

Bachelard would agree that we must speak to one another, and speak especially to the least little ones among us. She would agree, too, that it is the mission of the Church to do so and that the philosophy of our academies cannot supplant that mission. There is not space enough to explore her ecclesiology. One might at least note, though, that her Church celebrates the sacraments, each of which celebrates life. A reason subservient to the idols of the tribe continues to find one such sacrament, a Sacrament of Resurrection, an insuperable scandal. How is it that Jesus *dares* to say, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you: he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:53–54)?

A closing link? Keynes tells us that in the end we are all dead. With a Resurrection ethic and its imagination, we could counter that everything depends on “the end.” Might we not propose that “it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors” (C. S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory* [Harper Collins, 2001], 47)?

Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union, by Michael Gorman. Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xi + 177. \$99.99 (hardcover).

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That Christ was a person with both a divine and a human nature is for Aquinas a fact that faith commands us to accept, but that a theologian also needs to understand as fully as possible. In his lucid, deep, and beautifully written book, Michael Gorman sets out to investigate Aquinas’s life-long attempt to understand the incarnation of God in Christ.

The book is composed of six chapters. The first and the second chapter introduce the reader to the key concepts of *person* and *nature*, and argue for the interpretation that “Aquinas is best read as thinking that the off-the-rack philosophical notion of nature is inadequate for Christological purposes. Something tailor-made—a modified notion of ‘nature’ is required” (9). Such Thomistic-type of nature will include, writes Gorman, what an Aristotelian-type of nature includes, and in addition “accidents, individuating principles, and so on”; in the case of a human nature, accidents such as that of speaking Aramaic, which is “connected to and rooted in Christ’s human nature, even if it does not belong to that nature” (45). The reason why Aquinas feels the need to introduce this expanded notion of nature is to be able to express all that Christology requires him to say about Christ, which a more restricted, Aristotelian understanding of nature would not cover. Naturally this move



will strike the reader of Aquinas as *ad hoc*, and Gorman explicitly acknowledges this (10); he further remarks, more generally, on the “lightness” with which Aquinas holds metaphysical models and on his rather “opportunistic and occasional” way of using comparisons with natural substances in his Christological discussions (44).

So, how are we to proceed in our study of Aquinas’s views on the metaphysics of the hypostatic union? It might be tempting to think that this is a game with shifting goalposts: Aquinas’s stated intent is to *understand* the incarnation, but half-way as it were into the investigation it seems to have become that of being able to talk about it according to the teaching of the Creed. Gorman however steers away from this approach, which he would surely deem to be unfair to Aquinas. He states forthrightly: Aquinas “truly is a philosopher and theologian of genius, someone from whom anyone has a lot to learn” (6); in the book, he sets out to prove this claim true. But interestingly, the resulting view is not that of a genius that has (improbably) solved what metaphysicians and theologians alike still consider a deeply difficult philosophical conundrum; rather, Aquinas is presented as engaging with the problem as best he can and within the boundaries of faith. Gorman approaches Aquinas’s texts with exquisite sensitivity—aware that the way they would have been read by a contemporary of Aquinas, the way they strike us twenty-first-century readers, the way they speak to a Christian reader, and the way they are approached by non-Christian readers, are all different. Gorman engages with all these viewpoints, thus offering an interpretation of Aquinas that will be of interest to readers of all stripes, including the analytic-minded twenty-first-century philosopher who will appreciate a fair (and textually grounded) assessment of what Aquinas achieved *and did not* achieve in his take on the metaphysics of the hypostatic union.

Chapter 3 raises interesting issues concerning the compositeness of Christ. Christ for Aquinas is “more composite than Socrates. He has all the complexity a normal human has (a multiplicity of limbs, of organs, a composition of body and soul, and so forth), and he also has the compositeness of being both human and divine” (43). But on account of what is then Christ one substance, for Aquinas? This issue is not addressed by Gorman. Yet, one would think it is an important one, especially for an Aristotelian like Aquinas; even in the case of Socrates, who has one nature only, the question of what unifies a hylomorphic compound into one substance is a challenging one (and has divided commentators since antiquity). Aristotle’s stance (as I interpret him, with other scholars) is that the substantial form unifies the substance into one *by re-identifying* the parts that make it up: a hand severed from a living being is not a hand anymore, but in name only, says Aristotle. A hand that is functionally attached to the body and a hand that is severed from it have different identification criteria, hence there are different types of thing. Everything that makes up Socrates will depend for its identity criteria on the form of human being of

Socrates. But this Aristotelian line of thinking cannot apply to Christ, who has two natures. So, is Christ a heap of constituents? And if not, why not?

On Aquinas's view, it is as if each nature determined the number of Christ's constituents *independently from the other nature*, with the result that in Christ there are many human constituents but no divine one: "On Aquinas's way of thinking, to ascribe divine simplicity to Christ is to say that Christ has no multiplicity of constituents derived from his divine nature. That in no way excludes his having a second nature, nor does it exclude his having composition within that nature or composition of that nature with something extra-essential" (57). On the issue of the number of Christ, in chapter 5 Gorman expresses Aquinas's views thus: "In the hypostatic union, humanity is joined to the Word in such a way that afterwards there is the same number of persons as before [i.e., one], but it is not joined in such a way that humanity and divinity somehow team up to create a new nature" (52; Gorman has more to say about the relation between human and divine nature in chapter 6, on "The Consistency of Christology"). So, oneness of person *in* Christ does not entail the oneness *of* Christ ("a person . . . for Aquinas is a special kind of substance, a substance that has a rational nature" [19]).

What makes Aquinas's position even more puzzling, is that it looks as if he sees unity of action in Christ, even if not substantial unity. Gorman reports that "For example, Aquinas says that when Christ touches a leper and heals him, he does the touching in virtue of his human nature, while he does the healing in virtue of his divine nature. These are not activities that merely go on side-by-side, but activities that make up one divine-human action" (42). But how can a non-substantially-unified composite entity like Christ perform *one* action, and how can that action be "*divine-human*"? Gorman does not engage with these issues.

In chapter 6, Gorman investigates Aquinas's views on the consistency of Christology, namely, the attribution of contradictory qualifications to Christ, arguing for the conclusion "that we cannot know, in detail and with confidence, what Aquinas's thoughts were on the consistency problem: His remarks are so brief and underdeveloped that a certain kind of agnosticism is in order. We can, however think through what kind of view would make sense on the basis of what he says" (127). A substantial part of the chapter is devoted to a fair-minded, sophisticated and thorough discussion of the mainstream interpretation of this aspect of Aquinas's thought. According to such interpretation, called the Mereological Replacement Strategy, "When Aquinas says that X is F *qua* R, he is using the *qua*-phrase to point to some *part* of X, namely R, and he is saying that the feature F belongs unqualifiedly to the part R and only qualifiedly to X as a whole—the reason it belongs only qualifiedly to the whole is that it is borrowed by the whole from the part" (128). The aim here is to render the contradiction as inconsistent as the unity of the parts of Christ into one substance. For reasons of space, I cannot here reconstruct Gorman's arguments against this interpretation; and his alternative take on Aquinas's use of *qua*-statements. But I

want to briefly introduce Gorman's speculative suggestion of how Aquinas might have thought about consistency in Christology, even if "there is no way to be sure" (152).

Gorman suggests that Aquinas might have distinguished two ways of predicating attributes to Christ: a "weak" and a "strong" one. Weak predication is an elliptic or incomplete way of talking of Christ. To illustrate: "From the fact that impassibility can be predicated weakly of Christ *qua* divine, it does not follow that Christ is impassible; it would follow only if we added the premise that Christ is only divine, i.e., that he has no other nature" (153). Thus, inconsistent features can be weakly predicated of Christ without inconsistency, not because weak predication allows anything to be predicated of anything, as if it were a free lunch with no ontological implications, but rather because weak predications are opaque with respect to their subject.

In the book, Gorman argues for the merits of an interpretative method that avoids the Scylla of "stop[ping] at the words and miss[ing] the chance to grasp fully the ideas behind them" and the Charybdis of "jumping too quickly to struggling with the Big Ideas without dealing with nitty-gritty of historical analysis; these miss the chance to learn something new from their authors" (6–7). "If we really want to engage in a historically accurate reading of Aquinas, we will have to be as sharp as we can speculatively" (6), and speculatively sharp he surely is. Even if there appear to be still more issues left unaddressed by Aquinas than the ones Gorman identifies, Gorman does an excellent job at explicating Aquinas's texts, reconstructing his ways of thinking, and engaging the modern reader in a nimble and argumentative book that will remain a touchstone for years to come for students and researchers in medieval philosophy, philosophy of religion, and the history of metaphysics.

Being, Freedom, and Method: Themes from the Philosophy of Peter van Inwagen, edited by John A. Keller. Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 401. \$99.00 (hardcover).

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John A. Keller's *Being, Freedom, and Method* is a 401-page volume consisting of sixteen chapters (excluding the introduction and a lengthy concluding meditation) divided into five parts. The chapters include contributions from some of the best philosophers in the field (twenty in all) in a very well-organized festschrift to Peter van Inwagen. The parts include Being, Freedom, God, Method, and Afterword. With the exception of van Inwagen's

