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Beyond Faith and Reason

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To recover a sense of the sacred in our time, we need to confront the fear of theology. The Enlightenment set up a war between faith and reason, with reason demonstrably triumphant over faith, in the guise of scientific progress. Today any criticism of the Enlightenment tends to be interpreted from within that dualism, as though one were proposing to overturn the victory of reason. Provoked by a Muslim friend's criticism of recent magisterial pronouncements on faith and reason as 'simplistic' because they blur important distinctions between different senses of the word 'reason', I want to suggest that to break out of the dualism more effectively we need to locate John Paul II's two 'wings' of the soul within a three-level anthropology of the human person.[1]

From Cosmos to Universe

In *A Secular Age* Charles Taylor contrasts the ancient notion of 'cosmos' to the modern secular 'universe'. This is how he introduces the distinction:

> I use 'cosmos' for our forebears' idea of the totality of existence because it contains the idea of an ordered whole. It is not that our own universe isn't in its own way ordered, but in the cosmos the order of things was a humanly meaningful one. That is, the prin-

1 The first part of the essay is based on a chapter in my forthcoming book: Stratford Caldecott, 2009, *Beauty for Truth's Sake: The Re-enchantment of Education*, Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

> ciple of order in the cosmos was closely related to, often identical with, that which gives shape to our lives ...
>
> Thus Aristotle's cosmos has at its apex and centre God, whose ceaseless and unvarying action exemplifies something close to Plato's eternity. But this action, a kind of thinking, is also at the centre of our lives. Theoretical thought is in us that which is 'most divine'. And for Plato, and this whole mode of thought in general, the cosmos exhibits the order which we should exemplify in our own lives, both individually and as societies.[2]

He adds that for medieval Christians, as for many of the ancients,

> This kind of cosmos is a hierarchy; it has higher and lower levels of being. And it reaches its apex in eternity; it is indeed, held together by what exists on the level of eternity, the Ideas, or God, or both together – Ideas as the thoughts of the creator.

As Taylor, a Catholic philosopher, knows very well, this is the cosmos that many religious believers still inhabit. Partly he is putting himself in the shoes of those to whom this world is alien, and asking how so many have come to see it that way (his account takes in Renaissance humanism, the Scientific Revolution, the double movement of Reform, the birth of the police state, the Enlightenment, the Age of Mobilization and the Age of Authenticity). Modern people who see the religious cosmos as alien, inhabit not a cosmos but a 'universe'. A universe, he says,

> has its own kind of order, that exhibited in exceptionless natural laws. But it is no longer a hierarchy of being, and it doesn't obviously point to eternity as the locus of its principle of cohesion. The universe flows on in secular time. Above all, its principles of order are not related to human meaning, at any rate not immediately or evidently.[3]

There is, he points out, no bar to 'rethinking biblical religion within the universe' as distinct from the cosmos. For Aristotle and other

2 Charles Taylor, 2007, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 60.
3 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 60.

Greek thinkers, the cosmos was necessarily limited and bounded. This aspect of what he calls the 'cosmic imaginary' has been superseded even by religious believers, such as Origen, Nicholas of Cusa, Pascal and others. There may be other features of the ancient view that can be discarded without losing the baby along with the bathwater. On the other hand, it is worth noting Taylor's point that the transformation from cosmos to universe is not simply due to 'the progress of science', as though empirical science had disproved the hierarchy of being and we had simply moved on, leaving a few pockets of resistance to be mopped up later. The change from sacred cosmos to secular universe was due mainly to ideology and the pressure of social change. Science itself has not disproved God, and religion will never disappear, though it may take new forms.

Taylor's account helps us to understand how the philosophical and theological shift brought about by nominalism and voluntarism after Duns Scotus and William of Ockham could be part of a global transformation that is much more than intellectual, involving many social, psychological, political, economic and spiritual factors. At the end of it all he leaves us in a series of dilemmas, because he explicitly does not want simply to remove us from the 'immanent frame' of modernity – which he describes as a natural or this-worldly order understood in its own terms without reference to the supernatural. On the one hand, he is very far from denying the supernatural as essential 'for purposes of ultimate explanation, or spiritual transformation, or final sense-making'.[4] On the other, he thinks we cannot 'fix the contemporary situation' by applying a philosophical and theological analysis, because 'history cannot be separated from the situation it has brought about'.[5] Nor can we simply escape our dilemmas by flipping back to an earlier Golden Age. What we need to overcome is the very dualism for which 'modernity' and 'Christendom' are the stark alternatives. His sympathies lie with hard-to-categorize figures such as Charles Péguy, Gerard Manley Hopkins and John Milbank, for whom, he says,

> Creative renewal was only possible in action which by its very nature had to have a certain temporal depth. This kind of action had to draw on the forms which had been shaped in the deeper past, but not by a simple mechanical reproduction, as with 'habit', rather by a creative re-application of the spirit of the tradition.[6]

4 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 594.
5 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 776.

Taylor's book puts the challenge very neatly. While we cannot step outside history – and Christianity confirms that view, by redeeming history! – history's forward movements, its great creative leaps, often involve retrievals of insights and ideas from the past (*ressourcement*, Radical Orthodoxy). What we now need to retrieve is the hierarchy of levels of reality, a sense of the 'analogy of being', which allows for an order of divine wisdom shaping creation. While we cannot any more accept the details of medieval cosmology, the fundamental intuition of an 'ontic logos', as Taylor puts it, has never been disproved. In fact the most recent developments in science could be said to confirm it. So rediscovering the 'cosmos' is not necessarily a regressive thing to do.

The Two Wings

Nevertheless, talking in this way is likely to arouse fear for the intellectual gains won in the Enlightenment. For if reason is to be 'put in its place', as merely a mode of participation in the divine *Logos*, or 'Infinite Reason', will this not put theology once more in a position of effortless superiority? Radical Orthodoxy as well as *Communio* has come up against this fear. Under the conditions set by secular modernity, it appears that the legitimate autonomy of the intellectual disciplines, especially the human and natural sciences, must inevitably be threatened by any controlling influence from the side of faith – so that, in order to defend academic and intellectual freedom, the Church must never again be allowed to influence academic appointments or the curriculum.

That is why recent Catholic debates about the crisis of belief have come to focus on the relationship of 'faith and reason'. The separation of the two affects everything: science, economics, art, politics and education. It lay behind 9/11 and spawned the War on Terror. Debates about contraception and gay marriage are conditioned by

6 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 747.

it. If faith and reason are indeed incompatible, if they are mutually exclusive, then we are forced to choose between them. We can have one or the other, but not both. Once we have chosen, the energies of human nature will be channelled by our choice and we will shape the world accordingly. But I want to argue that the assumptions underlying this opposition are false. The modern world has a very strange and dangerous conception of freedom, and this conception distorts the way we see things, including the university.[7]

Freedom and knowledge go together. In order to be free, we must *know*. But religious believers know things *both* by reason *and* by faith. These two remain distinct, and it is not a choice between one and the other (as it would be if faith were, as its critics allege, simply determining ourselves to believe something without evidence and clinging to it no matter what). Their actual relationship is one of reciprocal illumination. Faith needs reason to illuminate and unfold its own content; reason needs faith to teach it things it cannot know by its own powers, as well as things it may have forgotten. In the opening words of his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul famously likens them to the two wings of a single bird:[8]

> Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex. 33.18; Ps. 27.8–9; 63.2–3; John 14.8; 1 John 3.2).

In other words, faith is not opposed to reason, but it does function as a constant goad, a challenge, a provocation to reason. Faith claims to stand beyond reason, to speak from the place that reason seeks. But it does not claim to *understand* what it knows, and it should not usurp the role of reason. The eventual resolution of this relationship lies not in faith, nor yet in reason, but in love. 'The

7 For an extended analysis of *why* they are false, see David L. Schlinder, 'On Meaning and the Death of God in the Academy', in David Schindler (ed.), 1996, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, pp. 189–202.

8 See the very helpful collection of essays edited by David Ruel Foster and Joseph W. Koterski, 2003, *The Two Wings of Catholic Thought: Essays on* Fides et Ratio, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.

intellect must seek that which it loves: the more it loves, the more it desires to know.'[9]

However, by itself this metaphor of the two wings is insufficient. Unless we introduce a third dimension into cognition, faith will still tend to appear entirely extrinsic to reason. It was certainly, as the Pope says, a mistake to divorce faith from reason, and this led to the subordination either of faith to reason (in modernism, positivism, etc.) or of reason to faith (in the various forms of fideism and extreme biblical fundamentalism). But the seeds of the divorce lay in the reduction of reason to *discursive thinking alone*. In order to bring reason and faith together again we must understand both differently, by situating them in a richer, deeper, three-dimensional world. We must understand that faith is not blind, but is a light that enables us to see even the natural world more clearly. And we must understand that reason is naturally open to God and in need of God. If we close it off to the transcendent, we do violence to its nature. Again, it is not that theology must in some way dictate to the sciences. Rather, as Pope Benedict XVI has said, 'We must overcome the self-imposed limitation of reason to the empirically verifiable.'[10]

We can be helped in overcoming this limitation by a distinction many ancient authors have made between discursive and contemplative intelligence, or between a lower and a higher kind of 'reason' – reason at the level of soul (*ratio* or *dianoia*) and reason at the level of spirit (*intellectus* or *nous*). Of course, I am skimming over a lot of distinctions and variations in terminology here, but I think Henri de Lubac has conclusively shown, building on the work of Pierre Rousselot and others, that such a distinction runs through the Christian tradition from St Paul (e.g. *soma/psyche/pneuma* in 1 Thess. 5.23) to St Teresa of Avila (who spoke of the spirit as the 'heart' or 'soul' of the soul).[11] To de Lubac's account we might add that of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, also known as the philo-

9 John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, section 42.

10 Benedict XVI, in his Regensburg Lecture of 2006.

11 Henri de Lubac SJ, 1996, 'Tripartite Anthropology', in his *Theology in History*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, pp. 117–200. De Lubac tells us that philosophers and theologians have a tendency to reduce the trichotomy to a dichotomy. Mystics, on the other hand, sometimes identify the third element too readily with the divine.

sopher Edith Stein, who developed it systematically in her book *Finite and Eternal Being*.[12]

In Stein's case the distinction forms part of a detailed phenomenological analysis of the human person, which she relates both to the cosmos as such and to the image of the Creator. She argues that every created being reflects in some degree the likeness of the Trinity in the form of (first) a tendency to formation, (second) a fixed essence or nature, and (third) a possibility of self-transcendence. This corresponds in inanimate matter, for example, to the three natural states of liquid, solid and gas. But the highest expression of this image is in the person, with the human soul, body and spirit corresponding to Father, Son and Holy Spirit respectively. Stein also discusses Augustine's 'psychological' trinity of human faculties, but refines it by adding that the Trinitarian image in man is multifaceted: memory, feeling, knowledge, will and love each possess a Trinitarian structure of their own. The highest of these is love, and therein lies the link between the psychological and the social image of the Trinity.

With some care, we can connect this distinction between soul and spirit with the parallel epistemological tradition summarized in the following passage by Josef Pieper:

> The medievals distinguished between the intellect as *ratio* and the intellect as *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the power of discursive thought, or searching and re-searching, abstracting, refining, and concluding [*cf.* Latin *dis-currere*, 'to run to and fro'], whereas *intellectus* refers to the ability of 'simply looking' (*simplex intuitus*), to which the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye. The spiritual knowing power of the human mind, as the ancients understood it, is really two things in one: *ratio* and *intellectus*: all knowing involved both. The path of discursive reasoning is accompanied and penetrated by the *intellectus*' untiring vision, which is not active but passive, or better, *receptive* – a receptively operating power of the intellect.[13]

12 Edith Stein, 2002, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt, Washington, DC: ICS Publications. See especially for what follows pp. 423–63.

13 Josef Pieper, 1952, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, London: Faber & Faber, pp. 11–12. Jean Borella expands this point, with the necessary distinctions between

This is the distinction we need if we are truly to make sense of the Pope's argument in *Fides et Ratio*. The 'two wings' belong to a fuller spiritual anthropology – a tripartite anthropology in which humanity bears the seal of the Trinity – which the Pope left entirely implicit. He does not develop it in his encyclical (on which Pope Benedict builds with his own statements on 'faith and reason'), although in Karol Wojtyla's earlier philosophical work, *The Acting Person*, he seems to have prepared the ground for such a distinction by introducing the idea of 'reflexive awareness'. By this he means not simply awareness of self, and not simply 'reason', but the experience of oneself as the 'subject of one's own acts and experiences'.[14] He sees this consciousness of our own agency as lying at the heart of our experience of freedom, securing our 'liberty from total immersion in the world of objects', and receptivity to grace.[15]

The Six Wings of the Human Ascent to God

I want to try to sketch this tripartite or three-dimensional anthropology using or adapting a famous text of St Bonaventure, the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* or *Soul's Journey Into God*. He bases this book around the image of the six-winged seraph seen by his master St Francis on the slopes of Mount Alverna; a vision that imprinted on him the living seal of the stigmata. According to Isaiah, 'each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew' (Isa. 6.2). This image may be considered a private revelation to Francis by one of the seraphim, who presents him with an image of the Crucified that is also an intimation of the divinized form of Man, of Francis himself united with his *telos*.

According to Bonaventure's interpretation, the two lower wings of the figure correspond to the human body, the second pair to the soul, and the third to the spirit. He is not writing here of the

'spirit' and 'intellect', in essays collected in G. John Champoux (ed.), 2001, *The Secret of the Christian Way*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, pp. 75–88, 103–14.

14 Cited in Kenneth L. Schmitz, 1993, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II*, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, p. 74.

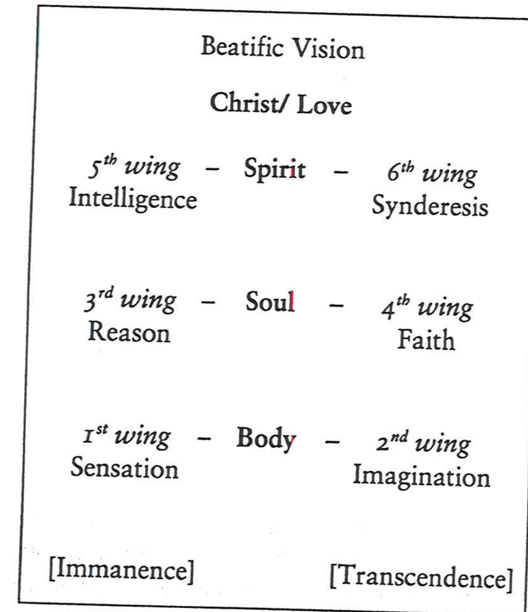
15 Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, p. 76.

distinction between the mystical ways of purgation, illumination and Union, to which he dedicated another well-known work (*De Triplici via*). The *Itinerarium* seems to take place entirely within the second phase of this other series, the phase of illumination. We should remember that in several prophetic visions of the seraphim, their wings are covered in eyes to signify consciousness.[16] Thus we can say that for our purposes they represent three types of consciousness – as he puts it, the awareness of things outside us (in the physical world), of things within us (in the psyche) and of things above us (in God). According to Bonaventure's commentary, we rise from the level of the body to that of the soul and then the spirit not simply by turning our sight in one direction or another, but by the elevation of our will, in the power of the theological virtues. Thus we can also say that there is a different type or degree of freedom involved at each of the three levels.

The first two wings enable us to know the natural world in which our bodies are situated. Bonaventure calls them sensation and imagination. Freedom of this first level, the first pair of wings covering the feet, has to do with choice between possibilities in this material world. In order to achieve this degree of freedom, both wings are needed – that is, both sensation and imagination – because we can hardly be said to have a real choice if we can only see what exists in front of us, without being able to imagine alternative courses of action. Nevertheless, at this level there is not yet full moral freedom, no fully developed sense of good and evil, because our choices tend to be dominated by the dialectic of pleasure and pain. This is the unreflective level to which modern consumerism tends to reduce us, despite sporadic attempts to influence consumers to choose 'ethically'. There is no real insight into that dialectic, no possibility of transcending it, until we step back and reflect; that is, until the next stage, when reason will be brought to bear on it.[17]

16 In Revelation 4.8, as in Ezekiel, the seraphim are called cherubim: 'And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside.'

17 I am glossing over the fact that Bonaventure's chapters on the first two wings deal extensively with our ability to 'read' the book of nature according to the multiple aspects of the divine Wisdom present throughout creation, seeing vestiges or analogies of God in created things, and becoming aware of God's indwelling of them by his essence, power and presence. For Bonaventure there is no purely 'secular' or 'disenchanted' view of nature, even though we have not yet attained the level at which faith becomes operative.



The six wings of the Seraph and the journey of the soul (the elevation of the heart or will)

The second two wings, the ones with which we 'fly', are the ones that enable us to advance beyond the world of the senses, first by reflecting interiorly on the mind, and then by seeing in our minds the image of God. Bonaventure calls them reason and understanding,[18] the latter being illuminated, he says, by the three theological virtues, beginning with faith. So here (I would argue) we have reached John Paul II's 'Faith and Reason' as the middle pair of three sets of wings. These give us freedom of the second level, which is freedom of movement between earth and heaven – or as John Paul II puts it, freedom to 'rise to the contemplation of truth'. With the help of reason we can see the invisible patterns within things, and with faith (our eyes reformed or enlightened by grace) we grasp the providential pattern or meaning behind them. This is also the

18 He uses the term *intellectus* here, reserving the term *intelligentia* for the 'higher *ratio*'.

level of the virtuous habits that develop in us the divine image. But *both* wings are necessary because without a supernatural faith in the transcendent source and locus of the Ideas, reason will quickly close in upon itself, universals will be denied, as will beauty, and the cosmos will be reduced to a mere 'universe', as has happened in modern thought.

> And just as, when one has fallen, he must lie where he is unless another is at hand to raise him up, so our soul could not be perfectly lifted up out of these things of sense to see itself and the eternal Truth in itself had not Truth, taking human form in Christ, become a ladder restoring the first ladder that had been broken in Adam.[19]

As for *the third and highest pair of wings*, Bonaventure calls them intelligence and conscience (or rather *synderesis*), meaning the faculties that enable us to contemplate first being, and then the good. These two wings covering the face of the figure represent the twofold 'contemplation of truth' to which our flight on the wings of faith and reason raises us. The freedom of this third level is the power to 'be', with a view to our final end or purpose, our *telos*. If the highest achievement of reason was to contemplate beauty in the order and harmony of the cosmos, the achievement of intelligence, according to Bonaventure, is to contemplate 'the *divine unity* through its primary name which is Being'. (By the way, this is also where I would tentatively locate Wojtyla's concept of 'reflexive awareness', which is not merely moral awareness but the awareness of our own being at its highest level.)

This third level is where we become able to hear the voice of the transcendent.[20] Bonaventure says that the sixth wing, 'the spark of *synderesis*', is the very 'summit of the mind'. This is the highest

19 *Itinerarium*, 4.2.

20 To this voice we normally give the name 'conscience', although there is a distinction in Scholastic thought between *conscientia* and *synderesis*. The latter is used most commonly to refer to the fundamental knowledge of moral norms or principles or the inclination towards these, whereas 'conscience' refers to the application of these norms to particular cases. Thus *synderesis* is the 'spark' or *scintilla* of conscience. There is also a difference between Bonaventure, on the one hand, and Aquinas and Scotus on the other as to whether *synderesis* is a tendency of the will or a power of the mind (related to 'practical reason').

point of the soul, which according to St Jerome, in his commentary on the four-faced cherubim in Ezekiel, is the 'spirit' in man not extinguished by the fall, which, like an eagle flying above the man, the lion and the bull, rises above the rational, the irascible and the appetitive parts of the soul. It is the gravity of the soul towards goodness and away from evil, the deepest mark of the divine image, our point of communication with God. Consequently for Bonaventure it is this wing or faculty that contemplates God not as Being, but as the Good, and not as One but as Three – as Bonaventure puts it, 'the *most blessed Trinity* in its name which is the Good'.

It is worth emphasizing this point, that it is in his capacity as the Good that God reveals himself to be three persons – in Neoplatonic terms, the Good 'diffusing itself' perfectly within itself. The human person bears this image of the Trinity as its supreme end or the goal of its existence. As we might say today, the human person is 'called to holiness', or called to self-gift, and in this way will be caught up in the Trinitarian life of God. This is where we derive or intuit the norm of human holiness, and that is why Bonaventure likens the sixth wing to the sixth day of creation, the day on which Man was created. In Christ that human image has been perfected as what Balthasar calls the 'concrete universal'.[21]

The fifth and sixth wings of the Seraph touch the face of the supreme mystery hidden from all ages. Together, they bring us face to face with the unity of human and divine natures in Christ, the Alpha and Omega, who reveals being as Trinitarian love.

Conclusion

I have tried to indicate how we need to deepen our conception of 'reason' if we are to 'liberate our freedom'. The graces received in prayer and the sacraments are the 'hand' extended by God to help us rise from the ground level of our animal nature to a higher spiritual plane, and eventually to come face to face with God. This is not a Gnostic ascent, since in rising we bring that animal nature with us. And, of course, in this process we are not entirely passive. It is our own actions, our own will, our 'hearts', that are raised up to God,

21 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, 1994, *A Theology of History*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

and that cannot be done without our own active co-operation. It is only in the very highest station, in the mystical 'seventh day', that our will is left behind in order that we might be entirely united to God – but then one might as well say (with Eckhart) that God does my will as that I do his.

Faith and reason are indeed complementary, as John Paul indicates, since their co-operation in the soul opens the horizon for contemplation. Faith orients reason towards the transcendent, so that reason remains open to a light from above. But unless we develop some sense of what lies above faith and reason, as well as what lies below, the art of flight will elude us. Thus in this brief essay I have tried to suggest a topic for future research – the retrieval and development of a tripartite Christian anthropology, which might draw some of its inspiration from de Lubac's essay, as well as from the writings of Edith Stein and St Bonaventure's classic work. We would find, I think, that there is ample scope here for dialogue with other religious traditions, where similar distinctions are often made.

A disenchanted world is one viewed through the eyes of reason when reason is looking downwards. To use the metaphor, the wing is drooping, no longer reaching for the sky. Even if the wing of faith flaps frantically on the other side, the person will remain earth-bound. The things it sees will become opaque and dark, no longer radiant, because they will no longer seem to possess an interior, or any intrinsic relationship to the ideas and the wisdom and the love of God. This is the world of darkness and dust that many of our contemporaries inhabit. But it is as easy and as difficult as it has always been to raise our heads to the sky, and the seraphim are closer than we think.

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The Wax Nose of Reason: Responses to *Ratzinger's Faith*

TRACEY ROWLAND

The purpose of this essay is to reflect upon the various responses to my book *Ratzinger's Faith: the Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*.[1] Most of the reviews accurately represented the arguments in the work; however, there was some confusion about my presentation of the relationship between Ratzinger and Thomism. Fergus Kerr began his review in *The Tablet* by saying that I had some very harsh words to say about Thomists.[2] He then quoted some examples which were not my personal comments but direct 'from the horse's mouth' statements of Cardinal Ratzinger, as he was. A couple of weeks later in the US neoconservative flagship *First Things*, the late Richard John Neuhaus said that I was 'rather too insistent that Benedict is, after all, a Thomist, albeit a very Augustinian Thomist'.[3] I thus had one reviewer saying that the work was anti-Thomist and another saying that I effectively performed all manner of intellectual gymnastics to make Ratzinger into a Thomist. In fact, I do not regard myself as being anti-Thomist, merely critical of elements of twentieth-century neo-Thomism and of Whig Thomism, which is a special intellectual project fostered mostly by neoconservative Americans. I harbour no hostility to the Thomist tradition in general, and for much of my academic life I have regarded myself as highly sympathetic to it. However, I have never attempted to present Ratzinger as a

1 T. Rowland, 2008, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 F. Kerr, 'Gardener with a Thirst for Beauty', *The Tablet*, 20 March 2008.

3 R. J. Neuhaus, 'Listening to Benedict', *First Things*, 11 April 2008.

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