend a serious pause over Thomas’s Third Way, *Summa Theologica, Pars Prima*, q. 2, a. 3, “*Utrum Deus sit.*” There is a useful popular presentation of these ways in my *Cantower 19, “Ultimates”* (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower19.pdf>).

<sup>21</sup> I am not here pitching for the truth of the legend regarding Lavoisier’s apprentice counting 12 blinks. I am rather pitching for a serious searching for truth about the human thing being everlastingly a growing glorious human thing, without say, limbs, liver, or lights.