

GOD, CREATION, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PHILOSOPHICAL WISDOM: THE PERSPECTIVES OF BONAVENTURE AND AQUINAS

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Contemporary debates about the relationship between philosophy and theology may be illuminated by comparing Aquinas's doctrine of philosophical wisdom to Bonaventure's. For both, philosophical wisdom apprehends God as creator through the medium of creation; the resultant act is therefore distinct from that of theology, which apprehends God through revelation. But Bonaventure also speaks of the capacity of the human soul, transformed by grace, to be formed by the expressive presence of God in creation—and this too, for Bonaventure, is philosophical.

FOLLOWING THE RENEWAL of Scholastic philosophy and theology promoted by Pope Leo XIII, and particularly following the publication, in the late 19th century, of the critical edition of the works of St. Bonaventure by the Franciscan fathers of Collegio San Bonaventura at Quaracchi, Florence, studies of the Seraphic Doctor grew more and more numerous.¹ The scholarship was somewhat eclectic; there never was, at least in fundamental or dogmatic theology, a recognizable “Bonaventureanism,” as there was a “Thomism.” Yet there was one debate at least that was pursued with considerable tenacity: the question whether, and in what sense, Bonaventure could be said to have had a philosophy distinct from his theology. One

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¹ For a partial listing and a general history of studies of Bonaventure, see Colman J. Majchrzak, O.F.M., “A Brief History of Bonaventurianism” (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1957) esp. 81–88. The continuity of Bonaventure’s influence is more evident in spiritual theology. See also Franz Ehrle, S.J., “Die neue Schule des hl. Bonaventura,” *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach* 25 (1883) 15–29.

of the striking features of the debate about this “Bonaventuran question”² was that it was pursued mostly by Thomists and judged by the canons of a Thomistic understanding of philosophy.

The second half of the 20th century saw a shift in Bonaventure studies away from this approach. Several factors contributed to this shift, including the breakdown of the Thomistic hegemony in philosophy and theology in Catholic circles, a broadening interest in medieval theology in general beyond the customary categories of Scholasticism (e.g., the consideration of “monastic theology” and “vernacular theology” in addition to Scholastic theology), and the appearance of groundbreaking studies of Bonaventure that deliberately eschewed the older approach.³

The “Bonaventuran question,” in its older formulation, has therefore somewhat faded from view. At the same time, however, the more general topic of the relationship of philosophy and theology (which is one form of the debate about nature and grace) has lost nothing of its compelling interest. Moreover, theologians and philosophers both are interested in Bonaventure’s contribution to the subject.⁴ The difference between the debate now and 50 years ago is that the current conversation is not constrained by the concerns and categories of Thomism.

² The phrase was coined by Pietro Maranesi in “Per un contributo alla ‘questione bonaventuriana,’” *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 58 (1995) 287–314. Maranesi defines the question specifically as “whether in Bonaventure one can speak of the presence of a philosophy separate or separable from his theological thought,” and more generally as the question of the relationship of reason and faith (ibid. 287). For the most comprehensive history of this question, see John Francis Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure’s Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973) 17–99, 841–96.

³ One could note particularly Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1971), with the postulate of Bonaventure’s “anti-intellectualism” in the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*; and Zachary Hayes, “Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure,” *Journal of Religion* 58 supplement (1978) 82–96, with its exploration of Bonaventure’s “theological metaphysics.”

⁴ See especially Andreas Speer, “Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997) 25–45. More recently, John Milbank has argued that Bonaventure is, rather more than Aquinas, guilty of having originated the doctrine of “pure nature” (John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005] 96–97); Christopher Cullen has maintained that Bonaventure has a genuine philosophy, insofar as he sharply distinguishes, throughout his work, arguments from reason and arguments from authority (Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* [New York: Oxford University, 2006] 35); and Kevin Hughes has found in Bonaventure’s warnings about rationalistic excess precisely his value for addressing today’s theological disputes (Kevin L. Hughes, “Remember Bonaventure? (Onto)Theology and Ecstasy,” *Modern Theology* 19 [2003] 529–45).

I contend that something has been lost by abandoning the earlier discussions. It is, of course, prejudicial to examine Bonaventure simply with an eye toward determining his adequacy with respect to Thomism. Nevertheless, when it comes to the question of the relationship of philosophy and theology, dialogue with Thomists remains key. A close examination of Bonaventure's arguments reveals that he is dealing with many of the same distinctions and categories that Thomists recognize. This is not to say that he entirely shares Aquinas's doctrine; yet the differences are all the more striking when the similarities are given their due.

In this article, I focus on the idea of "philosophical wisdom" as a way into the debate about philosophy and theology. The issues at stake become clearer when one is talking about the perfection of the natural knowledge of the created world. It is one thing to say that philosophical *knowledge* is possible without faith, but another thing to say that the perfection of that knowledge, philosophical *wisdom*, is also possible. To both Aquinas and Bonaventure, I put two questions: first, is philosophical wisdom possible? and second, if so, what lies at the heart of the conception of that wisdom—or, what is the fundamental intuition or conviction expressed in this doctrine? To anticipate: from a Thomistic perspective, it is clear that such a wisdom is indeed possible; I argue that, in Bonaventure's perspective, such a wisdom is indeed possible, but only from a certain point of view.

The purpose of this article is to articulate a Bonaventuran contribution to the discussion of the relationship between philosophy and theology (and, by implication, a contribution to the understanding of the nature of theology). The point is not to compare two historical figures (that would require a great deal more exegetical analysis of Aquinas than is presented here), but to make an argument regarding the power of Bonaventure's thought today, seen in light of the Thomist tradition.⁵ I begin therefore with an outline of the Thomistic account of philosophical wisdom as the background against which I read Bonaventure.⁶ At the heart of the differences between Bonaventure and Aquinas on this point lie their different conceptions of the relationship between God and the world. Any discussion between them requires that we name the metaphysical issues correctly. I close with a few thoughts about the philosophical and theological ramifications of this discussion.

⁵ For valuable background on the concept of wisdom as it was passed down to Aquinas and Bonaventure, see Alessandro Musco, ed., *Il concetto di "sapientia" in san Bonaventura e san Tommaso* (Palermo: Enchiridion, 1983).

⁶ Some differences among Thomists on this point will be noted, but this should not obscure the fact that in large part the doctrine presented here is uncontroversial.

THE THOMISTIC PERSPECTIVE

To delineate the Thomistic doctrine of philosophical wisdom, one must advert to three triple distinctions: those pertaining to wisdom as a speculative habit, the divisions of the philosophical sciences, and the *luminis* by which the rational mind knows.

Wisdom is one of three habits of the speculative intellect, the other two being science (*scientia*, knowledge) and understanding.⁷ Wisdom, like science, involves the knowledge of conclusions drawn from principles (unlike understanding, which is the intuitive grasp of principles), but whereas science is a grasp of a particular genus of knowable matter—that is, the conclusions drawn from particular causes that are united with respect to a distinct formal object—wisdom is the knowledge of the highest causes. Wisdom is the demonstrative knowledge of conclusions in the light of their highest principles. It is a judgment and ordering of principles as well as a knowledge of conclusions.

In the Thomistic perspective, philosophy encompasses all the theoretical sciences. Wisdom, therefore, as the knowledge of the conclusions of a science in the light of its principles, can be said to have as many forms as there are legitimate theoretical sciences. However, these sciences may be divided into a hierarchy that consists of three categories, depending on their objects and their relation to matter. Lowest in the hierarchy are the physical sciences, the object of which cannot exist or be understood without matter. The middle place belongs to mathematics, the existence of whose objects depends on matter, but the understanding of which does not (i.e., a line cannot exist without matter, but one can understand the properties of a line without referring to sensible matter). Highest of all is the science whose object is entirely free from matter. This science is metaphysics, which deals with being as being (*ens inquantum ens*; or being in general, *ens commune*) and its principles. Such knowledge merits the name “wisdom” because it is the highest kind of knowledge in its genus, and it considers being in light of its highest cause. Only in metaphysics does the consideration of being reach its culmination. In a loose sense, one may speak of wisdom as thorough mastery of a particular genus of knowledge; a master mathematician, for example, could be called “wise” in mathematics. But properly speaking, philosophical wisdom requires mastery of the highest principles that are known by reason. One could perhaps say that even the truly “wise” mathematician is the one who knows the conclusions of that

⁷ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) 1–2, q. 57, a. 2, drawing from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1.

science in the light of its ultimate principles (and is therefore metaphysician as well as mathematician).⁸

Finally, philosophy must be placed with respect to other types of knowledge of the highest realities (for there are more things in heaven than are dreamed of in philosophy). Theology too is, from the Thomistic perspective, a speculative kind of knowledge. So is the wisdom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. One may distinguish therefore between different orders of knowledge. These are distinguished not so much by their material object—for metaphysics, theology, and the higher graced knowledge all consider God—as by their formal object and the *lumen* that informs them. The *lumen* of metaphysics is the natural light of reason; its formal object is *ens commune* and God insofar as God is known from beings as their cause.⁹ By contrast, the *lumen* of theology is the grace made present in the virtue of faith, and the *lumen* of mystical knowledge is the grace made present through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Both operate by means of the *lumen gratiae*. But whereas theology is a discursive knowledge of the things that flow from faith, the gift of wisdom is an immediate knowledge of divine things by connaturality.¹⁰ Therefore theological wisdom and the gift of wisdom may be distinguished in terms of their formal objects: the formal object of theological wisdom is God as revealing, and the formal object of the gift of wisdom is God as the one to whom the soul is united.

Philosophical wisdom is therefore, for Aquinas, the speculative knowledge of being in general, related to God who is its cause. At the heart of this doctrine are two key postulates: (1) that it is possible to consider being in general, and (2) that there is a proper *lumen* to philosophy, distinct from the *lumen gratiae* (whether of faith or the gift of wisdom) in which one considers the highest things. If these postulates are true, there is an intelligibility to created being as such. The delineation of properly philosophical wisdom thus rests on the realization that *esse commune*—the being common to all creatures—is not *esse subsistens*.¹¹ Two results follow. First, one

⁸ See Aquinas, *ST* 2–2, q. 45, a. 1, where he distinguishes wisdom “in a genus” and wisdom “simply.”

⁹ Aquinas was aware of a dispute in his own day as to whether metaphysics is the science of being as being or the science of separated substance. His resolution was to say that, properly speaking, the subject of metaphysics is being as being; God and the angels are treated in metaphysics not as part of its subject, but as the cause of its subject. See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2000) 11–22; Mark D. Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1986) 149–56.

¹⁰ See Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 6; 2–2, q. 45, a. 2.

¹¹ Though both *ens commune* and *esse commune* are translated as “being in

recognizes that created beings have an intelligibility that is distinct from the divine intelligibility—that is, one can understand a creature without understanding God *in se*. Second, one recognizes that creaturely intelligibility depends on God—*esse commune* is nothing without *esse subsistens*. A truly philosophical wisdom is therefore possible—that is, a wisdom that apprehends the reality of things and their dependence on God entirely in the natural light of reason.

A few caveats are in order concerning the self-sufficiency of such wisdom. To repeat, philosophical wisdom is not entirely separate from the knowledge of God, for it invariably recognizes the dependence of *ens commune* on God. To know the creature is to know the divine causality with respect to the creature—and not only the efficient causality, but the exemplary and final causality as well. It is evident, especially if one considers what is involved in God's exemplary and final causality, that a much deeper knowledge is available to the one who knows God *in se* (i.e., through grace) than to the one who knows God merely *per effectum*.¹² Nevertheless, in the Thomistic view it suffices for philosophical wisdom that God's causality be known *per effectum*. Philosophical wisdom does not need to refer to a knowledge of God beyond what that wisdom is capable of.¹³ Aquinas also maintains—and this is the second caveat—that philosophical wisdom, when it is achieved, creates a disposition for a higher,

general," or "common being," they should be distinguished. "*Ens commune* is the idea of existence received by essence, of composite being in the most general sense. . . . [*Esse commune*] is the whole of created being considered from the angle of its participatory-causal dependence on *esse subsistens*" (Francis J. Caponi, O.S.A., "Karl Rahner and the Metaphysics of Participation," *Thomist* 67 [2003] 382). In other words, *ens commune* defines the subject of metaphysics, for being does not exist except as received by essence; however, if we are to define the *esse* common to all created being, it should be identified as *esse commune*, as distinct from *esse divinum*.

On the distinction of *esse commune* and *esse subsistens* in Aquinas, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* 110–24. For a different view, see Gerald B. Phelan, "The Being of Creatures," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 31 (1957) 118–25. Phelan's chief objection is to the idea that created *esse* is a "something" that God gives to creatures. He insists that there is only one *esse*, which is God. Wippel agrees that *esse commune* does not actually subsist as such—it is not a "something." But one moves from the knowledge of individual beings as participating in *esse commune* through the recognition that they are caused beings to "the existence of their unparticipated source (*esse subsistens*)" (Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* 117).

¹² There is inevitably an incompleteness to such wisdom precisely because it does not fully grasp the relationship of creation between God and the creature; see Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, trans. John Murray, S.J., and Daniel O'Connor (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's, 1999) 53–67. Still it merits the name "wisdom."

¹³ On the natural knowledge of God's causality, see esp. *ST* 1, q. 44.

theological wisdom.¹⁴ To know God as creator enlivens in the soul a desire to know him better—that is, to know him as revealer and, finally, as the Beloved with whom one may be united. Finally, though the natural light of reason is in principle sufficient for philosophical wisdom, sin has obscured that light. Practically speaking, it may not be possible for one to achieve philosophical wisdom without the infusion of grace, which purifies the soul.

Nevertheless, the point remains that at the heart of Aquinas's conception of philosophical wisdom lies a conviction about the natural intelligibility of being and the distinction between created being and God.

BONAVENTURE'S VIEW

In a *locus classicus* of Bonaventure's doctrine of wisdom, the highest natural knowledge of things is identified as wisdom "so-called"; it is not, properly speaking, wisdom.¹⁵ The question immediately suggests itself: does Bonaventure recognize such a thing as philosophical wisdom? Nowhere in his various discussions of wisdom does he advert to the science of *ens inquantum ens*, or to the intelligibility of beings in terms of *esse commune*. If there is a philosophical wisdom, it looks not to the intelligibility of being in itself, but to God—and God not simply as cause of creatures, but as the one in whom lies the fullest form of the truth of things.¹⁶

¹⁴ See Jacques Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940) 24; Kieran Conley, O.S.B., *A Theology of Wisdom* (Dubuque: Priory, 1963) 59.

¹⁵ Bonaventure, *III. Sent.* d. 35, a. un., q. 1.

¹⁶ The principal texts for this study are *III. Sent.* d. 35, a. un., q. 1; *Hex.* 2; and *De scientia Christi*, qq. 5–7 and epilogue. Many other texts speak of wisdom, but it is particularly the texts mentioned here that employ the kinds of distinctions that are most pertinent to this article.

One obvious challenge to the possibility of a correspondence between Bonaventure and Aquinas on the doctrine of wisdom is the fact that the texts from the *Sentences* commentary and the *Hexaëmeron* speak of a fourfold—not a threefold—distinction in wisdom. Some scholars who deal with Bonaventure's doctrine of wisdom have tried to find a one-to-one correspondence between them (e.g., George H. Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure* [St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1954] 188–89, 225; Cullen, *Bonaventure* 24–26; Fumi Sakaguchi, *Der Begriff der Weisheit in den Hauptwerken Bonaventuras* [Munich: Anton Pustet, 1968] 24–25). However, I would argue that the first type of wisdom mentioned in the *Commentary on the Sentences* is wisdom only in a very attenuated sense: while it is the highest knowledge available in a particular *disciplina*, it does not advert to the ultimate principles of knowledge. It is the sense of wisdom according to which one could call a master mathematician a "wise" mathematician. As noted above, Aquinas recognizes such a use of the term as well, but distinguishes between it and philosophical wisdom properly so-called. We are therefore left in this text of Bonaventure with a threefold division, which corresponds exactly to the Thomistic division of philosophical,

The very structure of Bonaventure's epistemology raises difficulties concerning philosophical wisdom. True knowledge is possible in philosophy because the ultimate truth of things—that is, the way they are known in God—is available to the human mind as a kind of guide.¹⁷ Thus, as Bonaventure says, “The person of science attains to the [eternal] reasons as to the principles that move the mind [*rationes moventes*]”; but “the person of wisdom attains to them as to that in which the human spirit finds rest [*rationes quietantes*].”¹⁸ Philosophical wisdom requires a resting in the ultimate principles of things. But is such a rest possible in natural terms? At the very least it cannot be wholly separated from faith, for Bonaventure maintains (following Augustine) that no one reaches this wisdom unless he is first purified by faith.¹⁹ Furthermore, he says that the intellect cannot rest except in God, for “nothing is sufficient for the soul unless it exceeds the soul's capacity.”²⁰ Such points militate against the possibility of philosophical wisdom, if we understand by that a natural fulfillment of a capacity in the soul to know the ultimate truth of things.²¹

theological, and mystical wisdom. I will say more about this text, and about the division in the *Hexaëmeron* (where the fourfold division bears a different meaning), later in this paper. For an account of Bonaventure's doctrine of wisdom in precisely these three categories, see Leo Veuthey, O.F.M. Conv., “Scientia et sapientia in doctrina S. Bonaventurae,” *Miscellanea Francescana* 43 (1943) 1–13. Another text in which Bonaventure explicitly speaks of philosophical, theological, and mystical knowledge is, interestingly, his sermon on St. Dominic (*Sermo de sancto Dominico*).

¹⁷ The classic texts of Bonaventure on this point are *De scientia Christi*, q. 4; the sermon “Christus unus omnium magister”; and *Itin.* 2.9. See Andreas Speer, “The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 3 (1993) 35–61; and Stephen Brown's note on *Itin.* 2.9 in Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., ed., intro., and notes Stephen F. Brown (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

The basic epistemological structure here is as follows: the soul, which is made in the image of God, has God as its object. God's knowledge of things (the “eternal reasons”) is always present to the soul as its object. When the soul perceives something in the creaturely realm, it abstracts the form from the sensible object and judges that form according to its orientation to the full knowledge of that form in the eternal reasons.

¹⁸ Bonaventure, *De scientia Christi*, q. 4, ad 2; see *ibid.*, ad 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* q. 4, ad 2, quoting Augustine, *De Trinitate* 1.2.4.

²⁰ Bonaventure, *De scientia Christi*, q. 6.

²¹ One critical aspect of Bonaventure's doctrine of wisdom will not receive much attention here: namely, his designation of it as an “affective habit,” as opposed to a purely speculative habit. Much of the recent scholarship on Bonaventure emphasizes this point. The idea is introduced in *I. Sent.* prol., q. 3 and appears again in various later comments on wisdom (e.g., *Brev.* 1.1; *III. Sent.* d. 27, a. 2, q. 5, where Bonaventure distinguishes *sapientia* as derived from *sapere* [which therefore has to

A closer analysis of Bonaventure's doctrine will reveal that he does recognize philosophical wisdom. However, precisely what he means by this—and the insights that form his thinking on this matter—depends on whether one understands this wisdom in terms of the soul's capacity, or in terms of the object, the contemplation of which brings about this state in the soul.²² My investigation into Bonaventure's meaning is thus divided into two parts.

Wisdom as the Fulfillment of the Soul's Capacity

A good example of a treatment of the question of wisdom in terms of the soul's capacity is book 3 of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, distinction 35, question 1. Distinction 35 is devoted to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and

do simply with cognition] and as derived from *sapere* [which therefore has to do with affection]; *III. Sent.* d. 35, a. un., q. 1, where it is seen that wisdom pertains to both the speculative and the affective powers of the soul, but principally the latter; *Hex.* 17.7, with the jibe, "The philosopher says that it is a great pleasure to know that the diameter is asymmetrical to the side. This pleasure may be his: only let him savor it"). This is certainly pertinent to my topic, for an obvious difference between philosophy and theology is that philosophy does not even attempt to satisfy the affective desires of the soul, whereas theology properly speaking does. In this perspective, however perfect one's philosophical knowledge might be, it could never merit the name wisdom, for it does not move a person to love. While this point should be acknowledged, I do not think it is determinative for the question of this article. One may investigate Bonaventure's most extended treatments of wisdom to see what they say about the kind of knowledge that is the perfection of philosophy, and whether and in what sense such knowledge can be called "wisdom." What will emerge is that love is critical for wisdom because of the way Bonaventure understands the relationship of God and creation. It is worthwhile to draw this out, and not to be satisfied with simply saying that what does not produce love cannot be wisdom. See Sakaguchi, *Der Begriff der Weisheit 27–75*: though this chapter is on wisdom as the "cognitio rerum generalis," it says much about cognition but little about wisdom; see Leo Veuthey, who describes the terminus of natural knowledge in Bonaventure as "mere abstraction," not the living God (Veuthey, *S. Bonaventurae philosophia christiana* [Rome: Officium libri catholici, 1943] 297–302).

On what it means to call theology an "affective science," see Gregory LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 2005) esp. 60–65, 190–91.

²² Christopher Cullen has noted something like this difference between the treatments of wisdom in the *Sentences* commentary and the *Hexaëmeron*. He says that Bonaventure "uses the term 'wisdom' in both a subjective and an objective sense, that is, he refers to a quality of the mind in a human subject and also to an object of the mind that, upon sufficient familiarity, brings about the subjective quality" (Cullen, *Bonaventure* 24). While I agree with Cullen's presentation of the subjective sense of wisdom in the *Sentences* commentary, my interpretation of the way the object of the mind produces wisdom according to the *Hexaëmeron* differs somewhat from his.

is part of a larger treatise on grace (dd. 22–36). The thrust of this whole treatise is to answer the question, how are the powers of the soul transformed by grace in terms of both their capacities and the acts proper to them?²³ When Bonaventure treats of wisdom in this context, he simply wants to know what the character of the soul transformed by the gift of wisdom is.²⁴

This kind of treatment invariably ends up emphasizing the highest kind of wisdom as the most proper kind.²⁵ If by “wisdom” we mean a knowledge in which the soul finds rest, we will want to identify the kind of knowledge that fully satisfies the soul’s capacity. By definition, the soul cannot truly find rest in anything less. Bonaventure describes this condition as one of “ecstatic knowledge.”²⁶ The created, and therefore finite, soul cannot comprehend what is infinite, but the infinite object—namely, the infinite truth and goodness that is God—draws the finite soul out of itself and thereby establishes the soul in a relationship to itself in which the soul can find rest.²⁷ Such knowledge is, of course, dependent on grace; nevertheless, it is appropriate to the nature of a rational soul, for, again, “nothing is sufficient for the soul unless it exceeds the soul’s capacity.” Paradoxically, the soul has a capacity, as it were, to be drawn above its capacity.

Where does this leave philosophical wisdom? It would seem that the highest knowledge of natural things is achievable only in this ecstatic experience. Only a mystic, with the highest possible experiential knowledge of God, can be a wise philosopher.²⁸

²³ See *III. Sent.* d. 23, div. text.

²⁴ Thus, for example, the actual question asked with respect to the gift of wisdom is “whether the act of the gift of wisdom is considered to pertain to the knowledge of the true or the love of the good” (*III. Sent.* d. 35, a. un., q. 1).

²⁵ The four types of wisdom delineated in the *Commentary on the Sentences* are said to be called wisdom *communiter*, *minus communiter*, *proprie*, and *magis proprie*, respectively. The last refers to wisdom as the gift of the Holy Spirit. See also *De scientia Christi*, q. 5, where Bonaventure distinguishes between uncreated and created wisdom—the former bearing the name “wisdom” properly, the latter (in whatever forms it exists) analogously; and the epilogue to *De scientia Christi*, where “ecstatic knowledge” is called “true, experiential wisdom.”

²⁶ This is the topic of *De scientia Christi*, qq. 6 and 7.

²⁷ *De scientia Christi*, q. 6. Bonaventure distinguishes sharply between comprehensive knowledge, meaning a complete grasp of an object from every perspective, and ecstatic knowledge, which is not a grasping but a being grasped.

²⁸ This is the way Speer interprets Bonaventure. He argues that philosophical wisdom “exceeds the domain of discursive reason and reaches an immediate insight into that ultimate principle,” which is the highest Truth, the Word of God. He goes on to say, “But this perfect knowledge, which both exceeds the natural capacity of the rational soul and perfects its immanent struggle, can no longer be reckoned a part of knowledge in the strict sense. Bonaventure, therefore, speaks of an *excessus*, an ‘overstepping’ or ‘exceeding’ of knowledge into wisdom. It happens only to a

Yet Bonaventure does not in fact make this claim. He recognizes that there are lesser forms of wisdom, kinds of knowledge in which the soul can find rest, though not ultimate rest.²⁹ Thus, for example, we may speak of the soul's capacity to reach toward the infinite goodness and truth that is God. The soul does not have the capacity to attain it, but it does have the capacity to reach toward it. The fulfillment of this capacity is a genuine kind of wisdom, for it attains a certain kind of rest.³⁰ The theological virtues thus produce in the soul a kind of wisdom—graced to be sure, but short of the ecstatic knowledge that is the perfection of created wisdom.

Having opened the door to lower forms of created wisdom, is Bonaventure willing to speak of a philosophical wisdom? In such discussions, philosophical wisdom, insofar as it is recognized at all, is very much an attenuated concept.³¹ Thus, for example, in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, ecstatic knowledge is called wisdom "more properly," and the state of the soul informed by faith, hope, and love is called wisdom "properly." But the state of the soul that has achieved the highest natural knowledge of things is only wisdom "so-called"; it is not wisdom properly speaking.³² No one can rest in a natural knowledge of things, precisely because each person

few, to the perfected intellects" (Speer, "Certainty and Scope of Knowledge" 52). For an interesting defense of such a construal of the relationship of sanctity and Christian intellectual life (not particularly focused on Bonaventure), see François-Marie Léthel, *Connaître l'amour du Christ qui surpasse toute connaissance: La théologie des saints* (Venasque: Carmel, 1989). The first sentence of the book states the claim boldly: "All saints are theologians, and only saints are theologians" (3).

²⁹ When created wisdom is introduced in *De scientia Christi*, q. 5, there is nothing to suggest that there can be only one form of this wisdom. Rather, there will be as many habits of created wisdom as there are states of the soul wherein there is some kind of conformity to uncreated wisdom (see Zachary Hayes, "Introduction," in Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, intro. and trans. Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. [St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1992] 59–62). The distinction between created and uncreated wisdom occurs throughout the commentary on the *Sentences* as well; see, e.g., *I. Sent.* d. 27, p. 2, a. un, q. 3, ad 1; *III. Sent.* d. 6, dub. 3; *III. Sent.* d. 14, a. 2, q. 3.

³⁰ See *De scientia Christi*, q. 6, ad 17–18.

³¹ In addition to the texts cited above in note 16, see *Brev.* 1.1, "Theology alone is perfect wisdom" (and begins "where philosophical knowledge ceases"). Bonaventure is not here elevating theology to a level previously reserved for the experiential knowledge of God. Rather, he is following out the general approach of the *Breviloquium*, which is to resolve things into their highest causes, and making the point that theology does this much better than philosophy can.

³² See *III. Sent.* d. 35, dub. 1. It may be called wisdom "properly" compared to wisdom in a particular area of natural knowledge but not compared to the wisdom that results from grace.

can see that the truth of those things lies ultimately in God. In fact, to Bonaventure's mind the Christian philosopher has a distinct advantage over the pagan philosopher, who is satisfied with the natural knowledge of things, and by that very fact falls short of true wisdom.³³

The difficulty of positing philosophical wisdom lies squarely in the realm of the debate about Bonaventure's philosophy with which this article began. A resolution of the difficulty—one that has had an enormous impact over the past 30 years—has been offered by Zachary Hayes.³⁴ Hayes notes that, for Bonaventure, the end of philosophy is the knowledge of the exemplary cause of things. The philosopher who is true to his science knows that that is what he is looking for. The philosopher also knows that God contains this exemplary cause, but because he does not know the Trinity, he does not know this cause clearly. The theologian, on the other hand, does know the Trinity. He knows that the second person of the Trinity is the complete self-expression of the Father. Moreover, the second person—whom Bonaventure prefers to identify as the Word—is the principle for any expression of God outside himself, in the finite realm. Said differently, the principle of creation is the Word of God, and this Word is the exemplary cause of all that is.

On this account, philosophical wisdom is nothing more nor less than the knowledge of God's Word as the exemplary cause of things. Philosophy has its proper autonomy of method (i.e., abstraction from sensibles) and *lumen*, but what the philosopher longs to know is in fact knowable only in the light of faith. To some, the achievement of philosophical wisdom might therefore appear to involve an abandonment of philosophy properly speaking. But Hayes would have us note the metaphysical power of Bonaventure's view: namely, created reality is intelligible not in terms of a divine work *ad extra*, but in terms of the law of God's very being. Because God is supremely self-communicative within himself, the world is intelligible. The logic of the Trinity is the explanation of being itself. The Word is the basis for all that is.³⁵

³³ On the possibility of the pagan philosophers approaching wisdom but falling short of it because they do not know revelation, see *Hexaëmeron* 5 (passim, but especially 5.21) and 7.

³⁴ Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics."

³⁵ For example, "what appears as philosophical metaphysics must be held open to further clarification at a level which can appropriately be called theological metaphysics and which—in Bonaventure's theology—is the metaphysical elaboration of the implications of the revelation in Christ" (Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics" 83); "if it is true that the triune God—as one, triune, orderly principle—creates after his image, or after the Word, then it follows that whatever created reality exists possesses in its inner constitution a relation to this uncreated Word, and since the Word is the expression of the inner-trinitarian structure of God, that which is created as an expression of the Word bears the imprint of the Trinity in itself"

Hayes's interpretation of Bonaventure is, so far as it goes, correct. The philosopher knows that philosophical wisdom involves a grasp of the exemplary cause of things, but this wisdom is not achieved until theology supplies its own understanding of the Trinity. Philosophy always longs for a fulfillment that it cannot achieve on its own.

Studies of Bonaventure's thought that have appeared since Hayes made this argument almost 30 years ago have often been content to leave the matter at that.³⁶ The question of philosophical wisdom is thus resolved as follows. There is indeed a philosophical wisdom, in the attenuated sense just described. At the heart of this doctrine of wisdom is an understanding that the real truth, the real meaning of things, lies in the fact that they come from God's desire to communicate himself, from his goodness. Thus one sometimes hears the claim that Bonaventure's "metaphysics of the good" is an alternative to Aquinas's

(*ibid.* 90). For a complementary reading that focuses more on Bonaventure's psychology—namely, relating different forms of human knowing to different potencies of the soul, which can be reduced to the highest potency (*viz.*, the *liberum arbitrium*)—see Francesco Corvino, "Qualche annotazione sulla concezione della 'sapientia' in Bonaventura da Bagnoregio," in *Il concetto di "sapientia"* esp. 82–86.

³⁶ See Zachary Hayes, "Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1994) 39–125; Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City, 2001); Jay Hammond, "Bonaventure," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (2002); Ewert Cousins, "Response to Zachary Hayes," *Journal of Religion* 58 supplement (1978) 97–104. Notable exceptions include Speer, "Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy"; Cullen, *Bonaventure*, chap. 2, "Christian Wisdom."

It is generally recognized that for Bonaventure the highest philosophical knowledge perceives that every creature is an expression of the Trinity. What that means, however, has not been explored sufficiently. Recent discussions of the subject that are in accord with Hayes's analysis interpret this relationship of expression in terms of Bonaventure's doctrine of universal analogy—that is, the idea that every thing in creation bears an imprint of God as vestige, image, or likeness (see esp. J. A. Wayne Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure's Theology*, trans. Jay M. Hammond [St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 2001] esp. chap. 5, "Creation in the Horizontal Order"). This is indeed an important Bonaventuran doctrine, but it will not suffice as an explanation of what is perceived in philosophical wisdom. A vestige points to God as its cause. More specifically, it points to God as its efficient, exemplary, and final causes, and in doing so it reveals God's power, wisdom, and goodness. But to know God's power, wisdom, and goodness is not to know the Trinity, for these are only trinitarian appropriations. Nothing is known in this way that cannot be known simply in the natural light of philosophy. Bonaventure has a somewhat different understanding of what it means to say that a creature is an expression of the Trinity. This idea will emerge in what follows.

“metaphysics of being,”³⁷ with a variety of implications for theology and philosophy.³⁸

At the very least, Bonaventure differs from the Thomistic understanding of the intelligibility of created being in itself and in its being caused by God in that Bonaventure places much greater stress on God’s exemplary causality, and the insufficiency of the strictly philosophical knowledge of that causality, than does Aquinas. At the same time, he appears to agree with the Thomistic distinction between philosophy and theology. However attenuated, philosophical wisdom—the knowledge of the highest causes—is distinct from theological wisdom and, *a fortiori*, mystical wisdom. At the basis of this division is an understanding Bonaventure shares with Aquinas that there are three ways in which God can be considered in relation to the creature: as cause, as revealer, and as object of union. The distinction of *lumines* and formal objects is the same in both thinkers.³⁹

Wisdom and the Object That Informs the Soul

I now turn to the other perspective on wisdom, which comes from the standpoint of the object that informs the soul. It is characteristic of Bonaventure’s realism that the knower is formed by what he knows. This is a commonplace of Scholastic epistemology.⁴⁰ It is also true that Bonaventure has always before him a more dramatic instance of the reception of the form of the object: St. Francis being transformed by his love of the Crucified. Francis was so disposed, in love, to Christ that he was sealed (*sigillatur*) with the impress of the form of the Crucified. As the *Legenda minor* puts it, the saint was so inflamed with the ardor of love that he was softened, like wax, to receive that impress.⁴¹ One may suspect that the normal mode of knowing things and Francis’s reception of the stigmata

³⁷ Hayes, “Christology and Metaphysics” 94; Cousins, “Response to Zachary Hayes”; Ilia Delio, “Bonaventure’s Metaphysics of the Good,” *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 228–46. For a general account of the difficulties to be encountered in attempting to coordinate Bonaventure’s and Aquinas’s accounts of natural knowledge, see Sakaguchi, *Der Begriff der Weisheit* 27–75.

³⁸ For example, Delio claims that this alternative metaphysics should make us look on evolution not as a series of random developments but as a process constantly guided by God’s self-giving love (Delio, “Bonaventure’s Metaphysics of the Good” 246).

³⁹ See, e.g., *Brev.* 4.6.

⁴⁰ Speaking of Scholastic epistemology in general, Hayes says, “In any act of human knowledge, the human soul becomes, as it were, ‘informed’ by the object known. In this sense, the soul becomes ‘like’ the object known; it becomes adapted to its object” (Hayes, “Introduction” 60).

⁴¹ *Legenda minor*, “De stigmatibus sacris,” lect. 2: “it was as if the liquefying power of fire preceded the impression of the seal.”

have little, if anything, to do with each another. However, I would argue that a kind of “in-forming” like that of Francis can be said to happen in the philosophical knowledge of things.

There is one text in particular where Bonaventure, in discussing wisdom, adopts the perspective of the object that informs the soul. It is the second of the collations *On the Six Days of Creation*, where Bonaventure speaks of the form of wisdom. The passage begins as follows: “The form of wisdom is marvelous, and no one looks on her without admiration and ecstasy. . . . This form is marvelous, because in one mode it is uniform, in one mode multiform, in one mode omniform, in one mode nulliform. Thus it clothes itself with a fourfold light. It appears uniform in the rules of the divine law, multiform in the mysteries of the divine Scriptures, omniform in the vestiges of the divine works, and nulliform in the elevations of divine transports.”⁴²

The context of this discussion is important. It is a treatise on creation—the six days of creation and the different kinds of knowledge reflected in each day. At work here is a well-known principle of Bonaventure’s understanding of creation, namely, the doctrine of seminal reasons: forms exist in matter potentially and are brought to actuality when they are educed from matter under the influence of light.⁴³ Every form disposes the matter of the thing to the eduction of a yet higher form. Therefore, the four forms of wisdom presented here are not unrelated to each other. Rather, these are forms that unfold in the human soul, each one rising up from the preceding one, under the influence of the light that is God’s Wisdom. The capacity of the soul—that is, the ability of the soul to be formed—is still an important part of the consideration; however, Bonaventure’s primary focus in the *Hexaëmeron* text is on the object that actualizes that capacity. This understanding of the soul and the object that forms it is the context for judging what is and what is not worthy of the name “wisdom.”

The first form of wisdom is “uniform.” It arises in the soul of every human being because God is always present to the soul in such a way that true knowledge of things is possible.⁴⁴ Bonaventure is here simply restating his conception of the way we know things. One does not need to know the

⁴² *Hexaëmeron* 2.8.

⁴³ See, e.g., Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, trans. Dom Iltyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1940) chap. 9, “Inanimate Bodies. Light”; Cullen, *Bonaventure* 47–48. Other scholars have noted that this doctrine has implications in the spiritual realm: see Kent Emery Jr., “Reading the World Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure’s Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues” *Traditio* 39 (1983) 183–218; Berard Marthaler, O.F.M. Conv., *Original Justice and Sanctifying Grace in the Writings of Saint Bonaventure*, Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Lauream (Rome: Editrice “Miscellanea Francescana,” 1965) 45–47.

⁴⁴ See above, n. 17.

interior love-relationship of the Trinity to know that a tree is a tree. The pagan philosopher can know that a tree is a tree because he is made in the image of God, and therefore is guided, all unaware, by God's knowledge of the tree.

There is nothing new in Bonaventure's treatment of philosophy here. But it is striking that he names this state of the soul as a type of wisdom, without the sort of qualification added in, for example, the text from book 3 of the *Sentences* commentary—namely, that it is only so-called wisdom. The difference comes from the context. Bonaventure is not asking whether one can rest in this knowledge. The important point for him is that the soul is formed in this way by divine Wisdom. This formation is also the basis for any further development in wisdom.⁴⁵ Uniform wisdom does not fully satisfy what we are looking for in philosophical wisdom, but it is, in Bonaventure's eyes, a real form of wisdom.

The highest form of philosophical wisdom, in this schema, is omniform wisdom. This is wisdom as it shines forth in every created thing. To the person informed by this wisdom, Bonaventure says, "the whole world is like a single mirror, full of luminaries that stand before divine Wisdom, shedding light as would live coals."⁴⁶ We have here the return of a great Bonaventurean theme: the world as a book in which the Creator may be read.⁴⁷ But the way Bonaventure describes this wisdom presents an important variation on the theme.

Bonaventure's customary account of this "book of the world" runs as follows.⁴⁸ Every created thing points to God, and the way it does so depends on the kind of thing it is. An intellectual soul, transformed by grace, points to God because it has been made like God through grace. When we get down to the common created things of the world, they point to God in a more distant way. In knowing them, we know that God is their cause. Bonaventure always describes this in a kind of Trinitarian way; thus, any created thing points to the power, wisdom, and goodness of its cause. But he is careful not to push this too far. When I know the tree, I see something of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God; but I do not really know the Trinity.

⁴⁵ Bonaventure says that being mistaken about this kind of wisdom "weakens the fountain of wisdom" (*Hex.* 2.10). See *De septem donis Spiritus Sancti* 4.12: "philosophical science is the way to the other sciences."

⁴⁶ *Hex.* 2.27.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., *Brev.* 2.12; *Hex.* 12.14.

⁴⁸ Every creature is related to God as vestige, image, or likeness. See *De scientia Christi*, q. 4: "In so far as [a creature] is a vestige, it is related to God as to its principle. In so far as it is an image, it is related to God as to its object. But in so far as it is a likeness, it is related to God as to an infused gift." See also, e.g., *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 1.11; *I. Sent.* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 2.

The description of omniform wisdom in Bonaventure's *Hexaëmeron*, however, claims that every substance, as substance, reveals the mystery of the Trinity. Specifically, it reveals the trinitarian relations: the Father as source, the Son as image, and the Holy Spirit as the bond between the two.⁴⁹ Bonaventure is not claiming that any person whatever, in knowing a substance, sees the mystery of the Trinity. Omniform wisdom clearly depends on the transformation of the person by grace.⁵⁰ But that is not really the point. The turn to the object is critical. Bonaventure is talking about the wisdom that is available to us through created things. The fact is that God, in creating a thing, leaves an impression of himself, in his full, trinitarian reality, within it. That impression shines forth from the thing and will in turn impress itself on the soul that perceives it, provided that the soul has been transformed in such a way that it is capable of receiving that impress. Every substance literally bears the imprint of the Trinity: the Word expresses himself in substances and through them provides a light that forms the intellect of the one who perceives them.

The possibility of this kind of wisdom—and its distinction from wisdom described in terms of the soul's capacity—appears earlier, in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. There are two kinds of arguments in books 1–6 of the *Itinerarium*: one kind sees God *through* what is below the soul, the soul itself, or above the soul; the other kind sees God *in* the same. The logic that runs through the arguments that see God *through* is based on a consideration of the capacity of the knower faced with an object. Things that are below the soul are “vestiges,” revealing God as their cause; thus, when faced with a vestige, we consider it (*Itin.* 1) in terms of the capacity of the soul to apprehend this causal relationship—for example, we rise from the knowledge of the vestiges “to the knowledge of the immense power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator.”⁵¹ When faced with the soul, which,

⁴⁹ The idea occurs a couple of times in the text; most clearly: “Every created substance has matter, form, and composition: the original principle or foundation, the formal complement, and the bond. It has substantial existence, power, and operation. And in these the mystery of the Trinity is represented: the Father as the origin, the Son as the image, and the Holy Spirit as the bond” (*Hex.* 2.23). See *Hex.* 2.26: “Another trace of this Wisdom is found in substance, power, and operation, since power depends upon substance, and operation upon both substance and power.” Earlier, in the *Sentences* commentary, Bonaventure provides a list of six different triads that form the creature: e.g., measure, number, and weight; mode, species, and order; unity, truth, and goodness (*I. Sent.* d. 3, p. 1, dub. 3). Matter, form, and composition, on the one hand, and substance, power, and operation, on the other, both appear here; but neither of these triads, nor any of the other ones enumerated, are understood to express the trinitarian relations.

⁵⁰ I.e., because it follows from multiform wisdom, which is the state of the soul infused by the theological virtues.

⁵¹ *Itin.* 1.11.

created in the image of God, reveals God as its object, the intellect considers it (*Itin.* 3) in terms of the capacity of the soul to have God as its object (thus, how memory, intellect, and will are related to God). The logic that runs through the arguments that see God *in* is different; I would call it a “logic of sensation.” Here, the argument turns not on the soul’s capacity, but on how the soul is formed by what it knows. Thus, we consider the vestiges of God (*Itin.* 2) as manifesting the expressive exemplar that impresses himself on all he creates. We consider the soul, the image of God (*Itin.* 4), in terms of the object—namely, Christ—in relation to which the soul can truly be said to know God. I call this a logic of sensation because, when Bonaventure begins this trajectory in the *Itinerarium*, he lays out his understanding of sensation: an experience of apprehension, delight, and judgment that begins with the object, which generates a similitude of itself that the knower receives and is formed by. One can trace the same pattern through the rest of this trajectory as well.⁵² This knowing “in” makes available a deeper knowledge than does the knowing “through.” In *Itinerarium* 1, one comes to a knowledge of the trinitarian appropriations; in *Itinerarium* 2, one achieves a knowledge of the trinitarian relations.⁵³

In this view, one may unqualifiedly advert to the existence of philosophical wisdom. Indeed, there are two forms of it: uniform wisdom, which arises from God’s natural presence to the soul, and omniform wisdom, which arises from the natural manifestation of the truth of things, though this latter is possible only to the one who has been attuned, by grace, to that manifestation. At the heart of this understanding of wisdom is the reality of expressive form—God expressing himself in the creature, and the creature expressing that reality in such a way as to form the soul.

COMPARISON OF AQUINAS AND BONAVENTURE

The Difference

At the heart of philosophical wisdom for Aquinas is *esse commune*. He is content to describe the highest attainment of philosophy in terms of an apprehension of the intelligibility of created being in itself. That is, one might say, one of the great triumphs of Aquinas: attention to the natural

⁵² For a development of this argument, see LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom* 97–116.

⁵³ Yet another example of Bonaventure’s evocation of this kind of wisdom is in question 7 of *De scientia Christi*, where he distinguishes between the relation of created wisdom and the Word as creative exemplar on the one hand and created wisdom and the Word as expressive exemplar on the other. See LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom* 150–51.

intelligibility of things in themselves. This does not mean that the Thomistic philosopher ought to be content blithely to remain in philosophy.⁵⁴ But Aquinas wants to know things by contemplating them, opening himself up to the nobility of every thing in its own terms. Utterly foreign to Aquinas's approach is the attempt to impose an extrinsic meaning on things. This is why some of Bonaventure's formulations sound, at best, like mere pious thoughts to Thomist ears. For example, Bonaventure contends that the color red is the noblest color, because it is the color of our Lord's passion.⁵⁵ To the Thomist, such an idea *may* have some use as an aid to devotion, but it is not a serious argument about the nature of the color red.

Some of Bonaventure's claims do smack of the devotional rather than the truly argumentative. The same may be said in general of the Scholastic argument *ex convenientia*.⁵⁶ But it is equally true that a closer look at many such arguments reveals their deeper logic.

The topic of philosophical wisdom is a fine example. Bonaventure's various descriptions of it will undoubtedly strike some readers as displaying a confusion between philosophy and theology. On one level, this is a fair charge, but at a deeper level the logic becomes apparent. In Bonaventure's view, the world is full of expressions of God, representations of the Trinity. To contemplate a thing is to see how God is expressed in it, and to submit oneself humbly to that expression. The philosophical task by its nature involves a transformation of the soul, opening up its sense for the real meaning of things.

In sum, Aquinas roots philosophical wisdom in the intelligibility of being as created by God. For Bonaventure, at the heart of philosophical wisdom is God's self-expressive presence in things. Because the natural light of reason is insufficient to see this presence (though reason does point us in

⁵⁴ See above, note 13.

⁵⁵ Bonaventure, *Dominica XXII post Pentecostem, Sermo VI*, pars 2; see Emma Jane Marie Spargo, *The Category of the Aesthetic in the Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1953) 61.

⁵⁶ For Bonaventure, there are legitimate arguments based in what will best foster a devotional impulse, but these should be distinguished from both arguments *ex convenientia*—which aim at the real intelligibility of the object, albeit in a non-necessary way—and arguments *ex pietate*. The last make judgments based on an understanding of what is in greater accord with the object of theology. Thus, for example, Bonaventure argues *ex pietate* that the principal reason of the incarnation was the redemption of mankind from sin, rather than the perfection of creation. "God derives more glory from a redemptive Incarnation than from one that would bring creation to completion. St. Bonaventure does not refer to an accidental glory accruing to God from the devotion that such a doctrine may occasion, but to the essential glory which is part of God's situation relatively to the world. Christ is not in creation like a perfecting element, since, as a Person, he towers high above all creaturely perfection" (Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence* 204).

the right direction), there is really no such thing as philosophical wisdom, if by this one means a capacity in the soul to rest in the natural knowledge of things. But that divine presence really is in things, and shines through them at their substantial level itself. To be open to this divine expressivity requires grace, but it is an openness to what things really are, and therefore merits the name of philosophical wisdom. Different views of the relationship between creation and God determine these different views of the possibility of philosophical wisdom.

Points of Discussion: Philosophical

The difference identified here has ramifications on both the theological and philosophical levels. The aforementioned debate regarding nature and grace has produced a vast amount of literature even in recent years. It is hardly possible that Bonaventure's theology would provide a resolution that would satisfy all the disputants. Yet in my analysis of philosophical wisdom we can see the formulation of an answer that is worth taking seriously. So long as one is looking at human nature as a stable form with a proper object—that is, so long as one is attending to the capacity of the soul—one is left with a conundrum: human nature can be satisfied only by what exceeds it precisely as nature. No resolution to the dilemma will be found in a redescription of the form that is the human soul. But if one looks instead to the formation of the soul by the object to which it is in relation, one can say that the question of nature and grace must be asked in the light of God's presence to creation: a natural presence that is perceptible only through a transformation of the perceiver's intellect by grace.

Against those who would collapse nature into grace, Bonaventure's concept of nature is that of a stable form with a proper, created end. Against those who would conceive of a natural end that would satisfy man as created, Bonaventure offers a picture of the created world that not only points to but also expresses the trinitarian reality of God. Some of the tools Bonaventure uses to describe this doctrine—that is, God's causality, especially his exemplary causality, and the expression of his power and presence in creation—are well known from Aquinas. The philosophical question that remains is precisely whether Thomists understand these doctrines differently from Bonaventure.

On the other hand, it is surely fair to ask more pointedly why Bonaventure does not simply accept the Thomistic account whereby philosophical wisdom arises from the intelligibility of created being. What role does *esse commune* hold in Bonaventure's thought? On the questions of nature and grace, Bonaventure and the Thomists ask the same questions; a dialogue between the two positions ought to be revealing.

Points of Discussion: Theological

There is another consequence of this debate that concerns the very nature of theology. In an age that has reacted very negatively against what it regards as the hyperrationality of neo-Scholastic discourse, it is not unusual to hear the exhortation that theology must be sapiential, that it must be oriented toward wisdom.⁵⁷ Bonaventure and Aquinas would agree. But what is a sapiential theology?

For the Thomist, theological wisdom is the perfection of the knowledge of God as he has revealed himself, and the knowledge of creatures as they are related to God so known. Clearly it depends on the transformation of the theologian by grace. It is impossible to have theological wisdom unless faith and charity, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well, are operative in the theologian. And while it respects the proper autonomy of the philosophical sciences, it stands over them, judging their principles.⁵⁸ Thomistic theology will always want to do justice to the reality of the thing known, from a blade of grass to the humanity of Christ to the Trinity itself. Yet what the theologian knows because of God's revelation will fine-tune his judgment of the adequacy of various natural approaches to created things.

For Bonaventure too, theological wisdom is based in God's self-revelation, and provides a window onto the meaning of created things. Yet there is obviously a greater sense in his thought of the transformation of one's knowledge of created things. This is not fine-tuning; it is an opening to a previously unimaginable depth of meaning in things.⁵⁹ Theological wisdom in Bonaventure's view is inseparable from a deeper sense of the way in which things express God, and the transformation of the soul that allows this expression to be perceived.

Here I turn to a comparison of Bonaventure and Aquinas, rather than Bonaventure and Thomism, for the personal element in the pursuit of theology is important. It is no accident that Francis plays such a significant role in Bonaventure's thought. This saint, who so perfectly allowed the form of Christ to be expressed in his very flesh, becomes for Bonaventure both a locus of theology and a paradigm for the theologian. It would be worthwhile to examine how Bonaventure and Aquinas understand their own transformation in grace to affect their theology. The *Hexaëmeron* is,

⁵⁷ For example, "the goal of theology is also wisdom. . . . To see theology as the way to wisdom again confirms that theology is the perfect science. . . . Wisdom is not dry speculation. It is the experience of love: 'which is knowledge through true experience'" (Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order* 25, 188, quoting Bonaventure, *De triplici via* 1.18).

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 6.

⁵⁹ See *Hex.* 13.2, where Bonaventure speaks of the "infinite number of interpretations" that may be drawn from the Scriptures.

significantly, Bonaventure's last major work (1273). When he wrote the *Commentary on the Sentences*, 20 and more years earlier, he saw the need for grace in theology—and not only faith, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well.⁶⁰ In the mid-career writings of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (1259) and the *Legenda maior* (1263), the figure of Francis emerges as normative for theology in various ways; at least we can say that there are things apparent to this holiest of saints that guide Bonaventure's own reflections.⁶¹ I have suggested that the notion of God's self-expression in creatures is best known to Bonaventure through the experience and example of Francis. But by the time he wrote the *Hexaëmeron*, he knew the truth of this self-expression so well that he no longer had to refer to Francis's experience. One might argue that what was self-evident to *Francis* became, through Bonaventure's own holiness, self-evident to *him*. In tracking the course of Bonaventure's writings, we therefore see that there is both a continuity of principles and a deepening appreciation of what those principles mean. It is worth investigating in what way the Angelic Doctor's life and thought present a similar trajectory.

We touch here the difference between scientific theology and sapiential theology. When we speak of scientific theology, we tend to try to describe how the claims of theology can appeal to every rational mind. When we speak of sapiential theology, our attention is turned rather to an understanding of the things of faith that is inseparable from our living, personal adherence to them. Bonaventure and Aquinas do not avoid the first task, but they exemplify the second. We, at the very least, ought to see the desirability of a dialogue between them.

⁶⁰ See *I. Sent.* prol., q. 2, ad 5: Bonaventure justifies a rational mode of proceeding in theology because, though the things of faith are above acquired reason, they are not above reason elevated by faith and the gifts of knowledge and understanding. He makes the same argument in a discussion of the meaning of "reasonableness" as it relates to the virtue of faith: faith is perfectly reasonable if "reasonable" means being consonant with reason elevated and illuminated by the light of supernatural Truth (*III. Sent.* d. 23, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4).

⁶¹ See LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom* 124–41, 186–91.