

A NOTE ON LACAN'S 'MEDIEVALISM' AND ITS RELATION TO SOME ASPECTS OF ANIMALITY IN THOMAS AQUINAS

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It is clear at a glance that animals and their relationship to human beings appear in most of Lacan's seminars. Yet, as is well known, long before the first seminar, at least as early as 1936, referring to Köhler's 1925 study of the chimpanzee, and the work of Wallon, he argued that animals do not have access to the symbolic realm (Ec 93; cf. Köhler 1957)¹. This was to remain central to his theory of the human subject and one that has not been without its critics, most notably Derrida (2008²). Might, in this regard, some aspects of St Thomas' thought on animality have relevance to Lacan's position?

Thomas and Lacan

At the beginning of her monograph *Lacan's Medievalism*, Erin Labbie points out that while Freud ignored the Middle Ages and turned to classical antiquity to find a basis for some of his key ideas, such as the Oedipus complex, Lacan looked to the medieval period to develop a distinctive reading of Freudian texts. In fact, she takes this a step further, suggesting that Lacan might be described as a 'medievalist' (Labbie 2006: 6). Labbie was not, of course, the first to make such a claim. Over ten years before Fradenburg had already written about 'the medievalism of contemporary theorists like...Lacan' (Fradenburg 1995; 1998: 254). And others followed suit, notably, Masi (1970) and Huchet (1990)³. For the most part, though, what these authors refer to as Lacan's medievalism is limited to a consideration of his views on courtly love. Labbie, however, principally under the influence of Kristeva (1987), is inspired to

¹ Webster (1994) gives us the background: 'Wallon went on to offer a series of deductions based on the reaction of human infants to their reflection [in the mirror]. He maintained that children started to react to their mirror image at the age of four months. By the end of the tenth month he claimed that children actually located a part of their self in their mirror image and that they then imagined that their own body was split into fragments. The child now fell under an inner compulsion, so the argument ran, to unify its ego in space and in order to do this is was forced gradually to subordinate the data of immediate experience to pure representation. The ordeal of the mirror eventually led, according to Wallon, to the child's entry into the symbolic stage of development.'

² Derrida's text was, of course, also a critique of Heidegger's view of animals. The key arguments are summarised by Lawlor (2007). But see also the perceptive discussion in Direk (2017).

³ One of the difficulties here is that for authors such as Labbie and Fradenburg practically every Western thinker turns out to be a medievalist e.g. Arendt, Heidegger, Bataille, Kristeva, Agamben, Barthes, Bhaktin, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Levinas, Jameson and Žižek.

consider Lacan not just a medievalist but a ‘Thomist’, indeed, one closely related to Gilson, whom he may have come to know through Jean Baruzi (Labbie 2006: 4)⁴.

Strictly speaking Thomism refers to a broad theological approach and has a number of distinct phases. Principally, these run from the 14th and 15th centuries; the 16th century; from 1850 to the early 1960s - this period is often referred to as Neo-Thomism and culminated in Leo XIII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879); and the period from 1968 to the present. Each of these phases is characterised by somewhat dissimilar schools of thought, all of which employ a variety of interpretations of Thomas’ theology, as they engage with philosophical and socio-political issues and debates both inside and outside the Church. Gilson defended a particular Thomist position in relation to epistemology that was characterised by an opposition to the ‘transcendental Thomism’ most often associated with Rahner and Bernard Lonergan⁵, both of whom had been influenced by Maréchal. They attempted to reconcile Thomism with a Cartesian subjectivist approach to knowledge and the transcendental idealism of Kant.⁶ This might suggest that Lacan’s position was closer to theirs than to Gilson.

⁴ Labbie argues that this is particularly true in terms of epistemology. Here she refers specifically to Gilson’s *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* which she describes as having been ‘originally published in 1956’ (Labbie 2006: 228 n.42). This was, in fact, a translation of the fifth, 1948 edition, of his *Le Thomisme. Introduction au système de saint Thomas d’Aquin* that had first been published in 1922. Roudinesco had earlier noted, though far more cautiously, the possible influence that Gilson, through his association with Baruzi, had on Lacan (1993). Subsequently, others, with varying degrees of success, have also attributed to Lacan a ‘medievalism’ and discussed the relationship of his ideas to those of Thomas. See e.g. Costello (2010), Pound (2011) and Beattie (2013). But while it is certainly the case that Lacan mentioned Thomas regularly in his seminars these references are often little more than an aside e.g. S2 (1954), S7 (1960), S8 (1960), S9 (1961), S10 (1962), S11 (1964), S12 (1965), S13 (1966 and 1967), S16 (1969), S18 (1971), S20 (1973), S21 (1974), S22 (1975) and S23 (1975); and in the one reference we find in *Écrits*, from a paper delivered in 1960, Thomas is introduced by Lacan merely to give an historical basis for the origin of what he considered a mistaken view of the unconscious (Ec 799). More erudite studies show Lacan’s account to be grossly inadequate in terms of patristic notions of the unconscious - e.g. in Basil, Evagrius Ponticus and Augustine - and in terms of the complexity of Thomas’ view. In this respect see Bamberger (1968) on Basil; Refoulé (1961) on Evagrius, Dulaey (1973) on Augustine, and Baumann (1999) on Thomas.

⁵ It is normally assumed that Lonergan was a disciple of Maréchal but this may need to be revised following the discussion in Byrne (2012).

⁶ Transcendental Thomists have engaged with the modern turn to the subject and attempted to establish an ontology of knowledge, one that defends the legitimacy of metaphysics, ‘by first offering an epistemological critique that justifies the value and validity of knowledge and in turn the reliability and certainty of our epistemic tools’ (Chamberlain 2017: 177). Gilson was the most outspoken critic of the transcendental method, arguing that ontological realism is incompatible with the employment of critique. Knasas (2002), whose work belongs firmly in the tradition of existential Thomism, quotes Gilson himself in this regard: ‘Is it so difficult, then, to understand that the concept of being is presented to knowledge as an intuitive perception since the being conceived is that of a sensible intuitively perceived? The existential acts which affect and impregnate the intellect through the senses are raised to the level of consciousness, and realist knowledge flows forth from this immediate contact between object and knowing subject’ (Gilson 1986: 206). Maritain’s position is generally thought to be very similar to that of Gilson, but Knasas argues convincingly that, in fact, he employs concepts closer to the transcendental Thomists.

Ens et verum convertuntur: intimations of the unconscious

For Labbie, Lacan is a medievalist ‘not merely because he cites courtly love poetics as a means of developing his theory of desire (although that focus remains a crucial point in support of his medievalism)’ but because his methodologies ‘follow those established by medieval scholastic scholars’ (Labbie 2016: 1). Indeed, she asserts that Lacan follows the ‘methods of the medieval scholastics throughout his seminars’ (Labbie 2006: 4). However, this is not transparently the case given that the scholastic method was characterised by a form of dialectic reasoning, the ‘*sic et non*’, the *sententiae* or famous Sentences of Peter Lombard, by a rigorous conceptual analysis and the careful drawing of distinctions. Crucial to this was the *quaestio*, that is, the problem the student faces in approaching scriptural and patristic texts. Here, arguments from authority were juxtaposed with those of reason, and the ensuing discussion sought a synthesis between the two, in which new insights and deeper meanings in the texts were disclosed. The *Quaestiones disputatae*, formulated by the professor at regular intervals through the year, and the *Questiones quodlibetales*, in which a variety of subjects were discussed, were structured around the *quaestio*, responses and counterproposals. Grammar, philology and logic were used extensively in these discussions and a highly technical language developed in which a precise meaning was attributed to each word. This formal structure and precision distinguished the scholastic method both within the university, and in the way scholastic texts were written. The organisation of the *quaestiones* led to the assembling of ever more extensive syntheses. Different *quaestiones* were composed with the answers elicited, creating a synthesis, the *summae* that were extensive theological and dogmatic treatises characterised by arguments of exceptional clarity and logical continuity.

Although Thomas’ direct interest in epistemology was by the standards of modern philosophers rather limited, he considered that it was possible to construct an ontology on the basis of the knowledge of truth. He argues this by distinguishing truth in the mind from truth in things. The former being the more important or primary form of truth, because it is concerned with knowledge, and knowledge is in the mind. For Thomas, truth is in the mind if it conforms to the thing known – ‘*cum verum sit in intellectu quod conformatur rei intellectae...Sic ergo veritas principaliter est in intellectu; secundario vero in rebus, secundum quod comparantur ad intellectum ut ad principium*’ (ST Ia. q.16, a.1). But he also insists that the two kinds of truth are connected. Thus, quoting the fathers, he writes ‘*veritas est, qua ostenditur id quod est*’ and ‘*verum est declarativum et manifestativum esse*’ (De Ver. q.1,

a.1c0)⁷. In other words, truth is in things, albeit in a secondary way – ‘*necesse est quod ratio veri ab intellectu ad rem intellectam derivetur, ut res etiam intellecta vera dicatur, secundum quod habet aliquem ordinem ad intellectum*’ (ST 1a. q.16, 1c0)⁸. That is to say, truth is disclosed from the being of things: ‘*esse rei, non veritas ejus, causat veritatem intellectus*’ (ST 1a. 16, 1 ad 3). Truth is not additional to being - ‘what is grasped in truth is not something behind or alongside being, but being itself’, or being understood (D’hert 1978: 146). Welte (1966) and D’hert (1978) both noticed how similar much of this is to Heidegger’s view in his description of *aletheia*. This common ground between Thomas and Heidegger has subsequently been discussed from a number of different angles e.g. by Wood (1997) and Caputo (1982).

All *aletheia*, all unconcealment of entities, takes place within the hidden background of the *lethe*, the essentially concealed to which, nonetheless, we as humans, via the notion of being, are essentially related. The sense of the *lethe* is the essential mystical sensibility, the sense of mystery that provokes the essential awe which gives rise to and sustains philosophy as the question of the meaning of Being.

Wood 1997: 279-80

Turner (2013) understands the notion of the uncovering or unfolding of truth, as we find it in Thomas, as something that results from a ‘practice’⁹, in which we trace the way back to our true desire (*voluntas*). He argues that while by *voluntas* - which is usually translated as will in English and ought not to be confused with instinct - Thomas signifies reasoned desire, it is at the same time unknown. Although not unknown in the sense in which a person may consciously be self-deceived.

...the moral life consists in the first place in those practices that enable the discovery of what it is that we really want, the happy life, and the power of insight that leads to that discovery is what Thomas calls *prudentia*, skill in seeing the moral point of human situations, what true desires are to be met within them. It is then, and only secondarily that the moral life consists in virtuous forms of living, the practices of desire that

⁷ ‘...truth is that by which that which is, is shown’ and ‘the true is that which manifests and proclaims existence’.

⁸ ‘...the notion of truth must pass over from the mind to the thing understood, so that the latter is also said to be true in that it has a relation to mind’.

⁹ In passages reminiscent of Foucault, Turner insists that for Thomas desire is ‘fundamental to the practical life’ (Turner 2013: 182).

prudentia has interpretively uncovered within the maelstrom of desires as actually experienced.

Turner 2013: 180

According to Thomas, we can trace our way back to our real desire - which is both unknown and fundamentally always a desire for happiness - through the desires of which we are aware. Indeed, the real significance of the things we think we desire, lies in the fact that our real desire is wrapped up in them (Turner 2013). Additionally, for Thomas, our true desire is also partially revealed, not in what we say we want, but indirectly in what we do. These intimations of a dynamic unconscious embedded in Thomas' concepts of *voluntas* as desire complement his analysis of the concept of human action (*actus humanus*) in ST 1a. 2ae, 6-7. Here we can see that Thomas' understanding of human freedom systematically allows for unconscious material co-determining acts which are out of the control of reason or the will (Baumann 1999)¹⁰. The apparent similarity with psychoanalysis may be significant in relation to Lacan's treatment of being and truth in which Heidegger's thought forms a bridge from Thomas¹¹. And this may also give some credibility to Labbie's suggestion of a link between Lacan and the Thomism of Gilson.

Scholasticism's lack of homogeneity

Although the philosophical concepts that Thomas inherited were handed down through the medieval university system many of his insights were, as Anthony Kenny points out, gained despite the apparatus of scholasticism (Kenny 1980). This is not to deny the tremendous debt Thomas owed to Augustine, but it is to recognise the displacement of Augustinian thinking that occurred within medieval philosophy and theology, and the distance between the thought of Thomas and that of his contemporary neo-Augustinians. This shift in thinking amounted to an intellectual crisis that, in part, was triggered by the translation of Aristotelian texts, in the thirteenth century, and by the rise of the Averroists. In response, Thomas wrote his *De unitate*

¹⁰ See note 2 above.

¹¹ As Tyler Akers puts it: 'Though he squarely renounces the academic discipline of philosophy as he sees it, from the categorical vantage point Lacan is quick to deploy a panoply of philosophical terms generally, but those that situate him incontestably within the neighborhood of a Heideggerian vocabulary and conception. For example, Lacan dubs his investigations phenomenological and ontological, and often quotes Heidegger and borrows from his terminology, including employing—most significantly—Heidegger's rejuvenation of the ancient Greek concept for being and truth, i.e., *aletheia*. The consistent use of these two terms (even his own refurbishing of the Greek sense of *imago*), particularly that of *aletheia* (and, as we will see, being-towards-death), interweaving it closely to the range of Lacanian phenomenological terms, leads Lacan right into the center of the Heideggerian thematic. The very Heideggerian experience of falling is evinced throughout Lacan's notion of truth as unconcealment and the many revelations of Lacan's subjectivity. By locating this *aletheia* in relation to falling, we can see how the truth of the subject is the truth of metaphysics, and that the truth of metaphysics is the truth of the subject' (Akers 2015: 308).

intellectus, while Bonaventure responded with his *Collationes in Hexaemeron*¹². Komonchak sums up the contrast between these two approaches as follows:

The typically Augustinian approach works with a sharp and unmediated distinction between sin and grace, natural reason and faith. The natural world appears to have no solidity or substance except as a sign pointing beyond itself to the spiritual and supernatural. The dramatic contest between sin and grace monopolizes attention, distracting it away from the natural, or rather subsuming it under the religious categories so that, on the one hand, we are *natura filii irae* and, on the other, our ‘true’ nature is only recognized in the supernatural.

The typically Thomist approach, in contrast, effects a theological differentiation of the natural, not in order to deny that the drama of sin and grace is the only real drama of human history but in order to promote a more accurate understanding of it. ‘Nature’, if you will, theoretically mediates the practical drama. It has its own solidity or substance, its own laws, its created autonomy. Sin is what falls short of or contradicts nature, and grace is what heals and transcendently fulfils nature. This permits one at once to differentiate the genuine limitations of nature without having to label them as sinful and to affirm the power of grace as the fulfilment and not the destruction of nature. This is why St Thomas could embrace the new world opened to Christian culture by Aristotle’s philosophy and by Arabian science without believing, as many Augustinians did at the time, that this was a profanation of the sacred because it implied that an understanding of nature was possible in other than religious terms.

Komonchak 1994: 87

A knowledge that resists signification

Both scholasticism and psychoanalysis, Labbie tells us, are ‘founded on an imperative to consider a knowledge that resists signification, to bare the signifiers that ground ontology within an epistemology’ (Glejzer 1997: 105 quoted by Labbie 2006: 3). Glejzer, who is Labbie’s principle source here, explains this in terms of the centrality of language.

Lacan placed his investigation of language within Augustine’s examinations of signs and teaching. By focusing on how language works particularly for each subject, Lacan

¹² This revolution in thinking was examined in some detail by Yves Congar in his article ‘Theologie’ in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* XV: 374-402. Following Chenu (19301) and Ratzinger (1971), Komonchak argues that Thomas distinguished, in his work, the fields of theology, and philosophy and the sciences of nature, ‘implying a certain autonomy for those other disciplines’ (Komonachak 2009: 125). Bonaventure, on the other hand, set himself against this development in an ‘anti-Aristotelianism’ (Ratzinger 1971: 165).

developed a way of placing language at the center of knowledge and being, a conclusion that the Twelfth Century scholastics similarly drew from Augustine.

Glajzer 1997: 105-6¹³

Thomas' direct interest in linguistics was minimal in comparison to his contribution to metaphysics, ethics and the philosophy of mind (Kenny 1980). However, like other medieval philosophers, Thomas used analogy and metaphor, and was aware of the distinction between the grammatical form of a sentence and its logical form, as well as the difference between the etymology and the use of words. Thus Thomas writes that the 'etymology of a name is one thing, and the meaning of the name is another. For etymology is determined by that from which the name is taken to signify something, while the meaning of the term is determined by that which it is used to signify' (quoted in Copleston 1957: 66). Furthermore, language formed the basis for his metaphysics precisely because it was based on Aristotle who, as Tugendhat (1975) points out, showed that ontology rests on the foundation of an analysis of the use of language.

The celebrated introduction of ontology in the fourth book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*¹⁴ is based on the following argument. Since all the special sciences confine themselves to particular aspects of reality, there is a need for a new science which will go beyond all specialist limitations to concern itself with Being in general or with Being as Being. Access to this domain of objects, which is prior to all scientific methodology, can come about only by withdrawing to a universal and primary mode of our relation to the world. Language in its manifold forms and modes of use establishes this original connection with the world...what is expressed by *pollachōs legetai* is the basis on which the question of Being in general can be raised.

Bubner 1990: 98

The context in which Thomas developed his sophisticated analysis of God language includes the enormous shift that had taken place in the philosophical understanding of religious

¹³ Wittgenstein famously began his *Philosophical Investigations* by arguing against Augustine's naïve account of language in the *Confessions* (see the useful discussion in Burnyeat 1987). But Lacan seems to have known better and turned to the *de Magistro* for an account of Augustine's views on language (S1). However, for a comprehensive view of Augustine's understanding of language, his other works need to be taken into account, particularly various passages in his *De Trinitate*, his treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, and the probable influence of the Stoic theory of *lekton* (Watson 1982; cf. also Markus 1957). On the Stoic background A.A. Long (1971) is particularly illuminating.

¹⁴ *To on legetai pollachōs*: Aristotle. Met. iv, 1004b15.

language from Anselm and the Victorines. McCuskey puts it succinctly: ‘the theory of language to which Aquinas ascribes is actually quite different from Augustine’s own’ (McCuskey 2014: 111).

The idea that knowledge resists signification points to the way in which, for Thomas, silence is not merely the absence of speech, but its fullness - the fundamental unknowability to which all speech is directed. Early in the *Summa theologiae* which, significantly, he left unfinished, Thomas explains that words always fail, for they are merely as straw, and that we are made one with God *quasi ei ignoto* (Turner 2013)¹⁵. In fact, it has been recognised increasingly, that the apophatic theology of pseudo-Dionysius influenced Thomas, and that silence in Thomas stands for the apophatic element in his thought (Pieper 1957). This brings him closer to mystical writers like Maimonides and Eckhart, than was previously realised (Burrell 1983)¹⁶. Here, Thomas’ doctrine of analogy is particularly significant (Burrell 1975). But while pseudo-Dionysius’ thought necessitated the unknowability of God as the One beyond symbolisation - language, concept - and being, Thomas, in the light of Aristotle, went further in his rejection of equivocity, developing an apophaticism in which the unknowability of God is qualified through the concept of *quidditas*. ‘The reason Denys’ theology leads to an absolute unknowing is because he denies that God is identical with Being, whereas Aquinas’ metaphysics, while denying univocal being, retains true speech about God, including logical discourse by analogy’ (Darley 2011).

Reason and language: Thomas on animality

According to Berkman while Thomas makes overly simplistic dichotomies between human and non-human animals, if one is willing to dig and piece together his references, in fact he presents ‘a rather sophisticated – even if arguably inadequate and incomplete – view of nonhuman animals, one worthy of extended review’ (Berkman 2009: 22). In chapter three of

¹⁵ In describing the end of psychoanalysis as the arrival of the analysand at the point of subjective destitution, Lacan compared it to Thomas’ experience at the end of his life when he suddenly stopped writing, explaining to his secretary that he could no longer continue because everything that he had written up to then seemed to be ‘*sicut palea*’ (as straw) cf. Lacan (1967). The late William Richardson discussed this in some detail, concluding that ‘For Thomas, the remark suggests nothing of what Lacan calls the “destitution of the subject” but rather a “destitution” that follows upon the failure of the metaphysical structures of his rational synthesis to account in any adequate way for his own concrete (perhaps mystical) experience of the sacred. What appeared “like straw”, then, was the scaffolding that another language would call (properly or not) “onto-theo-logy”, which in turn is structured, psychoanalytically speaking, by the Lacanian categories of the symbolic and imaginary. Accordingly, what characterized Thomas’s experience would be the disillusionment with this symbolic/imaginary synthesis by reason of his encounter with what he called God in the real. Thus, religious “meaning” (e.g., the interpretation of human suffering in terms of union with the suffering Christ) need not be considered, as Lacan suggests, a repression of the real (of “what does not work”) but rather a way of confronting it’ (Richardson 1992: 93).

¹⁶ Albert the Great was, of course, the teacher both of Eckhart and Thomas.

his short early treatise *De Ente et Essentia*, Thomas argues not that human beings are a higher species than animals but that they are completely animal. That is to say, being an animal is not just a part of what a human being is, not an aspect of human existence, but the entirety of what it is to be a human being: *Si enim animal non esset totum quod est homo, sed pars ejus, non praedicaretur de eo, cum nulla pars integralis de suo toto praedicetur* (E 3.12-14)¹⁷.

Thomas wrote the treatise while studying at the Dominican house of studies in Paris, sometime between 1252 and 1256, before receiving his Master's degree. In it he set out to explain the terminology of Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian metaphysics (Kenny 1980). Some years later, in book two of the *Summa contra Gentiles* he develops the idea that animals, and indeed plants, as well as human beings have souls. What he means by a soul (*anima*) is not something inside the body, separate from it, but rather the thing that makes the body alive (S.T. 1a, 75, 1). Its living principle or form of life. The special feature of human beings is not that they have souls, but the fact that their souls are rational or intellectual. But 'though human beings grow like plants and feed and breed like animals, human beings do not have vegetable and animal souls as well as their immortal soul: there is one single form in a human being which is his intellectual soul' (Kenny 1980: 11). Turner (2013) refers to this as radical position. One that illustrates how far removed Thomas' thought was from many of his contemporaries including Bonaventure, who considered that human beings had also a vegetable and animal soul. Furthermore, Thomas contemporaries added corporality, as a fourth form, one held in common with stones and which made a human being a bodily being. Thomas rejected this proliferation of forms, insisting that a human being had but one form (corresponding to Aristotle's *entelecheia* or actuality cf. Met. 1050a, 22), which is the rational soul¹⁸.

For Thomas, both the cat owner and the cats are wholly animals; the difference between them falls *within* their common animality – it is an *internal* differentiation, a *differentia* as Thomas puts it, within the genus 'animal'. For nothing that is not an animal can be rational. Rationality is a specifically animal way of being alive.

Turner 2013: 65

There were a number of reasons that Thomas gives for rejecting the proliferation of forms. Most importantly, through a consideration of individuation, and because human beings live

¹⁷ If being an animal were not what a human being is as a whole, but only a part, it would not be predicated of man, since no integral part is predicated of the whole.

¹⁸ For Aristotle, the soul is substance only as being '*entelechiea sōmatos phusikou dunamei zōēn echontos*' (De An. II. 1. 41a, 19). It is precisely this view that Plotinus combats. See the discussion in Jaeger (1948).

within a linguistic world. That is to say, an intelligible universe. One mediated through language in which meaning, as a function of being, dwells (*ens et verum convertuntur*).

There was strong opposition to these views among his contemporaries, and among the propositions condemned at Oxford in 1277 was the following: ‘The vegetative, sensitive and intellectual souls are a single non-composite form’ (quoted by Kenny 1980: 47). Although there are a number of philosophical problems associated with Thomas’ identification of soul with form¹⁹, Thomas’ view was gradually accepted as the common theological opinion.

Conclusion

It seems that the criteria used by Labbie and Fradenburg to define medievalism is far too loose. Moreover, there are at least three problems which result from Labbie’s reading. Firstly, the inadequacy of Glejzer’s description of the scholastic method, on which Labbie depends; secondly, the assumptions that such a view implies about Thomas’ method and the homogeneity of scholasticism and Thomism; and thirdly, because it presents a distorted picture of the relationship between the thought of Thomas and that of Augustine in general, and more specifically, in relation to language.

Merely to have referred to a text or texts from the Middle Ages seems to us to be insufficient grounds upon which to conclude that an author is a medievalist. Lacan’s oeuvre seems to bear little resemblance, in terms of method, to the logical rigour and clarity that characterised scholasticism. Moreover, by linking Lacan to Gilson, in the context of the former’s supposed Thomism, Labbie is positioning Lacan against transcendental Thomists (O’Donnell 1996). This seems curious, given the importance Lacan places on subjectivity.

However, when the influence on Heidegger of Thomas’ teaching on truth and being (*ens verum convertuntur*) is taken into account, in the light of Lacan’s early reliance on Heidegger, such a claim may be seen to be not completely unreasonable. This is especially the case given the position Thomas affords to the will (*voluntas*) and the practices that lead back to our true, unconscious, desire, and the function of *voluntas* within human acts. This is illustrated in the case of animality, because central to it is the question of language.

¹⁹ Kenny (1980) briefly summarises three such difficulties.

Abbreviations

- De An. Aristotle. *De Anima* in *On the Soul. Parva Naturalia. On Breath.* (trans.) W. S. Hett. Loeb Classical Library 288. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- De Ver. S. Thomae Aquinatis. *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate*. <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/qdvoi.html>
- De Nat. Gen. S. Thomae Aquinatis. *Opuscula philosophica. De Natura Generis*: <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/xpg.html>
- E S. Thomae Aquinatis. *Sermo seu Tractatus. De Ente et Essentia* (ed.) L. Baur. Typis Aschendorff, 1933.
- Met. Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Book I-IX. (trans.) H. Tredennick. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 271. Cambridge, MA/Harvard University Press, 1933.
- ST St Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae* Volume 4 (1a 14-18), (trans. and notes) Thomas Gornall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- SZ Heidegger, M. (2006). *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. Eng. Trans. *Being and Time* (trans.) J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

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