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The Most Reverend John Nienstedt
226 Summit Avenue

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Dear Archbishop Nienstedt:

Attempting to understand current controversy, I have, for the first time, forayed through the conservative Catholic blogosphere, and found myself mired in a swamp of virtually Dantesque infernality.

How many living now, chancellors of wrath,
shall come to lie here yet in this pigmire,
leaving a curse to be their aftermath! (Canto VIII, 46-48)

And

Like a whirling windmill seen afar at twilight
or when a mist has risen from the ground –
just such an engine rose upon my sight
Stirring up such a wild and bitter wind

I cowered for shelter. . . (Canto XXXIV, 4-8)¹

You are much admired there.

I do not share the sentiment, due to the manner in which you have invested in the new 3M.² By “manner,” I specifically mean the following:

- ◆ While rightfully insisting on your right to speech, commanding silence of others (the Golden Rule overruled);
- ◆ Enforcing that command with thuggish threats (‘Thou art a priest forever’ – *unless* thou pisseth off the Archbishop!);
- ◆ Impugning the motives of those who disagree with you;
- ◆ Maintaining a veil of secrecy over the funding of your campaign; and
- ◆ Reducing the liturgy to a stage for a theatrical revival of *Culture Wars: The Archdiocese Strikes (Back?)*.

What you are doing may be reasonable, perhaps even a responsibility of the office you hold, as you understand it. *How* you are doing it is appalling.

¹ Dante, *The Inferno*, trans. John Ciardi (New York: New American Library, 1954), pp. 81 and 283.

² Minnesota Marriage Mess.

Lest there be any doubt, I love the Church and believe her to be humankind's last, best hope in these, as all, dark times. It is in the radiant light of that ecclesial love that I look upon your current doings, only to recall the medieval maxim, *corruptio optimi pessima*. I find you to be a cause of scandal, and since I have neither millstone, nor access to your neck (cf. Mt 18.6), the following six simple insistences must suffice: (i) insisting that, in point of fact, we are dealing with a disputed question; (ii) insisting on the limits, as well as the breathtaking beauty, of John Paul II's theology of the body; (iii) insisting that some natural law thinking simply isn't natural, is, in fact, highly *unnatural*; (iv) insisting on the centrality of analogy to a properly Catholic consideration of this, as any, question; (v) insisting that this question has to do, most proximately, with the virtue of prudence, not faith; and (vi) insisting on the crucial difference between authority, on the one hand, and naked power, on the other – easily confused, yet distinct from each other as Heaven is from Hell.

In the first instance, the question is, in point of fact, disputed. As a clarification by contrast, I consider the lamest language in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* to be the following five words, "There can be no doubt. . ." ³ The sentence continues, ". . . of the moral judgment made there [Gen 19.1-11] against homosexual relations."

Of course, there *can* be such doubt, *should be* such doubt, *is* such doubt. The congregations's assertion simply is not true, and its having said it does not change that fact. Assertion is not demonstration, and no demonstration is even attempted. The question is not answered, precisely because it is never asked. Once one approaches the text with a question, rather than a presumption, it seems at least highly probable that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah does not pertain to homosexual relations at all; this can be established on three very traditional grounds.

First, the integrity of the canon. There are numerous biblical texts which clearly pertain to same-sex relations,⁴ but one reads them all and finds nary a nod to Sod. Conversely, there are numerous references to Sodom throughout both testaments. Some are simply statements of the place name, but of even those with referential content,⁵ none pertain to same-sex relations. The closest, indeed the only sexual reference at all, is Jude v. 7, and both the immediately preceding and succeeding verses make it abundantly clear that the concern here is sex with angels. I mean, Hey, Jude!

³ *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, number 6.

⁴ Lev 18.22; 20.13; Rom 1.26-27; 1 Cor 6.9-10; 1 Tim 1.9-10.

⁵ Dt 29.22f; 32.32; Wis 10.6; Is 1.9f; 3.9; 13.19; Jer 23.14; 49.18; 50.40; Lam 4.6; Ezek 16.46-56; Amos 4.11; Zeph 2.9; Mt 10.15; 11.22-24; Mk 6.11; Lk 10.12; 17.29; 2 Pet 2.6; Jude 7; Rev 11.8.

Second, Dominical interpretation. Jesus explicitly referred⁶ to the narrative of Genesis 19, and his manifest concern is with the inhospitable behavior manifest there. I'm not sure there's any text in our Testament where the Lord's interpretation of a text from the Jewish Testament is more clear.

Third, plain philology. At issue is *yādhà* (to know). My single semester of under-graduate Hebrew studies clearly provides no competence here, but even I can consult a Hebrew concordance.⁷ The word occurs 941 other times,⁸ of which 11 carry a sexual connotation. Not a single one of the 11 pertains to same-sex relations.

None of which is to say that the congregation's interpretation of Genesis 19 is wrong. Maybe Jesus missed the meaning, as did every inspired author. Maybe *yādhà* is used 930 times to mean one thing, 11 times to mean something else, and this one time to mean yet something else. Stranger things have happened. But "there can be no doubt"?

The curious curial interpretation seems to have entered the tradition through Philo, who, being Greek, clearly knew a thing or two about Man-Boy love associations. The word "sodomy" entered the lexicon, and having done so proceeded to do what language does, shape consciousness – from the patristic era through our own. Even my beloved Bard of Hibbing fell under its spell:

You're going to Sodom and Gomorrah
but what do you care? Ain't nobody there
would want to marry your sister.⁹

And so my concern is not with the simple fact that Rome might have gotten the interpretation wrong. Look, if Dylan can see it that way, then surely other authorities can, too. It's the "There can be no doubt..." part of the assertion that troubles me. The process of learning, as Fr. Lonergan often insisted, is self-correcting.¹⁰ But the possibility of correction ceases when one is not open to further relevant questions. Questioning is the 'operator' of the desire to know, and we often fail to ask questions precisely because we do not *want* to know. What did

6 Mt 10.11-15.

7 F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

8 I exclude Judges 19.22 from this count, as this narrative is clearly modeled on the Sodom story, involves the same ambiguity, and therefore adds no clarification, one way or the other.

9 Bob Dylan, "Jokerman," *Lyrics 1962-1985* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p. 471.

10 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Volume 3 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 197-198, 311-312, 314-316, 325, 328-329, 370, 728. *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 159-160, 208-209, 303.

Cardinal Newman say about creeping infallibilism? This, I think, is precisely why he said it. There may well be a dictatorship of relativism, but there is also a dictatorship of absolutism; the former may at least possess openness to insight that the latter lacks. Still, better to avoid dictatorships altogether, and the congregation's language, to me, sounds like a *diktat*.

Truth has nothing to fear from questions. Concerning the issue at hand, for example, I think Derrick Sherwin Bailey's work of some half a century ago¹¹ can function -- indeed, *has* functioned -- in a manner analogous to Abelard's *Sic et Non* in the medieval context, introducing dialectic into theology. Abelard made the entire scholastic enterprise possible,

simply by marshalling texts in a way that made it possible to ask questions -- not simply about the texts, but about their real referents as well.¹² As then, so now, our Bernardian brethren aren't particularly pleased; things evidently seem(ed) much clearer in Clairvaux. But the problematic texts remained, the questions emerged, and the self-constitution of the Church developed.

Bailey assembled similarly problematic texts, as well as pointing out similarly problematic silences. His is an irenic work, without rancor, and all the more powerful for that fact. The tradition is much shallower, and wider, than had previously seemed to be the case, with subterranean currents, eddies, even waterfalls left off the official maps, impeding many a pilgrim's progress. Forbidden love had flowed rather widely and freely, his more detailed map showed, and others began to make the journey themselves, going beyond the biblical, theological, and legal texts explored by Bailey, into the territory of literature and letter, diary and song. Thus, the more expansive research of John Boswell,¹³ and even he never got around to a careful reading of the tale of Chaucer's Pardoner; that, and many more explorations, have been made by others.¹⁴ So the tension of texts is there, a discovery of dialectic in need of resolution. Pretending it isn't there resolves nothing.

I haven't belabored this material in order to be pedantic; in fact, just the opposite. I have only the most minimal skills of scholarship, and almost equally minimal resources with which to work. My point is that you don't have to look very far to find reasonable room for doubt, but you do have to look. A little over three decades ago I read a short article by Fr. David Burrell,¹⁵ in which he distinguished between two types of questions: (1) those for which an answer could be found by

11 Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality in the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green, 1955).

12 Cf. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (cf. n. 10 *supra*), p. 279.

13 John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

14 Monica E. McAlpine, "The Pardoner's Homosexuality and How It Matters," *PMLA* 95/1 (January 1980), pp. 8-22.

15 David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "How Can I Be Right?," *National Catholic Reporter* (January 28, 1977), p. 15.

looking it up, and (2) those which required a thoroughgoing and recurrent process of inquiry, insight, reflection, and judgment to approach resolution. No small amount of mischief arises from failing to distinguish the two. In the considerations above, I've been engaged in the first type of question. To establish that there *can* be doubt about the meaning of Genesis 19, all I had to do was open a Concordance and a Bible on the library table at which I sat, go back and forth from the one to the other, and the answer emerged, a bit tediously, but fruitfully. But what does it all mean, for gay friends, and gay 'strangers at the gate'? What does it all mean for their experience of love and loneliness, of fulfillment and failure, of hope, despair, anger, peace – in short, sin and grace? That's another type of question altogether. What foolishness to think you can get an 'answer' to that question by looking it up – whether in Genesis, Leviticus, and Romans, or in *Humani Generis* and *Veritatis Splendor*, or in the assembled sayings of the Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Look in those places, by all means. I have. I do. I will. But no answer to this kind of question will come as it did at my library table. That answer was helpful, but only to lead to the real questions that remain.

These are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, discipline, thought and action.¹⁶

The early Abelard set about marshalling texts, the later Abelard – prayer, discipline, thought and action, indeed! -- to a highly original, constructive theology which emphasized the love of God, manifest in the human Jesus, who suffered with and had compassion for flesh-and-blood human beings. The pivot from one to the other, of course, had a name, and we can take some hints from Heloise, who surely knew something of the experience of forbidden love, and its power to last life-long. Rosemary Haughton gleans these:

Through their strange and tragic experience of love the whole Christian feeling about the nature of human love was enhanced, made more strange, more sensitive, more problematic.¹⁷

... this strange, illicit, and disastrous love, in its destruction produced acute and courageous reflection on the nature of human love, of marriage, of the relation between divine and human love. The exchanges between the anguished minds of the parted lovers refined and hammered out new insights.¹⁸

Her contribution to the Catholic enterprise was to pin down remorselessly certain moral paradoxes displayed in her own life.¹⁹

16 T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," *Four Quartets* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 44.

17 Rosemary Haughton, *The Catholic Thing* (Springfield IL: Templegate Publishers, 1979), p. 33.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

In the intervening centuries there have been other anguished minds reflecting on tragic experience, attending to moral paradox, and hammering out new insights; there are such in our day. And like those raised by troubling texts, their existential questions will not go away. These questions, as the saying goes, may be queer, but they're here, and they won't be long suppressed. Ours, sadly, seems a time of competing certainties, conservative and liberal (manifest in their 'periodical' correctness – *First Things* v. *The Nation*). Each 'side' seems to have favorite sources where you can look answers up; neither seems particularly anguished by moral paradox, neither moving us very far toward understanding, because each considers the questions already answered. They aren't.

The fundamental question *is* disputed. So the only fruitful way forward is through the "acute and courageous reflection" of *disputatio*, and you don't get that by telling people to shut up.

In the second instance, John Paul's 'theology of the body' is often made to carry a weight it cannot bear. I shared the widespread curiosity, first, and then enthusiasm with which reports of the late Holy Father's early allocutions were greeted. Having inquired as to how one could read them *in toto*, late in 1979 I subscribed to the English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*. I had no idea there was such a thing; not a lot of copies came to the zip code where I lived on the far reaches of the Dakota Prairie. Browsing the rest of the first few issues, I understood why. The remainder of the articles had this in common with Italian wines – they didn't export well. But the allocutions themselves were fine wine, indeed. I read them avidly, and took copious notes. Who could have imagined a papal phenomenology of nakedness? He wasn't yet John Paul the Great, but he was clearly well on his way.

I mention this background only to assure you that I am not dismissive of what I continue to regard as the "permanently valid" achievement²⁰ of Pope John Paul's reflections. In fact, when last year's legislature placed this measure on the ballot, and I determined that I should, and would, spend the next year or so thinking and re-thinking about such things, this was where I began. Ah, the terror of aging, in which 'thinking about sex' means dusting off decades-old notes about a set of papal allocutions! However pathetic that thought, a dual encounter ensued, both with the mind of the pope and with the mind of a (chronologically) younger self.

This re-reading still found me saying "Wow!" quite regularly, as my notes made clear that I had long ago. But I also found myself nodding in agreement with three quibbling questions which I had jotted down way back then and way out there. A few new questions emerged, as well.

20 I take the notion of permanent validity from Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, Volume 17 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 405.

The 'Wow!'s pertain to the pope's powerful phenomenological perceptions of the meaning of "original experience" of human sexual differentiation as referring to "not so much their distance in time, as rather their basic significance," experiences that are "so intermingled with the ordinary things of life that we do not generally notice their extraordinary character."²¹ These reflections evoked powerful personal reflections on the experienced reality of solitude, communion, shame, innocence, nakedness, fear, gift-giving and -receiving. They enabled a reading of Genesis which allowed the sparse narrative to help us tell our lives as a story that is both ours and God's – the inspired text providing the direction of the story, with the actual details literally 'fleshed out' by the concrete contours of the reader's own life.

Only in retrospect do I notice that my reading of the sacred text was Ignatian, rather than Husserlian. I could never have stated it this way at the time, but it's clear that I was engaged in 'composition of place' and 'application of the senses,' in an attempt to 'discern' the movement of 'spirits' in my "unique and unrepeatable"²² life, and expected that others who came to the Garden through John Paul's insights would engage in similarly "unique and unrepeatable" readings. There seemed a solitude shared by all, yet uniquely shaped in each and all. So, too, communion, a call to all, yet each communing "unique and unrepeatable." In the papal pointing toward "subjectivity,"²³ I saw an invitation to engage in reflection on sexual *spirituality*, more basic and profound than the sexual *morality* into which our tradition seemed to have hardened. This, I see in retrospect, was something of a mistaken reading, yet, *felix culpa!*, a mistake that opens to possibilities for personal discernment more spiritually shattering than much of the theology to which the allocutions have subsequently given rise.

A final 'Wow!' stunned me – Pope John Paul's reflections on the man's delight in his first glimpse of the woman seemed to stem from a man who knew the experience, who himself found delight in the company of women (unless, as we later discovered, they happened to be uppity nuns). My notes refer to a translation of the text from a commentary I consulted at the time, the source of which I did not note and cannot now remember, which suggested that the sense of the verse could be best rendered by placing a colloquial "Aha!" at the beginning of the text: "Aha! This, at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." There was a suggestion of joyousness in this that seemed apt to the pope's own phenomenological insight, and which seemed suggestive of a spirituality more attuned to the reality of

21 I will give page references to the first Daughters of St. Paul edition, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston, 1981). This reference, p. 85. Somewhere and sometime in the course of the many moves that have transpired between then and now, I've lost my old copies of *L'Osservatore Romano*. I've also lost my original LP of *Blonde on Blonde*, probably in the same move. "Bummer!" to both.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

experience than was most moral theology, in which “Aha!”s were few and far between.

At the time, though, I also had a few stumbling reservations about what I was reading. My first discordant note pertained to the allocution of September 26, 1979. In paragraph 3, John Paul cites Romans 8.23:

. . . we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for. . . the redemption of our bodies.

Yet later in the same paragraph, referring back to this citation, using quotation marks and all, he writes “redemption of the body.”²⁴ My notes reflect both puzzlement and concern:

“our bodies”→“the body” ???!!!

This didn’t/doesn’t seem to be merely a matter of translation or typography. There seem to be quite significantly different connotations between the Pauline and the John-Pauline language.

The second of my original questions pertained to the allocution of October 10, 1979, concerning “the fundamental anthropological problem” of aloneness (paragraph 3):

This problem is prior not so much in the chronological sense, as in the existential sense: it is prior by its very nature.²⁵

Then, in paragraph 5, he explicates the meaning of “its very nature:”

. . . the fact of not being able to identify himself essentially with the visible world of other living beings (*animalia*) has, at the same time, a positive aspect for this primary search. Even if this fact is not yet a complete definition, it constitutes, however, one of its elements. If we accept the Aristotelian tradition in logic and in anthropology, it would be necessary to define this element as the “proximate genus” (*genus proximum*).²⁶

My notes are again cryptic, but, I think, clear:

existential sense? Wouldn’t Camus, Marcel call this essential sense? Very nature / complete definition / Aristotelian anthropology – Opposite of existential. Isn’t it?

Camus was a constant companion at the time, *The Plague* being a touchstone to which I still frequently return. Marcel was a newer interest, courtesy of Walker Percy. I sensed that part of the promise of the pope’s reflections involved engagement with such thinking. Adam and Eve, to be sure, were really married. But was the pope really engaged?

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Thirdly, on to March 12, 1980. Five months, and not a noted quibble! Then John Paul wrote:

The man, on the other hand, is the one who – after the sin – was the first to feel the shame of his nakedness. . . .²⁷

I jotted:

sin—► shame / or / shame►sin

Wasn't shame why they ate the fruit? After, came fear.

Shame begets sin begets fear. I was just a pipsqueak kid, but I think I had that right. I think that's how the Yahwist saw it, and said it.

Then the Holy Father did some traveling, headed to Castel Gandolfo, and I didn't tune in for Season Two. I caught a few episodes here and there, and have watched a few re-runs over the years, but only last year did I return to the whole thing, and also, for the first time, caught a few of the spin-off series which have since proliferated. A few new quibblings emerged, which, with the preceding, coalesce into a foundational question of method.

I noted, for the first time, John Paul's highly original (perhaps even idiosyncratic) use of a particular 'school' of interpretation, manifest in his references to Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung.²⁸ It is interesting (to me, at least) that I had not noted this on first reading. I was much taken at the time with Eliade's insistence that "only the paradigmatic is the real," and with the related notion that the Sacred is encountered by means of "repetition."²⁹ I had not yet done any serious reading of Jung, but was nevertheless somewhat under the spell of his insistence on the primacy of the archetypal. All these years later, I wonder about the implicit Idealism of their methods, especially in John Paul's usage. How to square the "unique and unrepeatable" experience of each human person with the insistence on repetition, eternal return, and collective unconscious?

Secondly, I was struck by John Paul's positing of ". . . a typically human intuition of the meaning of one's own body."³⁰ It seems to me that 'intuition' is epistemologically suspect. We know the real through judgment, not intuition.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 154-155.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32 and pp. 159-161, respectively. I have no illusion that my reading of these seminal thinkers has anywhere near the depth or breadth of John Paul's reading. Still, it is clear to me that he comes to conclusions on the basis of their work that they would not have shared. Sexual orientation, for Eliade, would have been a profane matter, and a person of any orientation could certainly 'live in the Sacred.' In fact, the social 'otherness' of a gay person could very well dispose to possession of/by shamanic power. As for Jung, he explicitly posited a positive interpretation of homosexuality. "Often he is endowed with a wealth of religious feelings, which help him to bring the *ecclesia spiritualis* into reality, and a spiritual receptivity which makes him responsive to revelation." *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Volume 9, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Pantheon, 1959), p. 87.

²⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper, 1961), pp. 20-29, 95-113. Here, too, I am convinced that Eliade's notion of 'repetition' involves greater openness to a wide range of creative possibilities than seems true of John Paul's use of the notion.

Phantasms form to make a whole of the dizzying blur of experience, enabling insights which answer the Aristotelian/Thomist question, *what* is it? (*quid est?*), but insights – as Fr. Lonergan noted too often to attempt references – ‘are a dime a dozen, and most of them are wrong!’ Insight into phantasm needs to give rise to the question, *is* it so? (*an sit?*), before reality can be grasped in true *judgment*. Reliance on intuition involves short-circuiting the process of knowing; it involves a resting at the level of insight, without the arduous reflection of asking further relevant questions. But only by allowing those questions to emerge, only through verification – ‘weighing’ the ‘evidence’ – in response to those questions, do we come to know reality. And here, I think, the Holy Father got it exactly backwards. He insists on “purely anthropological verification.”³¹ He posits an intuition of truth, against which he proceeds to evaluate experience, rather than allowing experience to be the data from which one moves to evaluate the intuition/insight.

Perhaps it was the difference between being a phenomenologist (a) in the professor’s chair, and (b) in the Chair of St. Peter. No one raised their hands to ask questions at the Wednesday allocutions. There had never before been such a thing as a Petrine phenomen-ologist. What to make of it? And it wasn’t long before a dual response seemed to emerge: enthusiastic affirmation, on the one hand, and a reciprocally enthusiastic negation, on the other – equally, it seems to me, without sufficient reflection.

The need for such reflection gets back to the first question which occurred to me thirty-two years ago. Are the pope’s insights true of every-body? Of ‘our bodies’? Or just of ‘the body’? Is there some Platonic ideal of the paradigmatic, archetypal body, intuited by the late Holy Father, against which we are to measure our very selves? Or did he proffer insights, on which to reflect by marshalling the evidence of our own experience? Are we to yield before Husserlian intuition? Or to struggle toward Ignatian discernment? To intuit or to discern, that is the question.

There are strains of both strainings – essentialist and existentialist – in our wide, ‘catholic’ tradition. I plead here, not for ignoring the former, only for real consideration of the latter. The “unique and unrepeatable” subjectivity of each truly incarnate person was respected, not only by Ignatius, but by others in our tradition. Hear, here, one giant of that tradition reflecting on another:

I have said that St. Francis deliberately did not see the wood for the trees. It is even more true that he deliberately did not see the mob for the men. What distinguishes this very genuine democrat from any mere demagogue is that he never either deceived or was deceived by the illusion of mass-suggestion. Whatever his taste in monsters, he never saw before him a many-headed beast. He saw only the image of God multiplied but not monotonous. To him

30 *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (cf. n. 20 *supra*), p. 56.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

a man was always a man and did not disappear in a dense crowd any more than in a desert. He honoured all men; that is, he not only loved but respected them all. What gave him his extraordinary personal power was this; that from the Pope to the beggar, from the sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernardone was really interested in him; in his own inner individual life from the cradle to the grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously, and not merely added to the spoils of some local policy or the names in some clerical document.³²

I don't know what color John Paul's eyes were, nor do I know the color of yours, but I do suspect that there are many who, looking into them, find them not particularly burning with interest in their "own inner individual life from the cradle to the grave." That burning interest enables Newman's *cor ad cor loquitur*. Neither Francis nor Chesterton tended to look upon 'the body' of humanity, but upon 'our bodies.' Thus, their "extraordinary personal power," which draws me each morning to pray the Canticle of the Creatures, which recalls me daily to "praise my Lord for our sister Mother Earth, who nourishes and sustains us all, bringing forth divers fruits, and many-colored flowers and herbs." As each night I hop into bed with Hopkins:

like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I do is me, for that I came*.
I say móre: the just man justices;
Kéeps gráce: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –
Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his

To the Father through the features of men's faces.³³

The Wojtylan intuition would have it 'To the Father through the features of man's face.' Not so, the affirmation of inscape by the son of Ignatius. And be it Thomist influence or Ignatian, the place of grace has always seemed to me to be 'men's faces,' not 'the face' – 'our bodies,' not 'the body' – "And that," as Frost observed, "has made all the difference."³⁴ Two roads, "one less traveled by" in ecclesiastical circles these days, yet how different things appear along that byway. Little in the way of archetypes, paradigms, and Husserlian intuitions. Yet how manifold the

32 G.K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 1951), pp. 114-115.

33 Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Major Poems*, ed. Walford Davies (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1979), pp. 87-88.

34 Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1969), p. 105.

“divers fruits” and the existential inscape of “faces” – mostly the faces – in the “ten thousand places” through which that road winds.

Or, to mix metaphors, perhaps there are ‘ten thousand’ roads. When Dylan played at the 1997 Eucharistic Congress in Bologna, Pope John Paul pointedly remarked:

You asked me: *How many roads* must a man walk down before you call him a man? I answer you: *one!* There is only one road for man and it is Christ, who said: “I am the way” (Jn 14.6). He is the road of truth, the way of life.³⁵

Might there not be many *roads* – ‘ten thousand,’ say – headin’ the same way? Some perhaps ‘straight’-er than others, but plenty of ‘straight’ roads headin’ the other way, too. *The body, the face, the road.* And as egressing on the roads of history oft’ tends toward regressing, even that was too much for then-Cardinal Ratzinger, who opined that Dylan – “that kind of ‘prophet’” -- should not have been invited there in the first place.³⁶ Could any such as he be bound for glory? How many mansions can there be in the Father’s house? How many roads to get there? How many bodies traveling those roads?

To render this more concrete, I return to Genesis 2.23 -- the “Aha!”, which John Paul noted in spirit, if the language came from elsewhere. The spirit of that simple word has been lyrically translated myriad times. Here is Dylan’s translation:

Suddenly I turned around and she was standin’ there
With silver bracelets on her wrists and flowers in her hair.
She walked up to me so gracefully and took my crown of thorns.
“Come in,” she said,

“I’ll give you shelter from the storm.”³⁷

Aidan Day’s commentary reads as though it could have been written by John Paul:

The meetings in ‘Shelter from the Storm’ envisage respite from suffering and healing of fragmentation; respite and healing that are caught in the reciprocities of self and other that characterize the refrain, where the ‘I’ of the speaker of the verses becomes a ‘you’ to the ‘she’ who in turn is translated into a speaking ‘I.’ But reciprocity is not integration. As the speaker records his continuing separation from the ‘she’, so even the insistent repetition of that other’s offer of shelter defines a presence continually reapprehended, never finally possessed.³⁸

35 Quoted by Alessandro Carrera, “Oh, the Streets of Rome: Dylan in Italy,” *Highway 61 Revisited: Bob Dylan’s Road from Minnesota to the World*, ed. Colleen J. Sheehy and Thomas Swiss (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 90.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

37 Bob Dylan, “Shelter from the Storm” (cf. n. 9 *supra*), p. 361.

38 Aidan Day, *Jokerman: Reading the Lyrics of Bob Dylan* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 68.

The mystery of solitude yielding to communion, without solitude being extinguished. No wonder that John Paul wanted to hear Dylan, nor that the song-and-dance-man wanted to play for the Poet-Pope. Both knew much of storms and shelter, suffering and healing, solitude and communion, the 'Aha!' of recognizing an 'other' reciprocal to 'self.'

Another 'translation' is found in 'Adam Waiting in the Garden for Eve', an engraving by the late Joseph O'Connell, longtime artist at St. John's in Collegeville. A leafy garden of a brownstone tenement, inviting Garrison Keillor's gloss:

. . . the First Man in abject boredom waiting for the First Woman, her magnificent haunches visible through a window, to finish her ablutions and do her toilet. . .³⁹

Something in him stirs. The nakedness here signifying "the original good of God's vision."⁴⁰ Adam's limpid arm outstretched toward Eve, my eye recalling Michelangelo's Adamic arm outstretched to the Creator. In both outstretchings, a new creation coming to be.

A final translation, that of Walker Percy, allows Eve the "Aha!". Middle-aged, despairing Will Barrett, awakened from suicidal stupor by a toothache, falls from his spelunking into the edenic garden of Allie's greenhouse. She, half his age and recently escaped from a mental hospital, tends to the wounds of his unconscious self, and feels her solitude stirred at the sight of his nakedness. He awakens, and the "Aha!" comes dialogically:

He was silent for a long time. He seemed to be watching the rain. He put his hand in the small of her back. Oh my, she thought. Lightning flickered. At last he smiled in the lightening. . .

"You feel so good. Me too. The good is all over me, starting with my back. Now I understand how the two work together."

"What two?"

"The it and the doing, the noun and the verb, sweet sweet love and a putting it to you, loving and hating, you and I."

He laughed. "You do, don't you? What happens to the two?"

"They become one but not in the sappy way of the saying?"

"What way, then?"

"One plus one equals one and oh boy almond joy."⁴¹

A moral theologian would be troubled. He is only very recently widowed, and once had a dalliance with Allie's mother. She is a 'vulnerable adult,' Will her legal

39 Garrison Keillor, "A Tribute: He Was in the Arts, You Know," in *Divine Favor: The Art of Joseph O'Connell*, ed. Colman O'Connell, O.S.B. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), pp. 14-15.

40 *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (cf. n. 20 *supra*), p. 99.

41 Walker Percy, *The Second Coming* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1980), pp. 262-263.

guardian. But, moral complications aside, spirits are discerned. Solitude yields to communion, without erasing solitude; joy abounds for both, his suicidal nihilism and her mental disintegration both abating. The moralist would miss the 'original innocence' of it all. The novelist didn't. Percy posits his titular 'coming' as a *double entendre*, simultaneously sexual and eschatological. The limpid arm had straightened, the clouded mind cleared. Oh boy almond joy. Aha! Aah!

These translations have much in common with Pope John Paul's reflections. All speak of the original experience of solitude, communion, innocence, shame, and the "Aha!" between a man and a woman. But there is a difference of focus, and focusing pertains to method. Phenomenology proceeds by means of eidetic reduction. One has an insight (*eidōs*), and proceeds to give "an account, description, presentation of data structured by insight."⁴² Thus, the 'reduction' – whatever is not structured by the insight is bracketed from consideration. The subsequent reflection is, thus, selective. John Paul's selective focus is on *ish* and *ishah*, the sexually differentiated man and woman. In short, what he offers is a phenomenology of hetero-sexual love. Other possibilities are bracketed from consideration.

Thus, Lonergan observes that phenomenologists "do brilliant work in particular limited fields, but phenomenology does not head toward a synthesis, towards unification."⁴³ He further notes Husserl's insistence on pursuing necessity and absolute certitude, a pursuit with roots in both ancient Greece and Cartesian rationalism.⁴⁴ And this pursuit, Lonergan concludes, "is more than man can have, and consequently it is doomed to failure because it is overshooting the mark."⁴⁵ Needed as a corrective is the Thomist insistence that the good is always concrete, and the existentialist corrective of focusing on "what is *de facto*, concrete, contingent, unique, individual."⁴⁶ Universal and necessary moral precepts, accordingly, do not suffice to determine the good.

They can be no more than pointers to the direction of location in which the good lies, or limits indicating where the good does not lie. There remains the problem for each one to work out concretely the good he can do by his decision in his concrete situation with his potentialities and possibilities.⁴⁷

To return to my three 'translations,' they seem more situated in the concrete, holding no pretensions to universality and necessity. With John Paul, they consider a man, a woman, and an "Aha!" between them. But whereas John Paul's focus is on "a man, a woman," the others' focus is on the "Aha!," on *this* woman and *this* man, the existential uniqueness, the inscape, of *this* particular encounter. And this latter focus could remain open to the possibility of an Adam who says "Aha!" to an Evan,

42 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, Volume 18 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 266.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

not an Eve. Such concrete events, such data, remain unstructured by the John-Pauline insight. Might gay lovers know their own solitudes, their own commun-ions? In our world, they can certainly put their finger on shame and fear. Might they also say “Aha!” at the gift-of-self-given-and-received? What might happen if, at least, you don’t bracket that possibility? My suspicion is that gay lovers can listen to Dylan, view O’Connell, and read Percy,⁴⁸ and experience a ‘shock of recognition’ they might not experience in reading John Paul. And this, I think, is unfortunate, because if the papal bracketing were only a bit less restrictive, a wider phenomenological insight into the nature of sexual love might emerge, with the result, recalling Haughton, that “the whole Christian feeling about the nature of human love [might be] enhanced, made more strange, more sensitive, more problematic”⁴⁹ once again.

Ironically, I think the pope’s reflections have greater power and deeper meaning than even he thought they did. In comparison, his – and your –

44 Stephen Toulmin has argued, persuasively to me, that many of the inadequacies of modernity stemmed precisely from this rationalist insistence on necessity, universality, and certainty, which he contends entails a rejection of the medieval pursuit of understanding. The latter was both more humble in its ambition, and more humane in its achievements. He often notes that even many contemporary critics of ‘modernity’ remain caught, ironically, in this pursuit of universality/necessity/certainty, thus embracing the very foundation of that which they would criticize. In Toulmin’s interpretation, Michel de Montaigne embodied a development of the classical/medieval tradition, and provided an alternative to the Cartesian search for certainty. Alas, this was a road not taken. Montaigne offered “a powerful case for classical skepticism, as the way to escape a presumptuous dogmatism.” *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 36. This was rooted in the fact that “he was deeply suspicious of writers who relied on abstract theories to undermine the truth of our common experience.” *Return to Reason* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 22. This insistence on concreteness, with its concomitant suspicion of abstract moral generalizing, e.g., led Montaigne to be attentive to very diverse cultural traditions without becoming apoplectic at the different, the unusual, the ‘other.’ He could calmly observe, for example, that “The laws of conscience, which we say are born of nature, are born of custom.” *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 83. So, too, he could simply note the wide diversity of cultural patterns of marriage, including men marrying men, and accept this as data, which the mind would seek to understand before venturing moral judgment. *Ibid.*, p. 80. The existentialist critique of phenomenology’s pursuit of the universal and necessary, accordingly, has corollaries in a deep – and Catholic – tradition.

45 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., (cf. n. 42 *supra*), p. 262.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

48 I had long judged Peter S. Hawkins, for example, to be among Percy’s keenest interpreters. My copies of *The Language of Grace: Flannery O’Connor, Walker Percy, & Iris Murdoch* (Boston: Cowley, 1983) and *Getting Nowhere: Christian Hope & Utopian Dream* (Boston: Cowley, 1985) are tattered [and I hate tattered books!] because I have returned to them over and over this past quarter century. Only recently did I read his essay, “Counter, Original, Spare, Strange,” in *Our Selves, Our Souls & Bodies: Sexuality and the Household of God*, ed. Charles Hefling (Boston: Cowley, 1996), pp. 76-86, and discover that Hawkins is gay, which has enabled a deepened understanding of his interpretation of Percy, and also, I discovered for the first time, of Hopkins.

49 Rosemary Haughton (cf. n. 16 *supra*), p. 33.

interpretation seems highly restrictive, needlessly selective, even reductive. Did the pope have anything to say to gay men and women, other than 'no'? He didn't think so; I think he did, does. Attention to the concrete possibilities of real persons – rather than some universal and necessary possibility of 'the person' – could still allow perception, understanding, and affirmation of real order in the universe of proportionate being, but that order would be "a concrete unfolding in concrete circumstances," with "concrete situations" being understood as "the product of individual decisions about the concrete good."⁵⁰

Believe it or not, gay men and women make such decisions every moment of every day, like everyone else. It would be nice if the Church had some guidance to offer. The tragedy is that Pope John Paul's reflections contain real possibilities for such spiritual guidance, but these possibilities are lost when the reflections become hardened into a "theology of *the* body," which itself becomes further hardened into a "nuptial theology,"⁵¹ the range of insight becoming progressively narrowed as the range of data becomes progressively bracketed. The Church 'catholic' would want to narrow and bracket as little as possible.

Alas, narrow and bracketed we have become, often without even a semblance of awareness. Pope Benedict once famously remarked to a reporter that, other than a few protesters in München, he had never met any homosexuals. This from a man who, by then, had worked for a couple decades in the Roman Curia, of all places! OMG, as the kids might text. LOL, if it weren't so ☐. Methodic phenomenological bracketing seems natural when everyday consciousness is so blind. Neither bracketing nor blindness provides adequate foundations upon which to build a universal and necessary theology – much less a spirituality. Not, at least, if it wants to be catholic. If we are blinded to the very existence of so many, or if we see but bracket them from meaningful consideration, there is left only the lament:

You'll never know the hurt I suffered nor the pain I rise above.
And I'll never know the same about you, your holiness or your kind of love.

And it makes me feel so sorry.⁵²

In the third instance, thinking clearly about natural law requires clear thinking about nature, and some ways of thinking about nature aren't very natural. It has long been clear to me, in many different contexts, that there are two basically different kinds of disagreements, one in which real conversation is much more possible and fruitful than the other. When three people differ on the nature of X, it

50 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J. (cf. n. 42 *supra*), p. 243.

51 And there does seem to be a 'hardening' of categories. Reading Genesis 1-2, then John Paul's reflections, and then nuptial theologians, like Angelo Cardinal Scola, recalled to my mind Lonergan's quip: "The problem with twelfth-century theology was that they had as many divisions of grace as Augustine had adjectives to talk about it." *Caring about Meaning: Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey, and Cathleen Going (Montréal: Thomas More Institute, 1982), p. 111.

52 Bob Dylan, "Idiot Wind" (cf. n. 9 *supra*), p. 368.

can be that they quite straightforwardly have different understandings and have made different judgments about X – let’s call their positions X^1 , X^2 , and X^3 . They can talk to each other, presenting images, suggesting questions, pointing out overlooked data, raising questions of verifying evidence that might strengthen or weaken a judgment. They can disagree, but they can talk to each other, perhaps intensely, and they can understand each other because there is an underlying agreement about the roots of their disagreement.

It is a quite different conversation about the nature of X , though, when the real root of the disagreement is about the nature of *nature* -- when three other people have different preunderstandings of what it would mean to understand anything. X , in such a situation, is not the real issue, though X may very well be what our disputants argue about until they are (red, white, and) blue in the face. They probably think of themselves as having a heated conversation much like that between our earlier partisans of X^1 , X^2 , and X^3 . In fact, however, they are arguing about Q , 9 , and J , quite literally not knowing *what* they are talking about.

Such is the situation of our current non-conversation about the *nature* of marriage. It may well be ‘marriage’ that we are explicitly talking about, but it is divergent – perhaps even dialectically opposed – notions of ‘nature’ that render the talking so fruitless. I want here to try to push that dialectical rock up this seemingly Sisyphean mountain in four steps. At the top, it’s all too likely that the damn thing will just roll back to the bottom – again! But maybe the very act of pushing will find us on the Mount of Purgation, instead, some of the fog clearing.

When it’s time, then, to turn to discussion of natural law, where better to begin than with Yogi Berra? “It’s *déjà vu* all over again!” How exceedingly eerie, in the midst of today’s hoopla and hubbub, to read the story of the marriage of Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving.⁵³ About as unexceptional a couple as could be imagined, in a pretty unexceptional time (June 1958) and place (Central Point VA). But things were pretty black & white back then, especially about, well, black and white. The Lovings spent their honeymoon in jail because of her blackness and his whiteness, which, in the eyes of the law, rendered their union both “null and void” and felonious. Exile to the District of Columbia followed jail until 1967, while the Supremes were singing “Stop in the Name of Love,” the other Supremes, in the same District of the couple’s exile, engaged in an act of raw judicial activism and ordered every jurisdiction in the nation to recognize the legality, the reality of their marriage. Alabama finally got around to repealing its constitutional ban on interracial marriage in the year 2000, with 40% of the voters (526,000) even then voting for retention, and a tradition of law that had begun with Maryland’s antimiscegenation law in 1664 had come to a close.

53 Phyl Newbeck, *Virginia Hasn't Always Been for Lovers: Interracial Marriage Bans and the Case of Richard and Mildred Loving* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

Are the realities of that/then the same as this/now? Of course, not. But not completely different, either. And there is something about the Catholic firings of my neurons that has rendered me hopelessly prone to perceive similarities-in-difference, to understand reality through insights into those perceptions, and to render judgments of truth and falsity, good and evil, grounded in reflection on the facts of similarity amidst difference.

In Phyl Newbeck's telling of the Lovings' story, she also tells the not-so-loving story of law, culture and religion which feared this simple couple, and found in them the very embodiment of virtually everything that could be considered wrong in American society. Sound familiar? Here's a bit of a lowlight reel:

- In 1838, a Mississippi court invalidated the will of a white man, who had left his estate to the children born of his union with a black woman, because "the statement of the case shows conclusively that the contract had its origin in an offence against morality, pernicious, and detestable."⁵⁴
- An Indiana state senator proposing an intermarriage ban in 1840: "There is no subject which, in the present state of the times, calls more loudly for legislative interposition than the one before them. It is an infraction of the laws of the Almighty, for one moment to allow the pernicious doctrine of such amalgamation to have an abiding place in our government, or upon our State books, being marked, as they are, by the eternal and unchangeable laws of God, the one *white* and the other *black*. Your committee believe that any man or set of men, who would encourage, counsel, aid, or abet in such unholy marriages as said bill prohibits, deserve the just animadversion of every Christian philanthropist and patriot."⁵⁵
- Same year, in the Iowa territorial legislature, "the house debate featured some interesting anthropological interpretations, including that of a representative who said that the Negro race did not descend from Adam."⁵⁶
- In *Scott v. Sandford* (1857), the infamous Dred Scott decision, Chief Justice Taney offered as foundational to his opinion the fact that laws against intermarriage "show that a perpetual and impassable barrier was intended to be erected between the white race and the one which they had reduced to slavery, and governed as subjects with absolute and despotic power, and which they then looked upon as so far below them in the scale of created beings, that intermarriages between white persons and negroes or mulattoes were regarded as unnatural and immoral, and punished as crimes, not only in the parties, but in the persons who joined them in marriage."⁵⁷
- A Pennsylvania court decision in 1867: "When, therefore, we declare a right to maintain separate relations, as far as is reasonably practicable, but in a spirit of kindness and charity, and with due regard to equality of rights, it is not prejudice, nor caste, nor injustice of any kinds, but simply to suffer men to follow the law of races

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

established by the Creator himself and not to compel them to intermix contrary to their instincts.”⁵⁸

- In the Alabama Court of Appeals in 1931, a judge referred to interracial unions as “moral filth,” “a picture that is nauseating to all that is finer in our natures,” “sordid,” and “too vile and disgusting to be repeated any place.”⁵⁹
- In 1954, the United States Supreme Court denied a challenge to Alabama’s constitutional ban on intermarriage, because of the state’s right to uphold “the laws of God and the laws of propriety, morality and social order.”⁶⁰
- The Supreme Court of the State of Virginia, in 1955, insisted that “the natural law which forbids their intermarriage and the social amalgamation which leads to a corruption of races is as clearly divine as that which imported to them different natures.” The same decision offered the judgment that “connections and alliances so unnatural that God and nature seem to forbid them, should be prohibited by positive law...”⁶¹
- Judge Leon Bazile, sentencing the Lovings in 1958: “Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix.”⁶²
- A Mississippi textbook from the 1950s: “God wanted the white people to live alone. And He wanted colored people to live alone. . . We do not believe that God wants us to live together. . . God has made us different. And God knows best. Did you know that our country will grow weak if we mix?”⁶³
- The sheriff who had arrested the Lovings, retrospectively in 1992: “I don’t think a white person should marry a black person. . . The Lord made sparrows and robins, not to mix with one another.”⁶⁴
- In the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1998, a member announced his intention to vote against repeal of the state’s constitutional ban on intermarriage, because such marriage is contrary to “the way God meant it. He does create races of people and He did that for a reason. From the beginning he set the races apart.”⁶⁵

You get the nauseating picture; there’s plenty more where those came from.

Acknowledging the difference – race is not gender – the similarities are troubling. There is dependence on a notion of nature rooted in a notion of the Creator’s intent, a notion whose genesis is found in Genesis. There was common

58 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

61 *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 211.

argument about the well-being of children; well into our lifetimes – yours and mine – society judged it preferable for children to be institutionalized rather than raised in ‘such’ homes.⁶⁶ There were warnings of the imminent collapse of civilization, if the traditional notion of marriage⁶⁷ were transgressed. There were also assurances that no lack of justice was involved, no absence of charity implied.

A further similarity is that tinkering with antimiscegenation laws waxed and waned (though the waning never seemed to touch Dixie): a tightening trend leading up to the Civil War, a loosening trend following it. Regional repeal movements in the 1880s, and then boxer Jack Jackson married a white woman in 1913, setting off a political firestorm that virtually swept the nation. “Only California, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Vermont did not succumb to the antimiscegenist frenzy.”⁶⁸ Legislative bodies and plebiscites in state after state copied each other, tweaking each other’s bans, tightening a screw here, loosening a knot there.

A difference: the Church Catholic conjectured only as an innocent bystander. The canonical rights of her members, trampled by Leviathan, evoked barely a murmur. As late as 1967, when sixteen extraordinary Ordinaries⁶⁹ signed on to an *amicus curiae* brief in the Lovings’ appeal to the Supreme Court, the USCC demurred, citing the absence of any compelling Church interest.⁷⁰ Ponder the strangeness of difference: when the State excluded persons whom the Church held to have rights to *inclusion*, almost nary a peep; when the State considers *including* persons the Church would have excluded, all hell breaks loose – and the ‘breaking loose’ does seem to me infernal, not paradisaal.

A final similarity, and then a reprise of step one up the mountain.

The cast of characters rings a bell: the impetus of the argument against the very possibility of interracial marriage came largely from Protestant Evangelicalism; the lonely resistance came from the American Civil Liberties Union (this potato was

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁶⁷ *Contra* current assertions, the traditional definition of marriage – in most of the territory of this nation and for most of its history – has been the union of one *white* man and one *white* woman, or of one *colored* man and one *colored* woman, with all sorts of different permutations at different times and in different places. If you want to insist on the traditional definition, that’s it.

⁶⁸ Phyl Newbeck (cf. n. 53 *supra*), p. 49.

⁶⁹ Let their names be remembered: John J. Russell (Richmond), Lawrence Cardinal Shehan (Baltimore), Paul Hallihan (Atlanta), Philip Hannan (New Orleans), Robert Lucey and Thomas Tschoepe (San Antonio), Joseph Brunine (Apostolic Administrator, Natchez-Jackson), Lawrence DeFalco (Amarillo), Joseph Dimick (Apostolic Administrator, Nashville), Thomas Gorman (Dallas-Ft. Worth), Joseph Hodges (Wheeling), John Morkovsky (Apostolic Administrator, Galveston-Houston), Victor Reed (Oklahoma City and Tulsa), L. J. Reicher (Austin), Ernest Unterkoefler (Charleston), Vincent Waters (Raleigh). R.I.P.

⁷⁰ Phyl Newbeck (cf. n. 53 *supra*), p. 166.

too hot even for the NAACP). The first law review article⁷¹ about the Supreme Court's decision in *Loving v. Virginia* was written by Fr. Robert Drinan, God rest his soul.

By way of reprise, a caution: be careful in making natural law arguments in proposing positive law that excludes from participation in the goods of social life. There was, there and then, far too little such caution. Plenty of assertions by other men in pointy white hats insisting, 'There can be no doubt...' Plenty of intuition into the meaning of embodiment. But so little openness to further relevant questions. Why? In retrospect, it seems fairly simple; such questions were, literally, taboo. And a taboo always seems a first principle of natural law to those caught under its spell. Always. And one never perceives that one is under the spell, until one isn't. Never.

The question emerges as to how the spell is broken. John Noonan suggests that it comes by way of revelation, more precisely by three ways of "deepening the understanding of revelation:" (1) by empathetic identification with the other; (2) by empirical investigation, especially "in the observation of human practices;" and (3) by "the development, intellectual, moral, emotional, and social, of human beings."⁷² In other words: get to know 'other' people, watch and listen to them, and be open to whatever conversion – intellectual, moral, affective, and religious – might come your way, however unbidden and, even, unwelcome.

White and black folks started going to school with each other, working with each other, living next door to each other – even, though far more rarely, going to Church with each other. As a few such folks fell in love and married, we noticed that, while a house of cultural cards collapsed, civilization didn't. And we changed, most of us, certainly as a social whole. What had seemed an unquestionable truth, now not only seems untrue, but abhorrent.⁷³

Noonan understands the Church's complacent bystanding, at best, and outright resistance, at least as often:

. . . moral theologians are often catching up with what is already established, that, at least in the cases looked at here [usury, slavery, and religious freedom], they did not lead the way. A somewhat different implication could also be drawn, that experience and empathy are necessary before a practice can be definitively known as good or bad.⁷⁴

71 Robert Drinan, S.J., "The Loving Decision and the Freedom to Marry," *Ohio State Law Journal* 29 (1968), pp. 358-398.

72 John T. Noonan, Jr., *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 215-216.

73 My younger brother is happily married, with three adorable children, to a woman he could not have married in South Dakota as late as 1957, just months before he was born. When they return to the small town in which we were raised, not even there does a single head turn. How different it would have been such a short time ago.

In Lonergan's pithy formulation, the Church tends to find itself "in the unenviable position of always arriving on the scene a little breathlessly and a little late."⁷⁵ But we do tend to get there, and to catch our breath, sacraments celebrated in new contexts, the Word proclaimed a bit more widely. Noonan notes:

Love must 'abound' in order to 'test what is vital' (Phil 1.9-10). Love accomplishes this task by abounding 'in knowledge and in insight of every kind.' That is, by empathetic identification with the other.⁷⁶

How apt, a Balthasarian might even say beautiful, the following description of a wedding in Virginia, a month after the Supreme Court had spoken in *Loving v. Virginia*. Herman McDaniel and Joyce Prescott headed to the courthouse to marry. Not a single magistrate was willing to oblige.

Through each step of the journey, more and more onlookers attached themselves to the wedding party. This entourage proved useful when no judge could be found: a black Baptist minister in the crowd named David Vaughn offered his services. He had left home without his Bible, but yet another bystander was able to procure one for him. It was badly worn and the back was missing, but it was sufficient for the job.⁷⁷

Mildred Loving saw herself simply as "an ordinary black woman who fell in love with an ordinary white man."⁷⁸ Aha! Sure didn't seem so ordinary at the time.

The second step has found me lingering long, my footing most precarious here. I have little familiarity with the Augustinian turn of Balthasarian theology. Yet the conclusion seems inescapable that this 'turn', especially with its insistence that nuptiality – human sexual differentiation as male and female, the reality of love between the two as gift-received-and-given, and the fruitfulness that follows – has become the hermeneutical center of official Catholic thought.⁷⁹ So, late last year, I spent about a month attempting a careful reading of Angelo Cardinal Scola's *The Nuptial Mystery*.⁸⁰ I have just taken a two week break from writing this whatever-it-is to re-read this book, and have just now set fingers back to keyboard.

The appeal of neo-Augustinian/Bonaventuran/Balthasarian theology, it seems to me, is rooted in the evocative thinking and language – indeed, evocative praying and living – which lie at its heart. The *ressourcement* sought by the *nouvelle théologie* a long and bloody century ago seems to have been, in large part, a reaction against the conceptual aridity of Baroque scholasticism.⁸¹ The concepts of tightly enclosed logical systems tend to evoke neither heart-felt worship nor

74 John T. Noonan, Jr. (cf. n 72 *supra*), p. 211.

75 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (cf. n. 10 *supra*), p. 755.

76 John T. Noonan, Jr. (cf. n. 72 *supra*), p. 215.

77 Phyl Newbeck (cf. n. 53 *supra*), p. 195.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

passionate action. These, rather, are rooted in the bodily and psychic depths of each of us,⁸² and only a theology attentive to the primacy of ‘the form of the Beautiful’ reaches to those deep roots. Biblical and patristic writers – the very ‘roots’ of our Tradition – cared much about nourishing such rootedness, as do theologians and pastors today who want to reach back into that Tradition to evoke in us what those writers had evoked in their contemporaries, calling forth in us authentic worship and action, not simply drifting with the currents of the time – so easily rationalized by (and with) conceptual clarity.

I suspect that it is precisely this evocation of the wellsprings of *living* – in the sense of Eliot’s distinction between “living and partly living”⁸³ – that gets to the heart of my love for the three mentors of my adult life: Bernard Lonergan, Daniel Berrigan, and Bob Dylan (I call them my ‘two Jesuits and a Jokerman’).⁸⁴ The latter two are practitioners of the evocative, the former grounding that evocation in the most profound understanding and affirmation of the whole thrust of human intentional consciousness toward the Mystery of the Triune God, but always and everywhere rooted in the concrete reality of each person in his/her situation, that I have ever encountered.

79 Habits die hard. I have long resisted engaging this tradition because it is so discontinuous with the fundamental framework of thinking that has grounded my appropriation of ‘the Catholic thing.’ It has gradually become clear to me, though, that I cannot possibly hope to understand the emerging trend of official Catholic teaching without some grasp of its foundations. And if I am to hold – as I do – that understanding is pivotal to the theological enterprise, then the effort to understand what seems ‘other’ (in the sense of strange ‘to me’) is something that I must not only preach, but practice. Two sources have led to this reluctant acknowledgment on my part. Fergus Kerr, O.P., has traced this trend in a manner that even I can begin to grasp. *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), especially pp. 121-144, 176-182, 193-201, and 214-221. It is from Kerr that I took the clue that perhaps the work of Cardinal Scola might be an accessible point of entry. *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 198. The seed for sensing the need to make this effort had been planted in the less-than-fertile soil of my mind by Robert Doran, S.J., “Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations,” *Theological Studies* 58/1 (March 1997), pp. 61-84.

80 Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005).

81 It seems passing strange, though, that so many of those who were/are motivated by the rejection of Baroque scholasticism are enthusiasts of Baroque art. Go figure.

82 And here we return to a foundational divergence of interpretation. Many, I suspect, who would wholeheartedly embrace what I have just said, would have written ‘the bodily and psychic depths of *the person*,’ not ‘the bodily and psychic depths of *each of us*.’ Back to ‘our bodies’ and ‘the body.’

83 T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Wold, 1963), p. 19.

84 I rejoice in the appearance of three recent essays by Lonergan scholars, one on Dylan and two on Berrigan, which find me feeling less alone in the universe, less lost in the cosmos. Glenn Hughes, “Ultior Significance in the Art of Bob Dylan,” *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* 5 (2011): 18-40. Patrick D. Brown, “Lonergan and Berrigan: Two Radical and Visionary Jesuits,” *Faith, Resistance, and the Future: Daniel Berrigan’s Challenge to Catholic Social Thought*, ed. James L. Marsh and Anna J. Brown (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012): 183-208. Robert M. Doran, S.J., “Bernard Lonergan and Daniel Berrigan,” *ibid.*, pp. 119-131.

Dylan has provided the soundtrack for my life, always playing in the background, with not infrequent crescendos. This helps me to understand the constant presence of Goethe in Balthasar's writing, and the Romantic poetry, drama, and music so constitutive of Karol Wojtyla's consciousness.⁸⁵ Without someone aiding us in reaching to the depths, we are so prone to remain on the surface.

And diving into those depths will often run counter to the social and cultural expectations surrounding us and invading us. Thus, Berrigan's burden in my life. He shares rootedness in the Augustinian turn from scholastic conceptualism. As for nuptiality, his first prose book was entitled *The Bride: Essays in the Church*⁸⁶ – and, in typing that, I notice for the first time the prepositional significance of the subtitle, not *on* the Church, but *in* the Church. He shares (indeed shares^{nth}) the hermeneutical suspicion of modernity so characteristic of Balthasar, Wojtyla, Ratzinger, Scola, and this entire new thrust of Catholic thinking. And yet with such different (truth and) consequences. I think of Fr. Berrigan's narration of the first prison visit he received from his Jesuit superior, who asked 'What are you doing here, in prison?' The spontaneous response: 'What are you doing, not in prison?'⁸⁷

O skunk raise
against lawnorder, your grandiose
geysering stinking NO!⁸⁸

But there is countering, and Countering. The difference largely a matter of 'paying up,' in

Camus's felicitous phrase. We must, accordingly, beware a too comfortable countering – and I mean that primarily for my own uneasy reflection, only secondarily for yours. What is evoked in thought and feeling must also be evoked in costly discipleship, or inauthenticity sets in, and our second state is worse than the first. 'Father Dan,' as the G-men who hunted him down used to call him, paid up. His 'no' worth hearing; yours and mine, not so much.

85 Each of the major biographers (Tad Szulc, George Weigel, George Huntston Williams) of John Paul narrate the formative influence of poets, dramatists, and composers, and each narration lists a series of artists, all of them firmly within the Romantic tradition, yet without identifying Romanticism as a common thread. The closest is Szulc, who notes that at the beginning of his university studies at the Jagiellonian, "Karol submitted a lengthy study of 'Madame de Staël as a Theoretician of Romanticism,' apparently his first written literary effort at the university." Tad Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography* (New York: Scribner 1995), p. 89. Are there roots here of seeking the form of the Beautiful in the grand gesture, the paradigmatic, the archetypal? I suspect so, but have far too little knowledge here for this to be anything more than a suspicion. If you know anyone looking for a dissertation topic, further inquiry here would be of fundamental value.

86 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *The Bride: Essays in the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1959).

87 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *Lights on in the House of the Dead: A Prison Diary* (New York: Doubleday, 1974).

88 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., "Skunk," *Prison Poems* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 83.

Still, yes, say 'no' – but to love? However strange, 'other' you might find it. There are wars, and rumors of wars, while your parishes pray for *our* troops, often under *our* flag, with, at best, generic prayers for *the* victims of war, never for the victims maimed or killed *by* our troops. And we have proffered for us as Catholic thinking the Will Rogers style militarism of George Weigel, who has never met an American war he didn't like. We have rendered unto Caesar the right – because the wherewithal – to determine whether human history continues, or ends. And this is met with only a highly nuanced ecclesial 'maybe.' It's left to a marginalized Georgetown Jesuit to say, simply, "It's a sin to build a nuclear weapon."⁸⁹ He has heard the plea of Camus:

What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could rise in the heart of the simplest man. That they should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today. The grouping we need is a grouping of men resolved to speak out clearly and to pay up personally.⁹⁰

I don't write as some go-along-to-get-along liberal, but rather in the radical hope that the Church would be *more* of a skunk, quite utterly transposing the old notion of 'the odor of sanctity.'

Back to Eden, for example, we're in danger of despoiling the entire garden.

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.⁹¹

Yet what we find to be unnatural is the 'wrong' kind of love? Is it not more unnatural that we are threatening to put an end to the very nature of nature itself?⁹²

If I seem to have digressed, it is only to return to *The Nuptial Mystery* able more clearly to meet the issue of the 'natural' order head-on.

89 Richard McSorley, S.J., *It's a Sin to Build a Nuclear Weapon: The Collected Works on War and Christian Peacemaking of Richard McSorley, S.J.*, ed. John Dear, S.J. (Baltimore: Fortkamp Publishing, 1991).

90 Albert Camus, "The Unbeliever and Christians," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Modern Library, 1963), p. 53.

91 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur" (cf. n. 33 *supra*), p. 64.

92 Cf. Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 2006). He argues that what we still colloquially call 'nature' has become an artifice, a human creation, that it is no longer possible, for example, for biologists to find a single living cell that does not carry a trace residue of artificial chemicals, and that such traces alter the 'nature' of the cell. The life and death of entire species is no longer a phenomenon of nature, but of history. *Pace* Francis Fukuyama, history not only has not ended, it may have only just begun – at least in the sense of human historical dominance over the terrestrial order having commenced, and showing few signs of abating.

Nuptial theology seems to unfold in three steps: (i) an insistence that natural reality can be understood only in terms of that reality's elucidation by Mystery; (ii) authoritative specification of the content of Mystery; and (iii) application of that Mystery-content to interpretation of natural reality. One of the disadvantages, I suspect, of reading this particular book is that it is a collection of essays, not an original, intentional whole. Yet that provides an advantage, as well, because the three-fold pattern I just mentioned is something that I understand to recur over and over again throughout the book, making it more probable, in my judgment, that this is the underlying method.

Cardinal Scola cites Balthasar's insistence that sexuality is "insoluble *in naturalibus*."⁹³ Without reference to the nuptial mystery, human sexuality cannot be differentiated from animal sexuality;⁹⁴ it becomes trivialized,⁹⁵ subject to banalization,⁹⁶ "condemned to the intracosmic."⁹⁷ Broad cultural calamity necessarily ensues, as the "contemporary world's dominant mentality" renders human sexuality meaningless. In the 1990s, the entire "frame of reference of the cultural sensibility" eroded, due to "the separation of ethics from larger questions of meaning" and a "growing perception of the irrelevance of the moral magisterium." In the new millennium, there ensued an even more radical change of mentality, "an anthropological mutation," in which "primary relations" have "completely changed," in large part because of "the pretended abolition of difference" – androgyny.⁹⁸ This is all due to the fact that "a culture that does not accept the revelation of the trinitarian God ultimately renders itself incapable of understanding sexual difference in a positive sense." It is not surprising, therefore, that "the open acceptance of homosexuality belong[s] both to classical paganism and to the paganism of the present day."⁹⁹ Without the light of nuptiality, as shines forth from the Mystery elucidated by Pope John Paul, there is only a "merry nihilism,"¹⁰⁰ a "gay nihilism," which: (a) "has its symbol in homosexuality;" (b) seeks only "a sequence of superficial enjoyments with the intention of eliminating drama from the heart of man;" and (c) understands "love as merely a prolongation of the self."¹⁰¹ Related to

93 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 supra), p. 24.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

98 *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv-xxvi.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

100 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

this, and underlying it, is the tendency to speak, not of nuptiality, but of 'gender' as a cultural construct; this leads "to nullifying the weight of physiological evidence that establishes differences between masculinity and femininity."¹⁰² Yet this "physiological evidence" is not apparent to "the biological, psychological, and social sciences,"¹⁰³ but only through "anthropological discourse. . . carried out in an integral fashion,"¹⁰⁴ i.e., through "phenomenological and ontological" analyses.¹⁰⁵ In short, "it is impossible to understand historical man without rooting him in his revealed theological prehistory,"¹⁰⁶ and failure to do so has led to the collapse, not simply of 'primary relations,' but of the entire cultural matrices in which those relations are lived. Such are the "macroscopic historical-cultural quandaries in which we live."¹⁰⁷

Seeking a way beyond those quandaries, the next methodological step begins with Barth's observation that "spousal categories are the least inadequate for stammering a few words about the ineffable life of the Infinite."¹⁰⁸ Sexual differentiation is "the necessary starting point," the mystery's "horizontal dimension." Three factors constitute the nuptial mystery: (i) difference; (ii) love as gift; and (iii) fruitfulness.¹⁰⁹ Three, too, are the theological manifestations of nuptiality: (i) the nuptial union of Christ and His Church; (ii) the nuptial union of divine and human natures in Christ; and (iii) the nuptial dimension within the Trinity.¹¹⁰ The union of Christ/Church is "the original pair," the "Archetype," with the man/woman union derived from it.¹¹¹ Little is said of the spousal nature of the hypostatic union, except for acknowledgment that assertion of this mystery "begs for further clarification."¹¹² And the Trinitarian dimension, following Balthasar's "suprasexuality,"¹¹³ constitutes John Paul's "important innovation,"¹¹⁴ whereby Genesis 1.27 is newly read to posit sexual differentiation as constitutive of human

102 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

103 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 58

105 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

107 *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 88. Perhaps it is Scola's aversion to postmodernism that leads him to miss the *irony* of beginning with Barth's 'stammering a few words,' and proceeding to elucidate, with confident clarity, essay after essay. Barth, I suspect, would be surprised at the effectiveness of speech therapy in overcoming his stammering problem.

109 *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

110 *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

existence as *imago Dei*.¹¹⁵ These are the fundamental theological assertions which mark “the beginning of an exhilarating road that leads, by grace, to the heart of the Mystery himself.”¹¹⁶

It is only in the application of that Mystery, thus elucidated, to the ‘nature’ of sexuality, that we are liberated from banal, intracosmic, trivial, nihilistic, culturally-mutant animality. It is here that the rubber meets the road. This ‘application’ grounds an integral “theological anthropology,”¹¹⁷ by means of which we are enabled to give “back the form of humankind as such to human reason.”¹¹⁸ It is “by following the ‘guided thread’ of nuptiality”¹¹⁹ that we can overcome the “limitless ethical relativism”¹²⁰ that has rendered us “incapable of meaningful ties, and of esteem for difference.”¹²¹ Understanding and affirming sexual differentiation as the *analogatum princeps*¹²² of all human communion, and all elevation of human communion by grace, is the only means by which “persons discover the truth about themselves.”¹²³ And that discovery, as Pope John Paul insisted, “is at the center of ‘the debate concerning the *humanum*’.”¹²⁴

Hints from the *humanum* enable insights into the Mystery, and illumination of those insights through revealed Truth enables restorative *sanans* of that very *humanum*.

112 *Ibid.*, p. 11. One of the clarifications needed, I suggest, concerns the fact that spousal relations can only occur between differentiated *persons* – a fact central to the phenomenological personalism of John Paul – and any hint of differentiated ‘persons’ in Christ should raise a Chalcedonian clamor. Or is he positing intra-hypostatic auto-eroticism? This is what happens when categories are hardened (cf. n. 51 *supra*). There are things you have to say in order for your system to hold together, but you end up, like Art Linkletter’s kids, saying the darnedest things.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

115 *Ibid.*, *passim*, but especially pp. 32-52. My brief mention of this here does not indicate that I have missed the centrality of this ‘innovation’ to Scola’s argument. I will return to it shortly (pp. 51-52 below), while considering the foundational role of analogy in Catholic speech.

116 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

118 *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

119 *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

122 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

123 *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

124 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.¹²⁵

It is a beautiful vision. I am not blind to that beauty. And yet, questions occur. I, also, am not deaf to them. And hearing them complicates things.

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older

The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated.¹²⁶

I offer here but one large complication, with a few textual twists to elucidate.

Cardinal Scola insists at the outset that he wants to proceed “without confusing the natural and supernatural dimensions.”¹²⁷ Whether or not he has succeeded in avoiding such confusion is the big question, the large complication. It seems to me that he has not. *The Nuptial Mystery* proceeds, page after page, essay after essay, by contrasting fundamentally opposed dyadic options, between which one must choose: either/or. If one were to follow Cardinal Dulles’s method and seek to read the book by understanding the implied models of human sexuality that are contrasted, there emerges this recurrent duality:



Every position on the *humanum* considered by Cardinal Scola can be incorporated in this model. Without interpretation in light of the nuptial mystery, there is only trivialization; and if one wishes to avoid trivialization, one must turn to the nuptial mystery. Simple models have the value of clarity.

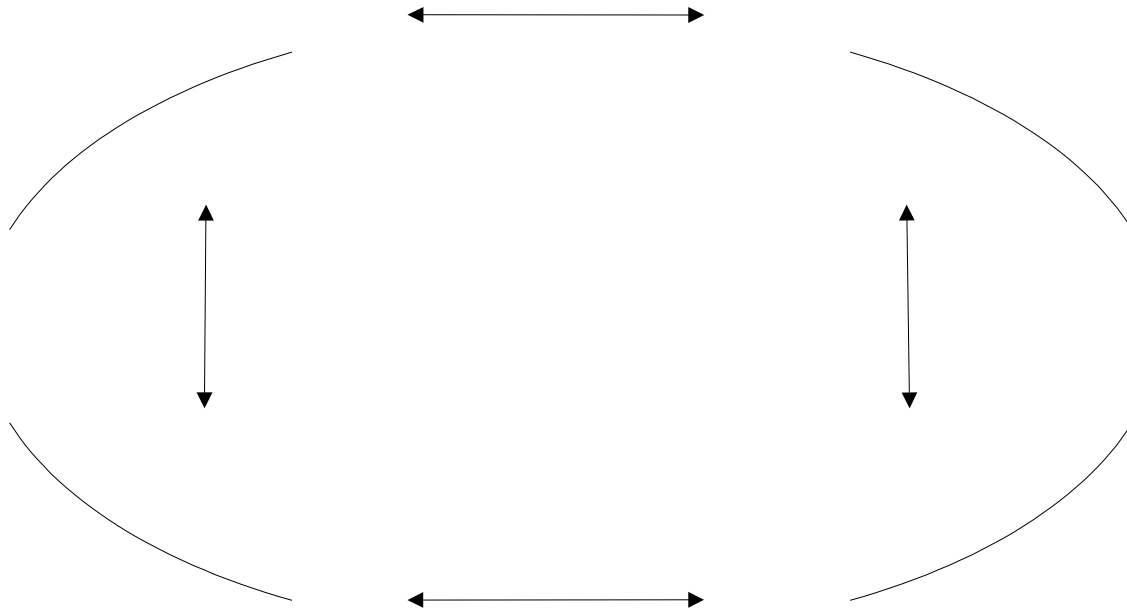
And yet, it seems to me, “all too concise and too clear.”¹²⁸ What happens if one introduces a quadral, rather than dual, model?

125 T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” *The Four Quartets* (cf. n. 16 *supra*), p. 59.

126 T.S. Eliot, “East Coker,” *The Four Quartets* (cf. n. 16 *supra*), p. 31.

127 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. xxiii.

128 Bob Dylan, “Visions of Johanna” (cf. n. 9 *supra*), p. 223.



Such a model introduces a twofold complication, yet also a dual clarity. Efforts at ‘natural’ understanding, to be sure, run the risk of trivialization. But do not appeals to ‘Mystery’ also carry risk of masking mere mystification? And just as the latter risk does not preclude the possibility of understanding the reality of elevation into Mystery, so, too, the former risk does not preclude the possibility of non-trivial natural understanding.

The insight which generated this model in my mind emerged from the cumulative impact of Cardinal Scola’s sources. Other than six references to Freud,¹²⁹ the only reference to any possible contribution to understanding by either the ‘natural’ or the ‘human’ sciences is in a footnote referencing the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss.¹³⁰ There are sweeping generalizations about socio-cultural shifts, and yet one looks in vain for a single demographic fact. There is insistence on physiological evidence, yet no biologist (Darwinian or otherwise) need apply for inclusion in Cardinal Scola’s index of names. The entire project of ‘nuptial theology’ is presented as a “theological anthropology,”¹³¹ yet without the slightest consideration of possible contribution from anthropologists, except for the aforementioned structuralist footnote. Historical judgments abound, but rather histrionically without any historians.

129 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), pp. 56, 59-60, 110, 118, 220, 380. The Freudian references seemed strange at first, but then I understood the commonality: sex underlies everything for Freud, as does nuptiality for Scola. Indeed, the Cardinal seems even less inclined to acknowledge that ‘sometimes a cigar is just a cigar!’

130 *Ibid.*, p. 118. I will briefly return later (pp. 44-45) to Lévi-Strauss, conjecturing as to why his structuralism appeals to Cardinal Scola, and why it seems problematic to me.

131 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

What makes this all seem so strange is the stated insistence that “to understand the meaning of human sexuality we must let the data. . . speak.”¹³² But what counts as ‘data’? And here, the key to the foregoing assertion, of course, is the ellipsis: “-- both phenomenological and ontological – ”. What need of *empirical* data, when one has John Paul’s elucidation of his ‘immediate intuition’ into the meaning of *the* body? What need, either, to inquire whether other persons might have other ‘intuitions’ into the meaning of *their own* bodies, other understandings of the *data* of their own consciousness?

It all hinges on what one means by ‘nature,’ and whether understanding ‘nature’ is the limited preserve of phenomenologists and ontologists, and, even of these, only those from ‘schools’ which receive current ecclesiastical approbation.¹³³ But what if nature is stranger, more mysterious, than is perceived by such approved authors? What if there are more ‘divers fruits’ than those growing in the Vatican gardens? Would it not be wise to ask a botanist?

There is endemic trivialization in modern life – as I suspect there was in pre-modern and will be in post-modern life. But there is endemic mystification, too, as there long has been and long will be. It is attentiveness to Mystery, in both understanding and living, that assists avoidance of trivialization. But it is also attentiveness to nature, again both intellectual and existential, that assists avoidance of mystification.

In terms of my quadral model, the further one goes in ‘Nature’ away from ‘Mystery,’ the nearer one approaches ‘Trivialization;’ the further one goes in ‘Mystery’ away from ‘Nature,’ the nearer one approaches ‘Mystification.’ And, significantly, the more one ‘Mystifies,’ the closer one comes to ‘Trivialization’ from the other side. But the further one proceeds along the way of ‘Trivialization,’ the more one is susceptible to ‘Mystification,’ from another angle.

A textual test of my interpretation comes in Chapter Four, “The Dynamism of Nuptiality: Affection, Love, and Sexuality,”¹³⁴ which I find to be both the most insightful and beautiful in the book. But a strange thing happens on the way from insight to beauty. Cardinal Scola begins with a close textual reading of Aquinas’s understanding of affection, and proceeds to a reiteration of the central themes of nuptial theology – the former pertaining to ‘Nature,’ the latter to ‘Mystery.’ Affection is understood as a dynamic movement beginning in *immutatio*, a transformation of the person, visible to others, that one ‘suffers’ resultant from the awakening of desire. In *coaptatio*, that transformation has worked a harmony between the person and desirable/desired object. There follows *complacentia*,

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹³³ ‘Periodically’ speaking, Cardinal Scola seems to find ‘communion’ only in the pages of *Communio*. The conversation seems enclosed within a quite limited circle – nuptiality, thus, a bit theologically ‘incestuous.’

¹³⁴ Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), pp. 55-81.

natural love (*amor naturalis*), which is genuine love, but emerges prior to engagement of the will, prior to the person's choosing. *Intentio* is the subsequent voluntary engagement, the effective tending toward possession of the object of desire. The culmination of this dynamic process is *gaudium*, the joy in which one rests in possession of the beloved, a reward well worth the initial 'suffering.'

Reading Cardinal Scola's clear and moving presentation sent me scurrying back to the original text.¹³⁵ The influence of Aristotle is clear, but equally clear is that St. Thomas knew whereof he spoke. His prose here is 'moving,' because one senses that he, himself, has been 'moved' by the affection of which he writes. There is attentiveness to 'nature' in this, both in seeking to understand the best 'science' available to him – which was Aristotle – and in seeking to understand what he himself had experienced in the intentional movement of his own consciousness.

It seemed clear that here would emerge the Nature – Mystery nexus that I had found wanting in the rest of the book. Indeed, the author teases to this effect by concluding section one of Chapter Four with the assertion that this Thomist analysis provides "the key for an adequate discussion of sexuality."¹³⁶ But then one turns the page, enters upon discussion of nuptiality, and the strangest thing happens – more precisely, doesn't happen:¹³⁷ he never 'turns the key.' One reads the next twelve pages, without encountering the slightest advertence to the preceding analysis. There is 'Nature,' and there is 'Mystery,' but there is a one-way ticket for travel between them. Still, there is at least acknowledgment of the possibility of 'natural' inquiry, without the slightest taint of trivialization, even though the methodology of nuptial theology allows no value for that inquiry. It, quite precisely, doesn't know what to do with it.

A few, final, textual tidbits before moving on.

The impetus toward evocative rhetoric, rather than clear analysis, shines forth in the following: "There is not a single man (or woman) who can by himself alone be the whole of man."¹³⁸ To one not rhetorically swayed, the question might occur, 'is there a single hetero-sexual couple that *is* the whole of man?' I'm not from Missouri,¹³⁹ but my empirical bent still says, 'show me.' And Cardinal Scola

135 ST I-II, q. 26.

136 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. 71.

137 It's Conan Doyle's dog that didn't bark. And the 'not barking' is a *clue* that something is wrong.

138 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. 7.

139 I have, though, backpacked in the lovely Ozarks, saw the last-ever matchup of Nolan Ryan pitching to George Brett there, and spent many a lovely visit lingering in the impressionist gallery of Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Museum (while saying a prayer or two in the mothballed medieval cloister there).

later proceeds to decry the contemporary “quasi-mythical exaltation of the couple.”¹⁴⁰ Hmmm?

In positing the erosion of cultural sensibility in the 1990s, and then the anthropological mutation of the following decade, he asserts that these radical changes undermined “the very grammar and syntax of the human person and of authentic community.”¹⁴¹ I note this simply to underscore again the recurring fondness for *the* definite article: the grammar and syntax of the human person. It seems a strange image/metaphor for the point he is trying to make; there are, after all, *many* languages, *many* grammars. Even he, in a different context, notes later that there is a “continual evolution of language.”¹⁴² If one takes the image seriously, as phantasm, might not questions lead to the insight that heterosexual-love and homosexual-love are different grammars – to be sure, both Romance languages – with the concomitant question as to whether our current concern might possibly be evidence of the very ‘continual evolution of language’ which he has posited? The questions seem to leap *from* the text. But certainly not *in* it.

Returning to Aquinas, Cardinal Scola notes that the Angelic Doctor posited “natural inclinations as one of the orienting foundations of natural law.”¹⁴³ Given that the notion of sexual *orientation* is a relatively recent discovery, isn’t it reasonable to question whether such ‘orientation’ might constitute precisely such a ‘natural inclination’? It is clear that St. Thomas, in his brief, explicit considerations of homosexual relations, considered such ‘acts’ to be contrary to natural inclination. It is equally clear that he never considered the possibility that different persons might have different sexual inclinations/orientations; that question had not yet arisen. It has arisen now. Widely. And any theology that intends to proceed at the level of our time must ask it.

These latter two texts, pertaining to ‘language’ and ‘inclination,’ point to a troubling constant: phantasms/images virtually bursting with questions – that are never asked. And this doubles back to Scola’s elucidation of the realism of Christian thought, grounded in the insistence: “Human thought is made to grasp reality.” Thus, the “urgency of turning (*cum-vertere*) to things just as they are.”¹⁴⁴ The fundamental issue is the *how* of that grasp, *how* to assure that we have truly turned to things-as-they-are, and not simply to things-as-they-intuitively-seem. And the only way to approach such assurance is through a thoroughlygoing *critical* realism – in which ontology is grounded in epistemology, epistemology grounded in cognitional theory, and cognitional theory grounded in the authenticity of a knowing

140 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. 145.

141 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

144 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

subject. The marks of such authenticity include creative imagination in the formation of phantasms – with regard to images, first is not finest very often – and this involves the relaxation (possibly even the conversion) of Freud’s ‘censor,’ to allow hitherto repressed imaginal/affective content to be released from the psyche into the dynamic flow of intentional consciousness. From this fountainhead flow a river of questions – white water rapids in ‘the best and the brightest,’ a more leisurely stream in us ‘creeks.’ But allowing the questions is the measure of authenticity here, for only questions that are truly asked yield understanding. Without understanding one can still throw around concepts that others have thrown one’s way – sort of a Springtime game of conceptual ‘catch’ – but sedimented concepts have no flow, enabling no movement toward reality. ‘Acts’ of insight, on the contrary, channel the dynamic flow forward, but only through further questions, which return to the possibility of reconfigured images, the possibility of data to which one had not attended, and the anguishing possibility of one’s own bias, one’s own constricted subjectivity. One considers such questions reflectively, marshaling and weighing evidence for affirmation or negation, until the stream of further relevant questions first narrows and then yields to solid ground, whereon one can authentically say, “Here I stand.” There are, however, no shortcuts to reality.

A question in your nerves is lit
 Yet you know there is no answer fit to satisfy
 Insure you not to quit
 To keep it in your mind and not fergit
 That it is not he or she or them or it

That you belong to.¹⁴⁵

Repressing such questions in oneself, or silencing them in others, rests on the illusion of a secret passageway that simply isn’t there. Pretending it is, is Christian *unrealism* – which can result only in *unnatural* law. And if there is a “growing perception of the irrelevance of the moral magisterium,”¹⁴⁶ one might wonder whether such pretending may lie at its root. It is a question – like many others – that never seems to have been lit in the nerves of Angelo Cardinal Scola.

So, step one of this mountainous climb negotiated a notion of nature rooted in cultural bias carrying the force of a sexual taboo, recognized as such only retrospectively. The arduous, winding climb of step two negotiated a notion of nature rooted in the application of an authoritative interpretation of Transcendent Mystery to the terrestrial terrain of inclined sexuality: nature visible only to a God’s-eye view (which an ecclesiastical elite is privileged to share).

145 Bob Dylan, “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” (cf. n. 9 *supra*), p. 177. Here, “Dylan skewers the deadly conformism and lethal hypocrisy of American society.” Steven Heine, *Bargainin’ for Salvation: Bob Dylan, A Zen Master?* (New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 124. Surely, nuptial theologians – Scola, *et al.* – would resonate with such skewering. The question is whether they can understand themselves as juicy morsels fit for imminent impalement on the shish-ka-bob of Mystery. Can you? Can I?

146 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. xxiv.

Now, I want to search the underbrush for the possibility of a different path. In this third step, I return to Aquinas on affection, wondering how he was able to forge such a key, while the nuptialist – holding it in hand, fully forged – was unable even to turn it.

At issue is the central achievement of St. Thomas, indeed, of 13th century Catholic thought: the theorem of the supernatural, first formulated by Philip the Chancellor, but grasped and engaged in its full potential only by Aquinas. This notion of the ‘supernatural’ is not a concept among other concepts, but an overarching/underlying way of thinking that enabled a clarification and ordering of the whole range of data that constitute religious, indeed all human, experience.¹⁴⁷

For any Catholic, indeed, any Christian, our life is a struggle between sin and grace. Whatever distance between us may be introduced by differences of perspective, tradition, or temperament, acknowledgment of that struggle, and of what is at stake, is a point of fundamental unity. But it matters greatly how one understands those realities – ‘sin’ and ‘grace’ – and whether one considers them (i) as a dual reality locked in the eternal conflict that is our existence, or (ii) as best understood through introduction of a *tertium quid*, ‘nature,’ which both significantly transposes our understanding of ‘sin’ and ‘grace,’ and allows consideration of the natural order intrinsically, in terms of its own dynamic structures, as well as, and prior to, its determination by ‘sin’ and ‘grace.’

In the Augustinian perspective, the former option, the necessity of grace is due to sin. Grace is *sanans*, its gratuity due to the fact that its recipients are undeserving, because of sin and its effects – darkening of the intellect and enslavement of the will. By healing the wounds inflicted by sin, grace restores us, enabling fulfillment of the divine law. It is an intensely dramatic vision of human life, its intensity enhanced by the power of Augustine’s person and the beauty of his expression.

147 My meager -- and I recognize it to be precisely that -- understanding of this achievement comes from Lonergan, but his insistence that this is the central Thomist achievement seems widely shared. Lonergan’s fullest elaboration of his interpretation is in *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Volume 1 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), *passim*, but especially pp. 14-20 and 181-191. He returns to the theorem in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (cf. n. 10 *supra*), pp. 744-763. A succinct statement is found in *Method in Theology* (cf. n. 10 *supra*), pp. 309-310. Other interpreters who, in my reading, concur in their insistence that this is the foundational Thomist breakthrough, include: Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, trans. Paul Philibert (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), pp. 81-100; G.K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox* (Garden City NY: Anchor Books, 1956), pp. 71-96; Frederick C. Copleston, S.J., *Aquinas* (New York: Penguin, 1955), pp. 63-69; Fergus Kerr, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 33-38; and Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, trans. John Murray, S.J., and Daniel O’Connor (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), pp. 28-38 and 47-56. For me, the most helpful interpretation of Lonergan’s interpretation has been J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 67-92. Dom Sebastian Moore, O.S.B., offers a succinct statement in his inimitable style, “Ratzinger’s ‘Nature’ Isn’t Natural,” *Commonweal* (January 26, 1990), pp. 49-52.

But does it account for the full richness of our religious experience? Emergent through the twelfth century was a sense that it does not. If the core meaning of grace is the fact of its being undeserved, is not everything – creation itself – grace? We certainly do not merit existence. Numerous early scholastics, culminating in Hugh of St. Victor, answered in the affirmative, speaking of *gratia creatrix*. But this, too, seemed to fall short of enabling believers to understand the full scope of their experience of the reality of grace. All is gratuitous, but there seemed a uniqueness to the gratuity of grace not yet accounted for.

There emerged an understanding that we are unable to attain union with God, not solely, perhaps not even mainly, due to sin, but more fundamentally because of the simple fact of finitude. The finite cannot grasp the Infinite, but, rather, can only be grasped by the Infinite. Grace, then, comes to be understood as a transformation (*elevans*) of the finite, healing of sin and its effects resultant from that transformation.

Sin, then, comes to be understood as the conscious creature's resistance to this transformation, grounded in the mistaken judgment that our finitude is sufficient unto itself, is, indeed, all there is. But this resistance comes from that false judgment, not from finitude itself. Thus, the fundamental character of grace can be understood as being 'beyond nature,' not 'against sin.'

Grace, the unimaginable mystery of the transforming infinite, is no longer to be defined as the remedy for sin. Grace transforms nature while sin absolutizes it. But take out "nature," this new middle term, and sin and grace lock into a conflict that pulls into its orbit all our understanding of the world and God.¹⁴⁸

Grace and nature are not two 'things;' rather, together they offer a way of thinking about ourselves and God that takes seriously both the deadening reality of sin and the experienced, witnessed reality of elevation into a 'new creation' by Faith, Hope, and Charity. This took seriously the reality of conversion, the release of transforming power so evident in the lives of prophets, mystics, and saints, analyzed in all its concreteness by Rosemary Haughton,¹⁴⁹ and sung by Dylan:

The truth was obscure,
too profound and too pure,
to live it you have to explode.¹⁵⁰

148 Sebastian Moore, O.S.B. (cf. n. 147 *supra*), p. 50.

149 Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man* (Springfield IL: Templegate Publishers, 1967, 1980). The question at hand would be whether her reflections in chapter two (pp. 41-84) on sexual encounter could be fruitfully brought to bear on a same-sex relationship. I don't know the answer to that question, but I am quite confident that Haughton herself would insist that it is not only a legitimate question, but an urgent one.

150 Bob Dylan, "Where Are You Tonight? (Journey Through Dark Heat)" (cf. n. 9 *supra*), p. 413.

The experienced reality of such transforming events, and consequent converted living, has been, of course, widely known and lived in all ages of the Church's life. The Thomist breakthrough, though, enabled understanding of that reality as elevation to a new level of being. And this understanding seemed true to experience.

But this way of thinking also freed nature to be understood in terms of its own intrinsic dynamisms. Marie-Dominique Chenu expresses this natural liberation from its prior constriction:

Things *are* and temporal events *are* – not just their “eternal reasons.” The theocratic theology of the Augustinian position considered ideas the locus of truth and counterposed them to passing existences, making ideas the objects of a fallacious science that is relegated to subservience to religiosity. But in Thomism, temporal becoming is absolutely real.¹⁵¹

And that becoming, the dynamism of contingent realities – including persons in the full contingency of their actual existence – has its own intelligibility. It is in the intelligence that is able to grasp this intelligibility, and to live in its light, that human persons are *imago Dei*. But, in Chenu's expression, we are first *imago mundi*,¹⁵² our self-understanding beginning at a more ‘mundane’ level than the imposition of Trinitarian Archetypes.

Cardinal Scola insisted that it was only consideration of human sexuality as *imago Dei* – the counterposing of ideas to passing existences – that enables differentiation from animal sexuality.¹⁵³ Aquinas's consideration of affection, from this perspective, was a matter of doing what, in Augustinian principle, cannot be done. And yet, he did it. There was nothing trivializing in the Thomist analysis, no claim that such natural affection is all there is. In fact, his notion of *caritas* will involve a transformation into supernatural living – but precisely as an elevation of natural affection. Find first the natural inclination, follow it, and you will find the direction of its elevation by grace.

St. Thomas, it seems to me, understood the structured dynamism – the inclination – of affection within his own experience, found the natural categories of Aristotelian science helpful in expressing that understanding, and lived that inclination and its understanding with an openness to the transforming elevation of grace. But he didn't seek, in his affectional inclinations, hints as to the nature of Trinitarian Mystery, hints that could be mystically intensified, and then turn the light of that intensity back on his affections in order to understand them. He engaged in no such ‘fallacious science.’ He had sufficient trust in the Wisdom of the Creator of his own contingent existence, that he could seek the intelligibility of that existence,

151 Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P. (cf. n. 147 *supra*), p. 88.

152 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

153 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. 10.

in its very contingency, while remaining ever open to whatever amazing transformations grace might work.

One approaches the reality of a person's sexual orientation quite differently from this perspective, seeking first to understand that inclination in itself, not in terms of Trinitarian nuptiality, nor with a presumption of closure to supernatural transformation. One begins, in short, with questions, not answers. Might not a gay man or woman find Aquinas's analysis of affection an uncannily apt understanding of his or her own experience? Wouldn't asking some gay men and women be the way to find out? If consistent differences emerged, might one not try to understand a possible pattern of difference? Might not the insights of those who have asked such questions from the methodological standpoints of the various arts and sciences – biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, literature, music – be worth considering? And might not spiritual directors – listen to Fr. Harvey, yes, but Fr. McNeill, too (a dialectic of Johns!) – offer insights into the possible transformation of gay life and love by the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity? By their fruits, you shall know them.

Proceeding in such a manner is neither neat and tidy, nor easy. Science is enormously more complex than it was in the thirteenth century, but it is so precisely because of what happened then. Thomas forged a key, and there were many who did know how to turn it. The natural world – the setting of our living and killing, loving and betraying, creating and destroying, dancing and dying – was opened to exploration, in terms of its own structured dynamism. The Western mind was once “liberated by theology into an unimpeded exploration of the natural world.”¹⁵⁴ Yet now, it seems, theology would have us shrink from that exploration. Cardinal Scola insisted that “human thought is made to grasp reality,”¹⁵⁵ yet his own thinking seems more to reflect Eliot's shrug:

human kind

Cannot bear very much reality.¹⁵⁶

Thus, Chenu refers to the “spiritual escapism” of Augustinian Platonism,¹⁵⁷ drawing a series of contrasts between Bonaventure and Aquinas, and between Augustinians and Thomists, which are very much to the point of my present concern. He notes, for instance, that Bonaventure had objected to theological use of any notion of natural law.¹⁵⁸ Since “admission of our ontological poverty is the expression of our

154 Sebastian Moore, O.S.B. (cf. n. 147 *supra*), p. 51. ‘Liberation theology’ as a tautology, not an oxymoron!

155 Cf. n. 144 *supra*.

156 T.S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton” (cf. n. 16 *supra*), p. 14.

157 Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P. (cf. n. 147 *supra*), p. 90.

158 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

‘nothingness’” for Augustinians,¹⁵⁹ there is literally ‘nothing’ in ‘nature’ warranting theological attention or enabling theological insight. Thomas, however, gave rapt attention to nature, insisting that the ontological dependence of creatures on Creator indicated not ‘nothingness,’ but *being*. Accordingly, “human creatures still come to exercise a real personal autonomy,”¹⁶⁰ and it is in the very exercise of that autonomy that natural law can come to be understood. Augustinian thought rejected this, Bonaventure insisting that it is “dangerous to admit too much to creatures,” shunning natural inquiry “even at the cost of truth.”¹⁶¹ He insisted, rather, on sole attentiveness to the image of the supernatural projected upon things and the human heart.¹⁶²

Between Thomas and his Augustinian opponents, there was a commonality of both faith and theological assertion. Both posited the human person as a union of soul and body, of spirit and matter. But the manner in which those realities are imagined, understood, affirmed, and lived “will clearly shape the outcome of differing anthropologies and spiritualities.”¹⁶³ And that, I suggest, is not only what was at issue then, but also what is at stake now. Chenu notes, for example, that Bonaventure made use of Aristotelian concepts, but he did so “within a worldview foreign to their spirit and tone.”¹⁶⁴ Cardinal Scola’s attempt to make use of the Thomist analysis of *amor naturalis* is similar. He could interpret that analysis brilliantly, but it simply didn’t ‘fit’ in the worldview underlying his argument. Thus, too, the unwillingness or inability to face squarely question after question. Chenu quotes J.-P. Audet:

In the Platonic world, there is a need for evasion, an obligation to flee from certain things which are considered as irreconcilable with human hope.¹⁶⁵

In the “realist spirituality”¹⁶⁶ of Thomas, hope is far more expansive, and so he “explicitly refused not only the consequences but also the principle of this Augustinian anthropology.”¹⁶⁷ This enabled him to consider, both at length and in depth, the notion of natural moral law “which is discovered and defined by examining human nature, not by setting out with *a priori* ideas about the eternal

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

law.”¹⁶⁸ Chenu considers the latter method, with its focus on “the eternal, changeless place natural to the spirit,”¹⁶⁹ to constitute a “spiritual imperialism,” which holds itself above “the degradation of centrifugal bodily energies,”¹⁷⁰ whereas, for Thomas, those very ‘bodily energies’ enable the human person to be “the agent of the expansion of creative love into the very texture of matter.”¹⁷¹ Rather than beginning with *a priori* categories derived, e.g., from a notion of nuptial mystery, and imposing them – universally, necessarily, and certainly – on the dynamism of human desire, Thomist realism begins with that very dynamism. It doesn’t end there; indeed, it anticipates that there will be elevations, transformations, explosions galore. Beginning with concrete human desire doesn’t confine us to Scola’s dreaded ‘intracosmic realm,’ but it does refuse the equally real confinement of human possibility through the imposition of *a priori* religious categories. St. Thomas thought, prayed, and lived with an abiding trust that “human intelligence is the effect and the guarantee of a sense of mystery.”¹⁷² Without that sense, to be sure, reductionism ensues, and the *humanum* is reduced to the sociobiological caricature that is widespread in the Heideggerian *da* of our *sein*. But comparable caricatures have been widespread in every age of the Church’s life and mission. They were no more absent from the thirteenth century than from our own. But there are theological caricatures, too, now as there were then. The *humanum* can be reduced by religion, as well as by science. Dogmatic mystification is no more adequate to the reality of who we are than is any dogmatic Darwinism, and proposing the former as an adequate response to the latter is a fool’s errand – no matter who sends you as their ‘errand boy.’

Concerning the moral teaching of the *prima secundae*, Chenu remarks that there are surprises here for a certain type of moralist who looks only at *a priori* considerations and who extrapolates metaphysical and mystical ideas foreign to practical human behavior and to its internal criteria of freedom.¹⁷³

They are the kind of surprises that result from Noonan’s modes of “deepening the understanding of revelation.”¹⁷⁴ Is it possible that homosexual desire growing toward natural love and open to the transformation of supernatural *caritas* is precisely such a surprise? Can gay love, too, be “the agent of the expansion of

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. n. 72 *supra*.

creative love into the very texture of matter"?¹⁷⁵ We will never *know* the answer to that question without *asking* it. Our tradition provides us with no ready-made answer, because it really is a new question. But there are, if one looks for them, pointers in the tradition, and to them we must attend.

Two Thomist texts point me in just such a potentially surprising direction:

Because of the diverse conditions of humans, it happens that some acts are virtuous to some people and suitable to them, while the same acts are immoral for others, as inappropriate to them.¹⁷⁶

For it can occur that in a particular individual there can be a breakdown of some natural principle of the species and thus what is contrary to the nature of the species can become by accident natural to this individual.¹⁷⁷

In the latter instance, St. Thomas explicitly mentions among his examples, *in coitu masculorum*, acknowledging that for some persons this can be *connaturale secundum quid*. There is recognition here that a person is more than a member of the species, something that both ideological Darwinians and ideological Aristotelians can easily tend to forget. In any ideological system, whether intellectual or political, there is a tending towards totalism, in which the individual person is simply "a multitude of one million divided by one million."¹⁷⁸ No such ideological totalizing tempts Thomas. However systematic he seems, awareness of inclinations that may be 'natural to *this* individual' accords his thinking on persons an openness rooted in awareness of *this* person's freedom as both coming forth from God and beckoned to return to God precisely in the *this-ness* of that situated freedom. His vehement rejection of the Averroist notion of some universal human mind received its vehemence precisely from this awareness.

Josef Pieper also highlights

that affirmation of the natural reality of creation which is so characteristic of St. Thomas. All created things are good because they were created by God. For that same reason, they have a reality and effectiveness of their own, which may not be ignored or obliterated through making absolute in one way or another the "spiritual" or "religious" element in man.¹⁷⁹

175 Cf. n. 171 *supra*.

176 ST I-II, q. 94, a. 3, *ad* 3.

177 ST I-II, q. 31, a. 7, *Responsio*.

178 Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 262.

179 Josef Pieper (cf. n. 147 *supra*), p. 30.

He adds his judgment that theologians in the Barthian mode “were risking the error of removing from the Christian consciousness the reality of creation itself.”¹⁸⁰ This is the danger of the Augustinian tradition, Protestant and Catholic:

. . . one may well say of St. Augustine, without violating the reverence due to this great saint and great thinker, that, as the history of Christian teaching shows, his work falls more easily into the danger of being construed, or, rather, *misconstrued* in the sense of a de-actualization and devaluation of the visible reality of creation.¹⁸¹

My profound concern here is that precisely this danger has again entered ‘the history of Christian teaching’ in our day, which is why I have clumsily grappled with it at such length. There is much more at stake here than whether to amend or not amend the Constitution of our polity, much more at issue than whether you or I judge certain sexual acts to be peculiar or not particularly peculiar. My concern is with *how* we think about these things, because that is how we will think about everything -- about ourselves, about ‘others,’ and about God.

Concerning the latter, the title of Pieper’s little book, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, takes its cue from the *via negativa*, of such fundamental importance in Aquinas. Relevant texts could multiply like heterosexual bunny rabbits, but two will suffice here:

Because we are not capable of knowing what God is, but only what He is not, we cannot contemplate how God is but only how He is not.¹⁸²

This is the ultimate in human knowledge of God: to know that we do not know Him.¹⁸³

Karl Rahner points out numerous Scriptural texts on which Thomas commented with similar insistence,¹⁸⁴ elaborating the Thomist insistence that God remains absolutely incomprehensible to human beings even in the beatific vision – even there, the light of glory is finite -- that this is an inescapable dimension of the Creator-creature relation.¹⁸⁵

But if the only way that we can know anything of value about what it means to be human is in the light of what we know about God – as Cardinal Scola has

180 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

181 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

182 ST I, q. 3, Prologue.

183 *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei*, q. 7, a. 5, ad 14.

184 E.g., Job 11.7; Jer 32.18 ff.; John 1.18; Rom 11.33; 1 Cor 9.24; Eph 3.1-20; Phil 3.12; 1 Tim 6.15-16. Karl Rahner, S.J., “Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God,” *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure*, Supplement to *The Journal of Religion* 58 (1978), ed. David Tracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 108.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

insisted – then we had damn well better know a lot about God! Which, of course, he thinks he does, as do so many of his theological confrères. And from what they ‘know’ about God, they tell us, with necessary and universal clarity, what we need to ‘know’ about ourselves. But if their ‘knowledge’ of God is suspect, then so, too, is the knowledge of ‘us’ that they would impart.

Nuptial theology, it seems to me, stands in desperate need of intense apophatic critique. As do we all.

I return often to Fr. Berrigan’s *The Dark Night of Resistance*,¹⁸⁶ his underground reflections on John of the Cross, in order to be reminded how central to our faith is experience of that utter blackness in which entire cultural, conceptual universes dissolve. And that darkness dissolves ecclesiastical universes of discourse, as much as any other – if not more. We grow so confident in our ‘knowledge’ of ‘what God is.’ Preachers preach their ‘knowledge’ with such eloquence. Pieper wryly remarks upon how seldom in the course of his long life he had ever heard the incomprehensibility of God proclaimed from the pulpit.¹⁸⁷ St. Thomas began there, ended there, and threaded there beginning-to-end. I suspect he had less need of dark nights, because he lived and thought in the darkness, had no fear of it. He didn’t need to know ‘what God is’ in order to gain understanding of who we are, needing only to know, rather, that we ‘are’ only because God ‘is,’ and because of that very fact we can come to know something of ourselves, our world, our life in that world, and our hope beyond it.

Most of us fear that darkness like the plague, and so we fill our heads with certainties and bask in their cheap light. We render judgments of others who are ‘other’ – perhaps their ‘animal sexuality’ with Cardinal Scola, or their ‘bestiality’ with your surrogates. What ‘they’ have isn’t ‘love,’ it can’t be, because we ‘know’ what God is, and God isn’t ‘that.’ But then those very certainties, with which we would ward off the plague of darkness, become themselves a plague which deals death – perhaps even ‘the second death’ -- all around. Camus’s narrator understatedly observes of the townspeople of Oran that before the plague descended, “they forgot to be modest, that was all.”¹⁸⁸ Among the least modest was Father Paneloux, a character that has haunted me for forty years. Shortly after the outbreak of the pestilence, he delivered an explanatory sermon, whose clarity far exceeded its charity. By the end of the novel, though, I find him to be its most transformed character. He joined Dr. Rieux’s team visiting the infected, puncturing pustules and draining pus. He, who had preached at length, came to speak little, to listen much. As clarity vanished in the darkness, charity shone from it. At novel’s end, there was only, in Berrigan’s rendering of 1 Cor 13.13, “love, love at the end.”¹⁸⁹ And as modesty returned, the plague withdrew, but only biding its time, surely to return

186 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *The Dark Night of Resistance* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971).

187 Josef Pieper (cf. n. 147 *supra*), p. 37. Though I suspect he had heard an incomprehensible homily or two!

188 Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York: Random House, 1948), p. 35.

once again to rouse up its rats to infest another immodest city, to cut its townspeople down to size, “left with a few paltry, precious possessions of the mind and heart.”¹⁹⁰

When the plague struck with its most ferocious terror in the middle of the last century, just before your birth and mine, the starkness of the stakes became most evident. The central insight that I take from Robert Krieg’s penetrating study of Catholic theologians in Nazi Germany¹⁹¹ is that traditional scholastic theologians tended neither toward resistance nor collaboration, but that those of Augustinian persuasion tended toward one or the other. Engelbert Krebs emerges as the very glory of the Lord in the witness of his ‘No!’, Romano Guardini, too, less luminously, but still, given the situation, the beauty of the Cross manifest in his very person as well as his thought. But there were, as well, Karl Eschweiler, Joseph Lortz, and, most terrifyingly, Karl Adam, who were swept up in the appeal of the Third Reich’s detestation of the moral perversities perceived in the liberalism of the Weimar Republic. In them, Heidegger had clerical company in his flirtation with madness.

The notion of ‘the evocative’ returns. Scholastic conceptualism could not evoke the courage needed, but neither did it evoke enthusiasm for evil. A more evocative theology did one or the other, but could not provide adequate criteria for authentic, faithful, costly choice. What is it that distinguished Krebs from Eschweiler? I have no answer, but only a suspicion that the ‘dark night’ might have had something to do with it. I’ve never read Krebs or Eschweiler – indeed, had never heard of them before reading Krieg’s book – but have long felt the appeal of both Guardini and Adam. Before that reading, though, I had never wondered about any ‘difference’ between them. I now can’t stop wondering, and there seems a certainty, a harshness, in Adam, that I don’t find in Guardini, who seems both more humane and modest, yet more profound precisely because of that humane modesty, as if the dark night had dissolved clarity into charity in one, more than the other.

No insinuation of incipient Nazism motivates my mention of this. The only ‘place’ I have any business wondering about such is my own self. But a difference so stark in Catholic thinkers so seemingly similar makes me wonder about the foundations of such difference more generally. What is it, for example, that makes the notion of nuptiality so different in Scola and Berrigan? Both refer frequently to the spousal imagery of Genesis, Hosea, Ephesians, and Revelation. For the Cardinal, this clarifies things, gives certainty to his judgment of certain kinds of human love that image the divine, and other kinds that do not, because they *cannot*. For Berrigan, it is not a question of human mirroring the divine. He takes

189 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *Love, Love at the End: Parables, Prayers and Meditations* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

190 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., “A Camus Glossary,” *No Bars to Manhood* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), p. 141.

191 Robert A. Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

the imagery more literally, and focuses on the ‘jealousy’ of divine love, with its imperious demand that we surrender our attachments to all ‘powers and principalities’ that tempt us with the allure of their clarity and certainty, and that we be willing to accept the price of that surrender. God, as Lover, will strip us naked.

Between the two there seems a distance that can be measured in degree of darkness that has been embraced. Clarity on one side of darkness, charity on the other. There seems a parallel chasm between yourself and your foremost clerical critic. Having read your cocksure pronouncements on the marriage matter, Fr. Tegeder’s responses, and your consequent threats, I am led to sing you this anti-lullaby in hope of a dark and sleepless night:

When the whip that’s keeping you in line doesn’t make him jump,
Say he’s hard-of-hearin’, say that he’s a chump.
Say he’s out of step with reality as you try to test his nerve

Because he doesn’t pay no tribute to the king that you serve.

He’s the property of Jesus
Resent him to the bone
You got something better

You’ve got a heart of stone.¹⁹²

Harsh? Sure.¹⁹³ But the real question is whether it’s true. And I think it is. You are so focused on how we use our bodily *members*, and whether that ‘use’ mirrors the divine, that through the smoke and mirrors the Cross of Christ is lost from sight. It is in surrender to the Cross that our natural loves find elevation into the life of God, in the most surprising ways. Without that surrender and elevation, our most ‘appropriate’ loves fall short. With it, we are Christ’s, and He is God’s. The key question is whether we are *members* of the Body. That is the proclamation we desperately need to hear, and that need is rather impervious to Constitutional text.

Our understanding of nature, including natural love, will undergo permutations, age to age, and culture to culture. And there will be decline, as well as progress; both are real vectors of human history. We must always be engaged in promoting the latter, reversing the former. It is ‘natural’ that there will be argument about which is which, and that argument must be allowed to take its ‘natural’ course. This is precisely the argument in which we are presently engaged. There is no surprise in the fact that members of the Church come to this argument with different understandings, and different judgments. But where we should not differ is in our insistence that there is a third vector in human history, beyond progress and decline, and that is redemption. Whatever the resolution of natural argument, there

192 Bob Dylan, “Property of Jesus” (cf. n. 9 *supra*), p. 456.

193 It may not seem like it, but I have, to this point, tried to soften the harshest edges of my expression. Having read of the contretemps at De La Salle High School, though, and your office’s treatment of what happened there as a public relations problem, rather than as what it is – sin – leaves me somewhat less concerned with being respectful.

remains the mission of the Church to invite transformation of that resolution through the mysterious ministration of grace. Whose heart attaches to whose heart naturally matters, but what ultimately matters is whether those hearts are of stone, or of flesh.

The worldview emerging from the thirteenth century opened possibilities for understanding nature in terms of its own dynamic energies, rather than in terms of reflections from some ideal realm, and this freed, not only theology, but ministry, to a deepened sense of the transformations wrought by grace. That today's official Catholic thinking seems to have turned its back on that breakthrough seems tragic, and leaves me deeply saddened. But my highly unofficial and even more highly insignificant Catholic thinking presses on.

In this fourth stage of our mountainous climb, I will try to be as brief as I was long in stage three. There simply lingers the question as to where one turns for assistance in understanding the structured dynamisms of our nature if one wants to think and live within the Thomist worldview, but recognizes that Aristotle, for all his brilliance and perennial value, no longer provides the height, depth, length, and breadth of natural scientific understanding. And what might that 'turning' mean for present concern?

When I first finished reading *The Nuptial Mystery*, I felt a bit of a need to come back down to earth from transcendent orbit, and so I picked up a little book by Jared Diamond,¹⁹⁴ in which the great physiologist explores the evolutionary biological roots of the fact that human sex is fun. I mean, I always suspected as much, but, still, it's nice to have empirical proof. The details are delightful, but the fundamental point is what matters here. Cardinal Scola was deeply concerned with the need to probe the internal processions of Trinitarian love in order to distinguish human from animal sexuality. Diamond would tell him to chill. Our sexuality can't help but be human. It may, to be sure, be humane or inhumane, but it is not animal. Attention to basic biological fact eliminates this misleading consternation.

Other mammals tend¹⁹⁵ to have no interest in sex outside the brief, fertile phase of the reproductive cycle. Females advertise their fertile availability: their vaginas turning bright red in some species, presenting-rearward to male passersby, emitting distinctive smells, making noises like the damn she-cat that periodically prowls my neighborhood making it absolutely impossible to sleep until some tomcat relieves her misery. Absent those signs, though, sexuality simply isn't a factor in animal life.

We are rather different critters altogether. In fact, we need to take classes in order to learn how to recognize the subtle signs of fertility (thermometers, mucus,

194 Jared Diamond, *Why Is Sex Fun? The Evolution of Human Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

195 As I will soon argue, we need, though, to be careful of universals here. Bonobos and dolphins seem to engage in non-reproductive sexual frolicking, but that's about it.

and all that). And those who take such classes more often than not wait for such signs to disappear in order to say 'oh boy almond joy.' The fundamental fact is that human sex is fun, and there is something fundamentally wrong with discussions of sex in which there is not the slightest advertence to human playfulness. The vast majority of human sexual acts have nothing whatsoever to do with reproduction. That has always been the case; we now simply know it.

I am not being frivolous here. If that seems to be the case, then I am failing in my expression, or you in your reading, or some combination of the two. Some things are just far too important to be considered with the unrelieved seriousness that seems to characterize far too much Catholic moral reflection on matters sexual. This is another sign that something is wrong. In his commentary on the *Nichomachean Ethics*, St. Thomas writes:

Therefore, unmitigated seriousness betokens a lack of virtue because it wholly despises play, which is as necessary for a good human life as rest is.¹⁹⁶

Thus I found myself, as I was reading, occasionally saying to Cardinal Scola, 'give it a rest!' To which I now would add, 'give it a jest!' It's not that sex isn't serious stuff; it is. It can give life, and it can kill. But it tends to be deadly from too little playfulness, not too much. And the question of how to assist couples toward genuinely humane playfulness has profound pastoral urgency.¹⁹⁷ That is a first lesson from evolutionary biology.

The only other point I would make here is that neo-Darwinian thought renders possible, and necessary, a transposition of the Aristotelian notion of *species*. In the classical concept,

the differences among the individuals grouped under the same species concern only accidental characteristics, whereas different species are distinguished from each other by their different essential forms.¹⁹⁸

The evolutionary notion of species involves no such universal and necessary essence. It is more a matter of 'family resemblance.' Members of a species share a preponderance of traits, but there are no specific traits shared by all. I know of no more serious engagement with neo-Darwinian thought from a fundamentally Thomist perspective than that of Stephen Pope, who comments:

Knowledge of evolution replaces this static notion of species with one that is more open to change, is less stable, and allows considerably more diversity.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ *Eth. ad Nic.* IV, 8, 11, 1128B.

¹⁹⁷ And since you seem able to find piles of money lying around to devote to other tasks, perhaps you could find a million bucks or so to devote to helping your pastors with this urgent need.

¹⁹⁸ Josef Santeler, "Species," *Philosophical Dictionary*, ed. Walter Brugger, trans. Kenneth Baker (Spokane: Gonzaga University Press, 1972), p. 384.

¹⁹⁹ Stephen J. Pope, *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 148.

And this insight into nature is a game-changer, with which we must come to terms if our speech about 'natural' law is to be anything other than a game of 'let's pretend.' Heterosexual inclination remains the human 'norm,' but deviation from that norm is perfectly natural in our species. 'Norm' is a statistical term, and, while this does not preclude the possibility of a moral import to the term, moral reflection must begin with that statistical fact if it is to proceed as a 'natural' investigation. Reproduction remains essential to our species. But, while we have long acknowledged that it is not necessarily essential to each individual (thus, your celibacy is perfectly natural – well, maybe not 'perfectly,' but that's a matter for you and your confessor), we now must grapple with the fact that it is not essential to every couple. The vast majority of infertile couples in Minnesota are heterosexual, and that will remain true whether our Constitution tells it to be true or not. That fact changes nothing about the nature of our species, but it may well change how we think about individual persons and couples.

And this is not completely discontinuous with traditional ways of thinking. St. Thomas had observed:

Instead we should state that distinctiveness and the plurality of things is because the first agent, who is God, intended them. For he brought things into existence so that his goodness might be communicated to creatures and re-enacted through them. And because one single creature was not enough, he produced many and diverse, so that what was wanting in one expression of the divine goodness might be supplied by another, for goodness, which in God is single and all together, in creatures is multiple and scattered. Hence the whole universe more completely than one alone shares and represents his goodness. And because divine wisdom is the cause of variety in things.²⁰⁰

Greater variety than he could have possibly imagined, knowing nothing of either quarks or bandicoots, though he surely would have relished the opportunity to learn of both. And in that very curiosity he seems strangely more akin to contemporary scientists than to many who spend their entire lives interpreting his own words.

My knowledge of contemporary biology could be contained in the proverbial thimble, so I will stop here, lest I reveal too much more ignorance. I know enough, though, to assert that you can't authentically pontificate about natural law without knowing about nature, and you can't know about human nature without knowing about biology, and today you can't know about biology without investigating our evolutionary inheritance. Further, such investigations seem clearly to point to greater natural diversity in our species than had been classically conceived. Any moral thinking that attempts to shortcut such investigation is mere moralizing, another way of saying 'mystification.'

A next step is the realization that it is in our nature to be incomplete without the directing information provided to our evolutionary inheritance by culture, our 'second nature.'

200 ST I, q. 47, a. 1, *Responsio*.

Whatever universal species-specific biological traits we have will always bear their moral significance within particular cultural contexts.²⁰¹

And here, of course, emerges another source of variation, and thus a further foundation of divergent understandings of 'nature.' Cardinal Scola's oblique reference to Claude Lévi-Strauss is instructive here, with its assumption of structuralism as preferred mode of anthropological reflection, enabling him to posit a universal "central core" of culture.²⁰² Subsequent generations of anthropologists sought long for such a 'core,' but have quite generally concluded²⁰³ that it had all been akin to Ponce de León's quest for the fountain of youth. It had been an enchanting quest, but at a certain point you stop looking for the fountain, which isn't 'there,' and start looking at what *is* 'there.' What Lévi-Strauss had found in the savages of the Brazilian jungles was precisely what Rousseau had told him he would find,²⁰⁴ and that was precisely why he 'found' it. He hadn't really even needed to make his Amazonian journey. Such anthropology "annuls history," and "replaces the particular minds of particular savages in particular jungles with the Savage Mind immanent in us all."²⁰⁵

Anthropologists today tend not to find any such 'central core,' and they have looked far and wide. To the extent that there is something universally present in the dizzying array of human cultural variety, it is the fact that we are meaning-making and meaning-made beings. The biological facts of food, sex, and death, always and everywhere evoke meanings to make sense of them. Meaning-making is universal; 'meanings' are not. And desperate efforts to construe universal cultural meanings tend to blind those making such efforts to the concrete reality of the meaning-makers they actually encounter.

There emerges from this, of course, a constant stream of accusations of relativism. A certain cast of mind can rest only in universals, and seems only able to cast aspersions on others not caught in the net of that need. Contemporary anthropologists have not stopped positing a universal and necessary core of culture

201 Stephen J. Pope (cf. n. 199 *supra*), p. 234.

202 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. 158.

203 Cf. Clifford Geertz, "The Cerebral Savage: On the Work of Claude Lévi-Strauss," *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 345-359.

204 *Ibid.*, pp. 356-358. His work was "an ingenious and somewhat roundabout attempt to defend a metaphysical position, advance an ideological argument, and serve a moral cause." *Ibid.*, p. 347. Geertz also comments, "Like Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss's search is not after all for men, whom he doesn't much care for, but for Man, with whom he is enthralled." *Ibid.*, p. 356.

205 *Ibid.*, p. 355.

because they have surrendered to any dictatorship of relativism, but simply because they have discovered that assertion of such a cultural core is not *true*. Ironic, isn't it? Insistence on pursuing truth, wherever it leads, leads to being accused of relativism. Back to Chenu's judgment that Bonaventure was willing to sacrifice truth in order to defend the worldview he fearfully found essential to his faith.²⁰⁶

Resistance to absolutism doesn't necessarily constitute relativism. Clifford Geertz insists that, while he is not a relativist, he is insistently "anti anti-relativist."²⁰⁷ His allusion, of course, is to the McCarthyism of our childhood: being anti anti-Communist did not mean that one secretly carried hammers and sickles tattooed on one's heart; it simply meant that one judged the Senator from Wisconsin to be an unconscionable bully, who painted with far too broad a brush, and, thus, did a horribly sloppy job, at enormous human cost. Similarly, simple refusal to pay obeisance to the claims of absolutism does not constitute relativism. The whole back-and-forth of accusations, claims and counter-claims, is often nothing more than a chimera. To be sure, both relativism and absolutism are real dangers: the former eliminates human judgment, the latter removes that judgment from history.

Authenticity requires making judgments *in* history, and that is the real crux of the matter. The truly significant distinction is between authenticity and inauthenticity, not between relativism and anti-relativism. Positing truth is always relative: relative to the absence of further relevant questions. A presumption of positing truth, unless tentatively and modestly, in the presence of such questions, betokens inauthenticity. And that is true of an Eminence like Your Grace, as well as of a peon like me.

In one of Fr. Lonergan's most influential essays, he distinguished a classicist world-view from historical-mindedness.²⁰⁸ Of the former, he wrote:

If one abstracts from all respects in which one man can differ from another, there is left a residue named human nature and the truism that human nature is always the same. One may fit out the eternal identity, human nature, with a natural law. One may complete it with the principles for the erection of positive law. One may hearken to divine revelation to acknowledge a supernatural order, a divine law, and a positive ecclesiastical law. So one may work methodically from the abstract and universal towards the more concrete

206 Cf. p. 35 *supra*.

207 Clifford Geertz, "Anti Anti-Relativism," *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 42-67.

208 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., "The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical-Mindedness," *A Second Collection*, ed. William F.J. Ryan, S.J., and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 1-9.

and particular, and the more one does so, the more one is involved in the casuistry of applying a variety of universals to concrete singularity.²⁰⁹

Accusations of relativism come easily from this stance, but any such easy accusations are utterly dependent *upon* the stance. They are relative to the assumption of a particular worldview.

But there is another option: "One can begin from people as they are."²¹⁰ From this divergent beginning, one no longer apprehends the human abstractly through definitions that apply *omni et soli*, necessarily verifiable in the human as such, which is an unchanging abstraction. Beginning with the concrete,

one can apprehend mankind as a concrete aggregate developing over time, where the locus of development and, so to speak, the synthetic bond is the emergence, expansion, differentiation, dialectic of meaning and of meaningful performance. On this view intentionality, meaning, is a constitutive component of human living; moreover, this component is not fixed, static, immutable, but shifting, developing, going astray, capable of redemption; on this view there is in the historicity, which results from human nature, an exigence for changing forms, structures, methods; and it is on this level and through this medium of changing meaning that divine revelation has entered the world and that the Church's witness is given to it.²¹¹

Refusing to make a judgment in the concrete, here and now, in this particular situation, when all evidence demands it, may well constitute relativism. But making a judgment in the abstract, always and everywhere, without regard to concrete reality, with potential evidence needing to be either ignored or suppressed, is absolutism.

Culture constitutes a set of *meaningful* solutions to the widely varied problems of living that emerge in human societies. And as those problems are concrete, so, too, the solutions. There are always residual 'problems' that we haven't 'solved' very well. Emergent in our time and place is a gnawing realization that we haven't 'solved' the 'problem' of homosexuality very well. Indeed, the question has emerged as to whether regarding it as a 'problem' may be at the very heart of why our cultural 'solutions' have so inhibited human flourishing, indeed, have caused so much human hurt and pain. One of the most striking things about social scientific literature about this question is the fact that it does seem true that a whole host of psychological disorders were attendant upon homosexual inclination a relatively short time ago; an even more striking thing is that this simply is not true any longer. Those psychological disorders did not emerge necessarily from psychosexual orientation itself, but from the very cultural meanings that had been

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

attached to such orientation. And this has both theological and pastoral implications.

It does not take much imagination to understand how much heterosexual activity would tend to be dehumanized and compulsive if heterosexual liaisons were considered illegal and criminal by the state and the effect of sin by the Church. As we have seen, the insistence on the objective sinfulness of all homosexual relationships is precisely the type of moral thinking that psychologically destroys the ability of many homosexuals to enter into a permanent and fruitful relationship. The only certain substantive conclusion that follows from the scientific data is the terrible cost in terms of human suffering and degradation that has followed on the mistaken moral judgments and prejudices of the past which still are invoked to support the prejudices of the present.²¹²

Those who think differently than you do on this matter are not trying “to eliminate the need for marriage altogether,” as you have asserted.²¹³ They are simply engaging in the concrete judgment that our sociocultural solutions have proven problematic, and, accordingly, that solutions to the very problems that we have caused are called for. They are simply making a judgment-in-history, which simply diverges from your presumptive judgment-in-eternity.

But, of course, ‘culture’ itself is a pretty generic notion, and, for most of us, cultural meanings and values are mediated through a more particular, and more intimate, grouping. Here again I come so close to agreeing with Pope John Paul, Cardinal Scola, and you, that I end up disagreeing entirely. Commenting extensively on *Familiaris Consortio*, Cardinal Scola devotes about half his book to consideration of ‘the family.’ It is here that we are schooled in meanings and values, and that schooling lasts a lifetime and beyond. Problematic, of course, is the stubborn fact that we aren’t schooled in ‘the family,’ at all; we are schooled in ‘our families.’

Charlie Brown long ago insisted: “I love humanity. It’s people I can’t stand.” Similarly, while Cardinal Scola professes his love for ‘the family,’ he seems to detest a lot of ‘our families,’ as, I sense, do you. And, to be sure, if you’re looking for Platonic ideals, a lot of our families leave a lot to be desired. They remain, though, the primary place where love happens, and we would do well to attend to that happening.

If one wants insight into the impact of ‘traditional family values’ on gay persons, it seems, then, that one would want to listen to their families. Here, I owe you for drawing my attention a few years back to Carole and Robert Curoe’s little

212 John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 4th ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p. 113. This relates to my earlier (cf. p. 8 *supra*) consideration of the relationship between ‘shame’ and ‘sin’ in interpreting Genesis.

213 Rose French, “Priests told not to voice dissent,” [Minneapolis] *StarTribune* (January 15, 2012), p. A-1. Do you really think that about your own flock? It is very probable that somewhere between 45% and 55% of Minnesota Catholics will vote against you on this, and very possibly a similar percentage of your own priests. Is that really how you think of them? Really?

book, *Are There Closets in Heaven?*²¹⁴ Stories such as theirs are key sources for concrete reflection on problems and solutions of cultural meaning. They are not, by any means, the only source, the only stories to which we should listen. But there is something profoundly wrong with trying to suppress such a story, trying to prevent it from being heard. Such suppression seems rooted in fear, and that fear is perhaps not unwarranted. If people were to look at the Curoes, on the one hand, and at you, on the other, and ask themselves, 'where are the Pauline fruits of charity in all this?', you may well be right to fear the answer that would likely emerge. But at least be honest and admit the root of your terror.²¹⁵

Is such love natural? It all depends on what one means by 'nature,' and I have simply suggested four steps in the consideration of 'natural' meaning:

(1) The first considered notion of the 'natural' was essentially the perspective of common sense. What seems natural to people-who-think-like-me is regarded as the only way of being natural. Considering this through the lens of race gave concreteness to what I mean, but may well have given the impression that I identify this erroneous notion of nature solely with what is considered the 'conservative' position on the current question. That isn't my intention. Most of us operate on the basis of common sense judgments most of the time. 'Common sense' is nothing more than the 'sense' that is 'common' to people-who-think-like-me, and there are very diverse brands of common sense. 'Liberals' are every bit as prone as 'conservatives' to render such judgments simply because people-who-think-like-them think-that-way. A recent social analysis contends that, as a society, we are becoming even more prone to division simply on the basis of such presumed shared-judgments,²¹⁶ with like-minded people clustering in areas of the country, in sectorized suburbs, and in parallel virtual space online. We identify with people with whom we share judgments, and pretty soon our judgments become little more than reflections of that identification. The problem is that common sense, as a way of 'knowing,' relates everything to me, to us, and isn't able to consider realities themselves in their relations to each other. Thus, 'others' tend to be judged precisely in and for their 'otherness' vis-à-vis 'us,' without the possibility of consideration of their own 'natures.'

214 Carol Curoe and Robert Curoe, *Are There Closets in Heaven? A Catholic Father and Lesbian Daughter Share Their Story* (Minneapolis: Stren Book Company, 2007).

215 There seems to have occurred in the Church a big chill, in which we have moved from (a) Pope John Paul's inaugural 'Be not afraid!' to (b) 'Be afraid! Be very afraid!'

216 Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2009). Such clustering seems not uncommon in the Church. I suspect a disinterested observer of your presbyteral meetings, for example, could quite easily identify clusters of priests-who-talk-to-each-other. I further suspect that many purportedly 'theological' judgments have come to be little more than expressions of totemic 'cluster identity.' Thus, too, chanceries (perhaps even *curiae*) succumb to group-think, especially if the atmosphere is 'think like this if you'd like to keep your job.'

(2) An Idealist turn, our second step, attempts to get beyond this through the adoption of a God's-eye view. We can get beyond the particularities and peculiarities of our diverse common sense judgments by understanding the Eternal Reasons for things, and only in that way. This isn't really an attempt to understand nature at all, though; it essentially eliminates nature. Proposed as the solution of human conundrums is Eternal or Divine Law. 'Nature' is nothing more than a reflection of the mind of God. Understandings of the Divine Mind, though, also tend to develop into clusters of like-minded persons, those very clusters being determined by shared understandings of Eternal Reason. And since there is no natural way to distinguish between the varied interpretations, it devolves upon Power to make such distinctions. There are those who have Power-to-determine-what-God-thinks, and 'nature' is what they say it is. *Roma locuta, causa finita.*

(3) There is a tradition of Catholic thinking dissatisfied with both of these options. Rooted in real apprehension of Creator-creature relations, not simply notional apprehension, and in equally real assent to the natural reality of creaturehood, this tradition insists on the human capacity to understand the structured dynamisms of proportionate being, including human dynamisms in their very contingency, in a way that can get beyond the limited perspectives of common sense judgments, but without needing appeal to any God's-eye view. We can understand things-in-their-relations-to-each-other (i.e., 'nature'), not simply in their-relations-to-us (common sense), or in their relations-to-God (Idealism). There is no claim that this is easy. And *in via*, there are many oversights as well as insights, mistaken judgments as well as true. Profound pluralism results. Some of this results (a) simply from incompleteness of understanding – we are, after all, 'pilgrims' – while some results (b) from erroneous understandings, and some, perhaps, (c) from various forms of bias. And arguments must ensue about such ABCs. But those arguments will not be effectively resolved by withdrawal to the certainties of either common sense or Eternal Reasons, however appealing and satisfying such certainties may be. Such withdrawal is merely a matter of spiritual *coitus interruptus*.

(4) Resources for engaging in this natural form of thinking are many. I have identified two which seem parallel to St. Thomas's engagement with Aristotle: the natural sciences (e.g., evolutionary biology), and the human sciences (e.g., sociocultural anthropology). A third, and primary, resource parallels St. Thomas's engagement of his own natural inclinations. In order for scientific inquiry to avoid its common and recurrent tendency to devolve into hardened theoretic conceptualism, there is needed foundational grasp of the very dynamism of human interiority. And this must be not simply theoretical, but existential – not just notional, but real. The heart of the matter, in short, is the 'heart' – flesh or stone, converted or closed, authentic or not. And one of the ways toward our own authentic, converted hearts of flesh, is listening to other hearts in conversation: *cor ad cor loquitur*.

This long mountainous climb has been clarifying, at least for me, of what I judge to be the unnatural roots of many judgments of human love, with some hints as to the way forward.

In the fourth instance, as Catholics we will be likely to think in terms of analogy. This will be true of persons approaching this question from many different perspectives. I simply propose one manner of analogical thinking that opens a wider range of possibilities than you seem to allow, and I question another manner of analogical thinking used to narrow that range.

It seems fairly traditional to distinguish two forms of analogical usage: (i) as a comparative form of expression, and (ii) as a form of exploration and argument.²¹⁷ The two usages are distinct, but one might say they are 'analogous'! The former, using one better known reality as the basis for comparative understanding of another, is the foundation of Pope John Paul's notion of nuptiality as constitutive of human existence as *imago Dei*, Cardinal Scola's notion of heterosexual marriage as the *analogatum princeps*. It is with the latter usage, though, analogy as a form of exploration, that I would like to begin.

Analogy, in this sense, "is a language of ordered relationships articulating similarity-in-difference."²¹⁸ My simple suggestion is that one might attempt to understand heterosexual and homosexual loves as analogous, and that this would be a classically Catholic manner of approach. This would acknowledge the reality of similarities, the reality of differences, and explore what insights might emerge on the basis of that dual acknowledgment.

My expectation is that such exploration would tend to displease partisans on both sides of our current divide. 'Liberals' tend to be suspicious of difference-language here, insisting that things are either the 'same,' or not the 'same.' They make much of diversity and pluralism, and yet ironically tend toward a social 'sameness.' Thus, the insistence on tolerance of social minorities, alongside a parallel insistence that everyone be treated 'the same.' In this regard, 'conservatives' seem a mirror image, insisting on difference as total dissimilarity, with a parallel insistence on treating differently those who are different from 'us.'

It is my sensing this to be our situation that leaves me suspicious of any and all claims to some 'counter-cultural' stance. The above-stated tension *is* our culture. Today's conservative/ liberal divide has Puritan/Transcendentalist roots. America *is* that dialectic, and long has been. Show me someone claiming to take a counter-cultural stance, and my suspicion is that, if I look carefully, I will usually just find someone firmly planted on one side of that cultural dialectic, simply 'countering' the other side, their very act of 'countering' constituting the very

217 Cf. David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Exercises in Religious Understanding* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), pp. 88-89.

218 David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 409.

culture they think themselves opposing. Transcendentalists countered Puritans, who gladly returned the favor. Liberals and conservatives simply keep the blood-feud (a.k.a. 'culture wars') going.

Rather than joining in the culture-constituting countering, might we not suggest an alternative? It seems that we Catholics long did that here, while we were outsiders to the whole cultural game. Ethnic urban neighborhoods and labor unions were among our alternative contributions. Now that we have 'made it,' though, we seem far more likely to join one team or the other, not to suggest a different game. If the paucity of my knowledge of theology has been evident in many of the foregoing pages, any suggestion of insight into American social history on my part may well be laughable. But I've never minded clowning around, so here goes. It seems to me that we so tried to prove ourselves in the early days of the Cold War, that we signed up as foot soldiers in the ideology of National Security – Cardinal Spellman blessing battleships, J. Edgar Hoover recruiting his 'Fordham men.' The traditional Catholicism of Dorothy Day and J.F. Powers, who came to our fair state as a refugee from that ideology, came to seem quaint, if not downright embarrassing. There followed the great Liberal causes, Civil Rights and opposition to our Indochina insanity. And they were great causes, but there was perhaps too little that was uniquely Catholic in our following the Liberal lead – Fr. Berrigan having been a significant exception, following radically Catholic inspiration. Now, not surprisingly, Conservative reaction has ensued, and Catholic ecclesiastics seem simply to have switched sides, your cobelligerents now being conservative evangelicals. *Plus ça change*. . .

Analogical exploration of sexual love, it seems to me, would proceed differently. It would seek similarities in the midst of differences, confounding most everyone. There is little clarity as to where that exploration would lead; it has been far too little attempted. Some aspects of the outline of that exploration, though, seem fairly clear.

It would begin with consideration of homosexual love, precisely as love. There would be no phenomenological bracketing from analysis of the *humanum*, no insisting on hushed silence. Listening would precede speech, with openness to recognizing stories of falling in love, suffering in love, and rejoicing in love as being very familiar in their narration. Details of evolving self-discovery would likely differ, but the reality of self-discovery precisely as evolving would find lots of nodding heads. There would probably be shared laughter at stories of sexual bumbling, and shared grief at stories of loss. What is heard, I suspect, would connaturally be recognized as loving, as human, as natural. I suspect, too, that the cross would not be absent from the storytelling, nor would self-sacrificing embrace of the cross opening to the supernatural virtues,²¹⁹ which might well also sound familiar.

219 To overhear such supernatural sharing, cf. Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *Sorrow Built a Bridge: Friendship and AIDS* (Baltimore: Fortkamp Publishing, 1989).

But there would also be no need to hush any mention of difference. Human sexual love involves union of 'others,' and there may well be both a form and a degree of 'otherness' in the union of sexually differentiated persons that constitute significant differences from same-sex relationships. What the East points to as *yin/yang*, and what medievals meant by *coniunctio oppositorum*, surely matter in the flesh of love, not simply in the ethereal realm of conceptual speculation – even if they do not need to matter in the same way, for everyone, all the time. Human procreativity, too, is no small matter. Nor are 'gender issues' that surface differently in different cultures and at different times. Heterosexual experience of those issues may well be quite different from homosexual experience.

Where would it all lead? I have no idea; nor do you. That we have in common. What distinguishes us is this: I know that I don't know, and I know that you don't know; you know that I don't know, but you don't know that you don't know. Or, at least, so it seems from here.

Might it lead to the judgment that 'marriage' is best reserved, as both word and social institution, to express the differences, while creative energy is expended to discover and create words and institutions that express the similarities? Very possibly. Might it lead to the judgment that 'marriage,' again both word and institution, has embraced such diversity of meanings over time and across cultural space that it can express similarities, without denying difference? Again, very possibly.

Personally, I lean toward the former judgment, but ever so tentatively, with keen awareness of how little I know. Constant amazement attends my encounters with certainty in persons who don't know any more than I do. Of the way forward, though, I have some certainty. It will inevitably involve clouds of unknowing, dark nights dissolving such cultural certainties. Heart will speak to heart; listening to such heartfelt speech will involve connatural recognition of similarity-amidst-different; and graced conversion will follow in many, not all. On the basis of which, we'll stumble on. Just like so many times before.

Nuptial theology seems determined to obviate the need for such analogical exploration, indeed to preclude its very possibility, by positing an expressed analogy as all-determinative. Thus, Pope John Paul's suggestion that heterosexual nuptiality is normatively constitutive of human existence in the image of God. In this, Cardinal Scola argues, "the magisterium proposes an important innovation."²²⁰ Well, yes and no.

First, the no. As a suggested analogy, it has been around for a long time. Augustine knew of it, and didn't make much of it. Aquinas knew of it through

220 Angelo Cardinal Scola (cf. n. 80 *supra*), p. 34.

Augustine, and rendered this judgment: “This is *prima facie* absurd.”²²¹ So it is not something new to our tradition; what is new is the prominence given it.

Thus, the yes. That prominence is very new. One searches *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, for example, and finds not a trace. There is a lengthy treatment of human creation in the image of God,²²² and scattered references to human resemblance to God,²²³ but all refer to individual persons in their rationality, not their sexuality. So as late as 1994, this new doctrine had gained no foothold in official Catholic teaching whatsoever. Now, all of a sudden, it has virtually become the foothold.

This ‘all of a sudden’ gives me pause. We’ve been here before. Andrew Greeley has analyzed the “effervescence” that characterized Catholic life in the years immediately following Vatican II.²²⁴ Heady days, those. If I may ironically borrow a notion of which I have been critical, one might say those days were the very *paradigm* of all-of-a-suddenness. Perhaps it’s only fair that self-styled ‘traditionalists’ get their day in the effervescent sun, as they perceive self-styled ‘progressives’ to have had theirs. But that does seem a fairly accurate characterization of contemporary ecclesial life. Proliferating publications and seminars on the theology of the body remind me of nothing so much as early 1970s workshops on the fundamental option. The great Irish literary critic Terry Eagleton once self-mockingly remarked that he had studied the sacred science back in the day when you could call yourself a theologian if you could spell Schillebeeckx.²²⁵ Fast forward fifty years, substitute J-o-h-n-P-a-u-l for S-c-h-i-l-l-e-b-e-e-c-k-x, and today it’s even easier to be a theologian!

There was, though, this difference: effervescent ‘progressives’ didn’t tend to become popes, or even prefects of the Holy Office. The effervescent ‘new breed’ is possessed of such tendency, with the result that *an* analogy can become *the* analogy, and can do so quickly and powerfully. And that power can be rather ruthless: question the definite article here, and it’s off with your head. Not to worry, though, the *imago Dei* is now found “in our genitalia, not in our heads,”²²⁶ so nothing of spiritual value is at stake.

221 ST I, q. 93, a. 6, *ad* 2.

222 §§356-361.

223 §362, §380, §1701, §1702.

224 Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 7 and *passim*.

225 Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 2.

226 Fergus Kerr, O.P. (cf. n. 79 *supra*), p. 194.

Yet it is, of course, ‘in our heads’ – in the human mind and will – that almost the entire Catholic tradition – both East and West -- has found the notion of *imago Dei* to ‘reside,’ with significant differences and development of understanding.²²⁷ In a sense, at issue here is whether our existence as *imago Dei* lies in a particular analogy, which then becomes the control of meaning for all analogical predication, or whether our being in the image of God lies in our very ability to analogize, an ability common to all persons, regardless of gender.

And so it must be said that Scripture, having stated “After God’s image he created him,” adds “male and female he created them” not to present the image of God in terms of sexual distinctions, but because the image of God is common to both sexes, being in the mind which has no distinction of sex. And so in Collossians, after the Apostle has said “According to the image of him who created him,” he adds, “where there is neither male nor female.”²²⁸

It is not the simple fact of sexual differentiation and union that provides analogical understanding, but rather the fact that, in humans, sexual union is *meaningful*. It is precisely our knowing and willing that distinguishes our mating from animal behavior, as our artistry and our labor are so distinguished. And it is in acts of knowing and willing (Thomas’s ‘intelligible emanations’) that we live as the image of God. This has been the traditional understanding.

Nuptial theology posits a development of doctrine, not only of significant proportion, but with breathtaking speed.²²⁹ Proposed is a *thought* that obviates the need for *thinking*. It’s the classic distinction between *pensée pensée* and *pensée pensante*. By elevating nuptial imagery to be the meaning-content of *imago Dei*, this new tradition denies the assertion that further acts of thinking and willing, not specified by this content, may be the very *imago Dei* in act. And yet such acts continue. Other images emerge from the abyss, questions arise, insights follow, the

227 Cardinal Scola here simply distinguishes between Pope John Paul’s innovation, on the one hand, and, on the other, “the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition, according to which the *imago* resides in the *mens*,” without advertence to significant distinction between Augustine and Thomas. Cf. n. 80 *supra*, p. 47. Lonergan highlights the different notions of knowing in the two. Augustine posited illuminated knowledge through confrontation, a spiritual ‘seeing’ the Eternal Ideas of God. For Aquinas, knowing is not confrontation, but identity of the knower and the known. The human mind serves as Trinitarian analogy, not because of what it *has* by way of illuminating confrontation with the Eternal Reasons of things, but because it *is* a created participation of the divine mind in its ability to be *identical with reality* through its power to *understand the truth of reality*. Thomas himself adverts to the distinction between the two in noting that the Augustinian notion of *imago Dei* pertained to the human ability to understand God, while he found it in the human ability to understand natural things, as well (ST I, q. 93, a. 8). Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Volume 3 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 191-227. Thus, the notion of an ‘Augustinian-Thomistic tradition’ is both true and significant in pointing to the innovative character of John Paul’s usage, yet the blurring of the two together highlights what I attempted to say earlier (cf. pp. 32-42 *supra*) about the importance of clarity with regard to the difference between Augustinian and Thomist notions of knowing natural realities.

228 ST I, q. 93, a. 6, *ad* 2.

229 Comparable, it seems to me, to rushed canonization. Purgatory be damned!

affective intentionality of concrete persons charges those acts with momentum, further images/questions/insights follow, and demands for judgment present themselves – over and over again. In an older tradition, this was all understood to constitute our imaging God. Give me that old-time religion. Trading that dynamic ‘thinking’ for an already thought ‘thought’ seems a bit like trading one’s birthright for a mess of pottage. Esau fell for it, but there are those of us who, having learned from the story, say, ‘no, thanks.’

In the fifth instance, what we are dealing with here pertains most proximately to prudence, not faith. Irony abounds in visiting the virtue of prudence here. After all, how prudent is a man who spends the better part of three months of his life writing a letter, whose addressee will, in all probability, give it, at best, a cursory read?²³⁰ And looking in the other direction, having attended to your participation in this whole affair, I’ve concluded, with a high degree of probability, that prudence isn’t exactly your strong suit, either. Still, it matters.

Two brief perspectives on political prudence will precede a fuller excursus on personal prudence, with a concluding connection between the two.

The first advertence is to the simple fact that both Augustine and Aquinas, in very different social and cultural settings, opposed legal restrictions on the practice of prostitution.²³¹ I mention this, not to propose any direct parallel, but only to inquire as to the reasoning behind this rather surprising, shared position, and to consider the possible pertinence of that reasoning. The underlying conviction of both is that “the purpose of human law is the temporal tranquility of the state.”²³² Prudential judgment concerns choices of means to promote human flourishing most widely, and to diminish social disorder. In this particular situation, both Augustine and St. Thomas judged that social tolerance would do more to promote such flourishing and diminish such disorder, than would efforts at prohibition.

Transposed to the current question, political prudence is still a matter of judgment as to the best means of promoting human flourishing and diminishing social disorder. Persons of faith can differ in such judgments. There is no ideal text of the Minnesota Constitution in some Smithsonian Museum of Natural Law, nor is there any such in some Vatican vault, awaiting discovery by a character out of a

230 Then, why write? Simply because, having read the *Star-Tribune* on the morning of January 15 of this year, I couldn’t not write, at least not write and still be able to look at myself in the mirror. Somewhere – I can’t find the reference – Camus remarked that, by age forty, each man is responsible for his own face. He meant, I think, that (i) doing what we ought do, (ii) not doing what we ought do, (iii) doing what we ought not do, and (iv) not doing what we ought not do, all register cumulatively and visibly in our countenance. I’m well past forty, and each morning I catch a glimpse of the accretions of all four of those options. There is a certain sadness I sometimes glimpse at the corners of my eyes, the weight of the second option, that I have simply chosen not to deepen here.

231 Augustine’s position is summarized, and St. Thomas’s position examined thoroughly by Vincent M. Dever, “Aquinas on the Practice of Prostitution,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 13 (1996), pp. 39-46.

232 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Dan Brown novel. Different persons will highlight different aspects of human flourishing, and will have concern about different types and sources of disorder, but difference of such prudential judgment does not connote any conflict of faith between those who differ.

There were clearly persons in both the fifth and thirteenth centuries who made different prudential judgments than did our saints, otherwise the question would never have arisen. But such differences gave rise to no allegations of erosion of faith, nor to any efforts to suppress differing judgments. There was an understanding of what was at stake, and of what was not at stake. There should be such understanding in the twenty-first century, as well.

A second advertence harkens back to earlier American controversy about the definition of marriage, and, in my judgment, the relationship between that controversy and my consideration of common sense judgments of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural.’ As I was reading Newbeck’s book on the Loving case, I began noticing patterns of regional variation in degree of tolerance and intolerance relative to interracial marriage. The question emerged as to whether there might be any parallel pattern to the emerging divergence of tolerance and prohibition of same-sex unions.

As a means of considering that question, I developed two scales, each with five degrees of regulation. There is certainly no scientific precision to this, and others who examine the data may well construct different scales. Still, I think the criteria presented in Table 1 have at least a rough adequacy.

Table 1: Criteria for Degree of Regulation of Marriage by Race and Orientation

	Regulation by Race	Regulation by Orientation
1	No prohibition of intermarriage	Same-sex marriage legal
2	No felony; repealed before 1900	Civil unions provided by statute
3	Moderate penalty; moderately early repeal	No constitutional ban
4	Felony; moderately late repeal	Constitutional ban of same-sex marriage
5	Felony; late repeal	Constitutional ban of marriage & civil unions

It became possible, on this basis, to identify five quintiles of states on the basis of their historical regulation of marriage by race (the vertical columns 1-5 in Table 2). Each state’s degree of regulation by sexual orientation is found in the fifty parentheses of Table 2.

**Table 2: States by Degree of Regulation by Race
With Degree of Regulation by Orientation in Parentheses**

1	2	3	4	5
Connecticut (1)	Massachusetts (1)	California (2)	Delaware (2)	Maryland (2)

Iowa (1)	Washington (1)	Colorado (2)	West Virginia (3)	Indiana (3)
New Hampshire (1)	Illinois (2)	Nevada (2)	Missouri (4)	Missouri (4)
New York (1)	Maine (2)	Oregon (2)	Arkansas (5)	Tennessee (4)
Vermont (1)	Rhode Island (2)	Wyoming (3)	Kentucky (5)	Alabama (5)
Hawaii (2)	New Mexico (3)	Arizona (4)	Louisiana (5)	Florida (5)
Wisconsin (2)	Pennsylvania (3)	Montana (4)	North Dakota (5)	Georgia (5)
Minnesota (3)	Kansas (5)	Idaho (5)	Oklahoma (5)	North Carolina (5)
New Jersey (3)	Michigan (5)	Nebraska (5)	South Dakota (5)	South Carolina (5)
Alaska (4)	Ohio (5)	Utah (5)	Texas (5)	Virginia (5)

There emerged the simple question as to whether there was any correlation. Thus, Table 3.

Table 3: Race Quintiles with Average Degree of Regulation by Orientation

Race	1	2	3	4	5
Orientation	1.8	2.9	3.4	4.4	4.3

My simple suggestion on the basis of this data is that there are patterns of prudential judgment that remain consistent over time. There is no pretense of precision here, in part because of significant demographic changes, which have been dramatic in border states like Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina, for example. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a pattern. Regions that tended toward the highest degree of prohibition of interracial marriage also tend toward a high degree of restriction of same-sex unions. What this seems to suggest is the presence of culture-based evaluations of the meaning of both human flourishing and social disorder that shape the exercise of prudential judgment regarding marriage.

All of which is simply to underline the fact that prudential judgment is precisely what is at issue here. Different persons in different places at different times will have different degrees of familiarity with persons belonging to minority populations, and thus consequently different degrees of concern for their flourishing; they will have, as well, different degrees of fear of different kinds of perceived possibilities of social disorder. Neither allegations of bigotry nor heresy are helpful here; and, being unhelpful, neither are particularly prudent.

This *is* a political issue, and it seems shameful to make judgments of faith about persons on the basis of differing judgments of political prudence. Such judgments only increase disorder and diminish flourishing of both persons and communities. Failure to recognize that prudence is the issue here, in other words, leads to highly imprudent actions.

But prudence is not only a political virtue; indeed it is primarily personal. Realizing how long it has been since I have given significant consideration to this question, and sensing that it may not be a matter to which you have given significant consideration recently, I have needed to review the understanding of that virtue in the tradition that has nurtured me in order to be sure of my footing; following such review, I will return to the political question in its light.

The initial consideration of prudence in the *Summa Theologiae* comes in question 57 of the *prima secundae*, where St. Thomas treats the intellectual virtues in general; the key affirmations at that point concern the necessity of prudence, and its differentiation from art. Explicit and extended analysis is made in questions 47 through 56 of the *secunda secundae*, where Thomas delineates not only the nature of the virtue in itself, but also its integral and subjective parts as well as its relation to the gift of counsel. Clarification by contrast is offered in an analysis of vices opposed to prudence.

The essential definition of the virtue is taken from Aristotle: “Prudence is right reason applied to action.”²³³ By definition, then, it is an *intellectual* virtue in that it pertains to the cognitive, not appetitive, faculty;²³⁴ it is essentially a matter of knowledge. Nevertheless, its value lies in the application of this knowledge to action, and, therefore, it belongs to *practical*, not speculative, reason. As practical, prudence involves not only a knowledge of universal principles but also of the highly concrete and utterly unique situations in which one must act; thus, the prudent person must take cognizance of singulars, for “actions are in singular matters.”²³⁵

The meaning of this virtue, as defined, is clarified by a three-fold differentiation from other virtues.²³⁶ First, in that prudence regards concrete *contingent* things, its objects are materially distinct from those of wisdom, knowledge and understanding which regard necessary things. Secondly, while art is also in the practical reason and also regards contingent things, it too is materially distinct from prudence; the difference is that whereas art regards things that are made, prudence regards things that are *done*. Thirdly, while prudence resembles the moral virtues²³⁷ in that its value lies in application to action, it is formally distinct from them in that it is essentially rooted in the *cognitive* faculty whereas the moral virtues are rooted in the appetitive.

233 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 2, *Sed Contra*. *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.5.

234 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 1, *Responsio*.

235 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 3, *Responsio*.

236 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 5.

237 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 4.

A further differentiation is made²³⁸ of true from false or imperfect prudence. Later referred to as “prudence of the flesh,”²³⁹ false prudence characterizes a person who acts very craftily in pursuit of an evil end. Imperfect prudence regards devising fitting ways to obtain particular ends; for example, a ‘prudent sailor’ is one who has devised fitting ways to sail a ship. In contrast, true prudence applies right reason to action *in respect of the good end of the person’s entire life*; it involves rational apprehension and affirmation of the concrete means by which a person, in his or her highly unique situation, can achieve the final end of human existence. Herein lies the relationship and yet distinction between prudence and the moral virtues: the end of the moral virtues is the human good;²⁴⁰ prudence regards regulation of the *means* to that end. Precisely for this reason, Thomas insists that prudence is not in us “by nature;” rather, it is in us “by teaching and experience.”²⁴¹ There can be a natural inclination toward the ultimate ends of human existence because “the right ends of human life are fixed.” The means to such ends in human concerns, however, far from being fixed, are of manifold variety “according to the variety of persons and affairs.”²⁴² There is a keen recognition here of the inescapable significance of knowing oneself as concretely unique, and of knowing the concrete contours of one’s situation. The ultimate end of human existence is common; the means to that end are highly personal.

Herein lies a difficulty. Prudence involves attaining some knowledge of the future, by comparison to one’s knowledge of the past and present.²⁴³ But any person’s knowledge of all the contingent singulars which constitute that person and his or her situation is inevitably limited. In order to be prudent, we need a knowledge that we cannot attain on our own resources. This is Thomas’s point of entry into consideration of the gift of *counsel*. Because human reason “is unable to grasp the singular and contingent things which may occur. . . [a human person] requires to be directed by God who comprehends all things.”²⁴⁴ And since God moves or directs everything according to its own nature, the rational creature is directed “through the research of reason to perform any particular action.”²⁴⁵ The

238 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 13.

239 ST II-II, q. 55, a. 1, *Responsio*.

240 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 6.

241 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 15, *Sed Contra*.

242 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 15, *Responsio*.

243 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 1, *Responsio*.

244 ST II-II, q. 52, a. 1, *ad 1*.

245 ST II-II, q. 52, a. 1, *ad 2*.

gift of counsel is that disposition “whereby the soul is rendered amenable” to such direction;²⁴⁶ it functions, therefore, to “help and perfect the virtue of prudence.”²⁴⁷

Two aspects of this ‘help’ are specifically highlighted by Thomas. First, in our natural situation great personal distress can result from the fact that we never know all that we need to know to guide our living, and this distress itself can further cloud our ability to understand and choose; the gift of counsel “soothes this anxiety of doubt.”²⁴⁸ Secondly, an intimate connection is posited between counsel and the beatitude of mercy. Counsel opens us to the realization that showing mercy is a central means to the final end of our existence; this realization comes to us as a supernatural gift of the Spirit.

But this gift requires human cooperation, and Thomas specifies three levels of consciousness at which this cooperation must occur in authentically prudent living.²⁴⁹ There must first be *inquiry*, the act of taking counsel which yields insight. But from this flows further reflection leading to the *judgment* of what one has discovered; beyond the occurrence of insight, there is needed a personal affirmation of what has been discovered. But even beyond this, there is the act of *command*, “applying to action the things counseled and judged.”²⁵⁰ At each level there is a progressive intensity of existential engagement: judgment is more self-involving than discovery, and the intellect’s command which flows into the act of will²⁵¹ is yet more self-involving than judgment. True prudence involves the engagement of consciousness at each of the three levels, but also admits of breakdowns at each level. Thus, there is an imperfect prudence²⁵² which discovers and affirms means to the human good, but “fails to make an effective command.”²⁵³ There is also rash “precipitation” in which a person “rushes into action under the impulse of passion.”²⁵⁴ But the gift of counsel is a help toward authentic prudence throughout the movement of consciousness from inquiry to judgment to command.

Finally, I sense that some of the existential significance of this discussion can be glimpsed by returning to the differentiation of prudence from art.

246 ST II-II, q. 52, a. 1, *ad* 3.

247 ST II-II, q. 52, a. 2, *Responsio*.

248 ST II-II, q. 52, a. 3, *Responsio*.

249 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 8.

250 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 8, *Responsio*.

251 ST I-II, q. 17, a. 1.

252 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 13.

253 ST II-II, q. 47, a. 13, *Responsio*.

254 ST II-II, q. 53, a. 3, *Responsio*.

Art is the right reason of things to be made; whereas prudence is the right reason of things to be done. Now making and doing differ. . . in that making is an action passing into outward matter, e.g., to build, to saw, and so forth; whereas doing is an action abiding in the agent, e.g., to see, to will, and the like.²⁵⁵

Prudence, in other words, involves the recognition that beyond the practical impact of my actions in ‘making the world,’ there is the existential impact of those actions in ‘making my-self;’ besides action that passes into outward matter, there is action that abides in my-self.

A final insight into the eminent ‘practicality’ of spirituality seems clear. To be *prudently spiritual* involves very concrete knowledge of oneself and one’s situation; it involves keen discernment of the available means that can be reasonably chosen in the radically practical process of making one’s life a work of art before God.

There is consistent concern throughout for the contingent, not the necessary, for knowledge of singulars, not universals. Works of art are unique, and the dramatic artistry of our living is a matter of creating such a work of art precisely from the concrete, singular givens of our existence. Our destiny is common, but our roads are diverse. Arriving at the end together requires successful traversing of the curves unique to each of our ways there.

It is to this notion of prudence, I see now, that I have been pointing throughout these pages. The tragic, yet ecstatic, uniqueness of the love between Abelard and Heloise; Paul’s insistence on the resurrection of “our bodies,” not “the body;” Ignatian discernment of spirits; Chesterton’s paeon to the Poverello’s attentiveness to each person’s “own individual life from the cradle to the grave;” Hopkins’s inscape, his “each mortal thing,” and “*What I do is me*;” Montaigne’s suspicion of “abstract theories [which] undermine the truth of our common experience;” Lonergan’s focus on “the problem for each one to work out concretely the good he can do by his decision. . . with his potentialities and possibilities;” Peter Hawkins’s interpretation of Percy’s novelistic method of ‘placing a person in a situation, and seeing what happens;’ the Lovings happening to fall in love, and choosing the means to make their unique, pathfinding way forward; Noonan’s noting that our understanding of revelation has often deepened precisely by attending empathetically to persons choosing ‘other’ means to the end than had previously been understood; Camus’s insistence that we “get away from abstraction” as we confront the blood-stained face of history; St. Thomas’s movement beyond both Platonist metaphysics and epistemology by attending to his own interiority, the intentionality of his own consciousness; Chenu’s interpretation of Thomas as “beginning with concrete human desire;” Geertz on “the particular minds of particular savages in particular jungles;” the Curoes struggling to find their own loving way, Church and culture having both declined their assistance. In short, Lonergan’s option: “One can begin from people as they are.”

255 ST I-II, q. 57, a. 4, *Responsio*.

I appreciate the Wisdom of Pope John Paul and Cardinal Scola, but Wisdom, however necessary, is not sufficient. Current ecclesiastical Wisdom does not bound the Holy Spirit's gift of counsel. That Spirit blows where She wills. And if hierarchs will not extend the beatitude of mercy to those seeking such counsel, thank God there are more merciful souls in the Church.

Long ago, Fr. Berrigan spoke of hearing what St. Thomas called the 'command' of action in singular choice of means:

Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front parlor of the charnel house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise.²⁵⁶

I suspect Abelard and Heloise would have understood; they could not have done otherwise and remained faithful, neither to themselves and to each other, nor to God. And they are not the last lovers faced with the choice between fidelity and social, indeed ecclesial, respectability.

No gay man or woman has asked to be who they are. Nor have I, nor you. We are all thrown into this world, singularities and contingencies abounding. Our call is to make of them the most beautiful lives that we can. And the terrifying responsibility for choosing the means of that making in *my* life is *mine*. In *your* life, it is *yours*.

And that choosing occurs within real limits. Fr. Lonergan distinguished between essential and effective freedom.²⁵⁷ He argued that far too much theological controversy regarding free will has been little more than abstraction confronting abstraction, with far too little attention to our concrete experience, in which freedom is both real and situated. We are essentially free to respond or not to the promptings of grace, but there are both external and internal limitations of that freedom. I am not free to respond as someone else, nor as someone else's ideal of who I should be. There are sociocultural, psychoneural, and intellectual facts which situate my free response, making it singular and contingent, not universal and necessary. Thus, my freedom must be exercised prudently, not just wisely.

Politically, the question is whether to allow a wider range of persons the space in which to exercise their personal prudential judgment in the quest for human integrity. Restriction of that range has not been particularly successful in freeing gay persons for the dramatic artistry of love. In restricting the means, we seem to have made the road to the destined end of human existence more of an obstacle course than it need be. There is no reason whatsoever to expect that all, even many, homosexually inclined persons are effectively free to live beautifully

256 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *Night Flight to Hanoi* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. xvi.

257 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (cf. n. 10 *supra*), pp. 645-647.

and well as celibates; any more than is true of heterosexually inclined persons.²⁵⁸ Asserting this to be the only good and beautiful choice is literally 'utopian' – it happens *no place*. Never has; no reason to expect that it ever will. The Church has been admirably suspicious of utopian thinking in the economic realm, yet how insistently utopian in the sexual.

Liberals drive me nuts with their tendency toward social engineering, often with disastrous consequences. On this particular issue, though, they may well be pointing out that we've been engaged in social engineering for centuries, trying to make people into something other than who they are. The consequences *have* been disastrous. So maybe it's time for the engineering to stop, and to see what artistry might begin.

Gay persons in our society have been presented with three options from which to choose in order to make of their lives a work of art before God: (i) celibacy, (ii) promiscuity, and (iii) faithful relationships without social support, indeed without social visibility. Heterosexual experience can tell us how difficult faithful relationships are, even with social visibility and support. It, too, can tell us how few are those for whom celibacy is a real, effective option. It can tell us, as well, how difficult it is for promiscuity to constitute a beautiful life.

Might civil society not decide that it has a reasonable stake in the promotion of stable, faithful sexual relationships in the widest range possible of its citizenry? Might it not, in fact, be admirable for persons who have been excluded from expectation of sexual responsibility to step forward and ask for the right to accept such responsibility publicly? Both seem like positively conservative possibilities.

Indeed, insistence on continuing on a course that has proven disastrous seems illiberal, unconservative, imprudent, and insane.

In the sixth instance, not only are Power and Authority distinct, in the Body of Christ they are mutually exclusive.

Jesus finished his discourse and left the crowds spellbound at his teaching. The reason was that he taught with authority and not like their scribes.²⁵⁹

Authority is ever so likely to end up on the cross, with Power pounding the nails. It is precisely willingness to embrace the cross, and refusal to pound the nails, that constitutes spiritual authority. Drop your hammer, Archbishop, and pick up some wood. And if that's too much to ask, then, at least, "put away your sword."²⁶⁰

258 For those who are so free, and judge themselves so called, the communion of Courage is a beautiful gift. If only the Church could become sufficiently catholic that we could recognize the equally real courage of members of Dignity, as well as the very real dignity of members of Courage.

259 Mt 7.28-29.

260 Mt 26.52. Is there not ecclesiological significance in the fact that these words were addressed to Peter?

In choosing otherwise, of course, you have company. When Fr. McNeill was forced from the Jesuits, the executioner's task was delegated to Fr. Arrupe, as much as anything, I suspect, to pierce his own heart with a sword of seven sorrows. Ah, the sweet culture of life! So, you clearly *can* proceed in this manner. You have the *power*. But do not ponder long as to why so many are not spellbound at your teaching. There are, of course, many who agree with you; primarily, I suspect, because you happen to agree with them. Others maintain silence, because they fear you. Ever so few, though, seem spellbound by genuine authority.

Power comes with office. Authority proceeds from authenticity. I close with two reflections on what I judge to be the absence of authenticity in this whole affair.

When the American bishops gather in plenary session, there are dozens, if not scores of gay men in that room. On occasion or two, 'homosexuality' has been a matter of discussion. Yet, never has it been possible, perhaps even imaginable, that a bishop would stand and say simply, 'Let me tell you how this sounds from the perspective of this gay man.' Nor has it been either possible or imaginable that another bishop would simply say, 'I'd like to hear how this sounds from the perspective of some of our gay brothers.'

Just such conversations happen with searing honesty, if not always ease, elsewhere throughout our society – in boardrooms and breakrooms, in soup kitchens and five-star restaurants, in kitchens and bedrooms, in faculty lounges and on playgrounds, on battlefields and in hospitals. Among the flock you would lead and the citizens to whom you would appeal, virtually everyone who has reached the age of reason can have that conversation. And yet you guys can't. When most people look for leadership, they turn to grown-ups.

It is no secret that there are many self-accepting gay priests in the Church; it is a bit of an ugly little secret that there are also many self-hating repressed homosexual priests. Secret or not, both are facts, one of them far more frightening than the other. Repressed inclinations have a tendency to explode. And openness seems to me preferable to explosion.

For example, I haven't owned a television for many years, but I recall channel surfing back in the day, when I would find myself lingering at the liturgy on EWTN. The same thought always occurred: If these guys had auditioned for *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, they'd have been told to tone it down. Something of a gay aesthetic has long appeared in the Church, often in the queerest places. Mark Jordan's reflections on the official portrait of Francis Cardinal Spellman would be worth archepiscopal attention in this regard.²⁶¹ One might wonder in this regard even about some of your most vehement and vocal clerical supporters.

261 Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 198-200.

Yet such thoughts are taboo, or, as they would say in New Ulm, *verboden*. And as long as the taboo remains in place, authenticity will remain elusive, and, with it, authority.

Homosexuality has been silenced so successfully in the Catholic Church that we do not have the kinds of evidence required for a convincing answer. A subject that Catholic theologians cannot discuss during centuries except with thunder, derision, or disgust is not a subject on which Catholic theology is ready to speak. . . Catholic theologians will have to be able to speak freely about homosexuality for many years before they can write serious moral assessments of it.²⁶²

Authenticity requires speech, not silence, and the flow of genuineness, not repression.

Clothed with such authenticity, you could stand in the public square and speak compellingly. Bereft of it, you are standing there, not exactly naked, but clad only in your pallium, and, in case you're wondering, it's not a pretty sight.

Secondly, there is the reality of questions. Without them, we understand nothing. With them, we may understand something, or at least understand that we don't understand. Jesus asks well over a hundred questions in the Gospel texts,²⁶³ not simply wanting to impart conceptual certainty, but rather to lead us to understanding. Such is an aspect of 'teaching with authority.'

Yet today Church 'authorities' tend not only not to ask questions, but to forbid them, rendering themselves highly unauthoritative 'authorities.' Very reasonable doubt being suppressed by saying, 'There can be no doubt. . .' And this tends to pertain not simply to the assertion of doctrine, but rather to become a habit of mind. I think here, with great sadness, of Pope John Paul's certainty as to the innocence of Fr. Maciel.²⁶⁴ He was certain, but wrong.

One with far greater knowledge and competence than I could write a quite extensive monograph on the theme of 'certain, but wrong' in ecclesiastical history. And this is striking, indeed quite frightening. It should, after all, simply not be possible to be certain, and yet wrong. It is, of course, possible to think x, y, or z, and to be wrong in that thinking. It's one of the few things in life at which I might qualify as a 'pro.' But there is a radical difference between (a) thinking something, and (b) being certain of it.

'Thinking' something, yet being wrong simply indicates a need for correction. Being 'certain' of that something, yet wrong, is indicative of a need for conversion. What is wrong is not simply one's thought, but his or her very thinking. And what is

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁶³ John Navone, S.J., "The Dynamic of the Question in the Gospel," *Milltown Studies* 17 (Spring 1986), pp. 75-111.

²⁶⁴ Jason Berry and Gerald Renner, *Vows of Silence: The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), pp. 125-221, 294-300.

wrong will most often be found in the repression or suppression of images and questions.

This is precisely what struck me long ago in reading *The Acting Person*, a copy of which I am not able to locate in order to verify my recollection. I recall the consideration of community, in which the future pontiff identified three essential elements: (i) Authority, (ii) Opposition,²⁶⁵ and (iii) Dialogue. Any society will have a center of power, but that power can be more or less legitimate, indeed it can be utterly illegitimate. Legitimacy, in large part, is constituted by allowance of opposition. Those in power have a self-interested tendency to disallow questions that are vital to the well-being of the society. And since those questions will never occur to those in power, it is essential for the good of social order that they be allowed to emerge in others-in-opposition. But such emergence will be fruitful only if there is genuine dialogue between the center and the periphery. It is not a uniquely Polish truth.

There are questions that simply do not occur to you, Archbishop, and that non-occurrence need not be deleterious to the well-being of our Catholic community, but only *if* there is allowed an opposition *within* that community to whom those questions *do* occur. Also, only *if* those questions are allowed to be dialogically *spoken*, and seriously considered.

But commands of silence, enforced with threats, betoken Power, not Authority. And it is community that suffers.

Whatever anger you may have detected in the foregoing emerges from a conviction that the Church deserves better. Still, please forgive any lapses of charity. I fear there are such. My nightly examen takes the form of attempting to discern the presence/absence of the theological virtues in the concrete exchanges of the day. I often shudder at my failures – frequent, occasionally intense. But I have discovered a pattern to the intensity. I respond most passionately when confronted with what I perceive to be an absence-of-faith masquerading as faith, an absence-of-hope masquerading as hope, and an absence-of-charity masquerading as charity.

I write simply in the hope that you might occasionally shudder, too.

In caritate Christi,

Jim Englert

Copy to Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò.

Copies to the suffragan bishops of Minnesota.

²⁶⁵ At the time of writing, of course, Karol Wojtyła was in the Polish 'opposition.'

Copies to priests of the Mankato area.