Ontology, Thomism, and the *Esse* of Christ: A Theological Response to R. E. Houser

Cyrus P. Olsen III
University of Scranton

The following theological response to R.E. Houser's scholarship on the Avicennian provenance of God, understood as necessary being, serves to complement rather than critique his historical and textual study; it takes its cues from recent scholarship on Aquinas and, more fundamentally, from the development of Thomism proposed by the Jesuit Donald J. Keefe. As he lauds the distinction between essence and existence, Keefe further argues that this, the ontological object of Christian theology, needs to be conceived historically rather than cosmically, or ahistorically. Thomist act-potency relations (matter-form, substance-accident, essence-existence) cannot be considered cosmically lest necessity continue to haunt theological metaphysics; human beings cannot freely respond to the call to perfect creation in a universe marked simply by necessity. Just as Christian scholars argue that Aquinas altered Avicenna's thought as he brought his philosophy into dialogue with Catholic doctrine, so too does Keefe urge further conversion of Thomism as he shows that even Aquinas remained incapable of escaping the rigorous necessity that follows from adapting Platonic and Aristotelian ontology for Christian theological purposes. Houser helps us see how Aquinas's use of Avicenna can answer the question about how many esses *are in Christ, but Keefe pushes the Christological orientation of this Avicennian inheritance to become realistically historical lest the freedom of love Eucharistically perfected be imperiled by the logic of necessity.*

Introduction

According to R. E. Houser, the Avicennian provenance of God understood as necessary being (*necesse esse per se*) deeply marks Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics of *esse*; that metaphysics directly mirrors Avicenna's mode of argumentation subsequently opening Christian discourse to conclusions unknown to Aristotelian philosophy, conclusions principally related to Trinitarian theology.[1] Houser's argument serves to illuminate Aquinas's defense of the Council of Chalcedon's (451) definition of the hypostatic union. The theological fruit born of his philosophical acumen is the settling of the matter of how many "*esses*" are in Christ: one or two. A close reading of Aquinas reveals that there can only be one *esse*, the divine *esse* signifying the divine personhood of the Son, undivided as the Person is in the unity of divine nature. Essence and existence (a possible, though contested, translation of *esse*) are one in God, yet distinct in composite creatures. Avicenna aids Aquinas in his development of an orthodox scholastic account of Chalcedon once we read the "secondary existence" characteristic of Christ not as another *esse* but rather as a way of buttressing the relationship between "truly man" and "truly God;" as the divinity is upheld, so too is the integrity of his human nature. Houser's textual

[1] See e.g. R.E. Houser, "Aristotle and Two Medieval Theologians on the Nature of God," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 3, issue 203 (September 2011), 355-375; id., "Avicenna and Aquinas's *De Principiis Naturae*," *The Thomist* 76 (2012), 577-610.

analysis is further corroborated by recent scholarship on Aquinas and his sources.[2] There can be "only one *esse* of a thing that has parts," what Aquinas calls the "existence of the whole" (*esse totius*).[3] In accordance with the ontological relationship—not simply logical—between whole and part, Christ's wholeness requires one *esse*. If Chalcedon is to guide the metaphysics here, then only a divine *esse* can so order the unity of natures such that what is assumed is wholly redeemed. Avicenna's metaphysics accordingly contributes to Christological controversy.

The following theological response to Houser takes its cues from recent scholarship on Aquinas and, more fundamentally, from the development of Thomism proposed by the Jesuit Donald J. Keefe. As will become clear Keefe not only lauds the distinction between essence and existence, but he further argues that this valid insight needs to be conceived historically rather than cosmically, or ahistorically. For Keefe, Christian theological metaphysics starts from the revelation of God in Christ as this is received in the worship of the Church because Christ guarantees, not only the intelligibility of the material singular as the *concrete universal*, but also the freedom of created substance.[4] Precisely because "theology deals with a metaempirical reality," argues Keefe, "it must be at bottom a metaphysics."[5] The core of metaphysics remains ontology, or the systematic account of substance as indicative of the unity of reality. "Any systematic understanding in ontology has as its object a single understanding of reality, a solution to the classic problem of the one and the many. Thus the object of any such system, the unity of understanding and the unity of being, may be denoted by a word understood by all systems to indicate the object of systematic thought."[6] The word proposed for the unity of being is substance.[7] Substantial reality can be conceived materially, as in Aristotle, or immaterially, as in Plato. Keefe's theological account of substance is rooted in the *concrete universal* that is the Christ.

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[2] See e.g. David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas' Metaphysics of the Incarnation", in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, Gerald O'Collins, SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 197-218, esp. 197: "His interpretation is so thoroughly rooted in his general metaphysics that it is not possible to grasp this part of his philosophical theology without some understanding of his metaphysics;" Corey L. Barnes., "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Person, Hypostasis, and Hypostatic Union," *The Thomist* 72 (2008), 107-146; and J.L.A. West, "Nature, Specific Difference, and Degrees of Being: Metaphysical Background to Aquinas's Anti-Monophysite Arguments," *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2005), 39–80.

[3] The primacy of the whole of which the part remains simply that—a part—can be found throughout Aquinas's writings, even in his analyses of justice where he argues that actions belong to *supposita* and wholes, since a man acts *with* his hand, but the action is ever that of the whole person (*Summa Theologica*, II.IIae, q. 58, art. 2).

[4] See Donald J. Keefe, S.J., *Covenantal Theology: The Eucharistic Order of History*, 2 vols. in 1 (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996), 7, 444-445. The ontology proposed by Keefe remains theological in the way that Karl Barth thought Anselm's ontological argument fit only within a theological *a priori*. See Josef Pieper's *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy,* trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) for commentary on this relationship between Barth and Anselm.

[5] Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 19.

[6] Donald J. Keefe, SJ, *Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich: A Comparison of Systems* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 8. The Trinitarian theses provided by Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 178-190, are similarly rooted in the problem of the one and the many, purported to be resolved by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

[7] See Keefe, *Thomism*, 9-29.

Properly metaphysical and ontological theology "applies itself to the notion of substance, but it must identify its notion of substance with revelation, with the relation of being to God which is the true understanding of being."[8] The analogy of being must be that provided by Christian revelation rather than something purportedly prior.[9] The ontological systems of Aristotle and Plato undergo further transformation in light of God's covenantal relationship with creation, known biblically and historically. As we shall see, the "prime analogate of a Catholic metaphysical theology must be Trinitarian, covenantal, historical, free, and *gratia Christi*."[10] Again, the core of the theologian's systematic project is an account of the unity of reality, and the "real distinction" between essence and existence—historically illumined by Houser—remains central to that core commitment to ontological thought. The valid correlation provided by Thomism (and other systems, such as Paul Tillich's) is "summed up in the correlation between essence and existence."[11] Theological metaphysics becomes what he calls realistically historical insofar as reality is conceived in light of revelation.

Thomist ontological method becomes what Keefe calls the correlation of *act* to existence (*esse*) and *potency* to essence: "essence is potential, but not actual, substance."[12] The doctrine of creation and the Chalcedonian definition of the two natures of Christ force the Thomist method to situate substance *in act* with the revelation in Jesus the Christ; creation *in Christ* serves as *act* to the *potency* of created human substantiality, a substance that becomes itself as it freely attends to Christ. Creation then is understood ontologically as "in Christ," as *potency* to the *act* of perfected substance intelligibly manifest to that creation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Most fundamentally, Keefe provides the systematic theologian with detailed accounts of the relationship between faith and reason, and thereby continues what Josef Pieper and Étienne Gilson saw as the task begun in Anselm and developed most ably by Aquinas: "that necessary reasons cannot demonstrate the tenets held by faith, but can show that they are not contrary to reason; and that such use of the wisdom of the world is not a mixing of the wine (of theology) with the water (of reason), but should rather be called a changing of water into wine."[13] Keefe's theological metaphysics furthers our understanding of how "necessary reasons" can function within Thomist ontology without subjecting faith to a Procrustean bed. Indeed, he claims that the "Thomist conversion of Aristotelianism is the systematic solution of the Nestorian impasse."[14] Cognizant of the influence exercised upon Aquinas by Avicenna on this matter, Keefe nevertheless thinks that the conversion of Aristotelian ontology remained

[8] Keefe, *Thomism*, 29.
[9] The "theological question raised by Barth's criticism of philosophical analogy of being remains: is the systematically indispensable unity of being to be understood as monadic or as triune, as cosmos of as Covenant, as structure or as history, as necessary or as free, as "nature" or as grace" (Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 281, n. 51).
[10] Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 281, n. 51.
[11] Keefe, *Thomism*, 4-5.
[12] Donald J. Keefe, SJ, *Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich: A Comparison of Systems* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 56.
[13] Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 62; for elucidation of the relationship between necessary reasons and faith, the reader is directed to Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), 113.
[14] Keefe, *Thomism*, 255.

incomplete, even in Aquinas' own *corpus*. His writings fittingly challenge us to assess that conversion at the level of metaphysics.

Before proceeding further, let us register one final note on translation. In our colloquium Houser noted his preference for leaving *esse* untranslated, but for the sake of dialogue he was willing to use "existence." Similarly critical of rendering *esse* simply as "existence", Oliva Blanchette prefers "to be" or the "act of being," thereby capturing the more fully constituted term *actus essendi* which *esse* contracts.[15] Further engagement with a decision about translation is indeed required, for clarity on this matter can greatly aid dialogue among Thomists. However, such a task is beyond the scope of the following response. Keefe renders *esse* "existence" and so intends to highlight the activity of being, whether creaturely or divine. Perhaps a critique of Keefe could take issue with his choice of translation. Reference to the Latin term in question will be made where the meaning of essence and existence remains ambiguous.

Systematic Theology and Metaphysics: From Ontology to Henology?

According to W.J. Hankey, the nineteenth-century Thomist revival created a preoccupation with ontology, a preoccupation happily perpetuated by this present colloquium of the Institute for Saint Anselm Studies.[16] "Questions about structure," he argues, "were largely subordinate to the quest for a distinct doctrine of being. *Esse*, the absolutely simple act of being, was identified as the highest philosophical notion in Aquinas' system, providing his theology with its rational intelligibility."[17] What Hankey then characterized as a reaction against Thomism occurred in part "to replace ontology with henology, to substitute a science of the One for a science of being as the philosophical logic of theology."[18] As historical scholarship has shown, however, "the same late Hellenistic philosophical and theological tradition which was most concerned to give absolute priority to the One is that which was most consumed by the problems of structuring theology."[19] In point of fact, Hankey notes the (now twenty-five-year-old) trend in favor of henology over ontology cannot be any better than a one-sided focus upon monistic ontology; a balance is required in order for the integrity of Aquinas' project to stand up to further scrutiny. Consequently ontology, henology, and the structure of theology must be distinguished and disentangled if theology and metaphysics are to work harmoniously together in support of the faith that seeks understanding. Hankey's own synopsis of scholarship on Aquinas presents the *Summa* much the same way as Yves Congar had attempted to do more than fifty years before, namely, as a structure expressive of the *exitus-reditus* schema common to the Neo-Platonic heritage continued and yet greatly transformed by Aquinas.

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[15] Oliva Blanchette, *Philosophy of Being: A Reconstructive Essay in Metaphysics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).
[16] W.J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the* Summa Theologiae (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2.
[17] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 2.
[18] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 2; Jean Trouillard, PSS, Stanislas Breton, and Jean-Luc Marion are listed as "endeavoring to construct a henology to replace [Thomism's] ontological metaphysics" (id., *God in Himself*, 15).
[19] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 2.

Despite the difficulties that may attend preoccupations with *esse* common to the Thomistic revival occasioned by Pope Leo XIII, Hankey does admit that Aquinas' denial of "the composition of essence and existence in God remains central to his theology."[20] The denial of composition bolsters the simplicity of God and "requires that both be united in his *esse*."[21] Furthermore, since "actuality is a higher perspective than causation," Aquinas' *Summa* builds upon *de divinis nominibus* (questions 3 to 11) "and lays down the rules for applying names to God, [and] determines that *esse* is the highest of [those names]: 'this name, *Qui est* . . . is the most proper name of God'. This is the teaching from which a philosophy [of *esse*] has been extracted in the last century."[22] Both Houser and Hankey contend that the novelty claimed for Aquinas's philosophy of *esse* cannot be sustained by historical scholarship. Houser's textual analyses of Aquinas' Avicennian metaphysics supports Hankey's synopsis of Neo-Platonic research.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Avicenna received the identity of essence and existence in God from a tradition originating in Porphyry. Porphyry in fact "is the source of this doctrine in the Christians Victorinus, Augustine, Boethius. . . . Indeed Thomas is only one in the long line of interpreters of the crucial early texts in Boethius which convey it to the Middle Ages."[23] What scholars once thought distinguished as a "metaphysic of Exodus" indebted to Aristotelian thought turns out to be Neo-Platonic:

> What served to distinguish Thomas from Aristotle in this regard—Thomas was thought to have been able to grasp the import of Exod. 3:14 because of the Aristotelian direction of his thought, though his 'existential' philosophy of being was contrasted with Aristotle's 'essentialism'—in fact rather serves to distinguish his position as Neoplatonic as opposed to Aristotelian. Indeed, the characteristics meant to place Thomas and Avicenna together in the tradition of Exodus rather serve to identify their common filiation from Porphyry.[24]

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[20] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 4.
[21] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 4.
[22] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 5; in note 9 Hankey provides the following: "'hoc nomen Qui est . . . est maxime proprium nomen Dei', *ST* I, 13, 11. On the priority of activity, cf. *In de Div. Nom.*, v, i, 634ff. and *In de Caus*., prop. 18 and also props. 3 and 12."
[23] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 5-6. David Burrell describes this "classical scheme" of metaphysics common to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim writers of the Middle Ages as having grown out of "that neo-platonic harmony of Aristotle with Plato legitimized by passing on Books I-II of the *Enneads* of Plotinus as the "Theology of Aristotle." The result was an articulated emanation from the One of diverse levels of spiritual substances (more or less identified in the heavenly bodies) culminating in the Agent Intellect, whose role was to enlighten human beings regarding their place in the cosmos by illuminating them regarding all that lay above and below them. The levels of intelligences, moreover, offered a paradigm for those same human beings in their noblest practical endeavor: politics. So the scheme not only linked nature with spirit, the structure of the cosmos with a theory of knowledge, but provided a pattern for action as well by properly subordinating practical to speculative knowing" (Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God*, 9).
[24] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 6. For a recent invocation of this Gilsonian material, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40-44.

The common filiation further underscores Keefe's insight that the intuition of being from within the Platonic tradition sits uneasily with the Aristotelian strain of Thomism *unless* the two are brought together in Eucharistic liturgy, where the worshiper freely encounters the free and triune God.

Logic and Metaphysics

The prologue to Aquinas's *On being and essence* (*De ente et essentia*) draws directly from Avicenna's commentary on Aristotle in order to distinguish between "being" (*entia*) and "essence" (*essentiae*). "If, then, we are to avoid mistakes through ignorance of these," writes Aquinas, "we must begin exploring the difficulty by stating what is meant by saying 'a being' and 'an essence', how they are found in different things, and how they are related to the logical notions of genus, species, and difference."[25] Logical "notions," or *intentiones*, are meant to translate the Arabic for concepts.[26] Concepts (*intentiones*) such as genus, species, and difference can be called "beings" (*entia*) insofar as they are conceptual realities, realities that Aquinas considers "logical" rather than "metaphysical."[27] "Perhaps the strongest statement of the difference between logic and metaphysics," argues Robert Schmidt, SJ, "occurs in the commentary on the seventh book of the *Metaphysics*."[28] What elsewhere is indicated by *intentiones* becomes "mode of predication:" "Logicus enim considerat modum praedicandi, et non existentiam rei. . . . Sed philosophus . . . existentiam quaerit rerum."[29] Modes of predication are compared to the "existence of things," but the "being" that marks the commonality of logic to metaphysics is further articulated in *De ente et essentia*:

> We must realize (with the Philosopher) that the term 'a being' in itself (*ens per se*) has two meanings. Taken one way it is divided by the ten categories; taken in the other way it signifies the truth of propositions. The difference between the two is that in the second sense anything can be called a being if an affirmative proposition can be formed about it, even though it is nothing positive in reality. In this way privations and negations are called beings, for we say that affirmation *is* opposed to negation, and that blindness *is* in the eye. But in the first way nothing

[25] Thomas Aquinas, *On being and essence*, trans. Armand Maurer, 2nd rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968), 28 [Quia parvus error in principio magnus est in fine, secundum philosophum in I caeli et mundi, ens autem et essentia sunt quae primo intellectu concipiuntur, ut dicit Avicenna in principio suae metaphysicae, ideo ne ex eorum ignorantia errare contingat, ad horum difficultatem aperiendam dicendum est quid nomine essentiae et entis significetur et quomodo in diversis inveniatur et quomodo se habeat ad intentiones logicas, scilicet genus, speciem et differentiam. Quia vero ex compositis simplicium cognitionem accipere debemus et ex posterioribus in priora devenire, ut, a facilioribus incipientes, convenientior fiat disciplina, ideo ex significatione entis ad significationem essentiae procedendum est.].

[26] See the note by Armand Maurer in Aquinas, *On being and essence*, 28, n. 3.

[27] See Robert W. Schmidt, SJ, *The Domain of Logic According to Saint Thomas Aquinas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 42-48 for more extensive references to the differences between logic and metaphysics in Aquinas's writings.

[28] Schmidt, *The Domain of Logic*, 46.

[29] *In VII Met.*, 17, n. 1658; quoted in Schmidt, *The Domain of Logic*, 46.

> can be called a being unless it is something positive in reality. In the first sense, then, blindness and the like are not beings.[30]

Combining therefore the material from the commentary on *Metaphysics* with *De ente et essentia*, we can see that the ten categories of a being apply to the existence of the thing in question, namely its metaphysical reality. Only that which can be said *to be* substantially can be signified as a being in itself (*ens per se*). Being in the first sense cannot be said unless that which is signified is real (*Sed primo modo non potest dici ens nisi quod aliquid in re ponit*). Otherwise we are signifying a logical relation rather than a substantial one insofar as the "being" of blindness cannot be said to be an *ens per se*. Even here the language of affirmation can be shown to be influenced by Avicenna, for whom, it is said, "existence is synonymous with affirmation."[31] Affirmation entails existence, but the existence of the affirmation can be of two kinds: logical or metaphysical.

As Armand Maurer notes, the description provided in this section of *De ente et essentia* rests upon a metaphysics of privation whereby blindness can only be understood as the negation of the thing (*res*) called vision. Vision can be accounted for positively, whereas blindness can only be accounted for negatively. Blindness as a privative condition is real, but there cannot be a substance called "blindness" as such; it cannot be called "a being in itself" (*ens per se*). Blindness understood as "a being" can *be* only by analogy with the primacy of substantial existence. So-called "first intention" reaches to the existing being as real; then the further metaphysical work can proceed. The "second intention" remains on the level of logical relations among concepts, propositions, or predications. In Aquinas's rejection of Albert the Great's equivocal "use of 'hypostasis' both as a term of first intention or first imposition (i.e., a name for a thing) and as a term of second intention (i.e., the name for an abstraction)," he rather insists that "person" and "hypostasis" "are names of first imposition (names of things) rather than names of second intentions (logical abstractions) (*De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 2, ad. 2)."[32] Aquinas's early discussion of the relationship between logic and metaphysics thus remains applicable to our understanding of how Christ's hypostasis can be denominated. For Aquinas, Christ's hypostasis is named metaphysically because the Son is indeed existing really and eternally and also *in re*, namely in the historical Jesus the Christ; hence Stump's use of the phrase "the person Christ," which can be distinguished from "the person of Christ."

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[30] Thomas Aquinas, *On being and essence*, trans. Armand Maurer, 2nd rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968), 29-30 [Sciendum est igitur quod, sicut in V metaphysicae philosophus dicit, ens per se dicitur dupliciter, uno modo quod dividitur per decem genera, alio modo quod significat propositionum veritatem. Horum autem differentia est quia secundo modo potest dici ens omne illud, de quo affirmativa propositio formari potest, etiam si illud in re nihil ponat. Per quem modum privationes et negationes entia dicuntur; dicimus enim quod affirmatio est opposita negationi et quod caecitas est in oculo. Sed primo modo non potest dici ens nisi quod aliquid in re ponit. Unde primo modo caecitas et huiusmodi non sunt entia.].

[31] See Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God*, 30.

[32] Barnes., "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Person, Hypostasis, and Hypostatic Union," 109, 135. See also *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 2, arg. 5: "Persona autem est nomen rei et substantiae."

Logic deals with "a being" insofar as the inquiry "signifies the truth of propositions." The logical affirmation of a being entails analyses of propositions, but the being (*ens*) in question is not *per se*, but *in* another and can be called a "second intention," rather than a first, insofar as the reference need not imply necessarily a reference to an existing being. A reference made with "first intention" rather indicates the other type of meaning to be applied to *ens per se* such that the inquirer truly signifies the essence of the thing. The "intuition" of the unity of being common to Pythagorean-Platonic method can be united with the Aristotelian understanding that the unity of being is known through "logical" method; that unity of being Aristotle names "substance," the "object" of systematic thought (according to Keefe).[33] Truly systematic thought must provide an account of substance that *can also* be accessed intuitively. Indeed, well-developed metaphysical inquiry requires a constant movement from the intuitive into the scientific characterized as a "there and back again" journey of the human knower. As Aquinas would have it, human knowledge occurs via the *conversio ad phantasmata*, a kind of ostensible definition. In the turning of the intellect to sensible reality the intellect abstracts from the sensible singular as it searches for the nature of that being (*ens*) metaphysically conceived.[34] The intuition of the whole, of the harmony sensed beyond the evident brokenness of historical existence, is achieved where the person meets the whole Christ eucharistically mediated in the liturgy, thereby recognizing that the human person is *simul iustus et peccator* in union with the divine and healing *esse* of the Christ.

Liturgy and Metaphysics of Freedom

For Keefe, Catholic metaphysical theology accordingly remains rooted in worship. By praying with the Church the theologian intuitively undergoes a tuning process by means of liturgical harmony, a harmony that can withstand the scientific gaze characteristic of the person capable of discerning the systematic unity of the Church's worship centered on the Eucharistic Christ, the "source and summit" of the faith.[35] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* well articulates the process of lived initiation into faith taken by Keefe as foundational for theological metaphysics: "For it is in the liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that 'the work of our redemption is accomplished,' and it is through the liturgy especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."[36] Through worship the person is initiated into the mysteries of Christ (known as "mystagogy") and comes to see more clearly the sacramental nature of human knowing. What is called "liturgical catechesis" initiates people "into the mystery of Christ (It is "mystagogy.") by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the 'sacraments' to the 'mysteries.'"[37] Catholic theology can proceed precisely along these lines. The

[33] See Keefe, *Thomism*, 8.
[34] For my own reading of the *conversio ad phantasmata*, see Cyrus P. Olsen, "The Acts of 'Turning' and 'Returning' in Aquinas", *Nova et Vetera,* English Edition, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2014), 871–96.
[35] For the relationship between attunement and liturgy, see Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973); Joseph Cardincal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000).
[36] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §2; cited in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1068.
[37] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1075.

"sacramental structure" of reality is first learned in worship, a structure not monistically conceived, but rather essentially Trinitarian.[38]

The Trinitarian focus of Keefe's theology protects the freedom of God and further explains why it is necessary for the fallen creature to meet the perfected harmony of God liturgically; only in a place where these two freedoms meet can the integrity of both God and humanity be preserved. Unlike philosophy, the theologian must proceed from what is offered to all people of faith in the heart of the Church, namely the Eucharistic Christ. It is here that theological metaphysics can proceed to a scientific clarity concerning what Keefe calls the "order" of reality, an order that is known as historical since God reveals to humanity the fullness of God's plan through the fulfillment of the Covenant in the Christ.[39] The order is historical because God has revealed who God is in history. The *qui est* (God as the one "who is") of Aquinas's and Augustine's metaphysics needs to be interpreted historically, Keefe thinks.[40] As we have seen, Augustine hands on the Porphyrian tradition of interpreting *Exodus* 3:14 metaphysically, and Augustine understood this to be an historical revelation of God's name. Subsequent metaphysics of *Exodus*, however, interpreted this ahistorically. Keefe thinks that the historical aspect of this Christian metaphysics arising from the name of God was not taken in its fullest sense. Who God "is" comes to be revealed fully in the Christ, the one who recapitulates salvation history in his life, death, and resurrection. Metaphysical inquiry into God as *qui est*, also called *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, is only completed when it is understood that this name does not indicate God *apart from* God's relationship with creation, but rather reveals God's countenance as the one who is *for us* in history.

As we noted above, Keefe too argues that Avicenna's ontology allowed Aquinas to break free from the "chain of necessity" resulting from the use of Aristotelian act-potency metaphysics. Once we rightly understand the existential contingency of created humanity (Keefe's preferred terminology for the way human existence (*esse*) remains ever dependent upon the historical and ontological priority of the Christ), then we can see that this contingency "can be understood in two ways: existence or *esse* can be understood to be an accident, the correlate of essential substance, as Avicenna thought, or it can be understood according to the mind of St. Thomas, as the correlate of essence. The former understanding is not Thomist, and is . . . incompatible with a free creation."[41] By "free creation" Keefe does not simply mean God's freedom to create, though that sense is implicit in the claim, but also that, in order for *creation* to be free, creaturely *esse* cannot be relegated to an accident. In his commentary on the *Sentences*, Aquinas compares

[38] Here I follow the insights of John M. McDermott, SJ, 'La Struttura Sacramentale della Realta', *La Scuola Catholica* 128 (2000), pp. 273–99. There is a disagreement between Keefe and McDermott insofar as Keefe takes issue with "structure" and prefers "order," for the latter emphasizes the free relation between God and humanity at the heart of reality itself.
[39] See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 206, n. 124.
[40] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, Book I, Distinction 8, article 3: "in Deo esse sit ante alia attributa, et "qui est" inter alia nomina". See E.M. Macierowski, *Thomas Aquinas's Earliest Treatment of the Divine Essence* (Binghamton, NY: Binghamton University Press, 1998), 48-51. Augustine's *De trin.* cap. Ii, col. 912, t. VIII is quoted in the opening of *In I Sent.* 8,
[41] Keefe, *Thomism*, 88.

human *esse* to God's unchanging *essence* thereby demonstrating the contingency of human existence. Essence can be correlated with *esse* precisely because these are one in God.

In his defense of a Thomistic account of *esse* Keefe nevertheless argues that the underlying Aristotelian and Avicennian methods must undergo a transposition. "Thomism is," argues Keefe, "the transposition of act-potency metaphysics to the gratuitous order of existence."[42] By "existence" Keefe intends *esse*, and the gratuity of that order duly accentuates divine freedom. As we shall see, the further step Keefe thinks necessary for theology is a development of Thomism in the direction of what he calls realistically historical metaphysics. The *esse totius* of Aquinas is metaphysically explained in conjunction with history so that the Augustinian *Christus totus* (whole Christ) becomes the prime analogate for theological metaphysics rather than an a-historically conceived *esse*.[43] The divine *esse* is not thereby rendered historical, as if God's being develops in time, but rather indicates the way in which the analogy of being operates most faithfully within a Catholic context for systematic theological metaphysics. If the act-potency method of Thomism is to be transposed according to the norms set by Chalcedon, and subsequent development of doctrine, then metaphysics must become historical. Consequently, what is required is "a return to the doctrinal tradition as governing the metaphysical."[44]

The presupposition animating Keefe's insight into method is founded precisely on the recognition that theology cannot be abstracted from revelation conceived historically. An epistemological priority thus underpins the efficacy of theological metaphysics. When the theologian undertakes metaphysical inquiry, he or she does so from within the Thomistic *conversio ad phantasmata* contained in the unified treasury of Scripture and tradition that together present the fullness of revelation offered in the life, death, and resurrection of the Christ. The use of any other system in conjunction with revelation ultimately subordinates the theology to the system so correlated (more on correlation presently).

Theological method must then proceed by means of a prime analogate, one that is truly historical. Blanchette, for example, argues that metaphysics is most successful when the human being remains the prime analogate.[45] Keefe has something similar in mind, as long as the human being is not considered apart isolation from God. Rather, the God-Man, Jesus the Christ, whom the worshiper meets Eucharistically in and through the Church, becomes the prime analogate for metaphysics. How does one come to know the prime analogate? One comes to know the prime analogate through the worship of the Church wherein the worshiper is freely offered the opportunity to unite himself or herself with the Christ sacramentally.

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[42] Keefe, *Thomism*, 85.
[43] See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 24-25.
[44] Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 20.
[45] For a description of how this prime analogate functions in metaphysics, see Blanchette, *Philosophy of Being*, 135-136; for Hegel, see id., *Philosophy of Being*, 24-25.

> The assertion of such a prime is to some extent a departure from the ordinary course of Catholic metaphysical speculation, which simply asserts the primacy of God, whether as the One God or more rarely as the Trinity. The theological a priori postulated here is not in disagreement with this more traditional emphasis, for the New Covenant is in fact the concrete revelation of the Triune God: viz., God the Father's sending of the Son to give the Holy Spirit. But the methodological postulate of a truly historical theology is a refusal of the methodological isolation of God from man which is the insupportable burden of Traditional Thomism of the schools. It asserts instead, as the indispensable place for theology to begin, as the sole interest of the theological *quaerens* and therefore as the sole interest of a properly theological metaphysics, the historical Event of the created and free relation of the second Adam and the second Eve, the New Covenant, in which consists the free relationship of the Trinity with creation by means of the free immanence in creation of the Son, an immanence that is at once revelation, salvation and creation in Christ.[46]

Avicenna's ability to unify esse and essence in God, and subsequently to predicate creaturely division of these upon creation *ex nihilo*, helps us to see how the perfection of the human creature must be understood as a freely engaged perfection. What the creature perfects "by grace" is already perfected "by nature" in the Father, who is consubstantial with the Son. As we shall see this relationship between grace and nature cannot render grace merely an "accidental property" or "accidental possibility" of the substantial nature, otherwise grace becomes an "accident" and thus cannot be referred to as a communication of God's very life to the creature, for nothing of God can be called "accidental" since God is not a composite substance. The details of the grace-nature relation have to be tabled until later in this paper. Presently let us simply register the distinction between Creator and creature that underpins Keefe's use of the term "existential mode" for the transposition of Aristotelian ontology into a viable Christian theology.

Substance and Freedom

What Keefe has in mind, then, when he argues that Aristotelian necessary essentialism is transposed into an existential mode, is a transformation firstly of the Thomist account of substance so that we understand secondly the way that the Trinitarian God becomes united with the creature in and through the very being of Christ. The act-potency method situates the human being as a creature in potency for the actuated essence of its substance in and through Christ, who, as the "formal existential cause" of humanity "in the beginning" sets the human being free from natural necessity. Although Avicennian ontology too proceeds according to creation *ex nihilo*, the doctrine alone remained incapable of securing metaphysical coherence for a Christian-inflected Aristotelianism. As we shall see, Aquinas shares with Avicenna a proper focus upon the

[46] Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 19.

"One" God, but Aquinas's thought has the added complement so ably noted by Prof. Houser, namely the dogmatic tradition of Christianity arising out of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The so-called essentialism of Aristotle altered by Avicenna enabled Avicenna to see that the evident contingency of existence through his *esse*-essence distinction would lead to the deduction that God, understood as *Ipsum Esse*, is inseparable from his effects. Some version of a necessary emanation of the *bonum diffusivum sui* rears its head. Keefe accordingly notes:

> A free creator is not deduced from an intrinsically necessary creation, as Avicenna also saw. St. Thomas broke this chain of necessity, but in doing so he created a theology, not a philosophy, for the hypothesis upon which his ontology is founded is theological, not philosophical. It assumes the ontological truth of the faith, and then proceeds to form an ontological structure consistent with that assumption. The truth of the faith is the *prius* of this ontology, and it is therefore theological at the outset.

Here we are provided with a distinction between philosophy and theology that enables us to see the primacy of the rule of the faith that seeks understanding; as faith "moved" from reiterations of the *lex orandi* in the fourth century into theological speculation, so today that movement must be recapitulated in us as we come to understand the order of priority for Aquinas's deductions.[47]

As a result of the theological priority adopted by Aquinas, resultant developments in Thomism transform basic philosophical principles of metaphysics, such as the act-potency relation. The method of Thomist ontology accordingly remains an act-potency correlation. Correlation is a term Keefe adapts from Paul Tillich and which he intends most fundamentally to indicate the way the Christian theologian seeks to clarify the interrelation between divinity and humanity in the Christ.[48] As a result of the interrelation between divinity and humanity, "theology is inevitably involved in a dualist methodology."[49] The valid dualist methodology of Thomist ontology becomes dependent upon "the prime truth of the mutuality of God and man in the Christ."[50] At the core of the development of Thomist ontology, grounded in the *esse* of Christ as this is understood in the hypostatic union, we shall see how God cannot remain ahistorically (or cosmically) considered simply *Ipsum Esse*, but must be understood and worshipped historically as even this revelatory "name" of God functions typologically and so comes to fulfillment in the full manifestation of God's love through the life, death, and resurrection of the

[47] "The crisis of 318 was part of a larger movement: a movement from the rule of faith to theology, from the language of confession to the language of reflection, from belief to speculation on what was believed. The rule of faith and the *lex orandi* were clear and accepted by all. . . . Characteristically, the Fathers of the early fourth century can readily quote creedal statements, but cannot so readily explain them. Since Origen, no great theologian had come along to explain the faith in the language of reflection and speculation" (Joseph T. Lienhard, SJ, "The "Arian" Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered", *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), 415-437, here 420; cited in Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 286, n. 56).
[48] Keefe, *Thomism*, xi.
[49] Keefe, *Thomism*, xi.
[50] Keefe, *Thomism*, xi.

Christ. "Christ," argues Keefe, "is understood as the existential actuality, the formal existential cause, of a humanity otherwise confined to essential immanence."[51] The formal cause is immanent in the matter which it informs. So what does Keefe intend by this claim about Christ? Christ as formal existential cause of a humanity is explained in conjunction with creating freely.

Since God creates freely, and creation occurs "in Christ," and though Christ's *esse* is divine, this creation is understood to be "primordial" because the Son's incarnation remains the principle for the creation of humanity as such. Humanity thus participates in Christ, not Christ's *esse*, for this would render humanity in some way a divine person, but rather in the hypostatically united divinity and humanity that then informs created humanity from the beginning. The incarnation is thus primordial, not the result of sin, and so the incarnate Son's obedient mission for the Father, and in the Spirit, functions as the prior "act" to which our creaturely "potency" is ordered. Not only does Christ give form, but Christ's very form itself functions as act to the potency that humanity remains until the eschaton. "The human substance is therefore actual by the actuality of Christ; He is the formal cause of the substantial unity of all men."[52] To become perfect by the perfection of grace would then entail that the human species ever remains intrinsically stamped with the form of Christ, such that the perfect nature of the Father incarnate by the Son and communicated through the Spirit renders creation as such "graced" precisely because humanity is created "in Christ." Nature cannot thus be interpreted as indicative of the "substance" later to be adorned by the "accident" of grace. Rather, the divine nature itself can be understood as the fullness of grace in Christ that serves as the act to the potency of grace in the human substance that ever remains distinct from the Creator. Keefe can thus say that the incarnation is "the ontological *prius* of humanity, for it is identical to the contingent actuality of humanity, to the creation of the human substance."[53] An analogy of freedom is required to account for free assent to union whereby the human being's potency for perfection acquires its proper trajectory.

Correlation and Metaphysics

Following Paul Tillich, Keefe argues that such an analogy requires a "correlation" of systems that may help us understand the transformation of Aristotelianism taken for granted by Keefe that well complements Houser's scholarship on Aquinas's dependence upon Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle.[54] If we were to be consistent with Houser's claims, we should rather say "Avicennian" than "Aristotelian," but since Aristotelian philosophical tools remain the common ground, I think we can register the debt to Avicenna while retaining reference to

[51] Keefe, *Thomism*, 5.
[52] Keefe, *Thomism*, 91.
[53] Keefe, *Thomism*, 91. "In short, a theory of the analogy of being which implies that the material individual is a direct, substantial participation in *Ipsum Esse* must be rejected. It can be supported by no act-potency metaphysics, for if there is one thing that is equally clear in existentialist Thomism and in essentialist Aristotelianism, it is that the material member of a species is not *divisum ab omni alio*, but rather is united to every other member of the species by the immanent activity which is specific to the species. Such an individual is not a substance, but a participation in substance" (Keefe, *Thomism*, 86).
[54] See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 8.

Aristotle. Keefe's version of systematic theology requires that if one is to use Aristotle to speculate in a theological mode, then such speculation becomes a correlation eminently aiding intellectual insight into faith's mysteries as long as the philosophy of nature, let us say, does not control the content of the faith. Rather, the correlation requires that the speculative tool itself undergo a transformation under the influence of faith's content. In conjunction with correlation rightly understood, even the effective tools provided by Aristotelianism and its Avicennian translation require transformation. "In Thomism," he writes, "the principles of being are correlated logically in an ontological composition of act and potency, on the three levels of matter-form, substance-accident, and essence-existence."[55] The systematic consistency and indeed wealth of Thomism (as much as Tillich's method) can be located in the "correlation between essence and existence".[56] We thus see how dependent this method is upon the exegesis provided by Houser: were we to misread the correlation, we would fail to make full use of benefits accorded theology as a result of the distinction. I take it this is what Houser means at the end of his paper by the deleterious effects of the controversies surrounding *esse* in Christ.

Thomistic theological correlation with Aristotelianism requires that the act-potency method leave behind natural necessity when the union of God and humanity in the Christ is under consideration. The reason for this is not because Aristotelian natural philosophy is metaphysically unhelpful, but rather that the necessity entailed by the metaphysics has to be altered by the freedom of God and the human being. "What is necessary can be neither free nor sinful," argues John M. McDermott.[57] McDermott further specifies that analogate by focusing our attention on the Christ. "Jesus calls us to follow him to the Father," the source and cause (*principium*)[58] of the Son's being, "because an analogy exists between the Son's acceptance of divine sonship and nature from the Father and our acceptance of existence and nature from God."[59] (Here I think we are at the heart of our colloquium centered on *esse*.) McDermott notes that such acceptance need not lead to what the medievals called the *homo assumptus* theory whereby the Son comes to be something he was not prior to the reception of Sonship. Instead, Jesus' saying "The Father loves me because I give my life in order to take it up again" (John 19:17) "should be applied to the inner-trinitarian life."[60] Theological speculation remains thus grounded in the witness of Scripture. McDermott continues thus:

> The Son receives all, his being and nature, from the Father who communicates his whole being and nature to the Son. In perfect self-giving the Father retains nothing for himself except the relation of paternity which is necessary for the gift

[55] Keefe, *Thomism*, 3.
[56] Keefe, *Thomism*, 4-5.
[57] John M. McDermott, SJ, "How Did Jesus Know He Was God? The Ontological Psychology of Mark 10:17-22," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 74 (2009), 272-297, here 280.
[58] McDermott, "How Did Jesus Know He Was God?", 277, n. 9: "For the understanding of *principium* as 'cause' (Greek *aitia*), see the recent (1995) statement of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, 'La Procession du Saint-Esprit,' *Enchiridion Vaticanum 14: Documenti Ufficiali della Santa Sede* 1994–1995 (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1997), 1726–1747, esp. par. 2969 and 2982, where Maximus's translation is approved."
[59] McDermott, "How Did Jesus Know He Was God?", 277.
[60] McDermott, "How Did Jesus Know He Was God?", 277, n. 12.

> to be a gift: see DS 1330. Freely the Son empties himself in eternity to receive everything from the Father. He, thereby, returns everything to the Father who gives him everything, his whole nature. Because the Son gives his whole life to the Father, the Father loves him and perpetually bestows himself upon the Son. Thus Trinitarian life provides the basic law of reality: only in losing oneself does one find oneself (John 12:24–25; Mark 8:35). In perpetual self-emptying the Son receives the perpetual joy of being filled by the Father's love. The divine nature is not a given nature shared by three divine persons. The divine nature consists of the three persons sharing themselves. Thus the Son's self-emptying on the cross (Phil 2:7) is not contrary to his divine nature but its clearest revelation under the conditions of sin.[61]

Under the conditions of sin the incarnate Son perfectly fulfills the will of the Father. Since Jesus "knows himself as the Father's unique Son," a relation that is "immediate and constitutive of his person," Jesus "cannot refuse his relation." "Our relation to the Father is mediated through Jesus' humanity. We creatures can refuse that relation."[62] The capacity to refuse the relation precisely marks the risk at the center of our personhood and indicates the way that clarity on the *esse*-essence relation assists our understanding of freedom, both human and divine. If freedom, sin, and the conquering of sin are to remain central to Catholic theology—and they must if the dogmatic tradition is to be upheld, maintained, and passed on—then substance, again, must be freed from necessity.

For Aristotle, on Keefe's reading, essence is "entirely actual" and without any correlation to formal cause. When the substantial unity of being is essential, the *causa sui* is completely immanent in the substance. Material substance accordingly becomes an "essentialist surrogate for God."[63] The substance indeed "transcends the individual but not the species." An analogy of being within such a framework can then be dubbed "necessarily anthropocentric." Accordingly, let us return to a quotation provided earlier in the paper, wherein Keefe mentions the two ways existential contingency can be understood by an act-potency metaphysics:

> existence or *esse* can be understood to be an accident, the correlate of essential substance, as Avicenna thought, or it can be understood according to the mind of Saint Thomas, as the correlate of essence. The former understanding is not Thomist, and . . . incompatible with a free creation. It is, in its ultimate implications, pantheist, for the creator is subsumed to the necessities immanent in creation. Further, this understanding, since it does not support the essence-*esse* correlation which alone constitutes existential substance—one whose existence is not deduced from an essential intelligibility by logical inference—supposes that

[61] McDermott, "How Did Jesus Know He Was God?", 277-278, n. 12.
[62] McDermott, "How Did Jesus Know He Was God?", 277.
[63] Keefe, *Thomism*, 83.

> creation is simply the placing of a necessary essence outside its cause. Within this essential human substance, everything proceeds by necessity.[64]

The theologian must thus account for the freedom of existential substance (humanity) in order that the freely constituted and freely elected relationship of love between God and humanity might be preserved.

Concluding Remarks

Since "accidental possibilities of essential substance are deducible from its essence," the Christian metaphysician requires sound reasons for barring such deducibility vis-à-vis the formal cause of substance. In other words, if an existential participated substance is to remain truly free with respect to its actuations, then the actuations of the agent in question cannot simply be "read off" of a logical analysis of the essence of the agent.[65] As we have seen, Avicenna does not consider God to be a substance at all, and so the deducibility of accidental possibilities cannot be imported into an account of God from God's essence; again, God is not a composite substance, and so the metaphysical account of nature via a matter-form analysis fails to apply. Matter individuates, and since God is non-composite, or cannot be materially individuated, Christian theology must remain open to an account of plurality, though never division, within God ("the substance of the Father is indivisible"). Individuality, though not material individuation, remains tied to personhood via the Boethian inheritance ("a person is an individual substance of a rational nature"). Person understood as signifying a subsistent relation makes this possible because "this is to signify a relation in the mode of a substance, which is a hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature." Person means "a relation in the mode of substance."[66] According to Gilles Emery, Aquinas's notion of relation "derives this capacity to be referred to hypostatically from its being situated in God: it perfectly preserves its formality of 'relation to another' (relation of origin) and simultaneously really identifies itself *existentially* with the divine subsistent essence."[67]

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[64] Keefe, *Thomism*, 88.

[65] We might thus say that Hegel's so-called "speculative Good Friday" faithfully approximates Aristotelian method insofar as his analysis of God's essence as a knower requires the kind of immersion in the world exemplified in the death and resurrection of Jesus; if God is to know his own essence, then that knowing must happen via a creation that is other than God, and yet also the arena in which God can come to self-knowledge; the prime analogate here is the human being, for we come to know ourselves through another. Although Hegel's Trinitarian theology works proleptically, if you will, after considering the crucifixion of Christ, it nevertheless then posits that such an event is required by virtue of the nature of God. The "accidental possibilities" even of God's essence thus come to be "deduced", even if the order of arriving at this deduction is occasioned by revelation in time.According to Blanchette (*Philosophy of Being*, 24), the "true beginning [of metaphysics] for Hegel is not really being or even pure be, but becoming. The full concept of being will emerge only later in the logic of *Dasein*, or finite being, which is a stabilizing of becoming, and in the logic of essence, where actuality is finally distinguished from possibility. But even there it will emerge only in the element of thought or pure knowing seen as the expression of God's own thought, "the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit" (*WL* I 31/50)."

[66] *Commentary on the Sentences*, I *Sent*. D. 23, q. 1, a. 3; cited in Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 117, n. 75.

[67] Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 117-118; see *ST* I, q. 28, a. 2.

Although the reference remains cursory in my account here, what can be seen is the way that "substance" is required in our speculations about God.

Keefe provides reasons for the importance of substance for metaphysics. "Substance is the a priori unity of being, and therefore the understanding and the reality of substance is identified with the understanding and the reality of being-itself."[68] Aristotelianism is a logical method of ontology proceeding by way of the materiality of substance. In order for theology to be systematic and ontological, however, it "must identify its notion of substance with revelation, with the relation of being to God which is the true understanding of being."[69] Here Keefe is simply in keeping with theology defined as following upon Scripture: "Sacred Scripture does not treat of God and creatures equally, but of God primarily, and of creatures only so far as they are referable to God as their beginning or end. Hence the unity of this science is not impaired."[70] Recent studies, such as Matthew Levering's *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, also represent a recovery of Aquinas's theological orientation, in part as a response to the critique initially offered by Karl Barth that metaphysical inquiry too readily becomes unmoored from Scripture. There is thus an ecumenical thrust, I believe, to the efforts of re-emphasizing Aquinas's sapiential approach to metaphysics, admirably shown to be indebted to Avicenna by Houser. Further inquiry into the nature of substance, however, is required, particularly with respect to the reception-history of Avicenna and Aquinas, if we are to understand the range of possibilities available to theological metaphysics without compromising the fullness of Christian revelation.

[68] Keefe, *Thomism*, 29.
[69] Keefe, *Thomism*, 29.
[70] *ST* Ia q. 1, a. 3 co. [sacra Scriptura considerat aliqua secundum quod sunt divinitus revelata, secundum quod dictum est, omnia quaecumque sunt divinitus revelabilia, communicant in una ratione formali obiecti huius scientiae. Et ideo comprehenduntur sub sacra doctrina sicut sub scientia una.].