

Remarks Concerning the Metaphysical Character of St. Thomas's Moral Theology, in Particular as It Is Related to Prudence and Conscience

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Translator's Introduction

Given that I already have provided two appendices to address technical points that are raised by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's vocabulary, I will here only provide a summary statement regarding why this translation is being presented to the reading public. A shortened, edited form of this article appeared in his *Le réalisme du principe de finalité*.¹ That version of the text is not thematically concerned with the implications of this topic for moral theology. These implications are discussed in this article from the *Revue thomiste*.

In this article, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange voices concerns that he likewise echoes elsewhere² about casuistic trends in moral philosophy, as well as the

¹ See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le réalisme du principe de finalité* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932), 285–99. A translation of this volume is anticipated by Emmaus Academic.

² See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange: *De revelatione per ecclesiam Catholicam proposita*, 5th ed. (Rome: Desclée et Socii, 1950), 31–33, esp. 31n1; *De beatitudine*

danger of separating moral theology off as a separate theological discipline. This connects him to certain aspects of Fr. Servais-Pinckaers's attempts at renewal in moral theology, although the latter Dominican differed from Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange on significant topics such as the importance of the Thomistic commentators and the vexed questions raised by Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel*. Nonetheless, I believe that it is important to bring together as intellectual friends authors whose works mutually reinforce each other.

Likewise, in this article, we find Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange critiquing aspects of the tradition of ecclesiastical manuals, a theme to which he returns on occasion in various works,³ registering his concern that the manuals too frequently do not exposit topics by drawing attention to the subordination of principles that dominate the topic under discussion. Thus, instead of seeing him as being an uncritical "neo-Thomistic manualist," one should have a more nuanced (albeit, critically aware) appreciation of his place in the tradition of Thomist authors. This is important so that the current generation of Thomistic philosophers and theologians can have a healthy sense of vital continuity with past thinkers without naively "turning back the clock."

Finally, in this article, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange makes some important points regarding the nature of prudential truth. Indeed, we could say that he presents prudence as the answer to many vexed problems concerning conscience and the personal character of moral acts. Likewise, the reader will find him touching on older debates surrounding probabilism. Perhaps current ecclesiastical discussions of conscience could be significantly deepened by incorporating this older debate into the Thomist doctrine on prudence. Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange suggests this himself in this article, expressing a profound appreciation for the personal self governance virtuously exercised through prudence.

These are my reasons for presenting this article to the reader. Well aware of the limitations of any presentation, I believe that the text provides great illumination on the topics of discussion that I have highlighted above.

(Turin, IT: Berruti, 1951), 1–12. Note that the English translation of *De beatitudine* published by Herder is somewhat periphrastic in nature. One should consult the Latin text for the full treatment provided by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange on these topics.

³ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le réalisme du principe de finalité*, 171–75, 239–41, 243–45, 250.

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's Text

In this article, we would like to briefly examine the principal characteristics of St. Thomas's moral theology with an eye to certain modern objections that are rather prevalent. A great difference separates his idea of moral theology from that which can be found in a number of works written on this subject from the seventeenth century onward. This difference is so marked that many modern theologians scarcely still know the treasures that they can find in the moral part of the *Summa theologiae*. At the same time, they no longer see that its profundity and elevation—indeed its great originality—nonetheless are in perfect conformity with the surest of tradition.

Above all else, it is certain that, in St. Thomas's thought, *moral theology is not a science that would be specifically distinct from dogmatic theology*:

Sacred doctrine, being one, extends to things which belong to different philosophical sciences, for in each of these things, it considers the same formal aspect, namely, inasmuch as they can be known through divine revelation. Hence, although among the philosophical sciences one is speculative (metaphysics)⁴ and another practical (ethics), nevertheless sacred doctrine includes both [kinds of knowledge]—just as God, by one and the same science, knows both Himself and His works.⁵

In a word, in dogmatic theology and moral theology, we are always concerned with *the same formal subject*—namely, *God*, whether God in Himself, God the Creator and Author of the supernatural order, God the Ultimate End of human acts, God the Legislator, God the Author of

⁴ [Trans. note: The parenthetical point is added by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange. Certainly, he is not reducing all of speculative philosophy to metaphysics. However, knowing well that the dignity of other speculative philosophical tasks derives from their orientation to the study of being as being, he places metaphysics as the primary type of speculative philosophy. Although Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's vocabulary is marked by his era's use of terms like "cosmology" and "rational psychology," he is well aware not to fall into a kind of post-Wolffian curriculum of philosophy. On this, see his remarks in Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "Dans quel ordre proposer les sciences philosophiques," *Revue thomiste* 40 (1924): 18–34. This essay is also included in a slightly redacted form in *Le réalisme du principe de finalité*.]

⁵ *ST I*, q. 1, a. 4. [Trans. note: This translation is taken from the English Dominican Fathers' edition of the *Summa theologiae* from Benziger in 1947, which is popularly available.]

grace and of the sacraments, and so on.⁶ Thus, all is considered in light of the same formal motive—namely, virtual revelation⁷—from which theology wholly takes its specification, as the sense of sight is specified by light, which renders all colors actually visible. Thus, the profound *unity* of sacred science is admirably respected, for “that which is divided and scattered in inferior orders, is found under a form that is simple and perfectly one in more elevated orders.” Thus, like the uncreated knowledge of God Himself, sacred theology is formally and eminently speculative and practical.⁸ Therefore, specialization in a given part of theology is not possible in the same way that it is in inferior sciences, which are specifically distinct among themselves. Nobody can have profound knowledge of moral theology without being an expert in dogmatic theology.

Moreover, it is certainly the case that *moral theology cannot be reduced to casuistry*, which presupposes (but does not treat) the fundamental questions concerning the last end, the nature of human acts, the foundation of morality, the nature of law, the nature of the virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the various states of life, and so forth. Casuistry is only the inferior application of moral theology, with the simple goal of discerning

⁶ [Trans. note: This point is well expressed in a late-career teaching text written by a student of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Fr. Emmanuel Doronzo, O.M.I., the author of an impressive sequence of texts in sacramental theology, as well as of the first two volumes of an impressive manual in theology. Doronzo was a professor of theology at the Catholic University of America into the 1960s. See Emmanuel Doronzo, *Introduction to Theology* (Middleburg, VA: Notre Dame Institute Press, 1973), 16: “This property of theology [namely, its specific unity] follows from the specific and indivisible unity of its formal object, the concept of Deity, which is constantly and equally considered in all the parts and treatises of this science. In fact, such treatises may be given the following formal titles: On the One God; On the Trinity in God; On God creating and Elevating; On God sanctifying through grace; . . . On the sacraments, sanctifying instruments of God; On God the Rewarder, or the Last Things. This is the reason why the divisions of theology into its various parts or treatises is not an essential division, that is, a division into specifically distinct treatises. It is only an accidental division, that is, into integrative or complementary parts which make up one total and single science.”]

⁷ [Trans. note: See the first appendix below.]

⁸ [Trans. note: On the way that theology is formally and eminently speculative and practical (though, more speculative than practical), see not only *ST I*, q. 1, a. 4, but also John of St. Thomas (Poincot), *On Sacred Science: A Translation of Cursus Theologicus I, Question 1, Disputation 2*, trans. John P. Doyle, ed. Victor M. Salas (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2019), a. 10, especially nos. 8–12 and 20–22. I would like to thank Dr. Salas for providing me with helpful feedback regarding the contents of this upcoming volume, which has been somewhat delayed in its publication.]

what is to be avoided in a given case, whether as a mortal sin or as a venial one. Asceticism and mysticism are moral theology's superior applications for conducting souls according to true progress in charity and the other virtues toward intimate union with God.

If moral theology were reduced to casuistry, as all too often happens, it would become the science of sins to avoid rather than the science of the virtues to be exercised and perfected—as if optics were the science of shadows instead of the science of luminous phenomena! Moral theology would thus lack the ability and impulse for directing men in the practice of lofty and solid virtues.

This is one of the reasons why St. Thomas does not divide moral theology according to the division of precepts (which are often negative, having defense against sin as their end), but instead divides moral theology according to the division of the virtues. Thus, the very organism of the virtues, their subordination, stands forth in complete relief, enabling a scientific knowledge of human acts, a knowledge through their principles or through their causes (whether radical or proximate). Therefore, it is not astonishing that, in the moral part of the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas treats of grace as the principle of human acts. On the other hand, it is surprising that numerous modern theologians, more or less reducing moral theology to casuistry, remove the treatises on grace and the infused virtues from moral theology, providing expositions on them in dogmatic theology. Thus, the supernatural character, profundity, and integrity of moral theology are all very diminished, for from such a perspective, moral theology no longer expressly treats the supernatural principles of meritorious acts, namely, the nature and necessity of grace, the essential character of the infused virtues and the Gifts, and the nature of merit. However, it is clear that these treatises belong to moral theology, not in an accidental way but in a proper and wholly preeminent way. These profound questions are like the marrow of moral theology and show its intimate connection with the other part of sacred science, dogmatic theology.

However, we would like to insist above all else on the *metaphysical character*⁹ of the Angelic Doctor's moral theology. Also, we intend to answer an objection that is often made today against his methodology.

St. Thomas's speculative manner of proceeding in the very exposition

⁹ [Trans. note: By this he means that St. Thomas's moral theology proceeds not merely in an empirical manner, but in a philosophical one, though elevated by faith into the proper domain of theology as a science of that which is virtually revealed.]

of his moral doctrine disconcerts certain modern thinkers who barely can see beyond the practico-practical¹⁰ aspect of questions. If they do at times read the *Summa theologiae*, many difficulties come to their minds, and they search in vain for a solution, although one may well be present there for them in the *Summa* in a very precise (and, indeed, elevated) manner—though, perhaps too elevated for those who are preoccupied almost solely with cases of conscience.

Indeed, a good number of modern theologians, not undertaking an adequately speculative study of moral questions, want to be able to determine immediately how one must act in a given concrete case. Thus, they settle for a kind of moral empiricism without rising to true moral science, to knowledge of the precise reason why a given concrete case of conscience ought to be judged one way instead of another. And because they do not elevate themselves to true principles (which are abstract, necessary, and universal), they cannot consider the concrete facts themselves as they should be considered (i.e., in light of these principles that, in reality, govern the concrete facts).

If one wishes to have a clear and easily understandable example of this defect, one need only compare the majority of modern treatises on *conscience* with the treatise on *prudence* in St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae*.

In nearly all of the modern works of moral theology from the time of the discussions concerning probable conscience onward,¹¹ the greatest importance is given from the start to the treatise on conscience considered not only in its general scope (which St. Thomas discusses quite excellently at the beginning of the *prima secundae* in the treatise on human acts¹²) but also in relation to specific questions of moral theology (even very specific ones) that certainly do not pertain to general morality. Indeed, many modern theologians in all of the various theological schools, scarcely allowing themselves to be engaged with this general part of moral theology, not only ask whether conscience is the proximate rule of human acts and if it must always be right and certain, but furthermore pose numerous questions about how one is to form a right and certain conscience and

¹⁰ [Trans. note: See the second appendix at the end of this article.]

¹¹ [Trans. note: He is referring here to the debates concerning the binding obligation of conscience that is organized under the doctrinal headings of rigorism, tutorism, probabiliorism, equiprobabilism, probabilism, and laxism. See Benedict Henry Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis*, vol. 2, 5th ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), no. 77 (pp. 70–72). For a recent study devoted to this period of Catholic theological history, see Stefania Tutino, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation Catholicism: A History of Probabilism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).]

¹² [Trans. note: See *ST* I-II, qq. 6–21.]

about how one is to correct an erroneous conscience. Likewise, they ask questions about the species and gravity of sin entailed by every action against conscience, about cases of doubtful and of probable conscience, about a lax or a scrupulous conscience, and so on. And then, in the portion of moral theology not dedicated to general questions but instead to specific matters,¹³ when these authors should speak about prudence among the different virtues, they barely speak about it at all or discuss it in only six or eight pages—something we can find even in the excellent Billuart.¹⁴ This has led to a situation in which students do not see the importance of this virtue. (Indeed, this is perhaps true for many teachers as well.)

As was well noted recently by Fr. Merkelbach, a professor at the Dominican College in Louvain, it is truly astonishing that *the principal cardinal virtue holds such a small place in moral science today*.¹⁵ Prudence, which directs all of the moral virtues and is called the charioteer of the virtues, is so fundamental that no human act is good without, at the same time, being prudent. However, despite this fact, numerous modern manuals of moral theology pass over this virtue in near silence. This quasi-suppression of the treatise on prudence would have been a kind of scandal in the eyes of the Thomists of yore.

In contrast to this state of affairs, in St. Thomas, at the very beginning of general moral theology, in the treatise on human acts, matters are discussed only as is suitable for the general questions pertaining to

¹³ [Trans. note: The French expression “moral spéciale” describes the portion of moral theology covering the virtues in the *secunda secundae*. The distinction between “general moral theology” and “special moral theology” (without, however, separating them as independent disciplines) can be rendered clear if one thinks of the types of questions asked in the various treatises on the virtues in *ST* II-II in contrast to those in the treatise on habits and virtues in *ST* I-II, qq. 49–70, or the treatise on vice and sin in *ST* I-II, qq. 71–89. In the latter two treatises, one is concerned with articulating the nature of virtue, vice, and sin, all in light of the common principles of all virtues, vices, and sins. By contrast, in the *secunda secundae*, one is concerned with articulating the nature of various virtues and vices in light of their own proper principles. This point is addressed in Benedict Henry Merkelbach, “Quelle place assigner au traité de la conscience?” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 12 (1923): 170–83. This article will be cited below by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange. A translation of the admirable text is scheduled for later this year in *Nova et Vetera* (English).]

¹⁴ Indeed, Billuart discusses prudence in eight pages, whereas earlier in his text, he devoted seventy pages to the treatise on conscience.

¹⁵ See Merkelbach, “Quelle place assigner au traité de la conscience?” [Trans. note: Josef Pieper notes this same point, indeed citing this very page in Garrigou-Lagrange: Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 6.]

conscience: Is it the proximate rule of human acts? Must it always be right and certain? Other specific questions remain: how is one to form a right and certain conscience? How is one to correct an erroneous conscience? What is the nature of doubtful or probable conscience? What is the nature of lax or scrupulous conscience? For St. Thomas, these kinds of questions are not at all treated in the general part of moral theology [i.e., in the *prima secundae*].

For this reason, many modern thinkers have appeared to accuse St. Thomas of having failed to discuss nearly all of the content needed for the treatise on conscience in his *Summa theologiae*. Hence, certain writers introduce this entire treatise, by way of appendix, after the two articles of *ST* I-II dealing with right reason and erroneous conscience, q. 19, a. 3, “Whether the Goodness of Human Acts Depends upon Reason,” and a. 5 of the same question, “Whether an Erring Reason Obliges.” Thus, the entire treatise on conscience, introduced as an appendix, seems out of harmony with the structure of the *Summa theologiae* and seems to be, as it were, a blemish on St. Thomas’s face.

Thus, would the holy Doctor have committed the imprudent act of omitting a great portion of the treatise on conscience? Not at all! On the contrary, he spoke about it where it was necessary, when it was necessary, and as it was necessary, according to his purposes. He did not wish to determine immediately what one must necessarily and practically do in a given case. Instead, he raises himself first and foremost to the highest, most abstract, most universal and necessary principles that govern actions, which themselves are concrete, singular, and contingent. Thus, he separates himself from moral empiricism in order to erect a true science.

The treatise on conscience as it pertains to specific matters is found in the *Summa theologiae* in its legitimate place, namely in the treatise on prudence, for *right and certain conscience* is nothing other than an *act of prudence*, which takes counsel [or, deliberates], practically judges, and commands. Commanding is the proper act of prudence, and it presupposes good counsel and good judgment. Already, Aristotle had well determined all these acts by relating them to their principles. Thus, he acknowledges *eubolia* and *synesis* as two virtues annexed to prudence. These two virtues respectively are the source of good counsel and good judgment.

In this treatise (*ST* II-II, qq. 47–57), St. Thomas has done something that no casuist would ever dream of doing: he undertakes a *metaphysical study of the very nature of prudence*, considering its object, its subject, its three acts, its extension, its genesis and progress, its mutual relations with the other virtues, and its parts and annexed virtues, including the Gift of counsel which corresponds to it. All of this is precisely concerned with *the*

formation of right conscience (through good counsel) and *certain conscience* (through good judgment). He even discusses how one is to form a conscience that is free from doubt concerning the most difficult and exceptional cases which require particular perspicacity (*gnome*).¹⁶ Moreover, in studying the vices opposed to prudence (above all imprudence, negligence, precipitation, and so on), he thus discussed the topics of lax conscience, perplexed conscience, and scrupulous conscience,¹⁷ and in every case, one can easily develop there the questions that are relevant to moral theology in its specific questions [i.e., in the *secunda secundae*].

As Fr. Merkelbach¹⁸ rightly notes, the ever-relevant importance of this treatise on prudence would be obvious to modern thinkers if only several words were added to its title: "On Prudence and the Virtues Annexed to It, in Relation to the Formation of Conscience." Indeed, all the specific questions concerning conscience could easily be explicated in this treatise, while the general questions would belong to the treatise concerned with human acts in general [i.e., in the *prima secundae*].

Moreover, by speculatively considering the intimate nature of prudence, its formal object, and its mutual relations with the other moral virtues, St. Thomas thus determined the very nature of its acts (and of right conscience in particular) and was equally able to resolve from on high the difficult questions of the treatise on conscience that, according to the majority of contemporary authors, remain without truly scientific solutions.

The first of these difficulties is this: How can we arrive at *certain conscience*, despite invincible ignorance concerning the numerous circumstances of human acts (for example, when it is a question of future contingencies that one must prudently predict in order to take the necessary precautions)? Or again, how could I determine with certitude *here and now*, in relation to what concerns *me* (and not you), *the golden mean* to keep in a matter of chastity, meekness, humility, courage, or patience, while this golden mean depends on particular circumstances (known only in a vague manner, or even sometimes unknown) of my temperament (e.g., as high-strung, sanguine, or phlegmatic), of my age, of the season (whether summer or winter), of my social condition, and so on? To what must we have recourse in order to have this *practical certitude of conscience* in the

¹⁶ See *ST* II-II, q.52, a.4.

¹⁷ [Trans. note: These were standard general categories used for discussing conscience: *conscientia laxa*, *conscientia perplexa*, et *conscientia scrupulosa*. See Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis*, 2:122ff. (no. 112ff).]

¹⁸ See Merkelbach, "Quelle place," 178.

presence of conditions that are so varied and that often can be known only in a vague manner? Should I weigh the probabilities for and against this action? Does this suffice, even if one were to add to it some more or less certain reflex principles:¹⁹ A doubtful law does not oblige? The one in possession is in a better position (lit. *melior est conditio possidentis*)? This kind of investigation into probabilities will be lengthy. It will even exceed the capacity of many and often does not lead to anything that is actually certain.

St. Thomas provides a rather profound solution to this question. He does not disdain the consideration of probabilities for or against a given action, nor does he disdain the reflex principles that are commonly received. However, he insists above all else on a *formal principle* to resolve this question. Few modern theologians speak about this principle. However it is nonetheless found even in Aristotle.²⁰ This principle can be expressed thus: the truth of the practical intellect (i.e., prudence²¹) consists in *conformity with rectified appetite*, meaning conformity with the *sensitive appetite* rectified by the virtues of temperance and courage, as well as (and especially) conformity with the *rational appetite* rectified by the virtue of justice and the other virtues of the will. In other words, practico-practical truth consists in conformity with the habitually and actually *right intention*²² of the will because, as Aristotle adds, “As each is well or badly disposed in his will, so does a given end appear good or bad to him.”²³ For example, the

¹⁹ [Trans. note: In various scholastic treatments of conscience, it became very normal to discuss the role of a variety of received “reflex” principles like those mentioned here. These are the sorts of propositions that one integrates into one’s reasoning to bolster moral certitude when direct, proper certitude is not possible. Thus, one would speak about the acquisition of indirect certitude by means of the prudential application of such principles. By themselves, however, they still remain rather general, calling for further specification depending on the matter being considered. One could, perhaps, think of such principles providing guidance (whether implicit or explicit) to the prudential reasoning process that ultimately arrives at a terminal practical judgment. Doubtlessly, some applications of such principles could end up appearing to be nothing more than bloodless, formalistic casuistry. On this topic, see the text of Beaudouin cited below.]

²⁰ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.4 and 6.2.

²¹ [Trans. note: On the primacy of prudence in practical truth, see especially Yves Simon’s highly accessible *Practical Knowledge*, cited in appendix 2 below.]

²² [Trans. note: Both parts are important. It is *right* (i.e., *rectified*) *intention*. This depends on the moral species of the object, which gives the formal specification to the will.]

²³ [Trans. note: For an approximation of this point, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.5. This was a famed scholastic maxim: *Quails unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei* (“As a given man is, so does the end seem to him”). Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange’s

person who is chaste, even if he has no knowledge of moral science, judges rightly (by the inclination of this virtue) concerning things that are related to chastity. They appear to him as being good and obligatory.

St. Thomas explains the truth of this point very well in *ST I-II*, q. 57, a. 5, ad 3, as he likewise does in the entire treatise on prudence. Indeed, he says in the aforementioned response:

The truth of the practical intellect (i.e., the practico-practical intellect or prudence)²⁴ is understood in another, different sense than is the truth of the speculative intellect, as is said in *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2. This is so because *the truth of the speculative intellect* is understood in terms of *conformity to the known reality* [*per conformitatem ad rem*]. Now, because the intellect cannot have infallible conformity in contingent matters (especially future things to be prudently foreseen) but can have such conformity only in necessary matters, therefore no speculative *habitus*²⁵ concerning contingent matters is an intellectual virtue; only those *habitus* that concerned with necessary matters are intellectual virtues. *However, the truth of the practical intellect* (i.e., the practico-practical intellect or prudence) is understood in terms of *conformity with right appetite*.

By right appetite, St. Thomas means right intention of the will. And this suffices for having PRACTICAL CERTITUDE even when *invincible ignorance* or a *speculative error* exists alongside it. For example, consider

student and founder of the Aquinas Academy in Sydney Australia, Fr. Austin Woodbury, S.M., seems to have organized the oral delivery of his moral philosophy courses under this guiding principle, as is attested to by the notes taken by Dr. Anthony Russell, which can be found in the John N. Deely and Anthony F. Russell Collection in the Latimer Family Library at St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA. Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange explicitly cites the importance of this maxim in *The Sense of Mystery: Clarity and Obscurity in the Intellectual Life*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2017), 274n43. More importantly, in his altered form of this essay, he made this dictum central to the discussion. See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le réalisme du principe de finalité*, 285–99.]

²⁴ [Trans. note: All parenthetical remarks are the added interpretations of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange.]

²⁵ [Trans. note: With good reason, one should refrain from referring to the virtues as habits, which could lead the reader to think that they are mere subjective dispositions and not ones that give objective capacity with regard to choice. Accepting the conclusions of Simon's life-long reflection, I am choosing to leave *habitus* untranslated; see Yves Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 47–68.]

someone invincibly ignorant of the extraordinary strength of a particular wine, judging that he can drink a glass of it to quench his thirst. Such a person can become drunk without being at fault. This prudential judgment is *practically true* according to its conformity with a right intention, though it is *speculatively false* (i.e., not conformed to the object, the nature of this wine).

Certainly, it often happens that modern theologians, in treating the formation of right and certain conscience, present their readers with an edifying statement: “In order to form your conscience, virtue is required and even the practice of the virtues.” However, they do not explain well enough *why* virtue is thus required, and they do not see well enough that this element concerning *the conformity of the practical judgment to rectified appetite* enters as a *formal* element into the *practical certitude* of the prudential judgment. In order to better determine the necessity of this element, one must have recourse to a metaphysical study of the nature of prudence and of its relations with the moral virtues. Indeed, prudence presupposes *habitual* rectification of one’s appetite by the moral virtues, and the prudential judgment presupposes *actual* rectification of the intention of the end. This right intention must persist so that prudence can determine what are the best means in view of the end that is willed, so that it can direct *here and now*, as it must, the particular and passing acts of the moral virtues by determining the *golden mean* that pertains to each person according to his temperament, age, and one’s circumstances—all of which admit infinite variation.

To wish to silently pass over this metaphysical study of the virtues in the *Summa* would be like merely preserving the setting of a ring without keeping the very diamond contained therein. In contrast, it is the role of great commentators to show precisely where the most beautiful diamonds are in St. Thomas’s work, just as great art critics make known the beauties of Raphael and Michelangelo. So too, the work of someone like Cajetan or John of St. Thomas begins where superficial commentators stop, commentators who barely exceed the letter of St. Thomas. Sometimes, these commentators respond saying, “if you wish to understand Cajetan, read St. Thomas.” However, without the help of the great interpreter, few would be able to resolve certain objections raised by Scotus. It is very easy to neglect them, but one sometimes is content with juxtaposing conclusions without seeing how they are rigorously deduced from the principles that give the doctrine of St. Thomas the very spirit that animates its letter.

Cajetan excels in placing these principles in relief. In particular, one should consult his remarks concerning the matter occupying us here in *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 5, and q. 58, aa. 3 and 5, and in the treatise on prudence in *ST*

II-II, qq. 47–57. He insists on this Aristotelian and Thomistic doctrine, noting that Scotus did not understand it. Indeed, this is an astonishing fact, for Scotus, who generally is a voluntarist, becomes, in the treatise on prudence, an intellectualist to excess, for he places prudence solely in the intellect as though (like *synderesis* and moral science) it did not presuppose the rectification of appetite. This is why, as Cajetan notes (in his comments on *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 5, ad 3), Scotus does not explain the fact that the judgment made by prudence concerning every particular action to be performed is not only true in most cases, but instead, is *always true*. This is why prudence has a worth that surpasses probable opinion, which is not an intellectual virtue; for, in order to be a virtue, an intellectual virtue must *always* incline reason to the truth, *never* to falsity. Indeed, the prudential judgment *cannot ever* be practically false, for at that very same moment it would be imprudent (or, not prudent).

Therefore, as a result of its conformity to right appetite (i.e., to right intention), prudence succeeds at attaining practical certitude in the direction of particular and contingent acts in the midst of the most varying of circumstances. Thus, it is *superior to opinion* and deserves to be called an intellectual virtue. However, it is *inferior to synderesis and moral science*, which have necessary and universal principles as their objects and which do not presuppose rectification of the appetite, though they contribute to establishing it in the virtuous person or establish only advertence in the sinner.²⁶

Therefore, St. Thomas has profoundly understood, much better than Scotus, as well as many modern thinkers, the double axiom of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "As each is well or badly disposed in his will, so does a given end appear good or bad to him"—"The truth of the practical intellect (i.e., of prudence) consists in conformity to rectified appetite" (or, right intention).

This conformity to rectified appetite is not something artificial or mechanical, like the comparison of probabilities for or against some action, or like various reflex principles that are more or less certain. Rather, it is something *vital* and *excellent*. It is the virtuous life itself, which contributes to forming the rectitude of prudential judgment on the condition—it goes without saying—of presupposing knowledge of the first moral principles (i.e., *synderesis*) and ordinary diligence in examining the circumstances, something that is possible for everyone.

Given that a particular man is truly humble, that which pertains to true humility (and not to false humility) pertains also to him. He has a

²⁶ [Trans. note: Reading "pécheur" for "péché."]

sensitivity that enables him to discover what precisely must be done in this difficult matter. That which *here and now* for him is the golden mean between pusillanimity and vainglory has a profound *relation of suitability* to the virtuous inclination found in him, with his humility of heart. Thus, the virtuous man has this judgment by inclination or sympathy (*iudicium per modum inclinationis*) precisely where the universal and necessary syllogism cannot descend, namely into the domain of individual, ever-variable contingencies, where one must, nonetheless, act without going astray, without confusing true with false humility, magnanimity with vainglory, firmness with inflexibility, indulgence with softness, or true charity with that form of liberalism which is only a lack of intellectual and moral rigor. Here, one must have the sensitivity given by virtue, indeed great virtue, sanctity that does not deceive in these matters.

Therefore, every virtuous man, above all when he is aided by the counsel of others, can generally succeed at forming a right and certain conscience without recourse to a meticulous comparison of probabilities for and against an action, and likewise without needing to consider the reflexive principles known only by theologians. Thus, we here have a principle that is at once vital, dynamic, organic, and virtuous, a principle of rectitude and of prudential certitude loftier than an empirical knowledge that is more or less artificial and that would not generally surpass the level of probability.

Thus, St. Thomas has well determined the specific character of the certitude proper to prudence, as he likewise did in relation to the certitude of faith²⁷ and the certitude of hope.²⁸ He was able to succeed in doing this only because he undertook a metaphysical study of these great questions.

In order to bring matters to a close, we will say a few words regarding another difficulty pertaining to the treatise on conscience, which can be resolved by means of St. Thomas's principles: *In the formation of one's conscience, why is the use of probability sometimes permitted and sometimes not?* From the time of the condemnation of laxism, all theologians agree in recognizing that *the use of probability is not permitted when there is a danger of an evil that one must absolutely avoid and that is independent of the forma-*

²⁷ See *ST* II-II, q. 4, a. 8: "Faith is, without qualification (*simpliciter*) more certain than the intellectual virtues, namely than wisdom, insight into first principles, and science."

²⁸ See *ST* II-II, q. 18, a. 4: "Certitude . . . *essentially* is found in a cognoscitive power; however, it is found participatively in everything that is *infallibly* moved to its end by a cognoscitive power." [Trans. note: These remarks are well compared with Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Sense of Mystery*, 40–46.]

tion of one's conscience. For example, this is so in the administration of the sacraments, if one is concerned about their validity (unless there is a grave necessity). Likewise, if one is concerned with things that are necessary for salvation, with a necessity as a means, one must choose the course the most morally certain course of action—*tutior pars elegendam est* (the safer way must be chosen). One cannot make use of a probability that would be contrary. This also holds when there is a question of some right of a third party, as well as a grave danger of spiritual or temporal harm to oneself or to others, something that must absolutely be ruled out. In all of these cases, recourse to probability in favor of freedom is illicit. However, in other cases, it is permitted, and the matter is explained differently depending on whether one holds to probabiliorism, equiprobabilism, or probabilism.

It would be truly useful to relate this common teaching of Catholic theologians to a superior principle, and as Fr. Reginald Beaudouin has rightly shown in his *Treatise on Conscience*,²⁹ such a relation to a superior principle can be established by means of St. Thomas's distinction between the *medium rationis tantum* [the mean of reason alone] and the *medium rei* [the mean of the thing].³⁰ Before St. Thomas, Aristotle himself had already said that the equitable mean of justice is the *medium rei* (e.g.,³¹ the just measure or just price established according to the very thing that one buys), while the golden mean of temperance (e.g., the quantity of food to eat) or of courage (and the virtues annexed to these) is the *medium rationis tantum, non rei* (i.e., the just measure constituted in the interior dispositions of the subject who acts, dispositions that vary according to age, temperament, circumstances of time and place, etc.).

By this, we can easily see that the use of probability is *illicit* when the measure of the action to be performed is the *medium rei* (i.e., the golden mean established according to the exterior thing that one absolutely must

²⁹ See Reginald Beaudouin, *Tractatus de conscientia*, ed. Ambroise Gardeil (Tournai, BE: Desclée, 1911), 84–87.

³⁰ St. Thomas explains this matter in the treatise on virtues in general (*ST* I-II, q. 60, a. 2; q. 64, a. 2) and in the treatise on prudence (*ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 7).

³¹ [Trans. note: I translate “c'est-à-dire” here as “e.g.,” though the meaning would be “that is to say,” “that is,” or “i.e.” “E.g.” is used here so as to avoid confusing the reader regarding the very limited case cited by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange. Later, for the case of temperance, he states “par exemple.” The simplest example of justice can be found in purchases, which can be reduced to quantitative exchanges admitting of strict equality. However, even here, matters quickly become difficult, for all monetary value must reduce to human use, i.e., artificial wealth to natural wealth. As distributive justice plays a role in the “value” of such wealth, the matters become very complex very quickly.]

do or avoid whatever may be our age or the circumstances in which we find ourselves). This is the case when one is faced with a matter of justice in matters pertaining to sales and purchases, when one is concerned about the validity of sacraments to be administered, and always when there is a danger of evil that one absolutely must avoid and that is independent of the formation of one's conscience.

On the other hand, the use of probability is *licit* when the measure of the action to be performed is a *medium rationis tantum*, meaning the golden mean constituted not by the exterior thing that one should do or avoid, but rather according to the interior dispositions of the subject who acts, as in a matter pertaining to temperance or courage (as well as the virtues annexed to them). Indeed, when the golden mean of one's action is only a *medium rationis*, practical reason itself (i.e., prudence) must *determine* by itself what this mean is, according to the probabilities in play and according to its conformity with rectified appetite. However, in the other case (namely, when the golden mean of the action is a *medium rei*), prudence must only *direct the execution* of the action, the measure of the matter already being determined in accord with an external thing or in accord with a given right of the other party in question. In that case, prudence cannot respond to a given obligation by commanding a doubtful or only probable satisfaction of the matter at hand but, instead, must without doubt render that which is without a doubt due.

And thus, this other difficulty—that concerning recourse to probabilities (a recourse that is sometimes licit and sometimes illicit)—is resolved by St. Thomas's principles concerning the intimate nature of human acts and of the virtues, especially that of prudence, to which the act of right and certain conscience properly belongs.

What then should we conclude? In the moral domain, we do not at all need to leave aside abstract speculation in order to determine here and now what we ought to do in a given concrete case. Were we to do this, we would disregard the universal and necessary principles that are the rule of particular and contingent actions. Even in moral science, we must first, in light of nominal definitions, raise ourselves upward by means of abstraction from concrete facts both to *real definitions* and to universal and necessary *principles*, as is done by the intellect in its purely speculative use [lit. *comme le fait l'intellect spéculatif*]. Second, we must *descend*, as is done by the intellect in its practico-practical use (i.e., by prudence), from abstract, universal, and necessary principles to particular and contingent concrete acts in order to direct ourselves well toward the proper ends of the virtues and toward

the final end. Without this outlook, nearly all of moral theology would be reduced to its inferior application (i.e., to casuistry). Moreover, casuistry itself would be abolished, since it cannot apply principles to concrete practical cases unless these principles of morality are in themselves known in themselves.

This is why, although the metaphysical study of the virtues at first seems useless to many people, it is in fact very useful, *more than useful*—indeed, supra-useful. It is a befitting good (i.e., something that is good in itself). If we say with Aristotle that “metaphysics is useless,” we must understand this adjective “useless” as meaning that it is above usefulness, not below it—like the befitting good, which is good in itself independent of every delightful or useful consequence.

Such is the moral theology conceived of by St. Thomas. It is not specifically distinct from dogmatic theology. It has a distinctly metaphysical character in the supernatural order. And if it truly remains at this loftiness, it will then proceed not only to *casuistry* but, by way of its superior applications, to *asceticism* and *mysticism*, the latter opening the way to contemplation of the mysteries of salvation. Thus the circle of sacred theology is brought to perfection, proceeding from faith in supernatural mysteries, then directing the human person toward contemplation of these mysteries, a contemplation that is, here below, along with charity, the normal disposition to the Beatific Vision in heaven.

Translator's Appendix 1: Concerning the Formal Object of Acquired Theology

The contemporary reader may not be familiar with the scholastic terminology being deployed above by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, using the term “virtual revelation” to distinguish theological assent from the assent of faith. Strictly speaking, that which is known by faith is *formally revealed* or, we could say, “revelation in the formal and strict sense.” The motive for such assent is precisely *that God has supernaturally revealed this truth*, not the mere rational credibility of the contents of what is believed, nor even the faith-directed reasoning of the believer about the contents of what is believed. An assent based on rational credibility remains *natural*, whereas an assent involving revealed truths but based on the inferential processes of human reasoning is *properly theological as a form of knowledge acquired by studious activity*. The inferential process³² of human reasoning “colors”

³² Note well, however, that acquired theological wisdom is a form of *wisdom*, not merely a form of science. Hence, the acquisition of objectively inferential (or “objectively illative”) conclusions is not the only task standing before the theo-

the objects studied in theology, thus presenting the knower with a form of knowledge that is *supernatural but not infused*. It is both *supernatural* and *acquired*. The epistemological character of the formal object of this latter kind of knowledge—*both supernatural* and *acquired*—came to be termed “virtual revelation” by the later Thomist school, especially under the precisions of vocabulary offered by John of St. Thomas.³³

To articulate this point, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange elsewhere³⁴ utilizes an important distinction that derives its terminology from Cajetan. As he notes, one must distinguish *Deus ut res* from *Deus ut obiectum*. The language is stilted, but the point is obvious once we formulate the matter aright. It is one thing to refer to God as he is in himself (*ut res*) absolutely speaking, prescinding from any knower whatsoever. However, *to be an object* implies that God is known by some intellectual being. Speaking in a general manner, we have the distinction between the material object (= *Deus ut res*) and the formal object (= *Deus ut obiectum*).³⁵

logian. Theology’s highest office, at least according to the tradition in which Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange stands, is the task of reflecting on the revealed principles of theology. See Doronzo, *Introduction to Theology*, 21–24. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “La théologie et la vie de foi,” *Revue thomiste* 40, n.s. 18 (1935): 492–514; *De revelatione per ecclesiam Catholicam proposita*, 13–16.

This point is summarized very well in Jacques Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1944), 236: “This argument [from Fr. Ramirez] is very interesting because it shews what has happened to a certain conception of theology. Thus, only *theological conclusions* alone (that is, new truths not formally revealed, but deduced from the truths of faith) belong to the science of theology; and truths such as the existence of the last supernatural end and the fact of the fall and redemption of human nature, because they are truths of faith and not *theological conclusions*, cannot be truths of theology? As if the essential aim of theology was not to ‘acquire some intelligence’ as the Vatican Council says of its *formal subject* which is the divine reality under the *ratio* of Deity, and as if, consequently, the *principal* thing in theology were not to know in a more detailed and organic form the *truths of faith* themselves, and to penetrate ever deeper into these principles. The science of theology is not confined to theological conclusions which expand the area of its field of knowledge. It includes also, and chiefly, the very truths of faith which are penetrated and connected one to another with the aid of human inference—*ut connexae* said John of St. Thomas, *et penetratae modo naturali et studio acquisito*. For a theological inference which starts from a truth of faith can join up with another truth of faith. This augments theological knowledge in depth and is of primary importance to it.”

³³ See the forthcoming volume John of St. Thomas, *On Sacred Science*, translated by John Doyle, cited in note 8. The point is deployed on many occasions and is noted in the introduction provided by the volume’s editor, Victor Salas.

³⁴ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Sense of Mystery*, 126n9.

³⁵ As regards the distinction between *res ut res* and *res ut obiectum*, no dualism need

Thus, God is known *sub ratione entis mobilis* in natural philosophy, *sub ratione entis* in metaphysics, and *sub ratione Deitatis* (i.e., in his inner mystery) by faith (and theology, as well as by the gift of wisdom). Thus, the general character of one's knowledge is colored by the way that one approaches one's object. The distinction between knowing God as Prime Mover and knowing God as Source of created being is attested to in Aquinas, *De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 2, ad 3. The fifteenth-century Dominican Dominic of Flanders takes a similar view, noting that natural philosophy proves the existence of God as cause of motion, while metaphysics proves his existence as cause of being.³⁶

In St. Thomas, the distinction between faith and theology is a little blurry at times. Nonetheless, see especially the remark in *ST I*, q. 1, a. 7: “[That God is the object of this science] is clear also from the principles of this science, namely, the articles of faith, for faith is about God. The object of the principles and of the whole science must be the same, since the whole science *is contained virtually in its principles*” (emphasis added). The conclusions are drawn out “from the power” (i.e., virtually) from the principle of the science. Also, the distinction between formal revelation and virtual revelation is at play in *ST I*, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3, as well as in *ST I*, q. 1, a. 8. However, it is not fully spelled out by Aquinas.

Therefore, to fully articulate the point with which I opened, we need to make a further distinction so as to understand these matters aright. For all its limitations, the vocabulary of Cajetan is helpful here. When we are considering something *as an object*, we should distinguish between the *ratio formalis obiecti ut res* and the *ratio formalis obiecti ut obiectum*.

The *ratio formalis obiecti ut res* is the *formal object quod* (i.e., the formal object that is known or the formality taken from the side of the thing known). Jacques Maritain has felicitously referred to this as the “intelligibility appeal” of the thing known. When it is known, the thing (*ut res*)

be presupposed. Instead, as Maritain has ably shown, the notion of *object* includes that of *thing*. For a rather clear expositions of this point, see: John C. Cahalan, “The Problem of Thing and Object in Maritain,” *The Thomist* 59, no. 1 (1995): 21–46; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. and ed. Gerald Phelan et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 96–107, 127–36; Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. E. I. Watkin (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932), 159, 193, 205n2, 253n1.

³⁶ Indeed, he explicitly states his view as being part of a longer conversation in agreement with Avicenna. See Phillip-Neri Reese, “Dominic of Flanders, O.P. (d. 1479) on the Nature of the Science of Metaphysics” (PhL thesis, Catholic University of America, 2015), 22–23n40.

offers itself to the given power from a particular perspective.³⁷ However, we can go further so as to understand how this given perspective (i.e., of the object, considered as a thing) can be approached under several different lights. In other words, the “intelligibility appeal” of the thing can be considered under several different “objective lights.”

In his presentation of this matter, Maritain focuses on the traditional Thomistic division of types of immateriality involved in the orders of natural knowledge. These represent various kinds of *rationes formales sub qua*, *rationes formales obiecti ut obiecti*, or “objective lights” under which the given “intelligibility appeal” is known. (Also, one could call this the formal object *quo*.) In his account concerning the various types of sciences, Maritain notes the role of objective lights in giving distinct specifications to, for instance, natural philosophy and mathematical physics.³⁸

This brings us, at last, to the important point regarding the formal object of theology as an acquired form of wisdom. A text from Maritain articulates this very well:

It may happen that, given a certain sphere of fundamental intelligibility determined by the intelligibility-appeal of the thing, the corresponding objective light be diversified into several different objective lights each specifying a type of knowledge. In such a case it is clear that what ultimately specifies a scientific *habitus* is the formal perspective *sub qua*, the objective light, more than the formal perspective *quae*.

Such is the case for theology—and this is Cajetan’s point: theology has the same intelligibility-appeal, the same formal perspective of reality (*as does the beatific vision: Deitas ut sic*) and consequently belongs to the same sphere of fundamental intelligibility. The intelligibility-appeal, the *ratio formalis quae* of theology is deity as such,

³⁷ I would note, as well, that one could perhaps apply this kind of reasoning to virtues in appetitive powers. Thus, the same *formal object quod* is involved in all of the theological virtues (i.e., God in the inner mystery of the *Deity*). However, faith, hope, and charity are each objectively differentiated with regard to the way that they perfect the given powers in question. Thus, roughly speaking, we have faith specified by *the-supernatural-Godhead-known-obscurely*, hope specified by *the-supernatural-Godhead-as-he-who-faithfully-aids-in-salvation*, and charity specified by *the-supernatural-Godhead-as-loveable-in-Itself*.

³⁸ Let this suffice for our purposes, though discussions of this matter could provide much clarification on a number of important points regarding the various sciences, especially the transitions among them. See Maritain, *The Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Imelda C. Byrne (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 125–35.

the deep depths of the divine nature; its sphere of fundamental intelligibility is *Deitas sub ratione Deitatis*, God taken not according to the intelligibility-appeal of the first cause, but according to that of the deity itself.

And yet the formal perspective *sub qua*, the objective light of theology, is not the light of the beatific vision and of the science of the blessed; our theology proceeds from a special objective light: the light of divine revelation, not *as* evident as it is in glory and not *as* inevident [*sic*], but simply *as* revealing: for the principles of theology are received from the intuitive science of the blessed by means of faith. In this case the intelligibility-appeal, the formal perspective of reality, has only a generic and not a specific determination, and the objective light corresponding to this intelligibility-appeal, (the formal perspective *sub qua* which corresponds to this formal perspective *quae*) also has a generic unity which is diversified into several species.

The *lumen divinum* is divided first into *lumen divinum evidens*, which is the perspective *sub qua*, the objective light of the theology of the blessed; secondly into *lumen divinum revelans abstrahendo ab evidentia aut inevidentia*, the divine revealing light considered neither as evident nor inevident, which is the objective light of our theology; and finally *lumen divinum inevidens*, the non-evident divine revealing light which is the objective light of faith. Three different objective lights for the one same sphere of fundamental intelligibility, for one same object intelligibly determined by the formal perspective of the object as a thing (*Deitas*).³⁹

We can summarize all of this as follows. In revealing himself, God opens up the very depths of the intimate nature of the Deity (*ratio formalis obiecti ut res*). This same objective formality (considered as an object, but still from the perspective *ut res*) can be viewed under various lights. There is the full clarity of God's own self knowledge. This knowledge alone is fully comprehensive of the depths of the Divinity. Then, there is the clear vision of the blessed souls in heaven, viewing God in the light of glory. Here below, there is need for the supernatural, though obscure, light of faith. Formally speaking, the depths of the Deity are seen (though obscurely) in this light. (Thus, we have the "intelligibility appeal" of the Deity seen under the "objective light" of faith—*formal revelation*.) Theology extends

³⁹ Maritain, *The Philosophy of Nature*, 129–30.

this light, so to speak, by a kind of refraction through faith-directed reasoning. This is a light that is unique, one that is supernatural as a formal object *quod* (i.e., *ratio formalis obiecti ut res*) but is naturally acquired through study, thus receiving its ultimate character in terms of its formal object *quo* (i.e., *ratio formalis obiecti ut obiectum*). The latter is the “objective light” (shining on the Deity as such) of “virtual revelation.” It thus has its own kind of certitude and approach to the Deity that differentiates it from faith (or, “formal revelation”).⁴⁰

Appendix 2: On the Speculative, the Speculatively-Practical, and the Practically-Practical

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange does not introduce the distinction between the practico-practical and the speculativo-practical as a merely verbal distinction. Maritain deployed this distinction in at least two ways in his works, likely in dependence on Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange (who himself mediates the tradition crystallized in Billuart). In the *Degrees of Knowledge*, Maritain focuses on the essentially practical (or “operable”) character of all knowledge of human acts *qua operable*.⁴¹ Thus, he distinguishes between moral philosophy and the prudential command by qualifying the former as being “speculatively practical” (because of its mode of knowledge) and the latter as being practical in the highest degree. Here, he is making room for an intermediary kind of knowledge that would be “practically practical,” making room for moralists’ discussions in a more practical register than moral philosophy (and also making room for the

⁴⁰ We must direct the reader to other studies on such matters. Further details regarding the types of explicative and illative reasoning that fall to theology (and the relation of those forms of reasoning to dogmatic definitions) can be found in: Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1943), 39–93; Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality*, trans. Patrick Cummins (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1950), 53–60; Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Theological Virtues*, vol. 1, *Faith*, trans. Thomas a Kempis Reilly (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1965), 125–48. Also, one can profitably consult the work of the student of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Fr. Joseph C. Fenton, *The Concept of Sacred Theology* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1941). See also Emmanuel Doronzo, *Theologia dogmatica*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1966), 40–49.

⁴¹ One finds resonances of this, as well, in Michel Labourdette, “Connaissance pratique et savoir morale,” *Revue thomiste* 48 (1948): 142–79, especially 151–55. A recent article by Fr. Philip-Neri Reese, O.P., outlines many of these points with great clarity, though he seems to view moral philosophy in a more speculative light than Fr. Labourdette, Maritain, and Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange. Nonetheless, his text is a very clear exposition of the difference between scientific reasoning in moral thought and action-directing thought in prudence: “The End of Ethics: A Thomistic Investigation,” *New Blackfriars* 95 (May 2013): 285–94.

kind of knowledge used by mystics in theology).⁴² In *Existence and the Existent*, Maritain uses a slightly different distinction *precisely within the process of prudential deliberation and judgment*. There, he notes that there are two sorts of syllogisms, one that is speculativo-practical, considering the moral character of the law without fully bringing *this* agent here and now into the reasoning, and one that is practico-practical, passing to the full application of the prudential judgment to oneself.⁴³ As he summarizes in a footnote:

There are in truth two practical syllogisms, one opening into the speculativo-practical and the other into the practico-practical. Take this as an example of the first: "Murder is forbidden by the Law. This act which attracts me is murder. Therefore, this act is forbidden by the Law." The conclusion expresses the rule of reason, which I know and from which I turn away my eyes when I sin. This syllogism considers the act and its law; the subject does not enter, unless to be *submitted* to the universal as any individual *x* which forms part of the species.

The following is an example of the second syllogism: "Murder is forbidden by the Law. This act which attracts me is murder, *and would cause me to deviate from what I love best*. Therefore, *I shall not do it (and long live [the] law)!*" Or it could be contrariwise: "Murder is forbidden by the Law. This act which attracts me is murder, *and I make it to be what I love best*. Therefore, *I shall do it (and so much the worse for universal law!).*"

In the second syllogism, it is the existential disposition of the subject in the free affirmation of the unique self which decides the question.⁴⁴

⁴² See Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 327–58 and 481–89. A lucid exposition can be found in Yves R. Simon: *A Critique of Moral Knowledge*, trans. Ralph McInerney (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). This is a controversial topic that has led to pushback by writers such as Fr. Thomas Deman and even Maritain's own disciple, Simon, later on in the latter's life. These issues cannot be addressed in appendix such as this. See Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, 227–30, and, Simon, *Practical Knowledge*, ed. Robert J. Mulvaney (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 79–87, 100–113.

⁴³ Granted, the prudential command remains as an imperative applied by the practical intellect to the will, though with mutual causality, the intellect functioning as the extrinsic formal cause and the will as efficient cause. See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrangé, *God: His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*, vol. 2, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1949), 306–38 and 370–72; see also *Le réalisme du principe de finalité*, 353–55.

⁴⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri and Gerald

This appendix is meant only to introduce the reader to the issue, not to resolve Maritain's vocabulary. Likely, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange was dependent on what one can find in Billuart's discussion of conscience:

Conscience is said to be "a judgment of practical reason" because the intellect is concerned either with merely speculative truths (e.g., "God is triune," and "All angels are specifically distinct") as well as with truths about the substance, value, and quality of things or of facts, and not about the moral fittingness or wickedness of human acts, as well as the permissibility [*licitate*] or impermissibility of them (e.g., whether a sacrament confected in this manner is valid, whether a contract entered in this manner is valid, whether there are robbers along the road, whether a beast or a man is in the woods, and so forth). In either of these ways of speaking, the intellect is said to be speculative *simpliciter*. On the other hand, the intellect is also concerned with general principles or general conclusions concerning the goodness or wickedness of human acts, as achieved through synderesis or moral science. In that case it is called *speculatively-practical*. Or it is concerned with particular conclusions concerning the goodness or wickedness of this act here and now to be posited or fled from, as is achieved through conscience. Then, it is called *practically-practical*.⁴⁵

Thus, we find Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange stating in several passages in *De beatitudine*:

A speculatively practical judgment pertains to moral science and establishes advertence in the sinner. The *practically practical* judgment to be determined by prudence *is not psychologically necessary here and now*. Although the sinner may judge speculatively that justice is to be maintained by other men, especially in matters of justice related to himself, nonetheless, he practically [*in praxi*]

B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1948), 52n3. See also F.-X. Maquart, *Elementa philosophiae*, vol. 2 (Paris: Andreas Blot, 1937), 476–86.

⁴⁵ C.-R. Billuart, *Summa sancti thomae hodiernis academiæ moribus accomodata*, new ed., vol. 2 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1872), 329–30 (tract. *De actibus humanis*, diss. 5, a. 1; translation mine). He goes on immediately after this to contrast this judgment with the imperative command of prudence (or imprudence). Another account of these matters, following in Billuart's line, can be found in Beaudouin, *Tractatus de conscientia*, q. 3, a. 1, §1 (p. 49-50).

judges that here and now injustice in relation to another person is *simpliciter* something that is good for him to do on account of his appetite's evil desire. With the poet, he can say, "I see and approve of what is better" (speculatively practical judgment), "but follow what is worse" [Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.20–21].⁴⁶

And later in the work, he writes:

We must note, along with Billuart [in *Summa sancti thomae*, tract. *De actibus humanis*, diss. 5, a. 1] that probable conscience (as well as doubting conscience) is subdivided into *speculatively probable* conscience and *practically probable* conscience. Later on, we will discuss how speculatively probable conscience (i.e., conscience emanating from a speculatively practical judgment in the abstract) can become practically certain here and now by means of a given reflex principle. However, if it remains practically probable, it cannot be the rule of one's moral actions. . . . For example, I can *speculatively* judge that it is more probably the case that the conferral of baptism with rose water is not permitted. This is a speculatively-practical judgment in the abstract. However, in peril of a child's death, if I have no other matter at hand, I *practically* judge here and now, in these circumstances, that it is permitted for me to confer baptism in a conditional manner [*sub conditione*] with this dubious matter, basing my judgment on the reflex principle, "Sacraments exist for the sake of men." Thus, faced with such a case of necessity and lacking certain matter, we can even make use of dubious matter in a conditional manner.⁴⁷

Given that this is already a lengthy appendix, I will leave the matter here. However, I have felt that the retrieval of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's thought on these matters required some pedagogical remarks to direct interested researchers down paths that hopefully would be fruitful for further reflection. Too easily could the words "virtual revelation" and "speculatively practical" be skimmed over without realizing the significant positions staked out in previous generations concerning these matters.

⁴⁶ Garrigou-Lagrange, *De beatitudine*, 264.

⁴⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange, *De beatitudine*, 376. Also, on the two kinds of moral certitude—speculative moral certitude (judged through conformity to reality [*ad rem*]) and practical moral certitude (judged through conformity to right intention [*ad intentionem rectam*])—see *De beatitudine*, 383–84.

However, the reader should remember that these appendices, in the end, only mean to provide these pedagogical notes, not a full treatment of these quite complex matters. N.V