

The Teaching of Theologians from St. Thomas Aquinas until Vatican Council II on the Existence of Moral Absolutes

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The purpose of this inquiry is to examine the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and a select group of exceptionally important theologians — Duns Scotus, Suarez, Alphonsus Liguori — and representatives of the “Dominican,” “Jesuit,” and “Redemptorist” manualist traditions from the time of St. Thomas until Vatican Council II on the existence of moral absolutes. The expression, “moral absolutes,” refers to moral norms proscribing specific sorts of human actions describable in non-evaluative language, for example, a norm proscribing adultery, understood as genital intercourse between a married person and someone other than that person’s spouse as always wrong, with no exceptions.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

St. Thomas teaches that there are certain specifiable sorts of human actions that are morally wicked of themselves, *secundum se*, and therefore unworthy of human choice and contrary to precepts of the natural law. Among the sorts of human acts wicked in this sense and opposed to natural law precepts are theft,¹ lying,² fornicating,³ committing adultery,⁴ killing the innocent.⁵ This list is illustrative, not taxative. It thus seems that Aquinas does hold that there are moral absolutes in the sense in which these are understood here.

Nonetheless, several contemporary theologians, among them Franz Scholz,⁶ Louis Janssens,⁷ John Milhaven,⁸ and John Dedek,⁹ claim that Aquinas did not believe in moral absolutes in this sense and that the only unexceptional or absolute norms he recognized were *formal* norms, i.e., norms proscribing actions described in morally *evaluative* and not merely *descriptive* language, for instance, that it is always wrong to kill a human being *unjustly*. This claim is, however, vigorously repudiated by many Thomistic scholars, among them Servais Pinckaers¹⁰ and Patrick Lee.¹¹

My intent is to set forth Thomas’ thought on this matter by examining his teaching on the natural law and its structure, the absoluteness of the precepts of the Decalogue, and the difference between the “natural” species of an act and its “moral” species.

Natural Law and Its Structure

According to Thomas the rule for moral goodness is right reason. The goodness of the will’s acts depends on the goodness of its term or object. Since the will is a rational appetite, inclining toward objects presented to it by reason, it follows that “goodness of the will depends on reason, in the same way that it depends on its object.”¹² Moreover, Thomas teaches that practical reason should be measured by its first principles.¹³ Such principles are the primary precepts of the natural law, which is the rational creature’s unique way of participating in God’s eternal law. God’s eternal law is received in or communicated to human beings through their natural inclinations and their reason. Rational creatures participate in God’s eternal law not simply by being ruled and measured by it but also by actively measuring and ruling their own actions in accord with its truth.¹⁴ Rational creatures participate in the eternal law by coming to know the truths of the eternal law and expressing these as “propositiones” of the practical reason; and there is, Thomas says, an ordered progression in this active participation in the truths of the eternal law. For the natural law consists of an ordered series of “precepts” or propositions of practical reason.

The first set in this ordered series consists of “those common and first principles,”¹⁵ “of which there is no need for any ‘publishing,’ save insofar as they are written in natural reason itself, as being *per se* known.”¹⁶ Among

such common and first principles is “good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided” and all those precepts that are based on this ordination of reason.¹⁷ Therefore:

because good has the meaning of an end, evil the meaning of its contrary, it follows that all those things toward which man has a natural inclination natural reason apprehends as good, and consequently to be pursued by his action, and their contraries as evils and to be avoided.¹⁸

Thomas then lists some of these natural inclinations and the human goods to which they orient us and which reason naturally apprehends as goods to be pursued and done: the tendencies to preserve one’s life, to bear and raise children, to live in society with others, and to come to a true knowledge about God. The list, moreover, is illustrative, not taxative, as Thomas makes clear by such expressions as “and the like” (*similia*) and “others of this kind” (*cetera huiusmodi*).¹⁹ His point is that the goods to which these natural inclinations direct us are grasped by practical reason as fitting objects of the will, the objects that should be pursued and their contraries avoided. They are goods perfective of human persons, and human persons are meant to flourish in them. Thus, among the “first and common principles” of the natural law are the precepts that human life itself, its handing on in marriage and education, knowledge of the truth about God, life in fellowship with others and “other goods of this kind” are to be pursued and their opposites avoided. The human person, through his will and human acts, must therefore respect these goods. They are indeed the “ends” toward which we are rightly disposed by the moral virtues.²⁰

St. Thomas also includes, among the primary precepts or principles of natural law, such precepts as “evil must be done to no one”²¹ and “you are to love your God and your neighbor.”²² And one loves one’s neighbor by willing that the goods of human existence, of which mention has already been made, flourish in him. Such non-demonstrable and *per se nota* principles belong, Thomas insists, to the “primus gradus” or first set of the natural law.²³

The second “gradus” or set of natural law precepts is that “which immediately and of itself the natural reason of any man judges are to be done or not done.”²⁴ Such precepts are proximate conclusions from the first indemonstrable precepts of natural law.²⁵ They can be understood as true, “immediately, with very little consideration.”²⁶ They are “more determinate” than the primary precepts of natural law, but they can be easily grasped by the intelligence of the most ordinary individual.²⁷ Such precepts “are absolutely of the natural law.”²⁸ These precepts, it is true, can become perverted in a few instances because of sin and bad habits, and it is for this reason that they have a need of a further “edition,” namely through the divine [positive] law,²⁹ for these precepts are those found in the Decalogue. Their “absoluteness” will shortly be our principal concern. But, before examining them more closely, some brief words about the third set or “gradus” of natural law precepts recognized by St. Thomas are appropriate.

This third set is made up of those truths about human action that are known only “by a more subtle consideration of reason.”³⁰ They are like conclusions derived from the second set of natural law precepts,³¹ and they are known only to the “wise,” i.e., for Aquinas, those in whom the virtue of prudence is perfected. To know these precepts “much consideration of different circumstances” is required, and diligently to consider these is something that pertains to the wise. Those not perfected in virtue need to be instructed in them by the wise.³²

The Absoluteness of the Precepts of the Decalogue

In some texts, in which, it should be noted, the issue formally under consideration is *not* that of dispensations from the precepts of the Decalogue, Thomas says that God can grant dispensations from the precepts of the second table (the last seven commandments) but not from those of the first (the first three commandments).³³ God cannot grant dispensations from the first three precepts because they order man in his relationship to God, and man’s whole moral goodness depends on this order. But God can dispense from the last seven, which order man in his relationship to his neighbors, so long as God through his own action can, miraculously as it were, preserve man’s order to himself. The question of dispensations from the Decalogue was introduced into these texts by problems raised by some Old Testament texts, such as God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, to the Jews to despoil the Egyptians, and to Hosea to take to himself a woman of fornication and to have children of fornication. Thomas responded to such problems in these texts by simply saying that God could grant dispensations from the relevant precepts (the fifth, seventh, and sixth commandments respectively).

In other texts, in which the issue formally under consideration is that of dispensations from the Decalogue, Thomas says that even God cannot dispense from any of them, including those of the second table, for if he were to do so he would be contradicting himself, as he would were he to make a man without a soul.³⁴ In these texts

Thomas holds that all the precepts of the Decalogue express the intention of God the lawgiver and that consequently no dispensation from them can be given.

In these texts, in response to the objections that God had commanded the Israelites to despoil the Egyptians and Hosea to take to himself a wife of fornication, Aquinas distinguished between the precept and the conditions required for an act to be against the precept. The precepts that one ought not to take what belongs to another and that one ought not to fornicate or have sexual relations with someone who is not “one’s own,” i.e., one’s spouse, are absolute and admit of no exceptions. But if the item taken belongs, not to another, but to the one taking or receiving it, then the human act in question is not the kind of act prohibited by the precept: “God never commands things to be done contrary to the precepts of the Decalogue insofar as they belong to the Decalogue. But the prohibition of theft belongs to the Decalogue *insofar as the thing stolen is alien to him who takes it* [i.e., is not ‘his own’]. *Therefore, so long as this condition is kept*, if that thing should become [the property] of the one who takes it, then it will not be contrary to the Decalogue.”³⁵ Similarly, if the woman with whom a man has relations is indeed “his own,” i.e., his wife, then obviously he is not fornicating or committing adultery, and this was the case with Hosea: “Hosea, in approaching the fornicating wife, or the adulterous woman, did not commit adultery nor did he fornicate, *because he approached her who was his own [wife]* according to the command of God, who is the author of the institution of matrimony.”³⁶

In his *Scriptum in 3 Sententiarum* (the first of the texts under consideration here), Aquinas did not explicitly treat of God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, noting simply that the Decalogue does not prohibit killing “simpliciter,” but rather the “killing of one who ought not to suffer death.”³⁷ But in the text from the *Summa Theologiae* (the second of the texts under consideration) he does treat this issue as such. His point there is that Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son was not a human act of homicide, because Abraham was acting as the executor of a just judgment of God, who imposes death on all men, the just and the unjust, as a penalty for original sin. As Thomas says:

When Abraham consented to kill his son, he did not consent to homicide, because it was due to him [his son] to be killed through the command of God, who is the Lord of life and death. For it is He who inflicts the penalty of death on all men, the just and the unjust, for the sin of our first parents; if a man is the executor of this sentence by divine authority, he will not be a murderer, just as God is no murderer.³⁸

Here two things should be noted. First, Thomas is saying that a condition of Abraham’s act was changed so that *what* he did (the object of his will’s act) was no longer the human act prohibited by the fifth commandment, the killing of an innocent person. God did not dispense Abraham from killing an innocent person, a kind of act that Thomas elsewhere declares to be “secundum se malum”³⁹ and the kind of act forbidden by the fifth commandment. Rather, by his command he changed the object of Abraham’s will act or what Abraham chose to do. The object of Abraham’s will act was to carry out the just sentence of God.

Second, note that Thomas says that Abraham was no more a murderer or a killer than was God. For St. Thomas, God is absolutely innocent of evil (and thus human beings, who are God’s images, ought, like him, to be innocent of evil). Thus even in punishing mankind with the evil of death, God does not intend that evil, though the punishment entails an evil. What God directly intends is the order of justice. Thus St. Thomas writes:

It is not necessary that the good which is the cause of evil *per accidens* be a deficient good. For God is the cause of the evil of punishment in this way; *for in punishing he does not intend the evil of him who is punished, but he intends to impress upon things the order of justice*, upon which follows the evil of the one who is punished, just as to the form of fire follows the privation of the form of water.⁴⁰

Since Abraham’s act was now specified as an act of carrying out God’s just sentence, he was, like God, not setting his will on evil.

To understand more clearly what this means, it is necessary to examine the Common Doctor’s distinction between the “natural species” of a human act and its “moral species,” and the factors that determine the moral species of an act. Before doing this, however, I think it pertinent to note St. Thomas’ response to an objection, raised in the article in the *Summa Theologiae*, that God could indeed dispense from the precepts of the Decalogue. The objection held that since human lawgivers can dispense from the laws they make, so too can God. In response Thomas said:

As the Apostle says (2 Tim. 2:13), “God remains faithful; he is not able to deny himself.” But he would deny himself if he were to take away the very order of his justice: since he himself is justice itself. And therefore God cannot dispense in this, that it be licit for a man not to maintain himself in an ordinate relation toward

God or not to be subject to the order of his justice, *even in those things according to which men are ordered to each other.*⁴¹

The “Natural” and the “Moral” Species of Human Acts

“Coition,” Thomas writes, “is a certain act commanded by the will, through the mediation of another power; and therefore, it is only *per accidens* in the genus of morality. Hence the act of coition can be considered in two ways: either according to the genus of nature, and then the marital act and fornication do not differ in species and their natural effects are the same in species; or these acts can be considered as they relate to the genus of morality, and then their effects differ in species, as to merit or not to merit or something of this kind, and in this way they differ specifically.”⁴² As this text and others⁴³ make clear, Thomas distinguished sharply between the “natural” or “physical” species of human actions and their “moral” species. Human acts precisely as human or moral are constituted in their moral species by “forms” determined by human reason: “Species moralium actuum constituuntur ex formis, prout sunt a ratione conceptae.”⁴⁴

Human actions acquire their “forms” from human intelligence, which places them in their moral species by discerning their “ends,” “objects,” and “circumstances.” The end to which the human act is ordered is a primary, indeed *the* primary source of its moral species, because it is only for the sake of an end that a human person, as an intelligent being, acts to begin with.⁴⁵ The end known by reason and intended by will is the “object” of the internal act of the will, an internal act that is an integral element of the whole human act upon which moral judgment bears.⁴⁶ In fact, the end intended by the will is the formal reason why the other essential component of the whole human act, namely, the external act, is chosen by the will, for this external act is the “means” to the end intended.⁴⁷ Thus the end intended by the will is the “forma magis universalis” of the whole human act in the same way that a genus is said to be a “forma magis universalis” in respect to its species: “Insofar as it is more absolute and less constricted . . . and in this way the genus is the formal cause of the species, and the more common [universal] it is, the more formal it will be.”⁴⁸ It thus follows that the end intended by the agent must be known by reason to be good if the whole human act is to be in the species of a morally good act. An evil end intended by the will vitiates the entire act.

In addition, the “object” of the external act chosen and commanded by the will is also a primary source of the moral species of the whole human act, precisely because this object is the object of a will act. This “object” is *not* the “materia ex qua” the external act is composed. That is, it is not the “material” species of the act, e.g., sexual union. Rather, it is the “materia circa quam” the external act is concerned and as such “has in some way the meaning of a form, insofar as it gives the species to the act.”⁴⁹ It is, as it were, the intelligible proposal that is adopted by choice and executed externally (e.g., to have sexual union with “one’s own spouse,” or to have sexual union with someone who is not “one’s own”). Like the end for whose sake this object is chosen, it too must be judged good if the whole human act is to be morally such, for, as St. Thomas insists, “good is caused from an integral cause, evil from any individual defect.”⁵⁰

The end intended by the will and the object of the external act chosen and commanded by the will are, then, the primary “forms” intelligently grasped and placing the whole human act into its moral species. Both the end intended and the object willed must be judged by reason as morally good if the whole human act is to be morally good, and it is from these “forms” that the whole human act receives its species. It receives its more universal form or genus from the end, which is in this sense the “forma magis universalis,” and it receives its specific difference from the object essentially ordered to that end: “The specific difference that comes from the end is more general; and the difference that comes from the object ordered per se to that end is specific with respect to it.”⁵¹ If either end or object is judged evil, then the whole human act is morally bad.

In addition to these essential factors (end and object) that put a human act into its moral species, the circumstances in which the entire act is willed must also be taken into account before a final judgment of its moral goodness or badness can be made. These “circumstances” are like the accidents that modify a substance, and they too must be good if the whole human act is to be such.⁵² Thus marital union, an act morally good by reason of its object and ordered either to the morally good end of procreation or to the morally good end of spousal fidelity⁵³ could become morally bad if done in undue circumstances, e.g., in the public square.

The criteria used by human reason to judge whether the end and objects of the whole human act are morally good or morally bad are precisely the precepts of the natural law, whereby human acts are to be ruled and measured. The precepts of the Decalogue, although divinely revealed and thus pertaining to divine positive law, are, St. Thomas insists, proximate conclusions of the primary precepts of the natural law, and hence they pertain to the natural law too. So proximate are they that they are known by all men save those perverted by sin and bad habits, as we have seen, “immediately, with little consideration.” These precepts include specific moral norms proscribing

kinds of action describable in nonevaluative language: taking what belongs to another, having adultery (or sexual relations with some one who is not “one’s own”). These precepts, moreover, are absolutely binding. Not even God can dispense from them. Apparent exceptions raised by some Old Testament events are not, in reality, exceptions. For in these cases the precepts stand, along with the *human acts* proscribed by them. What occurred was a change in the moral species of the acts commanded by God.

At times some contemporary theologians⁵⁴ appeal to the texts in which St. Thomas says that “the natural law . . . with respect to certain proper precepts, which are conclusions, as it were, of the more common principles, is the same among all *for the most part*. . . *but in some few instances* it may be defective”⁵⁵ to show that the Common Doctor did not teach that there are moral absolutes in the sense understood here. In these texts, the usual example given by St. Thomas is that of returning something one has borrowed to its rightful owner. Aquinas notes that one is not obliged, for instance, to return what one has borrowed if the one seeking its return wants to use it to attack his country or something of this kind. Appealing to texts of this kind, some claim that *specific* moral precepts of the natural law (e.g., one ought not to commit adultery) are “valid for the most part,” but, in particular instances may not be true.

But this claim cannot stand. St. Thomas clearly taught, as the exposition and analysis of his thought provided here show, that there are some specific moral precepts that are absolutely and universally true, with no exceptions (e.g., the precepts of the Decalogue). It is true that not all specific moral precepts are indispensable or absolute in the sense understood here. It can be right and just to break a promise or to refuse to return, here and now, what one has borrowed from one’s neighbor. It is right and just to do so because this is what is required by the “common and first principles” of the natural law from which such specific norms are derived. We are required to keep our promises and to return what we have borrowed because of the principle of fairness or the Golden Rule, which is one of the “common and first principles” of the natural law. But this same principle can at times require us not to keep our promises or not, here and now (as in the case used by St. Thomas), to restore things we have borrowed to their rightful owners. But this principle in no way justifies *stealing* from others, an action whose malice is seen precisely in the light of the “common and first principles” of the natural law. For St. Thomas, the indispensable precepts of the Decalogue (specific moral precepts, all of them) are absolute, and they follow “immediately, with little consideration”⁵⁶ from the first and common precepts of natural law.

Conclusion

Thus, in the thought of St. Thomas, there are natural law precepts proscribing acts morally bad by reason of their objects. Some of these precepts, e.g., those of the Decalogue, are absolute, without exceptions, whatever the circumstances. Accordingly, St. Thomas, on encountering the opinion of the Anonymous Commentator on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* that adultery (sexual relations with a tyrant’s wife in this case) is morally permissible when committed to save a nation from tyranny, did not hesitate to say: “That Commentator ought not to be supported in this; for one ought not to commit adultery for any benefit whatsoever.”⁵⁷

In conclusion, St. Thomas teaches, and teaches firmly, that there are moral absolutes in the sense in which this expression is used here.

Duns Scotus (1266-1308)

Scotus clearly taught that, in one real and significant way, there are moral absolutes in the sense understood here. He insisted that “all who are subject to the divine law act inordinately if they do not act in accordance with it.”⁵⁸ Now the Decalogue, with its precepts that we are not to kill, to commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, etc. pertains to the divine law. Scotus maintained that these precepts must be observed in every stage of human existence, even in the stage of innocence. Thus he wrote: “All were held to these precepts, which were precepts inwardly [inscribed] in the heart of each and everyone, or perhaps through some teaching exteriorly given by parents to their children, although they were not then written in any book.”⁵⁹

Although it is absolutely imperative to obey these precepts, Scotus nonetheless taught that, in another sense, the moral precepts of the second table of the Decalogue are *not* absolute insofar as God has the power and the right to grant true dispensations from them and, in Scotus’ opinion, did in fact grant dispensations from some of them. Properly to understand Scotus’ position it is necessary to know (1) what he meant by a dispensation and (2) why he thought that God could dispense from the moral precepts of the second table of the Decalogue.

The Meaning of Dispensation

Scotus is very clear what he means by “dispensation.” “To dispense,” he wrote, “is not to make it lawful to do what is contrary to the precept while the precept is still in force; but to dispense is to revoke the precept or to declare how it ought to be understood. For there is a twofold kind of dispensation, namely, the revoking of a law and the declaration of a law.”⁶⁰ Dispensation of the first kind is an unconditional dispensation. Thus, for example, to ask whether God can grant a dispensation for an act of killing is to ask:

Whether, with all the circumstances staying the same in the act of killing a man, with only the circumstance of prohibition and non-prohibition changing, could God make that act, which is prohibited at one time with such other circumstances, be licit and not prohibited on another occasion? If so, he can dispense absolutely.⁶¹

In other words, a dispensation in the true sense is given when the human act in question (act as morally specified and not as considered in its “natural” species) remains the same, with the only condition changed being the fact that in one instance it is prohibited and illicit, in the other instance not prohibited and licit, for instance, an act of killing (*occisio hominis*). Scotus believes that God did in fact dispense from the precept against killing the innocent when he commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. He clearly recognized the difference between dispensing in a true and unconditional sense and changing a condition of the human act in question so that it is no longer the kind of act prohibited by the precept. He clearly understood this difference because he explicitly said, in speaking of the spoliation of the Egyptians by the Israelites, that “it can be said that . . . [God] did not dispense against that law or that precept, ‘thou shalt not steal,’ because they did not take what belonged to another . . . because God was the superior Lord and could transfer dominion to them, even if the lesser lords were unwilling.”⁶² In this instance God *could* have dispensed the Israelites from the precept against stealing, but in fact did not do so but rather changed the moral object of their act of choice. God so changed things that the Israelites were not taking what belonged to others but rather were receiving what was rightfully theirs. Nonetheless, God could have dispensed from the precept not to steal. But why?

Natural Law, Practical Truth, and God's Will

God can dispense from some precepts of the Decalogue and not from others because different precepts relate differently to the natural law, which is the expression, in the rational creature, of God’s will. According to Scotus, “some things can be said to be of the natural law in two ways.” First, some things pertain to it “as the first practical principles, known from their terms, or the conclusions necessarily following from them, and these are said to be of the natural law in the most strict sense . . . and in such there can not be any dispensation.”⁶³ But what are these first principles and what conclusions necessarily follow from them? Scotus says that the precepts of the first table of the Decalogue “immediately receive God for their object.” And of these the first two [the third poses special problems because it specifies the day on which God is to be worshipped, and hence Scotus has some doubts about its precise status] “are of the natural law when this law is taken in a strict sense, because it follows necessarily that, ‘if God exists, then God alone must be loved.’ Likewise, it follows that nothing else is to be worshipped as God, nor is irreverence to be done to God. And consequently, in these [precepts] God could not dispense, that someone might do what is opposed to them.”⁶⁴

In other words, the *first* principle of the natural law is that God is to be loved above everything. This is the one practical principle that is necessarily true, because it is based on the nature of reality itself, prior to any will act that might command it. Here it should be noted that Scotus regarded the act of commanding or ordering to pertain to the will, not to the intellect (as did St. Thomas). Hence law, *precisely as law*, i.e., as a command of the ruler imposed on subjects and directing them to the common good, pertains to the will, not to the intellect.⁶⁵ Natural law, which has God as its author, has its obligatory force from God’s will, although it is made known to men by the intellect and in them consists in judgments in conformity with right reason, that is, reason rectified by the rule of justice or the “*affectio iustitiae*” (on this, see below).

The point is that the practical principle, *God is to be loved*, is a necessary truth that even God’s will must command. As Scotus says:

If there should be some law prior to the determination of his own [God’s] will, to which law and in this legislator, as it were to another, his own will ought rightly conform; and indeed this is that law, *God must be*

loved. But if this ought not to be called a law or a practical principle of law, it is at least a practical truth preceding every determination of the divine will.⁶⁶

Thus this first principle or precept and any precepts that are necessarily drawn from it express practical truths whose observance must be willed, even by God himself. Such precepts, and such alone, pertain strictly and essentially to the natural law, and from them no one, not even God, can dispense.

Scotus acknowledges that in another way “some things are said to be of natural law because they are very consonant with that law, although they do not necessarily follow from first practical principles.” It is in this way that “all the precepts of the second table are of natural law, because their rectitude is very consonant with the first practical principles necessarily known.” Thus all these precepts “are of natural law, speaking in a broad sense.”⁶⁷

The “Affectio Iustitiae” and the Rule of Justice

For Scotus the moral goodness of human actions consists in their conformity with right reason.⁶⁸ Reason is made “right” when it conforms to the rule of justice or the “affectio iustitiae.” What does this mean? Scotus distinguishes, following Anselm, two “affections” or “inclinations” in the will. One is its natural inclination or “affectio commodi” toward its own perfection and fulfillment and includes a love for God as something that is good *for* itself. The other is the will’s inclination to love something for its own intrinsic merits, which includes love for God as a being infinitely lovable. The latter must regulate and rectify the former:

One [the *affectio commodi*] naturally and most intensely inclines the will toward the advantageous, but the other [*affectio iustitiae*] restricts it, so that in eliciting its act is not necessary to follow its inclination. These affections are nothing other than the will itself, insofar as it is a naked intellectual appetite, and insofar as above this it is free. For . . . insofar as it is merely an intellectual appetite it would be most intensely actually inclined toward the best intelligible, just as sight is toward the best visible; but insofar as it is free, it can restrain itself in eliciting an act, so as not to follow this inclination . . . to which the potency is naturally inclined.⁶⁹

Thus the “first” goodness of the will that pertains to it beyond its ontological goodness as an “ens positivum” is the goodness it has insofar as it “passes over to the object suitable for its act according to the dictate of reason and not only because it is naturally suitable for an act of that kind.”⁷⁰ Reason ruled by this justice is “right reason,” i.e., reason as rectified by the rule of justice or the “affectio iustitiae.” Its judgment is that we are to will to an object what its intrinsic character merits.

Scotus teaches that the “moral goodness of an act is its fittingness, judged according to the right reason of the agent himself,” and the first, generic moral specification of the act derives from its object, i.e., the intelligible subject matter with which it is concerned.⁷¹ But, and this is crucially important, for Scotus the only act morally good by reason of its object in such wise that it can *never* be made bad by reason of the circumstances surrounding it (among which Scotus includes the end⁷²) is the act of loving God. According to the *Doctor Subtilis*:

But no act is good of its kind from its object alone save the act of loving God, which love is the love of an object of itself willable and infinitely good. This act cannot be morally bad, because no one can love him too excessively with a love of friendship and for his own sake; and the only act evil of its kind is the act opposite to that act and with respect to the same object, that is, to hate God; this act can in no way be so circumstanced that it should become good; therefore every other act which is in respect of any other object is indifferent, and can be so circumstanced that it is either good or bad.⁷³

It thus follows that every eligible human act other than that of loving God can be so “circumstanced” that no matter what its object it can be made morally good or bad. Thus the act of hating one’s neighbor can, according to Scotus’ understanding of the “affectio iustitiae” and of the natural law rooted in this, be so circumstanced that it can be a morally good act. All actions having good objects other than God himself can, in other words, be so “circumstanced” that they can become morally wicked acts; and all actions having evil objects other than hatred of God can be so circumstanced that they can become morally good acts. Scotus admits that we ought to love our neighbor and to will to our neighbor the goods of life and health, knowledge and justice, etc. according to God’s *ordained power*, inasmuch as God has, in fact, willed that we do so.⁷⁴ In fact, as noted already, the precepts of the second table of the Decalogue are inscribed in our hearts and “very much in accord” with the first and necessary

precepts of the natural law. Thus we are morally obliged to abide by them. Nonetheless, by his *absolute power* God can will whatever does not contain in itself a contradiction.⁷⁵ But, as we have seen, the only practical principle that can never be contradicted is the principle that God is to be loved. Therefore, it is within God's absolute power to command that we hate our neighbors and hate ourselves. He can thus dispense us from precepts ordering us in our relationship toward our neighbors, and in Scotus' opinion this is precisely what God did do in ordering Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

It is for these reasons that Scotus denies that there are, in the very strict sense, moral absolutes as understood here. Still, it must be kept in mind that he taught that all men are strictly obligated to rule their lives by the moral precepts of the Decalogue, for God by his ordained power wills that they do so, and only God can dispense from them.

Francis Suarez (1548-1617)

Suarez clearly taught that there are moral absolutes and that there are certain kinds of actions, described in terms of their moral objects, that human beings ought never choose to do. His position on this subject can be seen by examining his teaching on the natural law and on intrinsically evil actions proscribed by the natural law.

Law, Eternal Law, and Natural Law

Unlike St. Thomas and like Scotus, Suarez believes that "imperium" is an act, not of the intellect, but of the will. He thus holds that law, in its most proper sense as existing in the mind of the legislator, "is an act of a just and right will, whereby a superior wills to oblige an inferior to do this or that."⁷⁶ This will act is not arbitrary and presupposes an act of the intellect judging that the law is just and conducive to a good end.⁷⁷ Thus the eternal law can be said to be "a free decree of God's will establishing an order that must be kept . . . especially . . . by intellectual creatures with respect to their own free acts."⁷⁸

Natural law, however, is law not as existing in the mind of the legislator but as found in the intellectual creatures subject to the eternal law. Suarez rejects the view that the rational creature's nature is itself the natural law, although he acknowledges that this nature is the foundation of natural law "inasmuch as it is as it were the foundation of the agreement or nonagreement of human actions to itself."⁷⁹ More precisely, natural law is a "certain power of that nature, which it has for discriminating between actions agreeing or not agreeing with that nature, which [power] we call natural reason . . . which prescribes or prohibits to the human will what is to be done in accord with natural law."⁸⁰ In its most precise sense the natural law is a *judgment* or *set of judgments* of the human intellect about what is or is not in conformity with human nature and therefore to be done or avoided: "I do not doubt that natural law exists most properly in the actual judgment of the mind."⁸¹

Judgments of the human intellect about what is or is not in conformity with human nature are not merely *indicative* of the natural law; they are truly *preceptive*, i.e., obligatory. Suarez puts the matter thus: "Natural law is not only indicative of bad and good, but also contains its own proper prohibition of bad and prescription of good."⁸² It is preceptive, i.e., obligatory and not merely indicative precisely because "God, as the author of this nature, prescribes to do or to avoid what reason declares is to be done or avoided," and because "whatever happens contrary to right reason displeases God and its contrary pleases him, because, since God's will is supremely just, what is base cannot please him, nor can what is noble not please him, because the will of God cannot be irrational."⁸³ Therefore, Suarez concludes, "Natural reason, which indicates what is of itself bad or good for man, consequently indicates that it is in harmony with the divine will that the one be done and the other avoided."⁸⁴

The Intrinsic Meaning of Human Acts

God's prohibiting or prescribing of an act is not the whole reason for its malice or goodness. Rather, God's will "supposes necessary in these actions a certain goodness or wickedness and joins to them a special obligation of the divine law."⁸⁵ To prove this Suarez first appeals to authorities such as St. Thomas and St. Augustine, attributing to the latter the source of the maxim that "some evils are forbidden because they are evil."⁸⁶ He then argues that this truth is rooted in the metaphysical principle "that the natures of things are immutable with respect to their essential being, and consequently also with respect to the agreement or nonagreement of their natural properties."⁸⁷ He

continues by saying that “in a human act there is some goodness or badness from the force of the object precisely considered, inasmuch as it is fitting or not fitting to right reason and can be denominated by it as evil and sin and culpable in those respects, even leaving out of account its relationship to its own proper law.”⁸⁸ He next affirms that God “cannot not prohibit through some law those things that are intrinsically evil.”⁸⁹ God cannot not prohibit those actions judged intrinsically evil by reason of their objects because:

If we suppose that there was the will of creating a rational nature with sufficient knowledge for doing good and evil and with sufficient concurrence on the part of God to both, God could not not have willed to prohibit for such a creature acts intrinsically wicked or not to have willed to prescribe noble and necessary acts. Because, just as God cannot lie, so he cannot govern unwisely or unjustly. Providence would have been quite alien to divine wisdom and goodness had it not prohibited or prescribed for those subject to it suchlike things.⁹⁰

The natural law has God as its author, but it exists in the rational creature as a judgment or set of judgments about actions that are intrinsically good, i.e., in conformity with human nature, the foundation of the natural law, and of judgments about actions that are intrinsically evil, i.e., not in conformity with this nature. Thus, “the natural law prohibits those things that are intrinsically evil (*secundum se mala*) inasmuch as they are such; and therefore it supposes in their very objects or acts something intrinsically undue, so that they may not be loved or done; and on the contrary it prescribes those things that are good inasmuch as they have an intrinsic connection and necessity with a rational nature.”⁹¹ This intrinsic character of human acts as being either good or in conformity with human nature or evil or in disconformity with it exists antecedently, in an ontological or metaphysical way, to the acts being either prohibited or commanded by some law extrinsic to them. Their moral character “is intrinsically presupposed in things themselves before every extrinsic law; and therefore, as long as these things remain themselves, [this moral character] cannot be taken away, because it does not depend on an extrinsic will, nor is it some distinct thing, but is as it were an entirely intrinsic mode or relationship that cannot be impeded, given its foundation and term.”⁹²

In other words, the intrinsic goodness or badness of human acts consists in their conformity with or disconformity from human nature, their foundation and term. Thus, so long as human nature exists, actions in conformity with it will be judged to be good and actions not in conformity with it will be judged to be bad. Since God is the author of this nature, it necessarily follows that whatever will be judged contrary to human nature will be displeasing to him, and whatever will be judged to be in conformity with it will be pleasing to his will. His will, therefore, is that human beings act in accord with the judgments of natural reason, and it is for this reason that these judgments constitute the natural law, whose author is God and whose obligating force comes from his will.

Thus God cannot dispense from the precepts of the Decalogue, including such precepts as those forbidding adultery or intercourse with someone who is not one’s spouse, theft, and the like,⁹³ because to dispense from such precepts, which contain the very order of justice that God wills, would be a self-contradiction. Suarez thus firmly rejects Scotus’ position⁹⁴ and concurs in the judgment of St. Thomas that even God cannot dispense from the precepts of the Decalogue.⁹⁵ He insists that “as often as . . . God makes licit an act which *seemed* prohibited by natural law, he never makes this as a pure legislator, but by using another power.”⁹⁶ By “using another power,” Suarez means that God changes, by his power, the *nature* of the act that he commands, i.e., the subject matter or “object” of the human will. He makes the act in question to be a different sort of human act by changing its object or essential conditions. Thus, Suarez writes, “it must be said that, properly speaking, God does not dispense in any natural precept, but rather that he changes its matter or the circumstances without which the natural precept itself is not obligatory of itself.”⁹⁷ Indeed, “since the goodness or malice arise from the conformity or nonconformity of the act to rational nature, it is not possible that the same act with the same conditions be of itself (*per se*) dissonant and consonant, because opposite relationships do not result from the same foundation.”⁹⁸

Although Suarez’s understanding of natural law is quite different from that of St. Thomas, he too affirms unequivocally the existence of moral absolutes.

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)

St. Alphonsus, as will be seen, clearly affirms the existence of moral absolutes. His work is quite different from that of the theologians already considered. It is intended as a practical guide for priest confessors, and not, as in Thomas, Scotus, and Suarez, as a systematic presentation of a moral theory. Book One of his *Theologia Moralis* begins with a long treatise on conscience and the proper way to resolve doubts of conscience. This is followed by a treatise on laws, in which he briefly notes the difference between natural and positive law, discourses at length on

papal infallibility, reflects on the subjects of laws and their duties (in particular, travelers from one legal jurisdiction to another), discusses the way in which legal precepts are to be observed, takes up factors excusing one from transgressing a precept, offers an analysis of legal privileges, and concludes with a section on the censoring of books. In the part devoted to factors excusing from the transgression of a precept he discusses ignorance of the law, fear, inability to act, and dispensations; but he does not discuss the possibility of dispensations from the Decalogue.

In the second book consideration is given to the precepts connected to the theological virtues. Book Three is concerned with the precepts of the Decalogue and of the Church. Book Five contains a preliminary treatise on human acts. Matter relevant to moral absolutes is found in his treatise on law, in the various treatises concerned with the precepts of the Decalogue, and in the treatise on human acts.

Alphonsus says that a *natural* precept is one of the natural law. Such a precept “is a dictate or judgment of our reason, whereby through the light impressed upon us by the author of nature we establish what must be done and what must be avoided; which [dictate of reason] is this: good is to be done, evil is to be avoided.”⁹⁹ He continues by saying that from this general precept, “particular precepts, e.g., that God is to be worshipped, that injury is to be done to no one, *indeed, all the precepts of the Decalogue* (with exception being made of the circumstance of the Sabbath) and many others are derived.”¹⁰⁰ Obviously he regards the precepts of the Decalogue as conclusions from the first precept of the natural law. He further insists that one cannot be invincibly ignorant of the principles of natural law and of the precepts of the Decalogue:

When talk is about natural law, it is evident that there can be no invincible ignorance of its very first principles; and by agreement these are: *God must be worshipped, what you do not want done to yourself, you are not to do to others*. Thus we say also that neither the *immediate conclusions* derived from these principles, or conclusions proximately connected to and cohering with these aforesaid principles can be invincibly ignored; and certainly these [immediate conclusions] are the precepts of the Decalogue.¹⁰¹

These texts show that Alphonsus considered the precepts of the Decalogue proscribing killing, adultery, theft, etc. as immediate conclusions from the first principles of natural law.

In discussing specific precepts of the Decalogue Alphonsus insists that it is always wrong to kill oneself (suicide) or an innocent person. With respect both to killing oneself¹⁰² and killing the innocent,¹⁰³ however, he says that such killing is permissible with God’s authority. In speaking of suicide he says: “Without divine authority it is not licit directly and intentionally (*ex intentione*) to kill oneself. The reason is that this is contrary to love of oneself, and it does an injury to the republic and to God, who is alone the direct and absolute Lord of human life.”¹⁰⁴ Speaking of killing the innocent, he says, “this is never lawful knowingly and by direct intent, unless God, the Lord of all life, grants it.”¹⁰⁵ Whether he would interpret this as a divine dispensation from the precept against killing or as an instance in which the very nature of the human act chosen and willed is changed because of a change in the matter of the act is not clear. Still, he obviously regards the precept against killing the innocent to be absolute so far as human beings are concerned. He certainly holds this as an absolute precept: human beings are not to kill innocent human beings without the explicit authorization of God himself.

The precepts included under the sixth commandment are, for Alphonsus, absolutely binding. He includes far more than adultery among the human acts proscribed by this commandment. He notes that “although under this precept, *thou shalt not commit adultery*, adultery only is expressed . . . nonetheless, every venereal act outside of marriage is forbidden by the same precept.” He continues by saying, “for although fornication is less evil than is adultery, nonetheless, because *carnal copulation is, by the natural law, ordained only toward marriage, through which progeny is not only to be born but also able to be well educated*, therefore in this precept God prohibited all coition outside of marriage, and likewise every venereal act which is ordered to generation.”¹⁰⁶ In treating the issues raised by the sixth commandment he makes it clear that fornication, or genital sex between persons who are not married, “semper est intrinsece mala,”¹⁰⁷ even if the persons are engaged to marry.¹⁰⁸ He also makes it clear that adultery, which is *always* immoral, is intercourse with someone who is not one’s spouse, even with the consent of one’s spouse.¹⁰⁹ In other words, he does not define adultery *formally* or tautologically as immoral sex with the wrong person. He defines it as intercourse with someone who is not one’s spouse, and he brands it as always and intrinsically immoral.¹¹⁰

Alphonsus calls those human acts *good* that are “consonant with right reason” and *bad* those acts that are “disconsonant.”¹¹¹ He lists three sources or principles of an act’s moral character, namely, the object, end and circumstances (placing the end among the circumstances, but as the principal circumstance), he teaches that “*the object* from which the act receives its essential and primary morality, is that about which the moral act is concerned, and is primarily and *per se* attained by the act itself: thus the ‘property of another’ (*res aliena*) is the object of theft. . . . Such an object can not be considered physically and according to its entitiveness . . . but is considered morally,

insofar as it is in agreement or not in agreement with right reason.”¹¹² The object, he holds, gives the act its essential moral goodness or badness.¹¹³ Thus, the moral object of the act, if bad, makes the whole act bad. In addition, he insists that the end and circumstances must also be good if the whole human act is to be good. “In order that an act be called good from its integral cause,” he writes, “it must be in agreement with law and right reason both *by reason of its object*, and *by reason of the extrinsic end* of the agent, and also *by reason of its circumstances*.”¹¹⁴

From all this it is clear that St. Alphonsus affirms the existence of moral absolutes.

Moralists Representative of the Manualist Traditions

In this part of this inquiry the views of theologians representing the Jesuit, Redemptorist, and Dominican “schools” regarding moral absolutes will be given. I have chosen *Compendium Theologiae Moralis* by John Gury, S.J. (first published in 1852), as revised by Antonio Ballerini, S.J., put into briefer form for the use of seminarians by Aloysius Sabetti, S.J., and further revised by Timothy Barrett, S.J. (*editio vicesima quarta*, 1942) as an example of the Jesuit school; for the Redemptorist school I have chosen the widely used manual of J. Aertnys, C.Ss.R., *Theologia Moralis secundum doctrinam S. Alfonsi de Liguorio* (first published in 1906) and revised by C.A. Damen, C.Ss.R. (*editio 14*, 1944); for the Dominican tradition I have chosen M. Prümmer’s *Manuale Theologiae Moralis secundum principia S. Thomae Aquinatis* (first published in 1914; the *editio quarta et quinta* of 1928). Prümmer’s work is influenced greatly, as notes throughout indicate, by the interpretation given Aquinas by Ch. Billuart, O.P. (d. 1757).

Gury/Ballerini/Sabetti/Barrett: The “Jesuit” School

According to these authors the essence of morality consists primarily in the relationship between human acts and the eternal law, “which is the divine reason or will of God commanding that the natural order be conserved and forbidding that it be disturbed.”¹¹⁵ Secondly it consists in the relationship of human acts to right reason, which is “a certain participation and consequently something manifesting the divine reason.”¹¹⁶

The “fontes” of an act’s morality are its object, end, and circumstances. Moreover, “the first and essential morality of a human act is derived from the object morally considered,”¹¹⁷ whereas the end of the agent and the circumstances are other determinants of moral goodness or badness.¹¹⁸ These authors distinguish three types of acts intrinsically evil by reason of their objects, of which the first two types are of relevance to this inquiry. “Some things are such [intrinsically evil],” they write:

absolutely, and independently of every circumstance because of themselves they involve a repugnance with the right order that is absolutely necessary, such as hatred of God, blasphemy, etc. . . . Others are *intrinsically* evil, not precisely in themselves, but by reason of something adjoined or some condition, which depends upon the dominative power of God or of man: such are the taking of what belongs to another, the wounding of body or reputation, and other like things which at times can become licit.¹¹⁹

A “taking away of another’s thing,” the authors make clear in their discussion of theft, can be morally right if the thing taken *no longer belongs to the person from whom it is taken* because *ownership of it* has been given to the one who takes it, either by God, the Lord of all, or by competent human authority.¹²⁰ In such an instance, the subject matter of the human act or its moral object has been changed. Thus, for these authors the precept proscribing theft or the taking of what belongs to another remains true and absolute.

These authors regard the directly intended killing of the innocent as *never* licit: “it is never lawful directly to kill the innocent, whether by private or public authority. The reason is both that the killing of the innocent is an action harmful to the rights of God, who alone has supreme lordship over life — and therefore this action is *intrinsically evil* — and that it is an action harmful to the right of the innocent to life, and that it is positively forbidden by God himself, for it is said (Ex. 23:7), ‘the innocent and the just thou shalt not kill.’”¹²¹ They likewise condemn as absolutely forbidden by natural law both fornication and adultery.¹²² Such acts seem to fall into the category of acts intrinsically evil “absolutely, and independently of every circumstance because of themselves they entail a repugnance with the right order that is absolutely necessary.”

They regard God as “the author of the natural law . . . ; its subject is the rational creature; its herald is the light of reason; its object inasmuch as the law is prohibiting are actions intrinsically bad . . . inasmuch as the law is commanding its object are actions intrinsically good.”¹²³

This team of Jesuit moralists clearly affirms moral absolutes.

Aertnys/Damen: The “Redemptorist” School

These authors affirm that the moral goodness or badness of human acts consists in their “agreement or disagreement . . . with the proper rule of human acts as such or with the rule of morality.” This rule ultimately is God’s eternal law.¹²⁴ More proximately and intrinsically it is human reason, but human reason only insofar as “it participates in the eternal law and is subject to it, or the dictate of reason which is a participation in the eternal law. Therefore it is reason, not in itself, but as informed by the principles of the natural law and their conclusions and by the precepts of positive law, divine and human, and by the particular principles of prudence, or reason as perfect and formed by synderesis, moral science, divine and human precepts, and the particular precepts of prudence.”¹²⁵

With other theologians considered here, they consider the sources of an act’s moral goodness or badness to be its object and circumstances, of which the principal circumstance is the end intended by the agent.¹²⁶ As examples of moral objects, which give to an act its essential morality, they give “what belongs to another” as the object of theft and “killing one’s neighbor” as the object of homicide.¹²⁷ They hold that some acts are intrinsically evil by reason of their objects. Acts “intrinsically evil are said to be prohibited because they are evil.” Acts absolutely “evil intrinsically” are those that are *per se* repugnant to the order of things metaphysically considered and rooted in the very essences of things.¹²⁸ This language seems very Suarezian. Other actions are “hypothetically” intrinsically evil, i.e., so long as the conditions under which they are contrary to right reason remain the same; but these conditions can be changed either by God, the supreme Lord of all, or at times, by men. As examples of acts intrinsically evil in this way they include the “taking away of another’s thing” and “murder.”¹²⁹ It would seem from this that, in those instances when “killing” and the “taking of what is another’s” are licit the very conditions of the acts have been changed so that the human acts in question are no longer ones of killing or of theft; this, however, is not explicitly brought out by the authors.

They maintain that the direct killing of the innocent can never be made licit by any human authority, giving the same reasons why it cannot as do Gury/Ballerini/Sabetti/Barrett.¹³⁰ They also teach that fornication and adultery can never be made right.¹³¹

Whether God can dispense from the precept not to kill the innocent or whether his command makes the act in question to be a different kind of human act is not clear from their text. Yet they nonetheless regard the killing of the innocent as a norm absolutely binding on human beings and unjustifiable by any human authority, public or private.

It is clear that these authors affirm the existence of moral absolutes.

Prümmer: The “Dominican” School

In common with the other manualist, Prümmer holds that the morality of human actions is determined by their objects, ends, and circumstances. He considers the object as the primary factor giving an act its intrinsic goodness or badness. With Billuart, he regards the end intended by the agent to be extrinsic to the act [whereas, as we have seen, Thomas himself considered both object and end to be intrinsic constituents of an act’s morality].¹³² All three of these sources must, of course, be good if the whole human act is to be good.¹³³

Prümmer holds that acts are wicked by their objects alone if they are contrary to the rules according to which human acts are to be measured, i.e., God’s eternal law and the natural law. He instances fornication as an act morally wicked for this reason; it is objectively wrong by its very nature, even if the one engaging in it may erroneously think this act to be good.¹³⁴ He also affirms that “adultery, by the very fact that it is approaching the wife of another, is understood first of all and essentially to be wicked, prescinding from its order to other circumstances; it cannot be conceived without this wickedness.”¹³⁵

Although I realize that this is a very brief account of Prümmer’s work, it suffices to show that he, like the other authors of moral manuals considered here, affirms the existence of moral absolutes.

Conclusion

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Poenitentia*, Pope John Paul II spoke of a “doctrine, based on the Decalogue and on the preaching of the Old Testament, and assimilated into the kerygma of the Apostles and belonging to the earliest teaching of the Church; and constantly reaffirmed by her up to this day.” The doctrine in question is that “there exist acts which *per se* and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object.” Correspondingly, as the Holy Father noted in his “Discourse to the International Congress of Moral Theology” on April 10, 1986, “there are moral norms that have a precise content which is immutable and unconditioned . . . for example, the norm . . . which forbids the direct killing of an innocent person.”

I believe that the material set forth in this essay shows that the Holy Father is absolutely correct in his articulation of the constant teaching of the Church. Although some theologians, for instance, Scotus, held that *God, and God alone*, could dispense from the precepts of the Decalogue and make the human act of killing an innocent person to be morally good, the Common Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas, more correctly taught that even God could not make an act of this kind morally right; to do so would be to deny his own being. But even Scotus was absolutely clear in teaching that no human authority could possibly justify the actions proscribed in the Decalogue. Unfortunately, several influential contemporary theologians contend that there are no actions, describable in morally neutral terms, that are intrinsically evil and that no specific moral norms, including those found in the Decalogue, are absolute, i.e., without exceptions. These theologians claim to be faithful to the Catholic theological tradition. I believe that the material presented here shows that their claim is spurious and that their moral teaching is utterly incompatible with the theological tradition from St. Thomas to the eve of Vatican Council II, and surely nothing that the Council Fathers taught contradicts this tradition. Instead, it confirms it. For the Council taught, among other things, that all actions against human life, such as suicide, abortion, mercy killing and infanticide, dishonor the Creator, poison human society, and do more harm to their perpetrators than those harmed by them (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 27).

NOTES:

¹*Summa Theologiae*, 2-2, q. 66, aa. 5 and 6.

²*Ibid.*, q. 110, aa. 1 and 2.

³*Ibid.*, q. 154, a. 2.

⁴*Ibid.*, q. 154, a. 8.

⁵*Ibid.*, q. 64, a. 6.

⁶Franz Scholz, “Durch ethische Gruenzsituationen aufgeworfene Normenproblemen,” *Theologischpraktische Quartalschrift* 123 (1975) 341-355 [English translation in *Readings in Moral Theology, No. 1: Moral Norms and the Catholic Tradition*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1979)].

⁷L. Janssens, “Ontic Evil and Moral Evil,” *Louvain Studies* 4 (1974) 114-156. For a critique of Janssens’ interpretation of St. Thomas see my “Aquinas and Janssens on the Moral Meaning of Human Acts,” *Thomist* 48 (1984) 566-606.

⁸John Milhaven, “Moral Absolutes in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Absolutes in Moral Theology?*, ed. Charles E. Curran (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1968), pp. 154-185.

⁹John Dedek, “Intrinsically Evil Acts: An Historical Study of the Mind of St. Thomas,” *Thomist* 43 (1979) 385-413.

¹⁰Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire: La question des actes intrinsequement mauvais. Histoire et discussion* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1986).

¹¹Patrick Lee, “Permanence of The Ten Commandments: St. Thomas and His Commentators,” *Theological Studies* 42 (1981) 422-433. Since this article was first written, an exceptionally important study of moral absolutes in the Catholic theological tradition has appeared, namely, John Finnis, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision, and Truth* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991). See also my own *Moral Absolutes: Catholic Tradition, Current Trends, and the Truth, the Pere Marquette Theology Lecture for 1989* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1989).

¹²*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 18, a. 3c: “bonitas voluntatis dependet a ratione, eo modo quo dependet ab obiecto.” Cf. 1-2, q. 5, a. 2; q. 18, a. 8, and a. 9, ad 2; *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 4; *Summa Contra Gentes*, III, 9.

¹³*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 94, a. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., q. 91, a. 2c and ad 3.

¹⁵Ibid., q. 100, a. 1.

¹⁶Ibid., q. 100, a. 8; cf. q. 100, a. 11.

¹⁷Ibid., q. 94, a. 2.

¹⁸Ibid.: “quia bonum habet rationem finis, malum autem rationem contrarii, inde est quod omnia illa ad quae homo habet naturalem inclinationem, ratio naturaliter apprehendit ut bona, et per consequens ut opere prosequenda, et contraria eorum ut mala et vitanda.”

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., q. 58, a. 5.

²¹Ibid., q. 95, a. 2.

²²Ibid., q. 100, a. 3, ad 1.

²³Ibid., q. 100, a. 11.

²⁴Ibid., q. 100, a. 1.

²⁵Ibid., q. 100, a. 3.

²⁶Ibid., q. 100, a. 1.

²⁷Ibid., q. 100, a. 11.

²⁸Ibid., q. 100, a. 1.

²⁹Ibid., q. 100, a. 11.

³⁰Ibid., q. 100, a. 1.

³¹Ibid., q. 100, a. 3.

³²Ibid., q. 100, a. 1.

³³*In 1 Sent.*, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4; *De Malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 17.

³⁴*In 3 Sent.*, d. 37, a. 4; *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 100, a. 8.

³⁵*In 3 Sent.*, d. 37, a. 4, ad 3: “Contra praecepta Decalogi, secundum quod ad Decalogum pertinent, nunquam Deus fieri praecepit. Prohibitio furti ad Decalogum pertinet *inquantum res furata aliena est ab accipiente. Retenta ergo hac conditione*, si res illa fiat accipientis, iam non erit contra Decalogum.” In *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3, Thomas writes as follows: “Si alicui auferatur quod suum erat, si debitum est quod ipsum amittat, hoc non est furtum vel rapina; quae praecepto Decalogi prohibentur.”

³⁶*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3: “Osee, accedens ad uxorem fornicariam, vel ad mulierem adulteram, non est moechatus nec fornicatus, *quia accessit ad eam quae sua erit* secundum mandatum divinum qui est auctor institutionis matrimonii.” In *In 3 Sent.*, d. 37, a. 4, ad 3, Thomas writes as follows on this matter: “Potest . . . Deus in aliquibus factis conditiones contrarias Decalogi auferre . . . sicut ab ea quae non est matrimonio iuncta, potest auferre hanc conditionem ‘*non suam*’ . . . ut sic accedere ad eam non sit contra Decalogum.”

³⁷*In 3 Sent.*, d. 37, a. 4, ad 4.

³⁸*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3: “Abraham, cum consentit occidere filium, non consentit in homicidium, quia debitum erat eum occidi per mandatum Dei, qui est Dominus vitae et mortis. Ipse enim est qui poenam mortis infligit omnibus hominibus, iustis et iniustis, pro peccato primi parentis; cuius sententiae si homo sit executor auctoritate divina, non erit homicida, sicut nec Deus.”

³⁹Ibid., 2-2, q. 64, a. 6.

⁴⁰*De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 10: “Non oportet quod bonum quod est causa mali per accidens sit bonum deficiens. Sic autem Deus est causa mali poenae; *non enim in puniendo intendit malum eius quod punitur, sed ordinem iustitiae imprimere rebus*, ad quod sequitur malum eius quod punitur, sicut ad formam ignis sequitur privatio formae aquae.”

⁴¹*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 100, a. 8, ad 2: “Sicut Apostolus dicit, II ad Tim., 2:13, ‘Deus fidelis permanet, negare seipsum non potest.’ Negaret autem seipsum, si ipsum ordinem suae iustitiae auferret: cum ipse sit ipsa iustitia. Et ideo in hoc Deus dispensare non potest, ut homini liceat non ordinate se habere ad Deum, vel non subdi ordini iustitiae eius, etiam in his secundum quae homines ad invicem ordinantur.”

⁴²*In 2 Sent.*, d. 40, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4: “Concubitus est quidam actus imperatus a voluntate, mediante alia potentia; et ideo, per accidens convenit sibi esse in genere moris; unde potest dupliciter considerari, vel secundum genus naturae, et sic concubitus matrimonialis et fornicarius specie non differunt: unde et effectum naturalem eundem speciem habent; vel secundum quod pertinent ad genus moris, et sic effectus specie differentes habent, ut mereri vel demereri, vel aliquid huiusmodi, et sic in specie differunt.”

⁴³See, for example, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3.

⁴⁴*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 18, a. 10.

⁴⁵Ibid., q. 1, aa. 1-3.

⁴⁶Ibid., q. 18, a. 6.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., q. 18, a. 7c and ad 3: “secundum quod est absolutius et minus contractum . . . et secundum hoc, genus est causa formalis speciei, et tanto erit formalius, quanto communius.”

⁴⁹Ibid., q. 18, a. 2, ad 2: “habet quodam modo rationem formae, in quantum dat speciem.”

⁵⁰Ibid., q. 19, a. 6, ad 1; see q. 18, a. 4, ad 3: “bonum causatur ex integra causa, malum autem ex singularibus defectibus.”

⁵¹Ibid., q. 18, a. 7: “differentia specifica, quae est ex fine, est magis generalis; et differentia quae est ex obiecto per se ad talem finem ordinato, est specifica respectu eius.”

⁵²Ibid., q. 18, a. 3.

⁵³Ibid., *Supplementum* to the Tertia Pars, q. 41, a. 4.

⁵⁴See, for example, Charles E. Curran, “Absolute Norms in Moral Theology,” in *A New Look at Christian Morality* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1968), pp. 82-83, citing *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 94, a. 4.

⁵⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 94, a. 4 (cf. a. 5): “lex naturae . . . quantum ad quaedam propria [praecepta], quae sunt quasi conclusiones principiorum communium, est eadem apud omnes *ut in pluribus* . . . sed *ut in paucioribus* potest deficere.”

⁵⁶Ibid., q. 100, a. 3.

⁵⁷*De Malo*, q. 15, a. 1, ad 5: “ille Commentator in hoc non est sustinendus; pro nulla enim utilitate debet aliquis adulterium committere.”

⁵⁸*Ordinatio Scoti (Opus Oxoniense)*, I, d. 44, q. 1: “omnes qui subsunt legi divinae, si non agunt secundum illam, inordinate agunt.”

⁵⁹Ibid., III, d. 37, q. un., ad 3: “Tenebantur omnes ad ista praecepta, quae erant praecepta interius in corde cuius libet, vel forte per aliquam doctrinam exteriorem datam a patribus ad filios, licet non essent tunc scripta in libro.”

⁶⁰Ibid., III, d. 37, q. un.: “Dispensare enim non est facere quod stante praecepto liceat facere contra praeceptum; sed dispensare est revocare praeceptum vel declarare qualiter debet intelligi. Est enim duplex dispensatio, scilicet iuris revocatio et iuris declaratio.”

⁶¹Ibid.: “An stantibus omnibus circumstantiis eisdem in isto actu ‘occidere hominem,’ ista circumstantia sola variata prohibiti et non prohibiti, posset Deus facere quod iste actus, qui cum eisdem circumstantiis aliquando est prohibitus et illicitus, alias esset non prohibitus sed licitus? Si sic, simpliciter potest dispensare.”

⁶²Ibid., ad 3: “potest dici quod . . . non dispensavit [Deus] contra legem illam vel praeceptum illud, ‘Non facies furtum,’ quia ipsi non rapuerunt alienam rem . . . quia Deus erat superior dominus et potuit transferre dominium in eos etiam invitis dominis inferioribus.”

⁶³Ibid., corpus: “aliqua possunt dici de lege naturae dupliciter . . . tamquam prima principia practica nota ex terminis vel conclusiones necessario sequentes ex eis, et haec strictissime dicuntur de lege naturae . . . et in talibus non potest esse dispensatio.”

⁶⁴Ibid.: “Sunt de lege naturae stricte sumendo legem naturae, quia necessario sequitur ‘Si sit Deus, est amandus ut Deus solus.’ Similiter, sequitur quod nihil aliud est colendum ut Deus, nec Deo est irreverentia facienda. Et per consequens, in istis non potuit Deus dispensare, ut aliquis possit facere oppositum huius et illius prohibiti.”

⁶⁵Ibid., IV, d. 14, q. 2, n. 5.

⁶⁶Ibid., IV, d. 46, q. 1, n. 3: “Si esset alia lex prior determinationi voluntatis suae [Dei], cui legi et in hoc legislatore, quasi alteri voluntas sua recte concordaret; et est quidem ista lex *Deus est diligendus*. Sed si non debet dici lex vel principium practicum legis, saltem est veritas practica praecedens omnem determinationem voluntatis divinae.”

⁶⁷Ibid., III, d. 37, q. un., corpus: “omnia praecepta etiam secundae tabulae esse de lege naturae, quia eorum rectitudo valde consonat primis principiis necessario notis. . . . [et] sunt de lege naturae large loquendo.”

⁶⁸*Reportata Parisiensa*, II, d. 39, q. 2, n. 4.

⁶⁹*Ordinatio Scoti*, II, d. 6, q. 2, n. 8: “Altera [affectio commodi] inclinatur voluntatem naturaliter et summe ad commodum, altera [affectio iustitiae] autem quasi moderatur eam, ne in eliciendo actum oporteat eam sequi inclinationem eius; nihil aliud sunt ista quam eadem voluntas, in quantum est appetitus intellectivus nude, et ultra hoc in quantum libera, quia . . . in quantum est mere appetitus intellectivus summe inclinaretur actualiter ad optimum intelligibile, sicut est de optimo visibili et visus; tamen in quantum libera est, potest se refrenare in eliciendo actum, ne sequatur inclinationem . . . ad quam potentia naturaliter inclinatur.”

⁷⁰Ibid., II, d. 7, q. un., n. 11: “transit supra obiectum conveniens tali actui secundum dictamen recte rationis et non solum quia est conveniens tali actui naturaliter.”

⁷¹*Quod.*, q. 18; see also *Ordinatio Scoti*, II, d. 40, q. 1.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³*Ordinatio Scoti*, IV, d. 28, q. un., n. 6: “Nullus tamen actus est bonus in genere ex solo obiecto, nisi amare Deum, qui amor est obiecti per se volibilis et boni infiniti, qui non potest esse moraliter malus, quia nullus potest nimis amare amore amicitiae, et propter se; et solus actus est ex genere malus, qui est oppositus isto actui, respectu eiusdem obiecti, ut odisse Deum, qui nullo modo potest circumstantiari, ut sit bonus; ergo omnis alius actus est indifferens, qui est respectu alterius obiecti, et potest esse circumstantiari bene aut male.”

⁷⁴*Reportata Parisiensa*, III, d. 28, q. 2, n. 3.

⁷⁵*Ordinatio Scoti*, I, d. 44.

⁷⁶*De Legibus ac de Deo Legislatore*, I, 5, n. 24: “esse actum voluntatis iustae et rectae, quo superior vult inferiorem obligare ad hoc vel illud faciendum.”

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 4, n. 6.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, II, 3, n. 6: “decretum liberum voluntatis Dei statuentis ordinem servandum . . . specialiter . . . a creaturis intellectualibus quoad liberas operationes eorum.”

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 5, n. 9: “quatenus est veluti fundamentum convenientiae vel disconvenientiae actionum humanarum ad ipsam.”

⁸⁰*Ibid.*: “vis quaedam illius naturae, quam habet ad discernendum inter operationes convenientes et disconvenientes illi naturae, quam rationem naturalem appellamus . . . quae humanae voluntati praecipit vel prohibet quod agendum est ex naturali iure.”

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 5, n. 14: “Non dubito, quin in actuali iudicio mentis propriissime existat lex naturalis.”

⁸²*Ibid.*, 6, n. 5: “Lex naturalis non tantum est indicativum mali et boni, sed etiam continet propriam prohibitionem mali et praeceptionem boni.”

⁸³*Ibid.*, 6, n. 8: “Deus, ut auctor talis naturae, praecipit id facere vel vitare quod ratio dictat esse faciendum vel vitandum . . . quidquid contra rationem rectam fit, displicet Deo et contrarium illi placet, quia cum voluntas Dei sit summe iusta, non potest illi non displicere quod turpe est, nec non placere onestum, quia voluntas Dei non potest esse irrationabilis.”

⁸⁴*Ibid.*: “Ratio naturalis quae indicat quid sit per se malum vel bonum homini, consequenter indicat esse secundum divinam voluntatem ut unum fiat et aliud vitetur.”

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 6, n. 11: “supponit in ipsis actibus necessarium quamdam bonitatem vel turpitudinem et illis adiungit specialem legis divinae obligationem.”

⁸⁶*Ibid.*: “quaedam mala esse prohibita quia mala.”

⁸⁷*Ibid.*: “quod naturae rerum quoad esse essentiae sunt immutabiles, et consequenter etiam quoad convenientiam vel disconvenientiam proprietatum naturalium.”

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 6, n. 17: “in actu humano esse aliquam bonitatem vel malitiam ex vi obiecti praecise spectati, ut est consonum vel dissonum rationi rectae et secundum eam posse denominari et malum et peccatum et culpabilem secundum illos respectus, seclusa habitudine ad propriam legem.”

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, n. 23: “non potest non prohibere ea quae sunt intrinsicè mala per aliquam legem.”

⁹⁰*Ibid.*: “supposita voluntate creandi naturam rationalem cum sufficienti cognitione ad operandum bonum et malum et cum sufficienti concursu ex parte Dei ad utrumque, non potuisse Deum non velle prohibere tali creaturae actus intrinsicè malos vel nolle praecipere honestos necessarios. Quia sicut non potest Deus mentiri, ita non potest insipienter vel iniuste gubernare. Esset autem providentia valde aliena a divina sapientia et bonitate non prohibere vel praecipere suis subditis quae talia sunt.”

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 15, n. 18: “lex naturalis prohibet ea quae secundum se mala sunt, quatenus talia sunt; et ideo supponit in ipsis obiectis seu actibus intrinsecum indebitum, ut non amentur seu non fiunt; et e contrario praecipit bona quatenus intrinsecum connexionem et necessitatem habent cum natura rationali.”

⁹²*Ibid.*: “intrinsicè supponitur in ipsis rebus ante omnem legem extrinsecam; et ideo, stantibus eisdem rebus, auferri non potest, quia non pendet ex extrinseca voluntate, neque est res aliqua distincta, sed quasi modus omnino intrinsecus seu quasi relatio quae impediri non potest, posito fundamento et termino.”

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 15, nn. 7 and 8.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, n. 19: “quoties . . . Deus facit licitum actum qui iure naturae *videbatur* prohibitum, nunquam id facit ut purus legislator, sed utendo alia potestate.”

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, n. 26: “dicendum est, proprie loquendo, non dispensare Deum in aliquo praecepto naturali, sed mutare materiam eius vel circumstantias sine quibus praeceptum ipsum naturale non obligat ex se.”

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, n. 30: “cum bonitas vel malitia consurgant ex consonantia vel dissonantia actus ad naturam rationalem, fieri non potest ut idem actus cum eisdem conditionibus sit per se dissonus et consonus, quia non resultant oppositae relationes ex eodem fundamento.”

⁹⁹*Theologia Moralis*, I, Tract. II, cap. I, dubium II, n. 102: “praeceptum naturale est dictamen seu iudicium nostrae rationis, quo per lumen nobis ab auctore naturae impressum statuimus quid agendum et quid vitandum sit; quale est illud: Bonum est faciendum, malum fugiendum.”

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*: “particularia, v. gr. Deum esse colendum, nemini faciendam est iniuriam, imo omnia praecepta decalogi (excepta circumstantia sabbati) multaque alia derivantur.”

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, cap. IV, dubium I, n. 170; see also n. 173: “Ubi de naturali iure sermo fit, palam est, invincibilem ignorantiam in primis ipsius principiis dare non posse, quo pacto sunt: *Deus est colendus, Quod tibi non fis, alteri non feceris*. Ita etiam dicimus, neque *immediatas* ab ipsis erutas *conclusiones*, seu proxime praefatis principiis connexas et cohaerentes, invincibiliter posse ignorari; quemadmodum certe sunt decalogi praecepta.”

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, III, Tract. IV, cap. I, dubium I, n. 366.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, n. 393.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, n. 366: “Absque divina auctoritate non licet seipsum directe, et ex intentione occidere. Ratio est quia est contra caritatem sui, et fit iniuria reipublicae et Deo, qui solus directus et absolutus dominus humanae vitae.”

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, n. 393: “Directa intentione et scienter numquam licet; nisi Deus, omnis vitae Dominus, concedat.”

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, Tract. IV, cap. II, dubium I, n. 414: “quamvis sub hoc praecepto *non moechaberis*, tantum exprimitur adulterium . . . nihilominus omnis actus venereus extra matrimonium eodem praecepto vetatur . . . nam etsi fornicatio minus sit malum quam adulterium, attamen, quia *a lege naturae copula carnalis tantum ad matrimonium est ordinata; per quod proles non solum gigni, sed etiam bene educari possunt*, ideo in hoc praecepto Deus prohibuit omnem coitum extra matrimonium, et simul omnem actum venereum, qui ad generationem ordinatur.”

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, dubium II, n. 432.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, n. 447.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, n. 445.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, n. 446.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, V, Tract. praem., art. I, n. iv.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, n. xxxvi: “*objectum* a quo actus accipit essentialem et primariam moralitatem, est illud circa quod versatur actus moralis, et primo et per se attingitur ab ipso actu: sic res aliena est *objectum furti*. . . . Tale *objectum* non consideratur physice et secundum entitatem . . . sed consideratur moraliter, quatenus convenit vel disconvenit rectae rationi.”

¹¹³*Ibid.*, n. xxxvii, with reference to *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 18, a. 2.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, n. xxxvi: “Ut enim actio dicatur bona ex integra causa, oportet sit consentanea legi et rectae rationi tum *ex parte objecti*, tum *ex parte finis extinsici operantis*, tum etiam *ex parte circumstantiarum*.”

¹¹⁵J. Gury, A. Ballerini, A. Sabetti, T. Barrett, *Compendium Theologiae Moralis* (Ratisbonae, NeoEboraci, Cincinnati: F. Pustet, 1941, ed. 24), n. 22: “quae est ratio divina seu voluntas Dei ordinem naturalem conservari jubens, et perturbari vetans.”

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*: “quaedam participatio et consequenter manifestativa divinae rationis.”

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, n. 25: “ex *objecto* moraliter considerato desumitur prima et essentialis moralitas actus humani.”

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, nn. 27, 28.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, n. 25: “Quaedam sunt talia [intrinsic mala] *absolute*, et independenter ab omni circumstantia quia ex se involvunt repugnantiam cum recto ordine absolute necessario, ut est odium Dei, blasphemia, etc. . . . Alia sunt *intrinsic* mala, non praecise in se, sed ratione adjuncti aut conditionis alicujus, quae pendet a dominativa potestate Dei aut hominis: talia sunt ablatio rei alienae, laesio corporis vel famae, et similia quae aliquando licita evadunt.”

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, nn. 406-407.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, n. 270: “numquam licet directe occidere innocentem, sive auctoritate privata sive publica. Ratio est tum quia occisio innocentis est actio laesiva jurium Dei, qui solus habet supremum dominium in vitam, ac proinde *intrinsic* mala, tum quia est laesiva juris quod innocens habet ad vitam, tum quia est positive prohibita a Deo ipso, tum dicitur, Ex. xxiii, 7, ‘insontem et justum non occides.’”

¹²²*Ibid.*, nn. 290, 292.

¹²³*Ibid.*, n. 107: “auctor legis naturalis . . . ; subjectum est creatura rationalis; praeco est lumen rationis; *objectum* quatenus lex est prohibens sunt actiones intrinsic malas . . . quatenus vero est praecipiens, sunt actiones intrinsic bonae.”

¹²⁴J. Aertnys and C.A. Damen, *Theologia Moralis secundum doctrinam S. Alfonsi de Ligorio Doct. Ecclesiae* (Torino: Marietti, 1944; editio decimaquarta), Tomus I, nn. 46, 47.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, n. 47: “participat legem aeternam et subiicitur ei, seu dictamen rationis quod est participatio legis aeternae. Est proinde ratio, non secundum se, sed ut informata principiis legis naturalis eorumque conclusionibus et

praeceptis legis positivae, divinae et humanae, et principiis particularibus prudentiae, seu ratio ut perfecta et formata per synderesim, scientiam moralem, praecepta divina et humana, et principia particularia prudentiae.”

¹²⁶Ibid., nn. 52, 53.

¹²⁷Ibid., n. 53.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., n. 573.

¹³¹Ibid., nn. 601, 609.

¹³²M. Prümmer, *Manuale Theologiae Moralis secundum principia S. Thomae Aquinatis* (Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder & Co., 1928; editio quarta et quinta), Tomus I, n. 121. On this issue and the influence of Billuart, see Pinckaers, *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire*, pp. 39-42 for the teaching of St. Thomas and pp. 58-61 on the influence of Billuart on subsequent Dominican theologians.

¹³³Ibid., nn. 111-126.

¹³⁴Ibid., n. 111.

¹³⁵Ibid., n. 112: “adulterium, hoc ipso quo est accessus ad uxorem alienam, intelligitur primo et essentialiter malum sine ordine ad alias circumstantias; sine hac malitia non potest concipi.”