

Chapter 1

Morality and Merit

e non voglio che dubbi, ma sia certo,
che ricever la grazia è meritorio
secondo che l'affetto l'è aperto.

(*Par.* XXIX.64-66)¹

1. Preliminary considerations: Aquinas, grace and grace-consciousness. 2. Patterns of doing and deserving I: Aquinas and movement. 3. Patterns of doing and deserving II: Dante and the coalescence of human and divine willing at the core of existence. 4. Dante, maturity in the flame of love, and primordial possibility.

In a startling passage near the beginning of the *Inferno*, Virgil announces that both he and those with whom he is destined to pass all eternity in Limbo were without sin:

Lo buon maestro a me: “Tu non dimandi
che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?
Or vo’ che sappi, innanzi che più andi,
ch’ei non peccaro; e s’elli hanno mercedi,
non basta, perché non ebber battesimo,
ch’è porta de la fede che tu credi;
e s’è’ furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,
non adorar debitamente a Dio:
e di questi cotai son io medesmo.
Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
che senza speme vivemo in disio”.

(*Inf.* IV.31-42)²

¹ and I would not have you doubt, but be assured that to receive grace is meritorious, in proportion as the affection is open to it. Translations (occasionally amended) from the *Commedia* are from *The Divine Comedy*, trans. C. S. Singleton, second printing (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970-) by permission.

² The good master said to me: “Do you not ask what spirits are these that you see? Now, before you go farther, I will have you know that they did not sin; but if they have merit,

The passage raises a number of issues relative to those living before or beyond the Christian dispensation and thus innocent of Christ and clergy, but striking above all is the 'ei non peccaro' moment of the argument, for it is straightaway a question of what exactly Dante meant by this. Did he mean that the pagan spirits of whom Virgil is one and for whom he is spokesman in the poem were untouched by the catastrophe of Eden and by the forces of destruction unleashed by that catastrophe?³ Or did

that does not suffice, for they did not have baptism, which is the portal of the faith you hold; and if they were before Christianity, they did not worship God aright, and I myself am one of these. Because of these shortcomings, and for no other fault, we are lost, and only so far afflicted that without hope we live in longing."

³ On Dante and the 'virtuous pagans' (in addition to commentaries and *lecturae* on *Inferno* IV), G. Rizzo, 'Dante and the Virtuous Pagans', in W. De Sua and G. Rizzo (eds), *Dante Symposium in Commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the Poet's Birth (1265-1965)* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 115-39; K. Foster, O.P., 'The Two Dantes (III). The Pagans and Grace', in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), pp. 220-53 (also, in the same volume, pp. 137-55, 'The Son's Eagle: *Paradiso* XIX'); D. Thompson, 'Dante's Virtuous Romans', *Dante Studies* 96 (1978), 145-62, and subsequently in R. Lansing (ed.), *The Critical Complex* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 345-62; H.A. Mason, 'A Journey through Hell: Dante's *Inferno* Revisited. Virtuous Pagans – "gente di molto valore". Canto IV', *The Cambridge Quarterly* 16 (1987), 3, 187-211; M. Picone, 'La "viva speranza" di Dante e il problema della salvezza dei pagani virtuosi. Una lettura di *Paradiso* 20', *Quaderni di Italianistica* 10 (1989), 1-2, 251-68 (a monographic volume entitled *Dante Today*); C. L. Vitto, 'The Virtuous Pagan in Legend and in Dante', in *The Virtuous Pagan in Middle English Literature. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 79, part 5 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1989), pp. 36-49; M. L. Colish, 'The Virtuous Pagan: Dante and the Christian Tradition', in W. Caferro and D. G. Fisher (eds), *The Unbounded Community. Papers in Christian Ecumenism in Honor of Jaroslav Pelikan* (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 43-91 (subsequently in *The Fathers and Beyond. Church Fathers Between Ancient and Medieval Thought* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-40); G. Inglese, 'Il destino dei non credenti. Lettura di *Paradiso* XIX', *La Cultura. Rivista trimestrale di filosofia letteratura e storia* 42 (2004), 2, 315-29.

On Virgil (Dante's Virgil) in particular, and in addition to the *Enciclopedia dantesca* ad voc. (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970-76), vol. 5, pp. 1030-48, E. Auerbach, 'Dante und Virgil', *Das Humanistisches Gymnasium* 42 (1931), 136-44 (and as 'Dante e Virgilio', in *San Francesco Dante Vico e altri saggi di filologia romanza* (Rome: Ed. Riuniti, 1987), pp. 27-37); idem, *Dante Poet of the Secular World*, trans. R. Manheim (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961; originally 1929 but now with an introduction by M. Dirda (New York: New York Review Books, 2007)); D. Consoli, *Significato del Virgilio dantesco* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967); E. Moore, *Studies in Dante. First Series: Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; originally 1896), pp. 166-97; R. Hollander, *Il Virgilio dantesco: tragedia nella 'Commedia'* (Florence: Olschki, 1983); T. Barolini, *Dante's Poets. Textuality and Truth in the Comedy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); see also her 'Q. Does Dante hope for Virgil's salvation? A. Why do we care? For the very reason we should not ask the question (response to Mowbray Allan [MLN 104])', *Modern Language Notes* 105 (1990), 1, 138-44 and 144-47 (and in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New

he understand by the term 'sin' ('peccare') something theologically less drastic than this, something more like 'moral aberration' or 'indiscretion'? Or is Virgil speaking strictly in character here, as one for whom the notion of sin as understood by those living in Christ had no meaning as a principle of self-interpretation? Or did he mean – somewhat after the manner of the 'man on the banks of the Indus' passage of *Paradiso* XIX⁴ – that though the pagans may, like all men, be said to have participated in the original sin of Adam, and thus to have incurred God's wrath as visited both upon him and upon his progeny, they lived according to their lights and were to that extent morally irreproachable? Or was he just speaking hyperbolically, in a manner designed to convey forcefully, but no more than that, a sense of the spiritual nobility of those now assembled in Limbo?

Whatever he meant by this, Thomas, everywhere cherished by Dante for his particular kind of intellectual and expressive discerning,⁵ would have none of it, the twilight pages of the *Prima secundae* in particular offering a sustained account of his sense of the indispensability of grace to a life of moral and intellectual integrity. Almost any article in the text would suffice as a point of departure, but let us take to begin with, as going straight to the heart of the matter, 109.8 on 'whether or not man needs grace to avoid sin' ('utrum homo sine gratia possit non peccare'). The 'objections' or antitheses in this article, turning as they do on the

York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 151-57). More generally, D. Comparetti, *Virgil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M. Benecke (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1967; originally 1872).

On the Dantean limbo, G. Busnelli, 'La colpa del "non fare" degli infedeli negativi', *Studi danteschi* 23 (1938), 79-97; K. Foster, O.P., 'The Two Dantes (I). Limbo and Implicit Faith', in the *Two Dantes* (above), pp. 156-89; G. Padoan, 'Il limbo dantesco', *Lettere italiane* 21 (1969), 4, 369-88 (and in *Il pio Enea, l'impio Ulisse* (Ravenna: Longo, 1977), pp. 103-24); A. A. Iannucci, 'Limbo: the Emptiness of Time', *Studi danteschi* 52 (1979-80), 69-128.

⁴ *Par.* XIX.70-75: 'ché tu dicevi: "Un uom nasce a la riva / de l'Indo, e quivi non è chi ragioni / di Cristo né chi legga né chi scriva; / e tutti suoi voleri e atti buoni / sono, quanto ragione umana vede, / senza peccato in vita o in sermoni.' On the living out among the pagans of moral (as distinct from theological) virtue in its entirety, *Purg.* VII.34-36: 'quivi sto io con quei che le tre sante / virtù non si vestiro, e senza vizio / conobber l'altre e seguir tutte quante.'

⁵ K. Foster, O.P., 'St Thomas and Dante', in *The Two Dantes* (note 3 above), p. 61: 'what distinguishes the motive and manner of his regard for St Thomas? A fine subject for a book which no one has written! But if I were to try and write it I would begin by distinguishing, in the poet's devotion (the expression is not too strong) to "il buon frate Tommaso", two basic motives: (a) gratitude to the Aristotelian scholar, the author of the commentaries, and (b) esteem for the thinker as a model of intellectual probity and finesse. And I would show that the former attitude appears chiefly in the *Convivio* and the latter above all in cantos X-XIII of the *Paradiso*.'

propriety of speaking about 'sin' at all if it is something that cannot be avoided, insist that man without grace *can* avoid sin, anything less than this not only making a nonsense of the moral issue generally (for how, without the power to choose either way, *can* there be a moral issue?) but flying in the face of Scripture.⁶ In reply, however, Thomas, having cited Augustine to the effect that those thinking along these lines 'ought without doubt to be removed beyond all hearing and to be anathematized by the tongues of all' ('ab auribus omnium removendum, et ore omnium anathematizandum esse non dubito'),⁷ proceeds by way of a distinction between the before and after of justifying grace to affirm that, while before justification man can indeed abstain from mortal sin (though not from the kind of venial sin arising from the waywardness of his lower appetites), he cannot do this for long, his general disorderliness conspiring eventually, in the words of Gregory on Ezekiel, to 'drag him down' ('suo pondere ad aliud trahit') and destroy him:

Similiter etiam antequam hominis ratio, in qua est peccatum mortale, reparetur per gratiam iustificantem, potest singula peccata mortalia vitare, et secundum aliquod tempus, quia non est necesse quod continuo peccet in actu. Sed quod diu maneat absque peccato mortali, esse non potest. Unde et Gregorius dicit, super Ezech., quod 'peccatum quod mox per poenitentiam non deletur, suo pondere ad aliud trahit'. Et huius ratio est quia, sicut rationi subdi debet inferior appetitus, ita etiam ratio subdi debet Deo, et in ipso constituere finem suae voluntatis. Per finem autem oportet quod regulentur omnes actus humani, sicut per rationis iudicium regulari debent motus inferioris appetitus. Sicut ergo, inferiori appetitu non totaliter subiecto rationi, non potest esse quin contingant inordinati motus in appetitu sensitivo; ita etiam, ratione hominis non totaliter existente subiecta Deo, consequens est ut contingant multae inordinationes in ipsis actibus rationis. Cum enim homo non habet cor suum firmatum in Deo, ut pro nullo bono consequendo vel malo vitando ab eo separari vellet; occurrunt multa propter quae consequenda vel

⁶ *ST* Ia IIae.109.8, objs 1-3: 'Videtur quod homo sine gratia possit non peccare. "Nullus enim peccat in eo quod vitare non potest"; ut Augustinus dicit, in libro de Duab. Animab., et de Lib. Arb. Si ergo homo existens in peccato mortali non possit vitare peccatum, videtur quod peccando non peccet. Quod est inconueniens. Praeterea, ad hoc corripitur homo ut non peccet. Si igitur homo in peccato mortali existens non potest non peccare, videtur quod frustra ei correptio adhibeatur. Quod est inconueniens. Praeterea, Eccli. XV dicitur, "ante hominem vita et mors, bonum et malum, quod placuerit ei, dabitur illi". Sed aliquis peccando non desinit esse homo. Ergo adhuc in eius potestate est eligere bonum vel malum. Et ita potest homo sine gratia vitare peccatum.'

⁷ *De perfectione iustitiae hominis* xxi.44, ult.

vitanda homo recedit a Deo contemnendo praecepta ipsius, et ita peccat mortaliter ...

(*ST Ia IIae.109.8 resp.*)⁸

Without grace, then, the situation is hopeless. Called upon to submit the lower to the higher appetites, this being the way of a properly structured act of existence in man, the individual never – or never for long – succeeds in this, nature being forever in the grip of its frailty. True, a man on guard against his old ways may on occasion forestall them and act virtuously; but rarely, short of a movement of grace, can he be equal to his readiness to sin again: ‘Sed quia homo non potest semper esse in tali praemeditatione, non potest contingere ut diu permaneat quin operetur secundum consequentiam voluntatis deordinatae a Deo, nisi cito per gratiam ad debitum ordinem reparetur’ (*ibid.*)⁹ Reading between the lines, it is not hard to discern something of Thomas’s misgiving here, his doubts about having yet again to resolve the Aristotelian in the Augustinian moment of his spirituality; for not only is it clear from the body of the article that

⁸ So, too, before man’s reason, wherein is mortal sin, is restored by justifying grace, he can avoid each mortal sin, and for a time, since it is not necessary that he should be always actually sinning. But it cannot be that he remains for a long time without mortal sin. Hence Gregory says (*Super Ezech. Hom. xi*) that “a sin not at once taken away by repentance, by its weight drags us down to other sins”; and this because, as the lower appetite ought to be subject to the reason, so should the reason be subject to God, and should place in him the end of its will. Now it is by the end that all human acts ought to be regulated, even as it is by the judgment of the reason that the movements of the lower appetite should be regulated. And thus, even as inordinate movements of the sensitive appetite cannot help occurring since the lower appetite is not subject to reason, so likewise, since man’s reason is not entirely subject to God, the consequence is that many disorders occur in the reason. For when man’s heart is not so fixed on God as to be unwilling to be parted from him for the sake of finding any good or avoiding any evil, many things happen for the achieving or avoiding of which a man strays from God and breaks his commandments, and thus sins mortally. (Translation here and throughout by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 20 vols, New York: Benziger, 1911–25). On the difficulty of withstanding, at least for any length of time, venial sin, *ST Ia IIae.109.8 resp.*: ‘Non autem potest homo abstinere ab omni peccato veniali, propter corruptionem inferioris appetitus sensualitatis, cuius motus singulos quidem ratio reprimere potest (et ex hoc habent rationem peccati et voluntarii), non autem omnes, quia dum uni resistere nititur, fortassis alius insurgit; et etiam quia ratio non semper potest esse pervigil ad huiusmodi motus vitandos.’

⁹ But because a man cannot always be in this state of heightened attentiveness, it cannot be but that he sometimes acts in accordance with a will turned aside from God, unless, by grace, he is quickly brought back to due order; cf. *ScG III.clx.2*: ‘Non est autem possibile mentem hominis continue in ea vigilantia esse ut per rationem discutiat quicquid debet velle vel agere. Unde consequitur quod mens aliquando eligat id ad quod est inclinata, inclinatione manente. Et ita, si inclinata fuerit in peccatum, non stabit diu quin peccet, impedimentum gratiae praestans, nisi ad statum rectitudinis reducatur.’

man *can* resist mortal sin from out of his reasonableness as man ('in quo quidem statu potest homo abstinere ab omni peccato mortali quod in ratione consistit'),¹⁰ but the reply to Objection 3, an objection turning on a passage from *Ecclesiasticus* to the effect that man will sooner or later reap his proper reward ('ante hominem vita et mors, bonum et malum; quod placuerit ei, dabitur illi'),¹¹ works by way only of introducing into that passage a distinction quite foreign to the plain sense of the text: 'Ad tertium dicendum quod, sicut Augustinus dicit, in *Hypognost.*, verbum illud intelligitur de homine secundum statum naturae integrae, quando nondum erat servus peccati, unde poterat peccare et non peccare. Nunc etiam quodcumque vult homo, datur ei. Sed hoc quod bonum velit, habet ex auxilio gratiae.'¹² Somewhere, in other words, between the uncluttered substance of what the text actually says, its straightforward sense of the choice in human experience between good and evil, and Thomas's invocation of it for the purposes of securing a position in grace theology, comes the severity of Augustine's anti-Pelagian cast of mind, his sense of grace as a condition, not only of doing good, but of willing to do good in the first place.

The grace-theological resolution of 109.8 is foreshadowed in Articles 2 and 4 of the same question, articles bearing respectively on whether man can will and do good without grace ('utrum homo possit velle et facere bonum absque gratia'), and whether, again without grace, he can fulfil the precepts of the law ('utrum homo sine gratia per sua naturalia legis possit praecepta implere'). Article 2 especially has something about it of the 'retractation', of thinking through afresh earlier emphases, for previously in the *Summa* (Ia IIae.65.2 resp.) Thomas had taken the view that the sort of virtue required of man for the accomplishment of his natural as distinct from his supernatural end lies within his reach, a position plain from the situation of the gentiles: 'virtutes morales prout sunt operativae boni in ordine ad finem qui non excedit facultatem naturalem hominis, possunt

¹⁰ In this state man can abstain from all mortal sin, which takes its stand in his reason.

¹¹ Before man are life and death, good and evil; whichever he pleases will be given to him (Eccles. 15:18).

¹² In reply to the third point, as Augustine says in the *Hypognosticon*, this saying is to be understood of man in the state of perfect nature, when as yet he was not a slave of sin. Hence he was able to sin and not to sin. Now, too, whatever a man wills, is given to him; but his willing good, he has by God's assistance. The *Hypognosticon* (also *Hypomnesticon*, a spurious text but close in inspiration to the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*) has at III.ii.2 (PL 45, 1621), and following on from the passage from *Ecclesiasticus* (15:14-18): 'Quid est autem, "Et reliquit illum in manu consilii sui", nisi, dimisit eum in possibilitate liberi arbitrii sui? In manu enim possibilitas intelligitur. Ipsa enim est prima gratia, qua primus homo stare potuisset, si servare mandata Domini voluisset.'

per opera humana acquiri. Et sic acquisitae sine caritate esse possunt, sicut fuerunt in multis gentilibus.¹³ Now, however, in Ia IIae.109, he is not so sure; for if *before* the Fall man was equal to his natural end by natural means ('per sua naturalia'), *after* the Fall even this eludes him. Certain things, like building houses, planting vineyards and the like ('sicut aedificare domos, plantare vineas, et alia huiusmodi'), are indeed still possible, but these, important as they are for man's well-being in the round, are matters of technical rather than moral concern, matters of moral concern requiring of him more than he himself can provide:

natura hominis dupliciter potest considerari, uno modo, in sui integritate, sicut fuit in primo parente ante peccatum; alio modo, secundum quod est corrupta in nobis post peccatum primi parentis. Secundum autem utrumque statum, natura humana indiget auxilio divino ad faciendum vel volendum quodcumque bonum, sicut primo movente, ut dictum est. Sed in statu naturae integrae, quantum ad sufficientiam operativae virtutis, poterat homo per sua naturalia velle et operari bonum suae naturae proportionatum, quale est bonum virtutis acquisitae, non autem bonum superexcedens, quale est bonum virtutis infusae. Sed in statu naturae corruptae etiam deficit homo ab hoc quod secundum suam naturam potest, ut non possit totum huiusmodi bonum implere per sua naturalia. Quia tamen natura humana per peccatum non est totaliter corrupta, ut scilicet toto bono naturae privetur; potest quidem etiam in statu naturae corruptae, per virtutem suae naturae aliquod bonum particulare agere, sicut aedificare domos, plantare vineas, et alia huiusmodi; non tamen totum bonum sibi connaturale, ita quod in nullo deficiat.

(ST Ia IIae.109.2 resp.)¹⁴

¹³ it is possible by means of human works to acquire moral virtues, in so far as they produce good works that are directed to an end not surpassing the natural power of man; and when they are acquired thus, they can be without charity, even as they were in many of the gentiles.

¹⁴ man's nature may be looked at in two ways: first, in its integrity, as it was in our first parent before sin; secondly, as it is corrupted in us after the sin of our first parent. Now in both states human nature needs the help of God as first mover to do or to wish any good whatsoever, as stated above [art. 1]. But in the state of integrity, as regards the sufficiency of the operative power, man by his natural endowments could wish and do the good proportionate to his nature, such as the good of acquired virtue; but not surpassing good, as the good of infused virtue. But in the state of corrupt nature, man falls short of what he could do by his nature, so that he is unable to fulfil it by his own natural powers. Yet because human nature is not altogether corrupted by sin, so as to be shorn of every natural good, even in the state of corrupted nature it can, by virtue of its natural endowments, work some particular good, such as building houses, planting vineyards, and the like; yet it cannot do all the good natural to it, so as to fall short in nothing.

Thus just as an invalid may have some movement of his own, Thomas goes on, there can even so be no healing without a physician ('Sicut homo infirmus potest per seipsum aliquem motum habere, non tamen perfecte potest moveri motu hominis sani, nisi sanetur auxilio medicinae'), at which point his theologization of the moral issue, its referral to grace as the *primum* of every significant inflexion of the spirit in the areas of right doing and of right being, is complete. And what applies in Article 2 on the willing and doing of good applies also in Article 4 on obedience to the law generally and to the gospel imperative in particular, where again it is a question of grace as a condition of fulfilment. Now obedience to the law, Thomas maintains, has two aspects to it, a material aspect relating to the *what* of obedience, to the precise nature of the obligation laid by the law upon those subject to it, and a psychological aspect relating to the *how* of obedience, to the mood or disposition of the one who obeys. If, then, materially or as regards the *what* of obedience, man in his innocence had no need of grace (his, at this stage, being an integral act of existence), psychologically or as regards the *how* of obedience he did, the *how* of obedience, both prior to and following the Fall, being a matter of grace as facilitative:

Respondeo dicendum quod implere mandata legis contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, quantum ad substantiam operum, prout scilicet homo operatur iusta et fortia, et alia virtutis opera. Et hoc modo homo in statu naturae integrae potuit omnia mandata legis implere, alioquin non potuisset in statu illo non peccare, cum nihil aliud sit peccare quam transgredi divina mandata. Sed in statu naturae corruptae non potest homo implere omnia mandata divina sine gratia sanante. Alio modo possunt impleri mandata legis non solum quantum ad substantiam operis, sed etiam quantum ad modum agendi, ut scilicet ex caritate fiant. Et sic neque in statu naturae integrae, neque in statu naturae corruptae, potest homo implere absque gratia legis mandata. Unde Augustinus, in libro de Corrept. et Grat., cum dixisset quod sine gratia nullum prorsus bonum homines faciunt, subdit, "non solum ut, monstrante ipsa quid faciendum sit, sciant; verum etiam ut, praestante ipsa, faciant cum dilectione quod sciunt". Indigent insuper in utroque statu auxilio Dei moventis ad mandata implenda, ut dictum est.

(*ST Ia IIae.109.4 resp.*)¹⁵

¹⁵ I answer that there are two ways of fulfilling the commandments of the Law. The first regards the substance of the works, as when a man does works of justice, fortitude, and of other virtues. And in this way man in the state of perfect nature could fulfil all the commandments of the Law; otherwise he would have been unable not to sin in that state, since to sin is nothing other than to transgress the divine commandments. But in the

Here too, therefore, commitment at one level of consciousness to the viability of the human project as such, to what man as man may accomplish *ex naturalibus* on the plane of right being and right doing, is at another level resolved in a sense of the priority of grace as enabling in respect of the whole.

2. The basic question here is the relationship within the totality of human experience of the divine and the human initiative, of what God does for man and of what man does for himself. Inasmuch as these things are understood to relate extrinsically, in terms of the latter as made possible by the former as radically other than self, then the viability of that being, its power in any sense or degree to function from out of itself, is called into question. In so far, however, as they are understood to relate intrinsically, in terms of the coalescence of human and divine willing at the core of existence, then the human project commends itself from out of itself, from out of its adequacy to the business in hand. Now here we must be careful, for Thomas's too is a species of intrinsicism, for in thinking about grace and the nature of its presence to the individual as graced, he is inclined to see it in terms of something placed in the soul, of a superadded principle of existence apt from within to quicken it in the interests of its supernatural finality. Eloquent in their expression of this idea – of grace as a matter of superadditionality – are, for example, these lines from the *Prima secundae* at 110.2 resp., secure in their sense of grace as a matter of infused formality and of this as the condition of every morally and eschatologically significant inflexion of the spirit in man:

Creaturis autem naturalibus sic providet ut non solum moveat eas ad actus naturales, sed etiam largiatur eis formas et virtutes quasdam, quae sunt principia actuum, ut secundum seipsas inclinentur ad huiusmodi motus. Et sic motus quibus a Deo moventur, fiunt creaturis connaturales et faciles; secundum illud Sap. VIII, *et disponit*

state of corrupted nature man cannot fulfil all the divine commandments without healing grace. Secondly, the commandments of the law can be fulfilled, not merely as regards the substance of the act, but also as regards the mode of acting, i.e. its being done out of charity. And in this way, neither in the state of perfect nature, nor in the state of corrupt nature can man fulfil the commandments of the law without grace. Hence, Augustine having stated that without grace men can do no good whatever, adds: 'Not only do they know by its light what to do, but by its help they do lovingly what they know' [*De corrept. et grat. ii*]. Beyond this, in both states they need the help of God's motion in order to fulfil the commandments. Augustine himself, in the *De corrept. et gratia* at ii.3, has: 'Intellegenda est enim gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum, qua sola homines liberantur a malo, et sine qua nullum prorsus sive cogitando, sive volendo et amando, sive agendo faciunt bonum: non solum ut monstrante ipsa quid faciendum sit sciant, verum etiam ut praestante ipsa faciant cum dilectione quod sciunt.'

omnia suaviter. Multo igitur magis illis quos movet ad consequendum bonum supernaturale aeternum, infundit aliquas formas seu qualitates supernaturales, secundum quas suaviter et prompte ab ipso moveantur ad bonum aeternum consequendum. Et sic donum gratiae qualitas quaedam est.¹⁶

¹⁶ Now he so provides for natural creatures, that not merely does he move them to their natural acts, but he bestows upon them certain forms and powers, which are the principles of acts, in order that they may of themselves be inclined to these movements, and thus the movements whereby they are moved by God become natural and easy to creatures, according to Wisdom 8 [v. 1]: 'she orders all things sweetly.' Much more, therefore, does he infuse into such as he moves towards the acquisition of supernatural good, certain forms or supernatural qualities, whereby they may be moved by him sweetly and promptly to acquire eternal good; and thus the gift of grace is a quality. Cf. *ScG* III.cl. 3 and 6: 'Oportet autem hanc gratiam aliquid in homine gratificato esse, quasi quandam formam et perfectionem ipsius. Quod enim in aliquem finem dirigitur, oportet quod habeat continuum ordinem in ipsum: nam movens continue mutat quousque mobile per motum finem sortiatur. Cum igitur auxilio divinae gratiae homo dirigatur in ultimum finem, ut ostensum est, oportet quod continue homo isto auxilio potiatur, quousque ad finem perveniat. Hoc autem non esset si praedictum auxilium participaret homo secundum aliquem motum aut passionem, et non secundum aliquam formam manentem, et quasi quiescentem in ipso: motus enim et passio talis non esset in homine nisi quando actu converteretur in finem; quod non continue ab homine agitur, ut praecipue patet in dormientibus. Est ergo gratia faciens aliqua forma et perfectio in homine manens, etiam quando non operatur ... Oportet quod homo ad ultimum finem per proprias operationes perveniat. Unumquodque autem operatur secundum propriam formam. Oportet igitur, ad hoc quod homo perducatur in ultimum finem per proprias operationes, quod superaddatur ei aliqua forma, ex qua eius operationes efficaciam aliquam accipiant promerendi ultimum finem.' R. W. Gleason, S.J., *Grace* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), p. 132: 'Since this gift of grace is added to a nature already substantially complete, we know that, philosophically speaking, it cannot be a substance but must be an accident. We know also from revelation that this created grace *inheres* in the soul, as Trent teaches, is capable of increase, and is therefore an absolute accident. We may conclude, therefore, that grace is a created, spiritual, absolute, qualitative accident, an accident which inheres in the soul, empowering the soul to supernatural acts, and which bears a proportion to man's end – the happiness proper to God, the beatific vision of heaven' (italics original).

On Thomas and grace (in addition to Gleason), R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *La Prédestination des saints et la grâce: doctrine de Saint Thomas comparée aux autres systèmes théologiques* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936); idem, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St Thomas, Ia IIae, 109-14*, trans. from the Commentarius of 1947 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Internationale 'Angelicum') by the Dominican Nuns of the Corpus Christi Monastery, Menlo Park, California (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1952); B. J. F. Lonergan, S.J., 'St Thomas's Thought on Gratia Operans', *Theological Studies* 2 (1941), 289-324; 3 (1942), 69-88, 375-402 and 533-78; idem, *Grace and Freedom. Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. F. E. Crowe and R. M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000; originally 1971); H. Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez s. Thomas d'Aquin: étude historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); M. Flick, *L'attimo della giustificazione secondo S. Tommaso* (Rome: Apud aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1947); P. Wehrbrink (trans.), *Thomas von Aquin. Die menschliche Willensfreiheit* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1954; selections

In so far, then, as it is a question of grace as incoming and thus as inclining the soul from deep within itself to its sublime finality we must speak of the immanentism of Thomist grace-theology. But – and this now is the point – to read over this and similar passages both in and beyond the *Summa theologiae* is to become aware that immanence is not the sole nor even the dominant model in Thomas's mind; for *immanence*, as a means of conceiving and of expressing the relationship of grace and nature within the economy of this or that instance of specifically human being, at once gives way to *movement* as a way of seeing and exploring this issue, to a sense of that being as constrained *ab extra* to its proper good; so, in the 110.2 passage just quoted, the 'ut non solum *moveat* eas ad actus naturales' moment of the argument, the 'Et sic *motus* quibus a Deo *moventur*' moment, the 'illis quos *mouet* ad consequendum bonum supernaturale aeternum' moment, and the 'prompte ab ipso *moveantur* ad bonum aeternum consequendum' moment, each alike turning on a sense of grace as a matter, less of coalescence, than of coercion in respect of man's proper good as man. And this, notable as it is in 110.2, is by and large the way with the grace treatise generally of the *Prima secundae*, Thomas's sense of what needs to be said here, and certainly of how it needs to be said, being causal and kinetic rather than immanentist or inwardly operative in kind. Take, for example, as further evidence of this situation, these lines from 113.6 on the question of justification as that whereby the lower powers of the soul are by grace ordered to the higher powers, and the higher powers of the soul to God himself as to their proper end.¹⁷ There are, Thomas says, four things involved in the justification or making righteous of the

from the *Quaestiones disputatae de malo and de veritate* with an introduction by G. Siewerth); C. Ernst, O.P. (ed. and comm.), St Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*, vol. 30 (*The Gospel of Grace*. 1a 2a. 106-114) (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1972); J. P. Wawrykow, *God's Grace and Human Action. 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); idem, 'Grace', in R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. P. Wawrykow (eds), *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 192-221; J. F. Wippel, 'Natur und Gnade (S.th. I-II, qq. 109-114)', in A. Speer (ed.), *Thomas von Aquin: Die Summa theologiae. Werkinterpretationen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 246-70. More generally on grace theology (but with reference still to Thomas), J. Auer, *Die Entwicklung der Gnadenlehre in der Hochscholastik*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1951); N. P. Williams, *The Grace of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966, originally 1930).

¹⁷ *ST*Ia IIae.113.1 resp.: 'Alio modo dicitur iustitia prout importat rectitudinem quamdam ordinis in ipsa interiori dispositione hominis, prout scilicet supremum hominis subditur Deo, et inferiores vires animae subduntur supremae, scilicet rationi.' In addition to Bouillard and Flick (previous note), M. G. Lawler, 'Grace and Free Will in Justification: a Textual Study in Aquinas', *The Thomist* 35 (1971), 601-30; A. E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei. A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, vol. 1 (*The Beginnings to the Reformation*) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 78 ff.

wicked, namely, an in-breathing of grace, a turning of the will towards God, a turning of the will from sin, and a setting aside of guilt, the process as a whole, however, lending itself to contemplation under the aspect of causality, of one thing's being moved by another until at last there is nothing more to be moved:

quatuor enumerantur quae requiruntur ad iustificationem impij, scilicet gratiae infusio; *motus* liberi arbitrii in Deum per fidem; et *motus* liberi arbitrii in peccatum; et remissio culpa. Cuius ratio est quia, sicut dictum est, iustificatio est quidam *motus* quo anima *movetur* a Deo a statu culpa in statum iustitiae. In quolibet autem *motu* quo aliquid ab altero *movetur*, tria requiruntur, primo quidem, *motio ipsius moventis*; secundo, *motus mobilis*; et tertio, consummatio *motus*, sive perventio ad finem. Ex parte igitur *motionis* divinae, accipitur gratiae infusio; ex parte vero liberi arbitrii *moti*, accipiuntur duo *motus* ipsius, secundum recessum a termino a quo, et accessum ad terminum ad quem; consummatio autem, sive perventio ad terminum huius *motus*, importatur per remissionem culpa, in hoc enim iustificatio consummatur.

(*ST Ia IIae.113.6 resp.*)¹⁸

But that is not all, for his preoccupation with grace as a matter of movement affects Thomas's sense, not only of justification as the pivotal point of human experience under its soteriological aspect, but of preparation and of perseverance as leading up to and following on from justification thus understood.¹⁹ As far, then, as the moment of preparation

¹⁸ there are four things which are accounted to be necessary for the justification of the ungodly, namely the infusion of grace, the *movement* of free will towards God by faith, the *movement* of free will in the matter of sin, and the remission of sin. The reason for this is that, as stated above [art. 1], the justification of the ungodly is a *movement* whereby the soul is *moved* by God from a state of sin to a state of justice. Now in the *movement* whereby one thing is *moved* by another, three things are required: first, the *motion of the mover*; secondly, the *movement of the moved*; thirdly, the consummation of the *movement*, or the attainment of the end. On the part of the divine *motion*, there is the infusion of grace; on the part of the free will which is *moved*, there are two *movements* – of departure from the term 'whence', and of approach to the term 'whereto'; but the consummation of the *movement* or the attainment of the end of the *movement* is implied in the remission of sin; for in this is the justification of the ungodly completed.

¹⁹ A. E. McGrath, 'The Influence of Aristotelian Physics upon St Thomas Aquinas's Discussion of the "Processus Iustificationis"', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 51 (1984), 223-29. In Thomas himself, *ST Ia IIae.110.2 resp.* 'Dictum est autem supra quod dupliciter ex gratuita Dei voluntate homo adiuvatur. Uno modo, inquantum anima hominis movetur a Deo ad aliquid cognoscendum vel volendum vel agendum. Et hoc modo ipse gratuitus effectus in homine non est qualitas, sed motus quidam animae, actus enim moventis in moto est motus, ut dicitur in III Physic.; 113.8 ad 3: 'sicut philosophus

is concerned, there can, Thomas thinks, be no such thing short of the grace whereby the soul is inspired in the first place to embark on the way of spiritual renewal. To be more exact, if the soul's preparation for the grace of justification is nothing but preparation for *habitual* grace as a steady disposition of the spirit towards God, then we need to be thinking here, not of a still further act of habitual gracing (for otherwise we would be committed to infinite regression), but of something closer to what we would now call a form of *actual* gracing, a transient efflux of grace designed to set the whole thing in motion:

duplex est praeparatio voluntatis humanae ad bonum. Una quidem qua praeparatur ad bene operandum et ad Deo fruendum. Et talis praeparatio voluntatis non potest fieri sine habituali gratiae dono, quod sit principium operis meritorii, ut dictum est. Alio modo potest intelligi praeparatio voluntatis humanae ad consequendum ipsum gratiae habitualis donum. Ad hoc autem quod praeparet se ad susceptionem huius doni, non oportet praesupponere aliquod aliud donum habituale in anima, quia sic procederetur in infinitum, sed oportet praesupponi aliquod auxilium gratuitum Dei interius animam moventis, sive inspirantis bonum propositum ... Hoc autem est praeparare se ad gratiam, quasi ad Deum converti, sicut ille qui habet oculum aversum a lumine solis, per hoc se praeparat ad recipiendum lumen solis, quod oculos suos convertit versus solem. Unde patet quod homo non potest se praeparare ad lumen gratiae suscipiendum, nisi per auxilium gratuitum Dei interius moventis.

(*ST Ia IIae.109.6 resp.*)²⁰

dicat, in II Physic., in motibus animi omnino praecedit motus in principium speculationis, vel in finem actionis, sed in exterioribus motibus remotio impimenti praecedit assecutionem finis. Et quia motus liberi arbitrii est motus animi, prius naturae ordine movetur in Deum sicut in finem, quam ad removendum impedimentum peccati', etc.

²⁰ the preparation of the human will for good is twofold: the first, whereby it is prepared to operate rightly and to enjoy God; and this preparation of the will cannot take place without the habitual gift of grace, which is the principle of meritorious works, as stated above [art. 5]. There is a second way in which the human will may be taken to be prepared for the gift of habitual grace itself. Now in order that man may prepare himself to receive this gift, it is not necessary to presuppose any further habitual gift in the soul, otherwise we should go on to infinity. But we must presuppose a gratuitous gift of God, who moves the soul inwardly or inspires the good wish ... Now to prepare oneself for grace is, as it were, to be turned to God; just as, whoever has his eyes turned away from the light of the sun, prepares himself to receive the sun's light by turning his eyes towards the sun. Hence it is clear that man cannot prepare himself to receive the light of grace except by the gratuitous help of God moving him inwardly. On actual gracing and the Tridentine and post-Tridentine development generally of Thomist positions in grace theology see especially, B. J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Grace and Freedom. Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas* (note 16 above), especially pp. 117-38.

The moment of preparation, meaning by this the moment in which the soul first contemplates turning towards God as the first and final cause of all turning in human experience, is, therefore, a matter of special or extraordinary gracing, habitual grace as a matter of God's steady presence to the individual presupposing a special or dedicated movement of divine assistance ('*aliquod auxilium gratuitum Dei*') as its prior condition. And this, as a general proposition, is confirmed in 112.3 by way of Thomas's particular take on the old adage to the effect that 'to anyone who does what he can, God does not deny grace' ('*facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam*'), a formula presupposing the idea that man *can* actually do what he has it in himself to do, that he *is* in some degree empowered to his own good, this being something that God will always seek to honour. That, at any rate, is the substance of the first 'objection' in this article, decisive in its sense of God's not only honouring, but, as a matter of elementary justice, of his *having* to honour the efforts of those doing their best:

Videtur quod ex necessitate detur gratia se praeparanti ad gratiam, vel facienti quod in se est. Quia super illud Rom. V, 'iustificati ex fide pacem habeamus' etc., dicit Glossa, 'Deus recipit eum qui ad se confugit, aliter esset in eo iniquitas'. Sed impossibile est in Deo iniquitatem esse. Ergo impossibile est quod Deus non recipiat eum qui ad se confugit. Ex necessitate igitur gratiam assequitur.

(ST Ia IIae.112.3 obj. 1)²¹

Thomas, however, committed as he is in the *Summa* to a high-theological account of this matter, to a steady referral of free will to grace as the ground and guarantee of its efficacy, is not persuaded. What we have to say, therefore, is (a) that grace does not, and cannot, follow necessarily upon a movement of human willing, since the gift of grace exceeds every kind of preparation man can possibly make for it, and (b) that if a man does what he can, and this in such a way that God honours him for it, then this must be looked upon as yet a further instance of his prior intentionality for that man, his gracing of him, therefore, being a matter, not of necessity, but of infallibility, as nothing but the outworking of what God had it in mind to do all along:

²¹ It would seem that grace is necessarily given to whoever prepares himself for grace, or to whoever does what he can, because, on Romans 5:1 – 'Being justified ... by faith, let us have peace' etc. – the Gloss says 'God welcomes whoever flies to him, otherwise there would be injustice with him'. But it is impossible for injustice to be with God. Therefore, it is impossible for God not to welcome whoever takes refuge in him. Hence he receives grace of necessity.

Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, praeparatio ad hominis gratiam est a Deo sicut a movente, a libero autem arbitrio sicut a moto. Potest igitur praeparatio dupliciter considerari. Uno quidem modo, secundum quod est a libero arbitrio. Et secundum hoc, nullam necessitatem habet ad gratiae consecutionem, quia donum gratiae excedit omnem praeparationem virtutis humanae. Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod est a Deo movente. Et tunc habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest; secundum quod et Augustinus dicit, in libro de Praedest. Sanct., 'quod per beneficia Dei certissime liberantur quicumque liberantur'. Unde si ex intentione Dei moventis est quod homo cuius cor movet, gratiam consequatur, infallibiliter ipsam consequitur; secundum illud Ioan. VI, 'omnis qui audivit a patre et didicit, venit ad me'.

(ST Ia IIae.112.3 resp.)²²

²² I answer that, as stated above [art. 2], man's preparation for grace is from God as mover and from free will as moved. Hence the preparation may be looked at in two ways: first, as it is from free will, and thus there is no necessity that it should obtain grace, since the gift of grace exceeds every preparation of human power. But it may be considered, secondly, as it is from God the mover, and thus it has a necessity – not indeed of coercion, but of infallibility – as regards what it is ordained to by God, since God's intention cannot fail, according to the saying of Augustine in his book on the Predestination of the Saints to the effect that 'by God's good gifts whoever is liberated, is most certainly liberated' [*De dono persever.* xiv]. Hence if God intends, while moving, that the one whose heart he moves should attain to grace, he will infallibly attain to it, according to John 6 [v. 45]: 'Every one who has heard of the Father, and who has learned, comes to me.' McGrath (note 17 above), p. 86, glosses as follows: 'Whilst Thomas continues to insist upon the necessity of a preparation for justification, and continues to discuss this in terms of man's *quod in se est*, he now considers that this preparation lies outside man's purely natural powers. As he now understands the matter, man is not even capable of his full *natural* good, let alone the *supernatural* good required of him for justification. The preparation for justification is itself a work of grace, in which God is active and man passive. For Thomas, the axiom *facienti quod in se est* now assumes the meaning that God will not deny grace to the man who does his best, in so far as he is moved by God to do this: "Cum dicitur homo facere quod in se est, dicitur hoc esse in potestate hominis secundum quod est motus a Deo." See, however, as evidence, perhaps, of a certain unease at this point, 114.3 resp. on the notion of merit *de congruo* in respect of a man's living by his lights: 'opus meritorium hominis dupliciter considerari potest, uno modo, secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio; alio modo, secundum quod procedit ex gratia spiritus sancti. Si consideretur secundum substantiam operis, et secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio, sic non potest ibi esse condignitas, propter maximam inaequalitatem. Sed est ibi congruitas, propter quandam aequalitatem proportionis, videtur enim congruum ut homini operanti secundum suam virtutem, Deus recompenset secundum excellentiam suae virtutis.' R.-C. Dhont, *Le Problème de la préparation à la grâce. Débuts de l'école franciscaine* (Paris: Editions franciscaines, 1946).

Reluctant, then, in his pursuit of a grace-theological position to make any concession to the efficacy of human willing in and for itself, Thomas manages to turn upside down a formula as gentle as it is generous in inspiration, a formula inclined to see in every integral movement of the spirit a moment of salvific significance. True, free will as such, as a power of the rational soul to moral determination, is not abolished, and neither can it be, for free will as the principle in man of accountability is part of what and how he actually *is*. But within the economy of the moral and religious life as a whole it stands to be contemplated in terms of the divine initiative by which it is moved from beforehand, herein alone lying its power to make any difference.²³

What applies, moreover, at the point of preparation or of man's preliminary turning towards God, applies also in respect of his persisting in the way of righteousness, where even as graced habitually he is dependent on a continual process of actual gracing as the condition of his at last coming home. The key article here is Ia IIae.109.10, where in the circumstances we might have been forgiven for expecting an easing of the argumentative line, a sweetening of the severity of it all; for while *preparation* as preliminary in respect of everything coming next by way

²³ For an earlier and alternative view of the 'facienti quod in se est' issue, II *Sent.* 28.1.4 resp.: 'Quidam enim dicunt, quod nullus potest se ad gratiam gratum facientem praeparare, nisi per aliquod lumen menti infusum, quod est donum gratiae gratis datae. Istud autem non videtur conveniens: quia praeparatio quae est ad gratiam, non est per actus qui sint ipsi gratiae aequandi aequalitate proportionis, sicut meritum aequatur praemio; et ideo non oportet ut actus quibus homo se ad gratiam habendam praeparat sint naturam humanam excedentes: sicut enim natura humana se habet in potentia materiali ad gratiam, ita actus virtutum naturalium se habent ut dispositiones materiales ad ipsam; unde non exigitur ad hoc ut homo ad gratiam se praeparet, aliquod aliud lumen gratiae praecedens. Et praeterea secundum hoc esset abire in infinitum: quia illud etiam lumen gratiae gratis datae non datur alicui nisi qui ad illud recipiendum se praeparavit; alias omnibus daretur: quod non potest intelligi; nisi forte gratia gratis data dicatur naturale lumen rationis, quod pertinet ad bona naturalia, et non ad gratuita, nisi large accepta. Si autem praeparatione indiget talis gratia gratis data, tunc redibit quaestio de ista praeparatione, utrum in eam possit homo ex se, vel non: et sic vel abiretur in infinitum, vel erit devenire ad aliquam gratiam ad quam homo per se praeparare potest se. Sed non est ratio efficax quare hoc magis in una gratia sit quam in alia. Et ideo aliis consentiendo dicimus, quod ad gratiam gratum facientem habendam ex solo libero arbitrio se homo potest praeparare: faciendo enim quod in se est, gratiam a Deo consequitur. Hoc autem solum in nobis est quod in potestate liberi arbitrii constitutum est.' Among the ancients, Origen, *Contra Celsum* vii.2; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* IV.xxxix.2, etc., and, among the moderns, J. Rivière, 'Quelques antécédents patristiques de la formule "facienti quod in se est"', *Revue des sciences religieuses* 7 (1927), 93-97; A. M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik*, 8 vols (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1952-56), vol. 1, part 1, pp. 249-64; H. A. Oberman, '"Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam"; Robert Holcot, O.P. and the Beginning of Luther's Theology', *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962), 317-42; A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (note 17 above), pp. 83 ff.

of justification may reasonably be said to involve a movement of grace as facilitative, *perseverance*, as belonging to a subsequent phase of the soul's journey into God, might be deemed more self-sufficient, more properly adequate to the matter in hand. But again Thomas will have none of it, for though by habitual grace man is healed and made adequate to his high calling, he still needs God's special assistance in keeping him safe along the way ('ipsum dirigente et protegente'):

perseverantia tripliciter dicitur. Quandoque enim significat habitum mentis per quem homo firmiter stat, ne removeatur ab eo quod est secundum virtutem, per tristitias irruentes, ut sic se habeat perseverantia ad tristitias sicut continentia ad concupiscentias et delectationes ut philosophus dicit, in VII Ethic. Alio modo potest dici perseverantia habitus quidam secundum quem habet homo propositum perseverandi in bono usque in finem. Et utroque istorum modorum, perseverantia simul cum gratia infunditur sicut et continentia et ceterae virtutes. Alio modo dicitur perseverantia continuatio quaedam boni usque ad finem vitae. Et ad talem perseverantiam habendam homo in gratia constitutus non quidem indiget aliqua alia habituali gratia, sed divino auxilio ipsum dirigente et protegente contra tentationum impulsus, sicut ex praecedenti quaestione apparet. Et ideo postquam aliquis est iustificatus per gratiam, necesse habet a Deo petere praedictum perseverantiae donum, ut scilicet custodiatur a malo usque ad finem vitae. Multis enim datur gratia, quibus non datur perseverare in gratia.

(ST Ia IIae.109.10 resp.)²⁴

a passage to which, as serving to point up the specifically Peripatetic moment of the argument, its accountability to the dynamics of movement as described by Aristotle in the *Physics*, we might add these lines from the *Contra gentiles* at III.clv.5:

²⁴ perseverance is taken in three ways. First, to signify a habit of the mind whereby a man stands steadfastly, lest he be moved by the assault of sadness from what is virtuous. And thus perseverance is to sadness as continence is to concupiscence and pleasure, as the Philosopher says in the seventh book of the *Ethics* [1150a9 ff.]. Secondly, perseverance may be called a habit, whereby a man has the purpose of persevering in good unto the end. And in both these ways perseverance is infused together with grace, even as continence and the other virtues are. Thirdly, perseverance is called the abiding in good to the end of life. And in order to have this perseverance man does not, indeed, need another habitual grace, but he needs divine assistance to guide and to guard him against the attacks of the passions, as appears from the preceding article. And hence after anyone has been justified by grace, he still needs to beseech God for the aforesaid gift of perseverance, that he may be kept from evil till the end of his life. For to many grace is given to whom perseverance in grace is not given.

Si sunt plura agentia successive, quorum scilicet unum agat post actionem alterius; continuitas actionis istorum non potest causari ex aliquo uno ipsorum, quia nullum eorum semper agit; nec ex omnibus, quia non simul agunt; unde oportet quod causetur ab aliquo superiori quod semper agat: sicut philosophus probat, in VIII Phys., quod continuitas generationis in animalibus causatur ab aliquo superiori sempiterno. Ponamus autem aliquem perseverantem in bono. In eo igitur sunt multi motus liberi arbitrii tendentes in bonum, sibi invicem succedentes usque ad finem. Huius igitur continuationis boni, quod est perseverantia, non potest esse causa aliquis istorum motuum: quia nullus eorum semper durat. Nec omnes simul: quia non simul sunt, non possunt igitur simul aliquid causare. Relinquitur ergo quod ista continuatio causetur ab aliquo superiori. Indiget igitur homo auxilio superioris gratiae ad perseverandum in bono.²⁵

Once again, then, there is a steady referral of the ordinary or connatural powers of the soul – of, in this case, the power of the soul to persistence – to God himself as the mainstay of human nature in the inadequacy of that nature. If, therefore, in one part of his being, Thomas's is a commitment to the notion of grace as, by way of its superadditionality, an intrinsically operative principle of righteousness, then in an alternative inflexion of the spirit he is happy to settle for the causal as distinct from the co-immanent as a way of seeing and setting up the grace-theological issue.

²⁵ Moreover, suppose that there are several agents in succession, such that one of them acts after the action of another; the continuation of the action of these agents cannot be caused by any one of them, for no one of them acts forever; nor can it be caused by all of them, since they do not act together. Consequently, the continuity must be caused by some higher agent that always acts, just as the Philosopher proves, in Physics VIII [vi; 258b10 ff.], that the continuity of the generative process in animals is caused by some higher, external agent. Now, let us suppose the case of someone who is persevering in the good. There are, then, in his case many movements of free choice tending toward the good, successively following each other up to the end. So, for this continuation in the good, which is perseverance, no one of these movements can be the cause, since none of them lasts forever. Nor can all of them together, for they are not together, and so they cannot cause something together. It remains, then, that this continuation is caused by some higher being. Therefore, man needs the help of higher grace to persevere in the good. Similarly, *ibid.* 6: 'Si sint multa ordinata ad unum finem, totus ordo eorum quousque pervenerint ad finem, est a primo agente dirigente in finem. In eo autem qui perseverat in bono, sunt multi motus et multae actiones pertingentes ad unum finem. Oportet igitur quod totus ordo istorum motuum et actionum causetur a primo dirigente in finem. Ostensum est autem quod per auxilium divinae gratiae diriguntur in ultimum finem. Igitur per auxilium divinae gratiae est totus ordo et continuatio bonorum operum in eo qui perseverat in bono.' J. P. Wawrykow, "Perseverance" in 13th-century Theology: the Augustinian Contribution', *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991), 125-40.

The consequences of this referral of the human to the divine initiative for the question of merit are far-reaching, though here too there is in Thomas an element of ambiguity – a hint of misgiving even – about his delivering himself in quite the way he does to the sombre substance of Augustine's anti-Pelagian spirituality. To begin with, then, all is well with man and his proper deserving, Thomas's, on the threshold of the *Prima secundae*, being a sense even of the final vision as in some degree merited, as accruing to the individual by way of his well doing. True, the angels or separate substances have an easier time of it in that theirs, in the immateriality of their being, is a relatively speaking untroubled implementation of self, whereas man in his psychosomaticity is forever caught up in a conflict of willing, in a constraining of the lower to the higher parts of his nature; but this, confirming as it does the difficulty of the moral situation in man, confirms too the meritoriousness of it all, the completeness of man's deserving as man:

Habere autem beatitudinem naturaliter est solius Dei. Unde solius Dei proprium est quod ad beatitudinem non moveatur per aliquam operationem praecedentem. Cum autem beatitudo excedat omnem naturam creatam, nulla pura creatura convenienter beatitudinem consequitur absque motu operationis, per quam tendit in ipsam. Sed angelus, qui est superior ordine naturae quam homo, consecutus est eam, ex ordine divinae sapientiae, uno motu operationis meritoriae, ut in primo expositum est. Homines autem consequuntur ipsam multis motibus operationum, qui merita dicuntur.

(ST Ia IIae.5.7 resp.)²⁶

Thus far, then, merit is meaningful, and, in its meaningfulness, enters into the soteriological scheme of things. But by the time we reach the other end of the *Prima secundae* the outlook is bleaker, such merit as man has being a matter of the grace by which it is everywhere inaugurated and sustained. There are, Thomas thinks, two questions here, the first turning on whether man can from out of himself merit eternal life, and the second on whether he can from out of himself merit anything at all. As far as the first is concerned, Thomas has no doubt, man as man being in no position to merit eternal life (*a*) because of its character as surpassing all that he is

²⁶ To have happiness naturally belongs to God alone. Therefore it belongs to God alone not to be moved towards happiness by any previous operation. Now since happiness surpasses every created nature, no pure creature can appropriately gain happiness, without the movement of operation, whereby it tends thereto. But the angel, who is above man in the natural order, obtained it, according to the order of divine wisdom, by one movement of a meritorious work, as was explained in the first part [qu. 62, art. 5]; whereas man obtains it by many movements of works which are called merits.

able to do and even to imagine unaided, and (*b*) because of his inveterate sinfulness, each of these things requiring a remedy – namely additionality and absolution – solely in the gift of God:

Vita autem aeterna est quoddam bonum excedens proportionem naturae creatae, quia etiam excedit cognitionem et desiderium eius, secundum illud I ad Cor. II, ‘nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit’. Et inde est quod nulla natura creata est sufficiens principium actus meritorii vitae aeternae, nisi superaddatur aliquod supernaturale donum, quod gratia dicitur. Si vero loquamur de homine sub peccato existente, additur cum hac secunda ratio, propter impedimentum peccati. Cum enim peccatum sit quaedam Dei offensa excludens a vita aeterna, ut patet per supradicta; nullus in statu peccati existens potest vitam aeternam mereri, nisi prius Deo reconcilietur, dimisso peccato, quod fit per gratiam.

(*ST Ia IIae.114.2 resp.*)²⁷

Now for the purpose of confirming this general position we need with Thomas to draw a distinction between *condign merit* or absolute worthiness (*meritum de condigno*) and *congruous merit* or relative worthiness (*meritum de congruo*). Condignly, there can be no question of man’s meriting eternal life from out of himself (*ex naturalibus*), for eternal life is something wholly exceeding his power of willing. Inasmuch as he merits eternal life *ex condigno*, he merits it by way only of the Holy Spirit as fitting him for life everlasting.²⁸ But there is here room for manoeuvre in that, though there can be no question of man’s meriting eternal life condignly, he may,

²⁷ Now everlasting life is a good exceeding the proportion of created nature; since it exceeds its knowledge and desire, according to 1 Corinthians 2 [v. 9]: ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man.’ And hence it is that no created nature is a sufficient principle of an act meritorious of eternal life, unless there is added a supernatural gift, which we call grace. But if we speak of man as existing in sin, a second reason is added to this, namely the impediment of sin. For since sin is an offence against God, excluding us from eternal life, as is clear from what has been said above [qu. 71, art. 6; qu. 113, art. 2], no one existing in a state of mortal sin can merit eternal life unless first he be reconciled to God, through his sin being forgiven, which is brought about by grace.

²⁸ *ST Ia IIae. 114. 3 resp.*: ‘Si autem loquamur de opere meritorio secundum quod procedit ex gratia spiritus sancti, sic est meritorium vitae aeternae ex condigno. Sic enim valor meriti attenditur secundum virtutem spiritus sancti moventis nos in vitam aeternam; secundum illud Ioan. IV, “fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam”. Attenditur etiam pretium operis secundum dignitatem gratiae, per quam homo, consors factus divinae naturae, adoptatur in filium Dei, cui debetur hereditas ex ipso iure adoptionis, secundum illud Rom. VIII, “si filii, et heredes”.’ J. P. Wawrykow, ‘On the Purpose of “Merit” in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas’, *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 2 (1992), 97-116; idem, *God’s Grace and Human Action. ‘Merit’ in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (note 16 above).

if he does his best, be said to merit it congruously, by way of a certain proportionality, inequality, therefore, subsisting still, but not in such a way as to abolish all deserving whatever:

opus meritorium hominis dupliciter considerari potest, uno modo, secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio; alio modo, secundum quod procedit ex gratia spiritus sancti. Si consideretur secundum substantiam operis, et secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio, sic non potest ibi esse condignitas, propter maximam inaequalitatem. Sed est ibi congruitas, propter quandam aequalitatem proportionis; videtur enim congruum ut homini operanti secundum suam virtutem, Deus recompenset secundum excellentiam suae virtutis.

(*ST Ia IIae.114.3 resp.*)²⁹

To this extent, then, Thomas's is a nod in the direction of deserving. But the spirit of accommodation does not last long, for, strictly speaking, Thomas tells us, all merit flows from charity, and charity in turn flows from God, the causal chain, therefore, brooking no interruption or qualification in favour of anything approaching human deserving. First, then, on the referability of merit to charity as to its first and final cause, we have these lines from the closing phase of the *Prima secundae*:

sicut ex dictis accipi potest, humanus actus habet rationem merendi ex duobus, primo quidem et principaliter, ex divina ordinatione, secundum quod actus dicitur esse meritorius illius boni ad quod homo divinitus ordinatur; secundo vero, ex parte liberi arbitrii, inquantum scilicet homo habet prae ceteris creaturis ut per se agat, voluntarie agens. Et quantum ad utrumque, principalitas meriti penes caritatem consistit. Primo enim considerandum est quod vita aeterna in Dei fruitione consistit. Motus autem humanae mentis ad fruitionem divini boni, est proprius actus caritatis, per quem omnes actus aliarum virtutum ordinantur in hunc finem, secundum quod aliae virtutes imperantur a caritate. Et ideo meritum vitae aeternae primo pertinet ad caritatem, ad alias autem virtutes secundario, secundum quod eorum actus a caritate imperantur. Similiter etiam manifestum est quod id quod ex amore facimus, maxime voluntarie

²⁹ Man's meritorious work may be considered in two ways: first, as it proceeds from free will; secondly as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Spirit. If it is considered as regards the substance of the work, and inasmuch as it springs from free will, there can be no condignity because of the very great inequality. But there is congruity, on account of an equality of proportion; for it would seem congruous that, if a man does what he can, God should reward him according to the excellence of his power.

facimus. Unde etiam secundum quod ad rationem meriti requiritur quod sit voluntarium, principaliter meritum caritati attribuitur.

(*ST Ia IIae.114.4 resp.*)³⁰

while on charity as a gift of the Spirit, as a species of friendship originating with God himself as the beginning and end of all friendship, we have these from the opening phase of the *Secunda secundae*:

caritas est amicitia quaedam hominis ad Deum fundata super communicationem beatitudinis aeternae. Haec autem communicatio non est secundum bona naturalia, sed secundum dona gratuita, quia, ut dicitur Rom. VI, *gratia Dei vita aeterna*. Unde et ipsa caritas facultatem naturae excedit. Quod autem excedit naturae facultatem non potest esse neque naturale neque per potentias naturales acquisitum, quia effectus naturalis non transcendit suam causam. Unde caritas non potest neque naturaliter nobis inesse, neque per vires naturales est acquisita, sed per infusionem spiritus sancti, qui est amor patris et filii, cuius participatio in nobis est ipsa caritas creata ...'

(*ST IIa IIae.24.2 resp.*)³¹

³⁰ as we may gather from what has been stated above [art. 1], human acts have the nature of merit from two causes: first and chiefly from divine ordination, inasmuch as acts are said to merit that good to which man is divinely ordained. Secondly, on the part of free will, inasmuch as man, more than other creatures, has the power of voluntary acts by acting by himself. And in both these ways does merit chiefly rest with charity. For we must bear in mind that everlasting life consists in the enjoyment of God. Now the human mind's movement to the fruition of the divine good is the proper act of charity, whereby all the acts of the other virtues are ordained to this end, since all the other virtues are commanded by charity. Hence the merit of life everlasting pertains first to charity, and secondly, to the other virtues, inasmuch as their acts are commanded by charity. So, likewise, is it manifest that what we do out of love we do most willingly. Hence, even inasmuch as merit depends on voluntariness, merit is chiefly attributed to charity.

³¹ charity is a friendship of man for God founded upon the fellowship of everlasting happiness. Now this fellowship is in respect, not of natural, but of gratuitous gifts, for according to Romans 6 [v. 23] 'the grace of God is life everlasting'; wherefore charity itself surpasses our natural faculties. Now that which surpasses the faculty of nature cannot be natural or acquired by natural powers, since a natural effect does not transcend its cause. Therefore, charity can be in us neither naturally nor through acquisition by natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of whom in us is created charity. Cf. *ScG III.cli*, etc. Also, however, I *Sent.* 17.1.3 resp. for a sense of infused perfection as proportionate to the properties of personality, of nature as determined in this or that individual: 'Perfectiones autem infusae sunt in natura ipsius animae sicut in potentia materiali et nullo modo activa, cum elevent animam supra omnem suam actionem naturalem. Unde operationes animae se habent ad perfectiones infusas solum sicut dispositiones. Dicendum est igitur, quod mensura secundum quam datur caritas, est capacitas ipsius animae, quae est ex

Bit by bit, then, but in a manner faithful to the logic shaping each successive emphasis in the grace-theological moment of the *Summa theologiae*, the possibility of merit is qualified in favour of a sense, not so much of the indispensability of grace as the remote principle of each significant inflexion of the spirit, as of the ultimate insignificance of that inflexion in itself, of – other than by way of its transparency to grace in its incomingness – its counting for next to nothing within the salvific scheme as a whole.

3. Dante's too is a theology of grace, of the grace whereby man is empowered as a creature of moral determination, and he too, above all in the *Commedia*, is at pains to stress its status as the ground of every significant movement of the mind and of the will in man.³² Thus it is by grace that the penitent spirit knows itself in the henceforth unclouded

natura simul, et dispositione quae est per conatum operum: et quia secundum eundem conatum magis disponitur natura melior; ideo qui habet meliora naturalia, dummodo sit par conatus, magis recipiet de perfectionibus infusus; et qui pejora naturalia, quandoque magis recipiet, si adsit major conatus.' Otherwise, as the deep ground of mature Thomist spirituality hereabouts, Augustine, *De gratia et lib. arb.* xviii.37: 'Haec omnia praecepta dilectionis, id est caritatis, quae tanta et talia sunt, ut quidquid se putaverit homo facere bene, si fiat sine caritate, nullo modo fiat bene; haec ergo praecepta caritatis inaniter darentur hominibus, non habentibus liberum voluntatis arbitrium; sed quia per legem dantur et veterem et novam (quamvis in nova venerit gratia quae promittebatur in vetere), lex autem sine gratia littera est occidens, in gratia vero spiritus vivificans, unde est in hominibus caritas Dei et proximi, nisi ex ipso Deo?'

³² Most recently on Dante and grace: A. C. Mastrobuono, *Dante's Journey of Sanctification* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990); S. Rossi, 'Il trionfo della grazia nell'episodio di Bonconte da Montefeltro', *L'Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca*, 35, n.s. 3/4 (1994), 83-93; C. Ryan, "'Natura dividitur contra gratiam": concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofico-teologica medievale', in P. Boyde and V. Russo (eds), *Dante e la scienza. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Ravenna 28-30 maggio 1993* (Ravenna: Longo, 1995), pp. 363-73; L. Scorrano, 'Paradiso XXXII. La legge, la grazia', *L'Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca* 37, n.s. 7 (1996), 19-36, subsequently in *Tra il 'banco' e 'l'alte rote': Letture e note dantesche* (Ravenna: Longo, 1996), pp. 103-22; I. Biffi, *La poesia e la grazia nella Commedia di Dante* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999), especially pp. 29-35: 'Un viaggio che parte dalla grazia'; J. T. Chiampì, 'The role of freely bestowed grace in Dante's journey of legitimation', in *Rivista di Studi Italiani* 17 (1999), 1, 89-111; J. Trabant, "'Gloria" oder "grazia". Oder: Wonach die "questione della lingua" eigentlich fragt', *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 51 (2000), 29-52; P. Cherchi, "'Da me stesso non vegno" (Inf. X, 61)', *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 18 (2001), 103-106. Notable prior to Mastrobuono are G. Getto, 'L'"epos" della grazia in *Paradiso*', in P. Pullega (ed.), *Scrittori e idee in Italia. Antologia della critica. (Dalle Origini al Trecento)* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1982), pp. 209-14; G. Godenzi, 'Il viaggio spirituale di Dante dal peccato alla grazia', in *Quaderni Grigionitaliani. Rivista trimestrale delle valli Grigionitaliane* 56 (1987), 3-4, 234-39; B. Panvini, 'La concezione tomistica della grazia nella *Divina Commedia*', in *Lecture classensi* 17 (Ravenna: Longo, 1988), pp. 69-85.

substance of self, in the now uncluttered character of conscience (the 'se tosto grazia resolvable le schiume / di vostra coscienza sì che chiaro / per essa scenda de la mente il fiume' of *Purg.* XIII.88-90),³³ and it is by grace that it knows itself in its equality to the forces of reckless desiring (the 'Beati cui alluma / tanto di grazia, che l'amor del gusto / nel petto lor troppo disir non fuma' of *Purg.* XXIV.151-53).³⁴ It is by grace that it knows itself as held by God in the love of God (the 'E se Dio m'ha in sua grazia rinchiuso' of *Purg.* XVI.40),³⁵ and it is by grace that it knows itself in the rapture of its proper self-surpassing on the plane of understanding (the 'Ringrazia, / ringrazia il Sol de li angeli, ch'a questo / sensibil t'ha levato per sua grazia' moment of *Par.* X.52-54 and the 'Con tutto 'l core e con quella favella / ch'è una in tutti, a Dio feci olocausto, / qual conveniesi a la grazia novella' of XIV.88-90).³⁶ It is by grace, moreover, that the mind is caressed by the truth to which it is now party (the 'Grazia, che donnea / con la tua mente' moment of *Par.* XXIV.118-19)³⁷ and it is by grace that it rejoices in the knowledge of its spiritual sonship (the 'Figliuol di grazia' of *Par.* XXXI.112). Grace, then, is everywhere present to the pious spirit as both the beginning and the end of its piety, as that whereby it is both encouraged and consummated in its seeking out of God as the first and final cause of its every yearning. But there is here a difference as regards the *Prima secundae*, for whereas Thomas, for all his commitment to the notion of grace as a *something* placed by God in the soul as the means of its proper righteousness, proceeds in terms first and foremost of *causality*, Dante, for all his commitment to grace as by nature adventitious, proceeds by way of *coalescence*, of the mutual indwelling of the divine and of the human initiative at the core itself of existence, all of which amounts to something more than a mere redistribution of emphases, a modest tweaking of the argument as it stands; for Dante's is a proposal of this issue in terms, not of the poverty of human nature in its fallenness and thus of its dependence for the purposes of being

³³ so may grace soon clear the scum of your conscience that the stream of memory may flow down through it.

³⁴ Blessed are they who are so illumined by grace that the love of taste kindles not too great a desire in their breasts, and who hunger always so far as is just.

³⁵ And since God has received me so far into his grace [that he wills that I see his court in a manner wholly outside modern usage, do not hide from me who you were before death ...]

³⁶ Give thanks, give thanks to the sun of the angels who of his grace has raised you to this visible one ... with all my heart, and with that speech which is one in all men, I made a holocaust to God such as befitted the new grace.

³⁷ the grace that holds amorous discourse with your mind [till now has opened your lips aright, so that I approve what has come from them].

and becoming on a ceaseless process of actual gracing, but of the fresh sufficiency of that nature in Christ, at which point the severity of the final phase of the *Prima secundae* gives way to something altogether more radiant, to a sense of the human project as party once more to the process of its own being and becoming.

Taking one by one, then, the successive moments of the argument – the Christological moment of *Paradiso* VII, the volitional moment of *Paradiso* III, and, as tending to confirm these things as the basis of every kind of moral and ontological triumph in man, the covenantal moment of *Paradiso* V – we may begin by saying that Dante's, for all his sense of the propitiatory substance of Christ's work on Calvary, is pre-eminently a sense of that work as one of re-empowerment, of making man equal once again to his own high calling. Man's, then, in the moment of his first disobedience, was a threefold forfeiture, a triple surrender of *eternal life*, of *freedom* and of *God-likeness*, the loss of any one of which would have been enough to confirm him in his now attenuated humanity and in the need somehow to make good:

Ciò che da lei sanza mezzo distilla
non ha poi fine, perché non si move
la sua impronta quand' ella sigilla.

Ciò che da essa sanza mezzo piove
libero è tutto, perché non soggiace
a la virtute de le cose nove.

Più l'è conforme, e però più le piace;
ché l'ardor santo ch'ogne cosa raggia,
ne la più somigliante è più vivace.

Di tutte queste dote s'avvantaggia
l'umana creatura, e s'una manca,
di sua nobilità convien che caggia.

Solo il peccato è quel che la disfranca
e falla dissimile al sommo bene,
per che del lume suo poco s'imbianca;
e in sua dignità mai non rivene,
se non riempie, dove colpa vòta,
contra mal dilettrar con giuste pene.

(*Par.* VII.67-84)³⁸

³⁸ That which immediately derives from it thereafter has no end, because when it seals, its imprint may never be removed. That which rains down from it immediately is wholly free, because it is not subject to the power of the new things. It is the most conformed to it and therefore pleases it the most; for the holy ardour, which irradiates everything, is most living in what is most like itself. With all these gifts the human creature is advantaged, and if one fails, it needs must fall from its nobility. Sin alone it is that disenfranchises

In a discourse turning on the precise *how* of this making good, Dante comes to the choices confronting God as the author and architect of the human project in all the now destitute character of that project, choices consisting either (a) of forgiving him outright, or (b) of leaving him to his own devices, or (c) of finding some way of involving him in his own redemption. Miraculously, or, rather, magnanimously, God chose all three, for in taking on man's humanity in Christ he made it possible for man as man somehow to make amends for Eden and the catastrophe thereof and to participate in his own resurrection:

Ma perché l'ovra tanto è più gradita
da l'operante, quanto più appresenta
de la bontà del core ond' ell' è uscita,
la divina bontà che 'l mondo imprenta,
di proceder per tutte le sue vie,
a rilevarvi suso, fu contenta.
Né tra l'ultima notte e 'l primo die
sì alto o sì magnifico processo,
o per l'una o per l'altra, fu o fie:
ché più largo fu Dio a dar sé stesso
per far l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi,
che s'elli avesse sol da sé dimesso;
e tutti li altri modi erano scarsi
a la giustizia, se 'l Figliuol di Dio
non fosse umiliato ad incarnarsi.

(Par. VII.106-20)³⁹

And it is this which, to come now to the second and third moments of the argument identified above, enables Dante to speak (a) of the co-inherence of divine and human willing in the critical moment of moral and ontological deliberation (the burden of the 'Anzi è formale ad esto beato *esse*' sequence of *Paradiso* III), and (b) of man's actually striking a bargain with God, of doing a deal with him in respect of the divine

it and makes it unlike the supreme good, so that it is little illumined by its light; and to its dignity it never returns unless, where fault has emptied, it fill up with just penalties against evil delight.

³⁹ But because the deed is so much the more prized by the doer, the more it displays of the goodness of the heart whence it issued, the divine goodness which puts its imprint on the world, was pleased to proceed by all its ways to raise you up again; nor between the last night and the first day has there been or will there be so exalted and so magnificent a procedure, either by one or by the other; for God was more bounteous in giving himself to make man sufficient to uplift himself again, than if he solely of himself had remitted; and all other modes were scanty in respect to justice, if the Son of God had not humbled himself to become incarnate.

plan and of the working out of that plan (the burden of the 'Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza' sequence of *Paradiso* V); on the one hand, then, these lines from *Paradiso* III on the mutual indwelling of divine and human intentionality within the economy of the moral instance:

Frate, la nostra volontà quiëta
virtù di carità, che fa volerne
sol quel ch'avemo, e d'altro non ci asseta.

Se disiassimo esser più superne,
foran discordi li nostri disiri
dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne;
che vedrai non capere in questi giri,
s'essere in carità è qui *necessesse*,
e se la sua natura ben rimiri.

Anzi è formale ad esto beato *esse*
tenersi dentro a la divina voglia,
per ch'una fansi nostre voglie stesse;
sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace
com' a lo re che 'n suo voler ne 'nvoglia.

E 'n la sua voluntade è nostra pace:
ell' è quel mare al qual tutto si move
ciò ch'ella crià o che natura face.

(*Par.* III.70-87)⁴⁰

while on the other hand these lines from *Paradiso* V, settled in their sense of God's dealings with man and of man's with God as a matter, not of kinesis, but of co-operation, of mutual consent in the name and for the sake of a joint enterprise:

Sì cominciò Beatrice questo canto;
e sì com' uom che suo parlar non spezza,
continüò così 'l processo santo:
"Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
fesse creando, e a la sua bontate
più conformato, e quel ch'e' più apprezza,

⁴⁰ Brother, the power of love quiets our will and makes us wish only for that which we have and gives us no other thirst. Did we desire to be more aloft, our longings would be discordant with his will who assigns us here, which you will see is not possible in these circles if to exist in charity here is of necessity, and if you well consider what is love's nature. Indeed, it is of the essence of this blessed existence to keep itself within the divine will, whereby our wills are made one; so that our being thus from threshold to threshold throughout this realm is a joy to all the realm as to the king, who inwills us with his will; and in his will is our peace. It is that sea to which all moves, both what it creates and what nature makes.

fu de la volontà la libertate;
 di che le creature intelligenti,
 e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate.
 Or ti parrà, se tu quinci argomenti,
 l'alto valor del voto, s'è sì fatto
 che Dio consenta quando tu consenti;
 ché, nel fermar tra Dio e l'omo il patto,
 vittima fassi di questo tesoro,
 tal quale io dico; e fassi col suo atto".

(*Par.* V.16-30)⁴¹

With this sense, then, (a) of the mutual inherence of divine and of human intentionality within the depths of the ontic instant, and (b) of God's dealings with man and of man's with God as a matter of contractual concern, we come once again to the question of merit, something which, on the face of it, Dante takes for granted; so, for example, the "Perfetta vita e alto merto inciela / donna più sù", mi disse, "a la cui norma / nel vostro mondo giù si veste e vela, / perché fino al morir si vegghi e dorma / con quello sposo ch'ogne voto accetta / che caritate a suo piacer conforma" passage of *Par.* III.97-102;⁴² the 'Ma nel commensurar d'i nostri gaggi / col merto è parte di nostra letizia, / perché non li vedem minor né maggi' passage of *Par.* VI.118-20;⁴³ the 'Quell' uno e due e tre che sempre vive / e regna sempre in tre e 'n uno, / non circunscriotto, e tutto circunscrive, / tre volte era cantato da ciascuno / di quelli spirti con tal melodia, / ch'ad ogne merto saria giusto muno' passage of *Par.* XIV.28-33;⁴⁴ the 'ora conosce il merto del suo canto, / in quanto effetto fu del suo consiglio, / per lo

⁴¹ So Beatrice began this canto, and as one who does not interrupt her speech, she thus continued her discourse: "The greatest gift which God in his bounty bestowed in creating, and the most conformed to his own goodness and that which he most prizes, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures who have intelligence, they all and they alone, were and are endowed. Now, if you argue from this, the high worth of the vow will appear to you, if it be such that God consents when you consent; for in establishing the compact between God and man, this treasure becomes the sacrifice, such as I pronounce it, and that by its own act."

⁴² "Perfect life and high merit enheaven a lady more aloft", she said to me, "according to whose rule, in your world below, are those who take the robe and veil themselves that they, even till death, may wake and sleep with that spouse who accepts every vow which love conforms unto his pleasure."

⁴³ But in the equal measure of our rewards with our desert is part of our joy, because we see them neither less nor greater.

⁴⁴ That one, two and three which ever lives, and ever reigns in three, two and one, uncircumscribed, and circumscribing all things, was thrice sung by each of those spirits with such a melody as would be adequate reward for each merit.

remunerar ch'è altrettanto' of *Par.* XX.40-42⁴⁵ and the 'nel trono che suoi meriti le sortiro' passage of *Paradiso* XXXI (lines 64-69), where Bernard, in a proclamation faithful to the substance of a lifelong meditation, confirms the blessedness of the Virgin as nothing other than the fruit of her deserving:

E "Ov' è ella?", sùbito diss' io.
Ond' elli: "A terminar lo tuo disiro
mosse Beatrice me del loco mio;
e se riguardi sù nel terzo giro
dal sommo grado, tu la rivedrai
nel trono che suoi meriti le sortiro".⁴⁶

But what might appear here to be instances of theological simple-mindedness where merit and the problematics thereof are concerned is nothing of the kind, for at every point informing these passages is a sense of grace and merit as functioning less as *antecedence* than as *alongsidedness*, as a matter of intimate complementarity. Now here, clearly, we have again to be careful, since at a deeper level of awareness grace subsists and must be said to subsist as the *locus* or whereabouts of every significant movement of the spirit in man. But given that it is indeed a question here of layered consciousness, of the precise point of theological engagement, Dante, when it comes to the nature of the relationship between grace and

⁴⁵ now he knows the merit of his song, so far as it was the effect of his own counsel, by the reward which is proportioned to it.

⁴⁶ And "Where is she?", I said at once; whereon he: "to terminate your desire Beatrice urged me from my place; and if you look up to the circle which is third from the highest tier, you will see her again, in the throne her merits have allotted to her." Similarly on Beatrice and merit, though at an earlier stage of Dante's meditation, *VN* iii.1: 'per la sua ineffabile cortesia, la quale è oggi meritata nel grande secolo ...', with, in *Venite a intender li sospiri miei*, ll. 9-11 (xxxii.6): 'Voi udirete lor chiamar sovente / la mia donna gentil, che si n'è gita / al secolo degno del la sua vertute', and, in *Era venuta ne la mente mia* (primo cominciamento), ll. 1-4 (xxxiv.7): 'Era venuta ne la mente mia / la gentil donna che per suo valore / fu posta da l'altissimo signore / nel ciel de l'umiltate, ov'è Maria', etc. On Dante and Bernard, A. Masseron, *Dante et saint Bernard* (Paris: Michel, 1953); G. Petrocchi, 'Dante e la mistica di san Bernardo', in W. Binni et al. (eds), *Letteratura e critica: studi in onore di Natalino Sapegno*, 4 vols (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974-79), vol. 1, pp. 213-29 (originally 'Il canto XXXI del *Paradiso*', *Nuove Letture Dantesche* 7 (1974), 235-53 and as 'Dante e san Bernardo', in *L'ultima dea* (Rome: Bonacci, 1977), pp. 137-55); F. Montanari, 'L'ultima guida: San Bernardo', *Lectura Dantis Modenese. Paradiso* (Modena: Banca popolare dell'Emilia, 1986), pp. 279-86; S. Botterill, *Dante and the Mystical Tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the Commedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); F. Drago Rivera, *S. Bernardo e l'ascesa mistica del Paradiso*, 2nd edn (Lugano: Paradiso, 1975; originally 1965). In general, E. Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990 and London: Sheed and Ward, 1940 and 1955; originally Paris: Vrin, 1934).

nature *in re*, shows a preference for parallelism rather than for priority as a way of configuring these things; so, for example, on the referability of hope as a theological virtue both to grace *and* to merit as a matter of companionship in the recesses of the spirit, these lines (67-69) from Canto XXV of the *Paradiso*:

“Spene”, diss’ io, “è uno attender certo
de la gloria futura, il qual produce
grazia divina e precedente merto”.⁴⁷

– to which, for the sake of confirming Dante’s revised geometry of grace and merit at this point, we may add these lines (40-42 and 106-14) from *Paradiso* XIV and XXVIII as but further acknowledgement of the co-inherence of nature and grace at the point of intellection:

La sua chiarezza séguita l’ardore;
l’ardor la visione, e quella è tanta,
quant’ ha di grazia sovra suo valore
...
e dei saper che tutti hanno diletto
quanto la sua veduta si profonda
nel vero in che si queta ogni intelletto.
Quinci si può veder come si fonda
l’esser beato ne l’atto che vede,
non in quel ch’ama, che poscia seconda;
e del vedere è misura mercede,
che grazia partorisce e buona voglia:
così di grado in grado si procede.⁴⁸

and these (lines 49-66) from Canto XXIX on his commitment to the notion of grace itself as meritorious *in casu*, in circumstances of a spirit suitably disposed on the plane of loving:

Né giugneriesi, numerando, al venti
sì tosto, come de li angeli parte
turbò il soggetto d’i vostri alimenti.
L’altra rimase, e cominciò quest’ arte

⁴⁷ “Hope”, I said, “is a sure expectation of future glory, which divine grace produces, and preceding merit.”

⁴⁸ Its brightness follows our ardour, the ardour our vision, and that is in the measure which each has of grace beyond his merit ... And you should know that all have delight in the measure of the depth to which their sight penetrates the truth in which every intellect finds rest; from which it may be seen that the state of blessedness is founded on the act of vision, not on that of love, which follows after; and the merit, to which grace and good will give birth, is measure of their vision; thus, from grade to grade the progression goes.

che tu discerni, con tanto diletto,
che mai da circũir non si diparte.

Principio del cader fu il maladetto
superbir di colui che tu vedesti
da tutti i pesi del mondo costretto.

Quelli che vedi qui furon modesti
a riconoscer sé da la bontate
che li avea fatti a tanto intender presti:
per che le viste lor furo essaltate
con grazia illuminante e con lor merto,
si c'hanno ferma e piena volontate;
e non voglio che dubbi, ma sia certo,
che ricever la grazia è meritorio
secondo che l'affetto l'è aperto.⁴⁹

Now it is usual in relation to the first of these passages, the “Spene”, diss’ io, “è uno attender certo / de la gloria futura’ passage, to invoke as Dante’s ‘control’ in the *Paradiso* Peter Lombard’s formula in the third book of the *Sentences* (dist. xxvi) to the effect that ‘hope is a sure expectation of future happiness stemming from the grace of God and from preceding merits’ (‘Est enim [spes] certa expectatio futurae beatitudinis, veniens ex Dei gratia et ex meritis praecedentibus’), a text which provides him with everything he needs for his own position in the *Commedia*, for his own ‘parallel’ association of grace and merit as the ground of lively expectation. But simply to note the text as a possible source for Dante in *Paradiso* XXV is to pass over what from a theological point of view actually matters about it, for Peter Lombard’s formula subsists in two versions, a shorter and a longer version, the longer version, tending by way of *caritas* as a prior and infused virtue of the spirit to privilege grace over merit as the basis of hope, reading as follows: ‘est autem spes virtus

⁴⁹ Then, sooner than one might count to twenty, a part of the angels disturbed the substrate of your elements. The rest remained and with such great delight began this art which you behold that they never cease from circling. The origin of the fall was the accursed pride of him whom you have seen constrained by all the weight of the universe. Those whom you see here were modest to recognize their being as from the goodness which had made them apt for intelligence so great; wherefore their vision was exalted with illuminating grace and with their merit, so that they have their will full and established. And I would not have you doubt, but be assured that to receive grace is meritorious in proportion as the affection is open to it. On Dantean angelology, with reference to Peter Lombard, P. Boitani, ‘Creazione e cadute di *Paradiso* XXIX’, *L’Alighieri* 43, n.s. 19 (2002), 87-103 (and as ‘Canto XXIX’ in G. Güntert and M. Picone (eds), *Lectura Dantis Turicensis. Paradiso* (Florence: Cesati, 2002), pp. 441-55); A. Mellone, ‘Il canto XXIX del *Paradiso* (una lezione di angelogia)’, in *Saggi e letture dantesche* (Angri: Editrice Gaia, 2005), pp. 157-74 (originally in *Nuove Letture Dantesche* 7 (Florence: Le Monnier, 1974), pp. 193-213).

qua spiritualia et aeterna bona sperantur, id est cum fiducia expectantur. Est enim certa expectatio futurae beatitudinis, veniens ex Dei gratia et ex meritis praecedentibus vel ipsam spem, quam natura praeit caritas; vel rem speratam, id est beatitudinem aeternam.⁵⁰ Now where and in what form Dante encountered Peter Lombard's text, either in the original or else in one or other of the abbreviated forms such as those conveyed by Thomas,⁵¹ we shall probably never know; but given for the sake of the argument that he *was* in possession of the original, then his opting, not for the ur-text, but for the edited version is significant, for his opting for the edited version is all of a piece with his own sense of the issue here, with his understanding of grace and nature, not as consequential, but as complementary to the point of co-immanent within the deep structure of the moral and ontological instant. Throughout, then, the pattern is the same, Dante, whenever he reflects on this issue as among the most delicate

⁵⁰ hope is the virtue by which spiritual and eternal goods are hoped for, by virtue of which, that is to say, they are confidently expected. For hope is a sure expectation of future happiness, coming from the grace of God and from merits preceding either hope as such, itself preceded in the nature of things by charity, or the thing hoped for, that is to say eternal life.

⁵¹ Among Thomas's citations of Peter Lombard's text, the following reproduce it in its short form: *Scriptum* 2, d. 43, q. 1, a. 5 obj. 4 ('Sed spes praesupponit merita: est enim spes certa expectatio futurae beatitudinis ex meritis et gratia proveniens'); *ST* IIa IIae.17.1 obj. 2 ("Sed spes est ex gratia et meritis proveniens"; ut Magister dicit, XXVI dist. III Lib. Sent.); IIa IIae. 18.4 obj. 2 ('spes ex gratia et meritis provenit, ut supra dictum est'). *ST* IIa IIae.17.8 obj. 3 has 'Magister dicit, XXVI dist. III Lib. Sent., quod "spes ex meritis provenit, quae praecedunt non solum rem speratam, sed etiam spem, quam natura praeit caritas". Caritas ergo est prior spe.' None has the 'praecedentibus' ('praecedentibus meritis') of the original. Exemplary in respect of Thomas's by and large negative attitude to the text is *ST* IIa IIae.17.1 ad 2, where although hope is said to follow upon merit in respect of this or that object hoped for, hope in itself must be regarded as an infused virtue of the spirit and as thus referable to grace as to its first cause: 'spes dicitur ex meritis provenire quantum ad ipsam rem expectatam, prout aliquis sperat se beatitudinem adepturum ex gratia et meritis. Vel quantum ad actum spei formatae. Ipse autem habitus spei, per quam aliquis expectat beatitudinem, non causatur ex meritis, sed pure ex gratia.' J. -G. Bougerol, *La Théologie de l'espérance aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, 2 vols (Paris: Etudes augustinienes, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 97-99. Otherwise on Peter Lombard and the *Sentences* (in addition to the general histories of medieval thought), M. L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1994); J. -G. Bougerol, 'The Church Fathers and the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard', in I. Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West from the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vols (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997; also Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 113-64 (with 'The Church Fathers and *auctoritates* in Scholastic Theology to Bonaventure' in the same volume at pp. 289-336). On Dante and Peter Lombard, M. Papio, ad voc. 'Peter Lombard' in R. Lansing (ed.), *Dante Encyclopaedia* (London: Garland, 2000), pp. 682-83, with bibliography. Also, M. Da Carbonara, *Dante e Pier Lombardo; Sent. lib. IV, dist. 43-49* (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1897).

of theological issues, professing a commitment, less to the ascendancy of grace under the aspect of causality, than – in direct consequence of God's purpose in the moment both of creation and of man's fresh co-adequation in Christ – to a co-presencing of divine and human intentionality in the moment of seeing, understanding and choosing.

4. In a remarkable moment of the *Paradiso* (VII.58-60), a moment prefacing his account of why God chose to proceed in precisely the way he did in Christ on Calvary, Dante points to the indispensability of 'maturity in the flame of love', of an adult understanding of what love is and of how love works, as the key to it all:

Questo decreto, frate, sta sepulto
a li occhi di ciascuno il cui ingegno
ne la fiamma d'amor non è adulto.⁵²

And it is at this point, at the point of maturity in the flame of love, that movement as a way of seeing and understanding God's way of relating with man in his fallenness is overtaken by something more sublime, namely by a sense of God's commitment, despite all, to confirming him once more in his equality to the task in hand, this – this *letting it be* in the fullness of that being – being what love is and what love means. Short of this, Dante felt, there can be no making sense of the Christ event as a matter, not now of God's deigning to move man despite himself to his proper end and happiness, but of the kind of love-creativity whereby, irrespective of those forces making in human experience for something closer to the diabolic than to the divine, the individual is restored to something like his pristine integrity. Movement, in short, gives way to magnanimity as a means of seeing and understanding the question of morality and merit, magnanimity having the sense here, not of modifying human nature in favour of something which, of itself, it neither is or ever could be, but of confirming it in its proper possibility.

⁵² This decree, brother, is buried from the eyes of everyone whose understanding is not matured within love's flame.