

A HIDDEN SOURCE OF THE PROLOGUE TO THE I-II OF  
THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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ABSTRACT

This article<sup>1</sup> investigates a particular aspect of the well-known quotation that opens the Prologue of the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. For scholars of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Middle Ages, the history of the introduction and story of the translation of the quoted text from St. John Damascene is a matter of undisputed interest. In particular, the curious addition to the Damascene quote, not found in the translations circulating at the time Aquinas wrote the Prologue, nor even in the work of other contemporaries, presents itself as an enigma.

Although the practice of citation in the Middle Ages included taking some liberties from the text itself, it should be noted that this does not mean that it was done without rules or reason. In fact, the citations were chosen and presented in such a way as to respond to the most pressing

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1. The authors are deeply indebted to Father Peter Marsalek, SOLT, for graciously volunteering to translate the article into English. Thanks to his Thomistic expertise, Father Marsalek has translated the nuances of a demanding centuries-old theological debate, one which involves Greek and Latin authors to whom St. Thomas Aquinas refers. Father Peter Marsalek's linguistic mastery and his passionate commitment have managed to clarify the most crucial passages of the difficult Italian text. Father Peter Marsalek is General Superior of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT), MSc. in Engineering; he received his STL and STD (*Summa cum Laude*) at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, with a thesis on *The Analogy of the Father in the Summa Theologiae. A Thomistic Inquiry on Philosophical, Dogmatic and Pastoral Implications of Fatherhood* (2010); he is Professor of Dogmatic Theology.

questions of the time. Therefore, the inaccuracy of the quotation from Damascene in the Prologue must have some explanation, namely, it was either connected to a different source, or Aquinas had some intentional motivation in presenting it as he did. Recent studies have attempted to connect the quotation to a different source, namely, a text from Nemesius of Emesa, which would have been the source used by Damascene. However, in the opinion of the authors, not even the Nemesian text explains the expression «*et per se potestativum*», added to the quotation of Damascene. Without dismissing the aforementioned studies and their plausibility, this paper undertakes the quest to determine the origin of the famous quotation and its final structure. The analysis to make such a determination, will be conducted using an innovative technique, called the «environmental» method, modelled by M.M. Rossi in her research in the field of exegesis and sermon writing in the Middle Ages. The method proves an effective tool to shed light on the pseudo-attribution to Damascene, and also provides a verification for the validity of the innovative method itself.

#### 1. AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY ...

THE quotation that begins the famous Prologue to the *Secunda Pars*<sup>2</sup> of St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is taken from St. John Damascene, according to the citation of Aquinas.<sup>3</sup> However, the quotation, which is rightly considered the gateway to the moral vision of St. Thomas, includes a very curious addition to the original text of Damascene,<sup>4</sup> which arouses interest and begs explanation. To compound the mystery, it is further noted that even a meticulous reconstruction of the sources, and consideration of the various theological, anthropological and exegetical debates of the major intellectual centers of the time, do not seem to provide an explanation for the curious addition in terms of either words or ideas, nor do the various translations of Damascene in circulation at that time.

The practice of citations and references in the Middle Ages could be

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2. Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae* = ST I-II, prol.

3. [...] *quod quidem "secundum imaginem", intellectuale significat et arbitrio liberum*: JOHN DAMASCENE, *De fide orthodoxa*, ch. 26, par. 2, in E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa. Versions of Burgundio and Cerbanus*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY 1955, p. 113.

4. The addition is the expression, «*et per se potestativum*».

described as being rather «free» with regard to the quotation from the source, but «free» should not be understood as not rigorous. Rather, the «free» style of citations was intended to be responsive to a specific theoretical question of the debate of a particular time or theological context. Therefore, the transformation of the Damascene text must have had a very specific reason and this presents the crux of the enigma: What is this reason? Was there a different source? Was it an error? or, Was it an intentional intervention by Aquinas? Recent studies attempted to find a different source for the quotation and reached the conclusion that the text originated from Nemesius of Emesa (who was himself a source for Damascene) rather than Damascene. However, the Nemesian solution is not entirely satisfactory since the addition to the text is not actually present in Nemesius's work either. As such, the mystery remains substantially unsolved.

Through the use of a novel interpretive tool called the «environ-mental»<sup>5</sup> method, this article intends to illustrate the possibility that the hidden source behind the mysterious addition to the Damascene quotation found in the Prologue to the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>6</sup> is Alexander of Aphrodisias. Prior to detailing the work of the current investigation, it is useful to first pro-

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5. In the cited work, the «environ-mental» method is illustrated and its potential as an interpretive tool is demonstrated. See also: M.M. ROSSI, *Appunti sulla Quaestio disputata De Magistro. Rifrazioni sapienziali*, in AA.VV., *Studi in onore del Prof. J.M. Riestra*, Edizioni Università Santa Croce, Roma 2015, pp. 427–457; EADEM, *Mind-Space. Towards an “Environ-mental Method”. An Exegesis of the Middle Ages*, in P. ROSZAK – J. VIJGEN (eds.), *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives*, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 80, Brepols, Turnhout 2015, pp. 171–198; EADEM, *Called into a story. An environ-mental approach to Saint Thomas Aquinas as exegete and preacher*, Angelicum UP, Roma 2018.

6. The research is extensively presented in the work: M.M. ROSSI – T. ROSSI, *Saggio sull'etica normativa nella Summa Theologiae di San Tommaso d'Aquino*, vol. 2: Il Prologo alla *Secunda Pars* alla luce del “metodo ambi(m)entale”, Angelicum UP, Roma 2019, 480 pp., from which the substantial conclusions of this article are drawn. In the referenced work, the authors compare the thought of St. Thomas with 38 contemporary masters regarding the text of the Prologue, the various sources involved, and arrive at an innovative thesis about the source of the Prologue. The authors further emphasize that this new found source sheds light on a new thematic orientation to the entire *Secunda Pars*. The book review can be found in B. Degórski published in the *Angelicum* 97/1 (2020).

vide a brief description of the «environ-mental» method mentioned above and used in this work.

After many years of studying textual elements and the historical contexts of the works of St. Thomas, in particular his exegetical works and sermons, M.M. Rossi developed a method that supercedes mere textual analysis and historical presuppositions, and moves toward an investigation of the actual environment in which the text was composed. The environ-mental (the hyphenation is intended to denote the idea of the environment and mind connected together) method is strongly rooted in both textual and historical approaches but contains some notable differences. In a strictly textual approach, the text is read in a linear fashion whereby ideas are communicated in sequential ordering sentence by sentence. In the environ-mental method, rather than being read merely in a linear fashion, the text is analyzed from the perspective of creating a mental picture, or architectural structure, built by the master in his development of the text. This difference can be better understood from the following example: a page of a book is read linearly, starting at the top left and finishing at the bottom right; on the other hand, the beauty of a magnificent Cathedral is approached not necessarily starting from top left, but by allowing one's eye to be captivated and drawn in different directions through the genius of the architect and artist whose placement of the images and structural features leads one toward the primary and secondary elements of the masterpiece. While of course the pages of the book of a Medieval master are read line by line beginning from top left, they often times were also like great architects who were creating a magnificent mental picture with a fascinating interplay of primary and secondary elements that were brought to one's mind as one reflected and pondered on the text.

The environ-mental method is also historical, but differs from a strictly historical-critical approach. Whereas the historical-critical method looks at history as providing the context and principle meaning of the text, the environ-mental method searches for historical references within the text as selected and filtered by the master himself. In other words, it searches for the historical environment of the master and his audience, in order to better ponder the impact of his theological interests and intentions at that moment. An environ-mental understanding of a text attempts to retrace the specific concerns present in the theo-

logical line of inquiry of a Medieval master in a particular moment and place of his ministry.

Therefore, the great advantage of the environmental method is that it attempts to understand the text from within its historical context, not merely from our objective modern day interpretation of those same historical circumstances, but rather from the personal subjective interpretation of those same circumstances by the master as he would have encountered them.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the environmental method attempts to peer into the mental setting of the master by analyzing the overall framework (architectural structure) of the text, and by examining the contemporary dialogue ongoing between the master and his interlocutors.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of the «environment» intends to communicate not only the various objective data such as the general historical setting and the specific time and place of writing, but above all to attempt to enter into the mind and intention of the author to see how the specific environment and context shaped the work in its tone, argumentation and even selection of literary genre. The medieval intellectual environment was a particularly rich and fruitful setting characterized by a great variety and multitude of authors and sources, a profound convergence of brilliant thinkers, lively debates, theological exploration, great availability of research opportunities at a number of distinguished universities, and an overall esteem and priority placed upon the science of theology.

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7. In order to understand better the difference between our modern «objective» understanding of the historical context with the «subjective» perspective of the Medieval master, consider the following example: the polemical debate regarding religious life in the 13<sup>th</sup> century is a common historical framework for many articles. However, the «objective» datum of the debates, when put in dialogue with the understanding of the mindset in which the Medieval master «subjectively» operates, not only portrays a general historical context, but it manifests the attempt of the master to shape history, to elicit a particular response from his audience to behave justly and virtuously within the historical context. As such, the Medieval master was trying to shape history within the wider context of the history of salvation, but producing a virtuous response from his audience.

8. This means that each element, e.g., a quotation, statement, or example, etc., despite its immediate value to the text, is chosen by the master according to the overall goal of the work. With this added dimension of considering the overall structure of the work, along with the immediate impact, the author requires a flexible approach to the material used. This flexible approach results in a creative and interpretive use of references.

Consequently, there is much data to be analyzed that allows one to enter into the text of a particular master, and determine how the text was produced as a specific response within a particular debate and with a specific pastoral purpose. None of which takes away from any of the universal value which the texts hold in and of themselves as theological expositions.

The «environ-mental» method combines a rigorous study of textual analysis and historical context with the specific conventual and geographical circumstances, as well as with the general biographical and cognitive atmosphere in which the author lived and wrote. The result is that the existential logic of the text may be grasped and inferences may be drawn regarding various circumstances and conditions of the text. While these inferences are more intuitive than explicitly attested to, or more speculative than documented, they nevertheless possess an internal coherence and plausibility capable of guiding the interpretation of the text. Emerging from the analysis is a kind of re-creation of the atmosphere which stimulated the emotions and thinking of the author in the creative moment of writing that impacted his selection of sources and the frequency with which he turned to various sources. The study brings to the surface and maps out the various connections that bind together individual treatises and explain the inner logic of the text. In this way, the «environ-mental» method aims to find the unspoken vitality and purpose of the text in a broad sense, arriving at the various hidden historical, theological, and emotional circumstances that motivated the author to write, and which impacted the very shape, structure and meaning of the text.

The application of the «environ-mental» method to the text of the Prologue of the *Prima Secundae* necessitates an investigation into the biographical circumstances of St. Thomas at the time of writing, and a study of the various sources used in composing the various parts of the *Summa Theologiae*. Further, the sources must be analyzed not only according to the various authors but also regarding the origin of each specific text. Finally, the method of transmission of the text of Aquinas must also be analyzed. Therefore, the «environ-mental» reconstruction of the Prologue requires one to analyze the various texts, teachings and protagonists of the moral and theological debate at the time in order to set up a historical-theoretical framework on which to graft the personal

concerns of St. Thomas that emerge in the Prologue, and the various conceptual pathways that emerge and are united by the same mental environment.

2. ... AND THE HYPOTHESES OF A SOLUTION

Saint Thomas began writing the *Summa Theologiae* after a fruitful stay at the University of Paris. As part of his intellectual inheritance from his Paris sojourn, Aquinas had a clear vision of the themes he would eventually include in the Prologue as an introduction to his discussion on morality. In particular, his awareness of the crucial importance of free will and of man being made “in the image of God” to the discussion of morality shaped his theological concern, especially as it relates to directing the studies of students. To this end, the Prologue most likely takes shape during St. Thomas’s time in Rome when he was involved in teaching students.

The text of the Prologue begins with a quotation from St. John Damascene but presents the challenge, as mentioned already, of what is clearly an addition to the original text of Damascene. The bolded text below is the mysterious addition in the quote:

Since, as Damascene states (*De fide orthod.* II, 12), man is said to be made to God’s image, in so far as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement:<sup>9</sup> (*et per se potestativum*) now that we have treated of the exemplar, i.e., God, and of those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image, i.e., man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free-will and control of his actions.<sup>10</sup>

The most widespread translation in Paris of the Damascene quote was drawn up by Burgundio of Pisa who emphasized two main facets of

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9. Please note that «self-movement» is the typical English translation. However, as will become clear in this article, the authors do not believe it sufficiently captures what was intended by «*et per se potestativum*».

10. *Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur intellectualem et arbitrium liberum et per se potestativum; postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem; restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem:* THOMAS AQUINAS, ST I-II, prol.

being made «in the image of God», namely that man is endowed with intelligence and free will. Consequent to this is that man is also made «in likeness» to God which he realizes through the acquisition of virtue.<sup>11</sup> Comparing the Burgundian translation of the Damascene text to the quotation used by St. Thomas in the Prologue, there are two significant differences: the first is the already mentioned addition of the expression «*et per se potestativum*», and the second is the omission of the conclusion regarding similitude. Concerning the omission from the second part of the Damascene quotation,<sup>12</sup> it can be explained by the custom of truncating non-essential elements from a sentence to save space on the parchment,<sup>13</sup> as well as the usual autonomy of Aquinas with respect to his sources.<sup>14</sup> However, the addition remains inexplicable, in particular in consideration of the just mentioned practice of saving space on the parchments. There appear to be two substantial

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11. *Quia vero haec ita se habebant, ex visibili et invisibili natura condit hominem, propriis manibus, secundum suam imaginem et similitudinem: ex terra quidem corpus plasmans, animam autem rationalem et intelligibilem per familiarem insufflationem, dans ei quod utique divinam imaginem dicimus. Nam quod quidem “secundum imaginem”, intellectualem significat et arbitrio liberum; quod autem “secundum similitudinem”, virtutis secundum quod homini possibile est similitudinem:* JOHN DAMASCENE, *De fide orthodoxa*, 26, 2 (ed. E.M. Buytaert), p. 113. Most of the editions carry the addition «*per se potestativum*», which does not appear in the translation of Burgundio of Pisa, but does appear of course in the text of the prologue.

12. The truncation of the Damascene quotation underlines the centrality of the first part of the quotation, that is, being «in the image of God», since the entire *Prima Secundae* is an illustration of the realization of the image which in the doctrine of Damascene is substantiated through the operation of virtue: see T. ROSSI, *Saggio sull’etica normativa nella Summa Theologiae di San Tommaso d’Aquino*, vol. 1: Il Prologo alla *Secunda Pars* come scenografia dello spazio morale, Angelicum UP, Rome 2017, pp. 19–35. Further, the authors would like to add the hypothesis that the term «*virtus*» — to which the text of Damascene refers — also has the meaning of «*potestas*», which may have been absorbed. This theory is part of the subject of this investigation.

13. The so-called «eye / ear» method was utilized based on the mnemonic ability to reproduce quotations taken from known sources. As such, it was enough just to report the beginning of the quotation and let the reader conclude. In this case, the master’s reproduction of the quote was substantial, but not necessarily explicit.

14. The second part of the quotation is attested to in all manuscripts and only partially in manuscript N: cfr. E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., p. 113.

hypotheses. The first is that Aquinas combined one or more sources together to create the addition.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the addition is included in some manuscripts of the translation of Burgundio of Pisa in the form “*per se potestativum*”<sup>16</sup> and, in two manuscripts<sup>17</sup> it is found in the identical form to the Prologue of St. Thomas «*et per se potestativum*». The second hypothesis is that Aquinas made an intentional addition which he deemed necessary for introducing the entire *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa*.

### 2.1. *The hypothesis of a textual dependence*

Regarding the first hypothesis, that of the textual dependence on a source, the authoritative Leonine Edition of the *Summa* suggests deriving the full citation of the Prologue from two distinct works of Damascene.<sup>18</sup> The Leonine Edition ascribes the majority of the quotation to the *De fide orthodoxa* and attributes the addition — «*et per se potestativum*» — to the *De imaginibus*.<sup>19</sup> The latter is a work written by Damascene endorsing the use of icons against the iconoclasts during the great iconoclast controversy which tore the Church apart at the time of Damascene. Damascene reviews the various meanings of the concept of «image» and investigates in what sense the human being can be called a creature made «in the image of God». He emphasizes that the human being is «free and with authority of command»<sup>20</sup> (similar in fact to the concept that he expressed in *De fide orthodoxa*).

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15. Moreover, the merging of different sources, by author and context, into a single text could have come from an explicit choice of the master, or from the circulation and confluence of materials in intellectual contexts and circles — medical, theological, philosophical, scientific.

16. See the following manuscripts A, B, D, E, F, G, M, N, P, R: cfr. E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., p. 113.

17. See manuscripts B e G: cfr. *ibidem*; in the text of the STI, q. 93 a. 9, St. Thomas omits the «*et*».

18. Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, STI-II, prol., in *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII*, vol. 6, Ex Typographia Polyglotta De Propaganda Fide, Romae 1891, p. 6.

19. Cfr. JOHN DAMASCENE, *De imaginibus*, or. 3, ch. 3, 20, in PG 94, 1339D.

20. «κατὰ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ ἀρχικόν λέγει γὰρ ὁ θεός»: *Ibidem*.

Although plausible, the above explanation does not seem to adequately take into account the fact that the *De imaginibus* is rarely referenced in the writings of St. Thomas or in his contemporaries. Conversely, there are an abundance of citations made to the *De fide orthodoxa*.<sup>21</sup> The lack of references to the *De imaginibus* and the abundance of references to the *De fide orthodoxa* seem to make it somewhat unlikely that on this one occasion Aquinas decided to combine the two sources together. Moreover, the great impact of the translations and doctrine of Damascene in the Latin world,<sup>22</sup> which had even prompted the drafting of verbal concordances of the Damascene texts, does not seem to have involved the *De imaginibus* very much at all. This is probably due to the fact that the work had been placed on the index of banned writings during the Council of Hieria in 754 following the condemnation of Damascene and others who sided in favor of the use of religious icons.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, if one intends to follow the path of dependence on a source that was a combination of various works by Damascene, it seems more plausible to hypothesize a merging of the texts of the *De fide orthodoxa* with the *Dialectica*,<sup>24</sup> rather than with the *De imaginibus*. The *Dialectica*

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21. For example, Philip the Chancellor, John de La Rochelle, and Hugh of Saint-Cher.

22. A study on the influence of Damascene as a homilist in the Byzantine era in general is found in A. LOUTH, *St John Damascene: Preacher and Poet*, in M.B. CUNNINGHAM.– P. ALLEN (eds.), *Preacher and Audience*, Brill, Leiden-Boston-Koln 1998, pp. 247–265. For the thought and influence of Damascene in general: L. BOSCH, *Huellas del Damasceno en el Angelico. Una aproximación hermenéutica a la utilización de la teología de San Juan Damasceno en la Summa Theologiae de Santo Tomás de Aquino*, Pontificia Università San Tommaso, Romae, 2011; S. MARKOV, *Die Metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus: Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 118, Brill, Boston 2015; J. MEANY, *The image of God in man according to the doctrine of Saint John Damascene*, [s.n.], Manila 1954.

23. On the iconoclastic controversy, the Council of Nicaea II and the condemnations, see: R. AUBERT, *Hieria*, in IDEM, *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, vol. 24, Letouzey et Ané, Paris 1993, pp. 397–398; L. BRÉHIER – R. AIGRAIN, *Storia della Chiesa dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, vol. 1: *San Gregorio Magno, gli stati barbarici e la conquista araba (590-757)*, Editrice S.A.I.E., Torino 1971, pp. 615–621; A. CALISI, 2009. *Iconoclastia e Concilio di Nicea II (787)*, in *Icone cristiane*, 31 Maggio 2009, [www.iconecristiane.it/](http://www.iconecristiane.it/), p. 5. [accessed 31 May 2009].

24. The *Dialectica* was, in fact, the first part of the work of which *De fide orthodoxa* was the third.

shares with the *De imaginibus* the same definition of the human person and, unlike the latter, is attested to in some medieval authors.<sup>25</sup> It also seems equally plausible to speculate that Aquinas intertwined multiple passages from the *De fide orthodoxa* into one reference, since in the same chapter where the majority of the quotation comes from, Damascene links the notion of free will (ἀὐτεξούσιον) with the concept of «*potestas*».<sup>26</sup>

If one admits the hypothesis of the use of the *Dialectica* or other passages of the *De fide orthodoxa* (rather than the *De imaginibus*), it remains to be explored whether the fusion between the two texts of Damascene originated from a previous citation that Aquinas adopted, or whether St. Thomas himself combined them. A study of the manuscripts of the *De fide orthodoxa* available to Aquinas indicate a variety of versions. Numerous versions of the manuscript originated in France, presumably of Parisian origin, from the thirteenth century. These versions often follow the division of chapters delineated by Philip the Chancellor. There are a significant number of annotations and glosses<sup>27</sup> presented there suggesting a lively theological debate, likely facilitated by first-hand access to both the texts and the glossary additions, which would have been distinguished from each other in a relatively clear way.<sup>28</sup> The next grouping of manuscripts presumably originated in England and are primarily based on the translation of Robert Grosseteste from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These manuscripts show various interpolations and influences from the French tradition, and assiduous comparisons to the translation of Burgundio demonstrate that there are insertions

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25. For example, Alexander of Hales, albeit quite sporadically or implicitly; it should also be noted that the *Dialectica* had been translated by Robert Grosseteste himself: E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., p. ix.

26. *Fecit autem eum natura impeccabilem et arbitrio liberum. [...] sed non in natura peccare habentem, in electione vero magis; scilicet, potestatem habentem manere et proficere in bono*: JOHN DAMASCENE, *De fide orthodoxa*, 26, 5 (ed. M.E. Buytaert), p. 114.

27. Cfr. for example the manuscript Urbin. lat. 62 found in the Vatican Library: cfr. *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, ed. E.M. Buytaert, p. xxxvii.

28. It is worth noting that the oldest codex C carries interlinear glosses from its earliest glosses: cfr. ivi, p. xxxvi.

from other works of Damascene<sup>29</sup> which would suggest a more recent stage of the use of the *De fide orthodoxa*. Finally, there are also numerous manuscripts preserved in Italy which tend to be rather sober in their annotations and glosses, thus testifying to a generally earlier dating<sup>30</sup> and greater preservation of the original text.<sup>31</sup>

As outlined above, the study of the various manuscripts reveals that the addition «*et per se potestativum*» (and its variant without the «*et*») tends to come from the French and Anglo-Saxon circles, due in large part to the intensity of the theological debate around Damascene in those places. Conversely, the manuscripts originating from Italy, less exposed to the aforementioned debate, prove to be more faithful to the original. Regardless, the study of manuscripts bearing the expression «*et per se potestativum*» does not determine with any certainty that Aquinas took the quotation from a single particular source. In fact, it is possible to hypothesize that St. Thomas could have used a more faithful translation to the original since he likely wrote the Prologue while in Italy, where he could have accessed some Burgundian texts of more directly Greek origin. St. Thomas used the text of Damascene in a thoughtful way and was clearly aware of references to the text from other masters, as well as their interpretations and commentary on the text.<sup>32</sup>

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29. See for example manuscript 134 of the Bodleian Library of Oxford: cfr. ivi, p. xxvii. On the other hand, it would seem that the transfer of the debate is reciprocal, in fact even in Paris the translation was followed and, therefore, presumably also the debate that took place in the English environment, in fact even in the French manuscripts there are references to the translation of Robert Grosseteste, for example in manuscript N: cfr. ivi, p. xxxiv; cfr. the manuscript lat. 2375 of the National Library of Paris, cfr. ivi, p. xxix.

30. Cfr. ivi, pp. xxi; xxv; xxxiv; xxxvi–xxxvii.

31. Even the later ones, for example the codex listed as D: cfr. ivi, pp. xxxiv–xxxv, or the manuscripts of the Laurentian Library in Florence: cfr. ivi, p. xxv. Regarding the manuscripts currently preserved in German libraries, assuming they are of German origin, it can be said that they have been slightly adulterated since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, so they could be affected by the debate; for example the manuscript F.179 of the Amplonian Library of Erfurt: cfr. ivi, p. xxiv.

32. Such as, for example, the *divisio textus*. Illuminating in this regard is the text of the ST III, q. 18, a. 3, in which St. Thomas admirably summarizes the debate, with theoretical and lexical acumen. The use of the division into the books of the *De fide or-*

As evidence of this, there are times when St. Thomas references Damascene with the words, «*sicut dicit Damascenus*», indicating a strict verbal fidelity, and other times where he introduces a reference with a more generic, «*secundum Damascenum*», likely referring more to a general sense or idea coming from Damascene.

Another alternative of the single source origin for the addition «*et per se potestativum*», is the hypothesis that St. Thomas relied on a version of the text from Burgundio of Pisa that contained a dual translation. In fact, it was common for an accomplished translator to provide more than one alternative, particularly in the case of demanding theoretical passages. However, this hypothesis also seems unlikely for a number of reasons. In the first place, it is notable that it is not sufficiently supported by a study of the manuscripts of that time and the publisher of Burgundio's translation does not include the addition in the critical edition of the text.<sup>33</sup> Rather, the «*et per se potestativum*» is typically found in glossed copies of the Burgundian translation and is therefore an expression of a subsequent addition.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the addition is also notably absent

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*thodoxa* is also strongly circumstantial, which was likely introduced — probably in the same way as Lombard's work — by Philip the Chancellor before 1224: see E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., p. xlii. Aquinas often uses the division into books when he mentions Damascene; see, by way of example: THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, l. 2, d.17, q.1, a.1, q.la 3, arg. 1; IDEM, *STI*, q. 83, a. 4 ob. 1; I-II, q. 6, a. 1, s.c.

33. In the opinion of the critical publisher, Burgundio's original text is identified in manuscript C which is the oldest and most reliable codex, of Roman origin, dating perhaps even to the twelfth century or at most to the thirteenth century: see E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., pp. xxxv–xxxvi; on the basis of it, the addition «*et per se potestativum*» from the initial version of Burgundio must be excluded, while the immediately subsequent manuscripts (such as B, M, N and P) already have this addition: cfr. Ivi, p. 113. The codicological study by L. CALLARI, *Contributo allo studio della versione di Burgundio Pisano del "De orthodoxa fide" di Giovanni Damasceno*, in *Atti del R. Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Letteratura e Arti* 100 (1941), pp. 197–246 it is not used directly in Buytaert's critical edition which is based on other previous studies.

34. The addition is amply attested to in highly glossed manuscripts, with the exception of manuscript G — from the Italian area — which, although not a highly glossed copy, nevertheless carries the addition «*et per se potestativum*»: see E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., p. xxi.

from the writings of other masters at that time. Thirdly, the Greek term «ἀυτεξούσιον» is rendered by Burgundio as «*liberum arbitrio*», without any further specifications or additions, not only in the translation of Damascene's *De fide orthodoxa*, but also in his translation of the *De natura hominis* by Nemesius of Emesa. For all of these reasons, it is implausible that the addition is the work of Burgundio himself.

All of the preceding arguments lead to the conclusion that St. Thomas did not depend on a single contemporary or immediately preceding source for the addition to the Damascene text. As a result, the next hypothesis to investigate is whether or not Aquinas intentionally modified the original text himself by adding the «*et per se potestativum*». Such an addition of Aquinas would likely be on account of a synthesis of the many influences of the debate regarding the specific traits of the rational creature that came from the influx of Aristotelian and Greek patristic texts, from the Trinitarian, Christological and anthropological discourses of the Fathers, and from the Latin and Carolingian controversies regarding topics such as the nature of God, His perfection, creation and free will.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.2 *The hypothesis of an intentional addition*

At this point, the hypothesis to be investigated is that St. Thomas intentionally added the «*et per se potestativum*» to the Damascene text. In order to investigate this theory, the authors will rely upon the environmental method to provide a plausible explanation for the addition. Of course, all of this is notwithstanding any future discoveries of manuscripts regarding the texts and sources of the Middle Ages since the entire matter, including the revision of the critical text of the *Summa Theologiae*<sup>36</sup> is largely still to be determined.

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35. This is a largely hidden debate, see: E. DOBLER, *Zwei syrische Quellen der theologischen Summa des Thomas von Aquin: Nemesiuss von Emesa und Johannes von Damaskus: ihr Einfluss auf die anthropologischen Grundlagen der Moralthologie (S.Th. I-II, qq. 6-17; 22-48)*, Dokimion, 25, Universitätsverlag, Freiburg 2000; J. DE GHELLINCK, *Les oeuvres de Jean de Damas en Occident au XIIIe siècle*, «Revue des Questions Historiques» 45 (1910), pp. 157–160; R. SACCENTI, *Un nuovo lessico morale medievale. Il contributo di Burgundio da Pisa*, Aracne, Roma 2016.

36. The Leonine Edition of the *Summa Theologiae* was not conducted on the basis

An important environmental circumstance to consider in the investigation pertains to the period of St. Thomas's first stint in Paris as a young student, when he likely forged his own interpretation and answers to the many questions raised from the text of the *De fide orthodoxa*. Years later, upon his return to Italy, St. Thomas could have incorporated into the translation his memory of the various theological interpretations<sup>37</sup> regarding the Damascene text with the many glosses<sup>38</sup> from authors such as Peter Lombard, William of Auxerre, John de la Rochelle and Philip the Chancellor. Each of these authors emphasized the notion of *potestas* and used the term «*potestativus*» as an adjective, and «*potestativum*» as a substantive.<sup>39</sup>

A second environmental circumstance to consider concerns the likely exchanges between St. Thomas and his Dominican brother William of Moerbeke (1215–1286), to whom St. Thomas used to turn to on account of Moerbeke's renowned linguistic competence. A biographical

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of rigorous paleographic criteria, introduced by L.J. Bataillon, O.P., but rather — according to his own words — on the basis of multiple certification. On the process of editing the *Summa Theologiae*, see: AA.VV., *La filosofia cristiana tra ottocento e novecento e il Magistero di Leone XIII*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale svolto a Perugia il 29 maggio–1 giugno 2003, Edizioni dell'Arcidiocesi di Perugia-Città della Pieve, Cortona 2004; E. CORETH – W.M. NEIDL – G. PFLIGERSDORFFER, *La filosofia cristiana nei secoli XIX e XX. Ritorno all'eredità scolastica*, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma 1994.

37. This sort of autonomy from the text can be seen in: N.J. GREEN-PEDERSEN, *The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages. The Commentaries on Aristotle's and Boethius' "Topics"*, op. cit.

38. According to the critical editor, the manuscripts B, M, N, tended to integrate glosses, repetitions and even summaries, produced subsequently, into the text: see E.M. BUYTAERT (ed.), *Saint John Damascene. De Fide Orthodoxa*, cit., pp. xxxiii–xxxiv; other manuscripts, on the other hand, also from the French area, kept the text pure and the glosses in the margin: cfr. ivi, pp. xxxi–xxxii.

39. Illuminating in this regard is the text in which St. Thomas admirably summarizes the debate, with theoretical and lexical acumen: *Et ideo alterius rationis est actus voluntatis secundum quod fertur in aliquid secundum se volitum, ut sanitas quod a Damasceno vocatur thelisis, idest simplex voluntas, et a magisteri vocatur voluntas ut natura, et alterius rationis est actus voluntatis secundum quod fertur in aliquid quod est volitum solum ex ordine ad alterum, sicut est sumptio medicinae, quem quidem voluntatis actum Damascenus vocat bulesim, idest conciliativum voluntatem, a magistris autem vocatur voluntas ut ratio*: THOMAS AQUINAS, *ST III*, q. 18, a. 3.

comparison reveals that both Aquinas and William resided in central Italy during the period when St. Thomas drafted the Prologue of the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. Not enough scholarly attention has been given to the specific texts which William was translating at that time, on which he could have provided his friend, St. Thomas, with advice and suggestions for a more precise translating of various Greek terms, especially pertaining to a text so widely debated as the one of Damascene. In fact, William of Moerbeke, revised the translation of *De fide orthodoxa* by Robert Grossteste at that precise time. Further, William was also engaged in the work of translating the prominent Greek author Alexander of Aphrodisias (2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), an Aristotelian styled thinker and profound connoisseur of the doctrines of the Peripatetics, who taught in Athens between 198–211 AD. Among his writings, the *περί εἰσαρμένης* (*De fato*) and the *περί μίξεως* (*De mixtione*) against the Stoics stand out, on account of his usage of the term «ἀυτεξούσιον» in reference to human freedom.

The aforementioned environmental circumstances, namely the coincidence of time, place and scholarly interests, make William of Moerbeke the most competent and available person for St. Thomas to speak to about translating such an important and exacting term as ἀυτεξούσιον. At the same time that St. Thomas was exploring the moral-theological themes of freedom and human nature, William of Moerbeke was occupied with translating a host of authors dealing with the same topics. Further, the expertise of William in understanding and translating the Greek lexicon made him the ideal person for St. Thomas to dialogue with in his own study of the writings and discoveries of ancient thinkers from Aristotle to Alexander of Aphrodisias, and from Nemesius of Emesa to St. John Damascene.

The original context of the term ἀυτεξούσιον is seen in the writings of the stoic Epictetus (~ 50–125 AD), one of the first philosophers to pose the problem of human action in terms of dominion and power. Epictetus used the term ἀυτεξουσία<sup>40</sup> to demonstrate the indifference of human actions towards good or evil. He, along with other Stoics, po-

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40. «τὰ γὰρ ἐπὶ σοὶ ἀυτεξούσια καὶ φύσει ἐλεύθερα θέλων τηρῆσαι καὶ τούτοις ἀρκούμενος τίνας ἔτι ἐπιστρέφῃ; τίς γὰρ αὐτῶν κύριος, τίς αὐτὰ δύναται ἀφελέσθαι»: EPICTETUS, *Discourses* b. 2, ch. 2, 3.

stulated a substantial determinism of human actions, incompatible with the Christian moral vision. Among the refutors of this Stoic thesis was Alexander of Aphrodisias,<sup>41</sup> whose critique of Stoicism finds a surprising parallel in Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*. Nemesius cited similar arguments that he attributed to the treatise on fate of Philopator, thus corroborating the hypothesis of scholars who speculated that these same arguments were spread by more than one Stoic source.<sup>42</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias argued that human deliberation would be utterly inane if one did not possess the freedom or mastery to choose between particular actions.<sup>43</sup> In this, he echoed the thought of Aristotle and became a link between Aristotle, whose writings became highly influential in the Middle Ages, and the flames of the Christian moral-theological debate with which St. Thomas had become so familiar with during his time in Paris.

On account of his writing about human freedom and action, Alexander of Aphrodisias became an author of great interest for St. Thomas. Aquinas could not avoid dealing with the moral-anthropological theme of human freedom and its link to not only being non-fatalistic or non-determined, but to also being compatible with the Providence of God in accordance with Christian revelation. As such, St. Thomas precisely places these ideas in the Prologue to the *Secunda Pars*, to be a theoretical bridge between the last treatise of the *Prima Pars* dedicated to Providence<sup>44</sup> and his treatment of morality which occupies the discussion of the *Secunda Pars*. A survey of the various translations circulating in the thirteenth century displays the prominence of the discussion on human freedom, and on the problem of the relationship between free-

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41. Alexander was a peripatetic philosopher, considered the most erudite commentator of Aristotle, of whom he translated many works and deepened his thought. Alexander had an influence on many later thinkers and commentators: cfr. S. LILLA, *Alessandro di Afrodisia*, in A. DI BERARDINO (ed.), *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, vol. 1, Marietti, Genova-Milano 2006<sup>2</sup>, coll. 199–202.

42. Cfr. ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *On Fate*, in A. MAGRIS (ed.), *Sul destino*, Ponte alle Grazie, Firenze 1995, pp. 62–63.

43. Cfr. IDEM, *On Fate*, nn. 11–12, 178B–181B (ed. A. Magris), pp. 94–100.

44. Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *STI*, q. 116. Cfr. M.M. ROSSI – T. ROSSI, *Saggio sull'etica normativa*, vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 427–436.

dom and fate, or freedom and necessity, or freedom and nature. These discussions were not only of central concern to Greek thinkers, but also became of major concern for Christian thinkers of the time, not only in reference to freedom and fate, but also to Providence. Authors such as Nemesius of Emesa and St. John Damascene adopted these themes and treated them with a different slant: Nemesius was more interested in a medical-scientific viewpoint, while Damascene approached from a theological-exegetical angle. This plurality of interpretations and approaches impacted in turn the various scholastic teachers, who placed the themes in diversified frames of reference, sometimes in dialectical opposition with one another.<sup>45</sup> Despite the sometimes conflicting viewpoints, each was committed to contributing to the advancement of the theology and anthropology, and to the clarification of the specifically Christian contribution to the history of ideas in this area.

### 3. THE TEXT OF ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS UNDER THE PEN OF WILLIAM OF MOERBEKE

The translation of the Greek word ἀὐτεξουσίου has a long history in the ancient philosophical lexicon, and was rendered in the Latin world by the expression «*liberus arbitrio*», which in turn boasts a glorious past in the theological and philosophical lexicon of ancient and medieval Christian authors. In the Middle Ages, the Burgundian translation of ἐξουσία with the word «*potestas*», and of ἀὐτεξουσίου with the phrase «*liberus arbitrio*», literally translated into English as «free in (one's) decision» (already present in St. Augustine<sup>46</sup>), is more of a semantic than a literal translation, since it implies reference to the faculty of judgment and decision (that is, to rationality and will). Unlike the Greek term which emphasizes power over one's acts, the Latin phrase mainly expresses the moment of freedom in judgment. Therefore, it should not be easily conceded that «*liberus arbitrio*» is the best translation of ἀὐτεξουσίου. Rather, it is necessary to be aware that this

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45. The new sources in translation, while being available to the university environment, were used and further enriched by the various masters with a validating or refuting intent.

46. Of course, the historical investigation of the origin of the Latin translation would require a separate study.

choice of Burgundio was made on the basis of a consolidated Christian tradition which in fact involved a shift in meaning that had repercussions on subsequent reflections.<sup>47</sup>

It is important to inquire as to why a translator as precise and competent as Burgundio of Pisa would translate the term ἀὐτεξουσίον with «*liberus arbitrio*» considering that neither of the two terms contain a Greek root. One possibility is that he wanted to «westernize» the term, dispensing of the etymology of the word in favor of focusing on the semantic evolution of the expression, which also happened to possess the prestigious stamp of Augustinian authority. Another possibility is that he opted for the translation «*liberus arbitrio*» because he wanted to emphasize the freedom of human judgment as opposed to the necessity observed in nature. The Latin term «*arbiter*», in fact, is derived from the particle «*ad*», which means «towards», and from the Sanskrit root «*ba*» (from which comes the Latin «*biter*»), which can be translated as «come», «move», or even «attend», and takes on the meaning of «the one who attends and judges». Consequently, the «*arbitrium*», signifies the faculty to judge and freely dispose.<sup>48</sup> This clarification helps explain the emphasis on freedom, also attested to in Damascene, which led Burgundio of Pisa to consistently translate ἀὐτεξουσίον by including the adverb «free»,<sup>49</sup> despite the fact that the notion of freedom was already

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47. According to the authors, a profitable path of research would be an investigation of the Stoic sources (for example, Epictetus) of the texts of St. Augustine, in which we find not only the expression «free will», but also the doctrine on human freedom compared to other creatures.

48. Cfr. the lemmas «Arbitro», in *Dizionario Etimologico*, [www.etimo.it/?term=arbitro&find=Cerca](http://www.etimo.it/?term=arbitro&find=Cerca) [accessed 21 January 2021] and «Arbitrio», in *Dizionario Etimologico*, [www.etimo.it/?cmd=id&id=1208&md=ed0dbb2bf431d7220db9c8827a07833c](http://www.etimo.it/?cmd=id&id=1208&md=ed0dbb2bf431d7220db9c8827a07833c) [accessed 21 January 2021].

49. [...] *ideo neque thelisis [...] dicitur irrationalium appetitus, neque bulisis [...]. Voluntas enim est rationalis et libera arbitrio naturalis appetitus. In hominibus autem, rationalibus entibus, dicitur magis rationalis appetitus quam ducit. Libere arbitrio enim et cum ratione movetur, quia coniugatae sunt et cognoscitivae et vitales virtutes in eodem. Libere arbitrio igitur appetit, et libere arbitrio vult, et libere arbitrio inquirat et scrutatur, et libere arbitrio iudicat, et libere arbitrio disponit, et libere arbitrio eligit, et libere arbitrio impetum facit, et libere arbitrio agit semper in hiis quae secundum naturam sunt: JOHN DAMASCENE, *De fide orthodoxa*, 36, 12 (ed. E.M. Buytaert), p. 138.*

included in the concept of *arbiter*. Lost, or at least certainly downplayed, in this emphasis on freedom in the translation, is the connotation that the human being has dominion or power over his own acts. Within this theoretical framework, it is very probable that the translation of the various experts of the day were caught between two tensions: fidelity to the Greek sources and its lexical nuances, and harmonization with what had become a theological *koinè*. As a result, it follows that the medieval masters felt free to interpret their sources and theoretical developments in different directions.

Within this rather complex context, one can appreciate the need of the medieval scholars to translate and retranslate the texts of Aristotle, Damascene and even of Nemesius of Emesa in some cases. One such example of this can be found in the Franciscan Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253),<sup>50</sup> who taught at Oxford, and applied himself to translating both the *De fide orthodoxa* and the Nicomachean Ethics. Presumably, his study of these closely related documents was motivated, at least in part, by a desire to trace the exact conception and precise terminology with which human freedom had been investigated in the Greek philosophical tradition.<sup>51</sup>

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50. Cfr. *ad. v.* «Roberto Grossatesta», in *Enciclopedia Treccani*, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/roberto-grossatesta/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/roberto-grossatesta/) [accessed 21 January 2021]. He was very active in translating the new Greek, Aristotelian and Patristic sources, of which he owned one of the most well-stocked libraries of his time; in addition to *De fide orthodoxa*, in fact, he had translated another work of Damascene, the *Dialectica*: cfr. P.B. ROSSI, “Magna magni Augustini auctoritas”: *Roberto Grossatesta e i Padri*, «Quaderni di Noctua» 3 (2013), pp. 443-444. In the opinion of the authors of the present essay the *Dialectica* was a better known Damascenian work than the *De imaginibus*.

51. One of the most heated battlefields of the Greek theory is precisely that which contrasts the vision of fate, which was very precise and articulated, to the vision of virtue, which instead represented the space of freedom and human causality: cfr. C.M. BOWRA, *L’esperienza greca*, in *Il Portolano*, vol. 15, Il Saggiatore, Milano 1961, pp. 103-123. On the debate about providence and chance, Magris very clearly notes: «... il conflitto nel mondo greco fra un’ontologia “chiusa” (dove l’essere è un tutto già da sempre compiuto) e un’ontologia “aperta” (con molteplici e indipendenti fattori del divenire) si gioca all’interno del dibattito filosofico ellenistico fondamentalmente sul ruolo da attribuire al principio di causalità, ed è questa la sua specificità rispetto al modo in cui l’idea del “destino” si presentava non solo in Omero e nei Tragici ma anche nei pensatori più antichi come Pitagora, Eraclito o Parmenide, dove la nozione di causa è del

The Dominican William of Moerbeke,<sup>52</sup> famous for his translations of the new Greek sources,<sup>53</sup> intended to revise Robert Grosseteste's translation of the Nicomachean Ethics<sup>54</sup> but ultimately decided not to. It is quite likely that Moerbeke did not want to overlap his work with the many other translators already working on the translations of Damascene, including the aforementioned Grosseteste. Instead, William of Moerbeke applied himself to a different translation project and translated the text of Alexander of Aphrodisias on fate.

A close look at the translation of Moerbeke reveals crucial elements that help solve the enigma of the Prologue. In his *De fato*, and in reference to freedom in human actions, Alexander of Aphrodisias used the term «ἀντεξούσιον», in lexical and semantic continuity with the Aristotelian and Stoic tradition. William of Moerbeke rendered his translation as follows:

Propter quod neque in hiis que necessario fiunt electio, neque in hiis que non necessario quidem non autem per nos, sed neque in omnibus hiis que per nos, sed in hiis que fiunt per nos, quorum nos et agendi et non agendi domini sumus<sup>55</sup>

William is particularly sensitive and attentive to the fact that in the Greek language — unlike the Latin one — words are composed by com-

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tutto assente. [...] il problema diventava poi quello del conflitto tra destino universale e libertà particolare, fra l'esteriore e l'interiore, fra Dio e l'uomo o fra la natura e lo spirito, e in particolare finiva per incentrarsi sulla legittimità o meno di ritagliare all'interno di un mondo condizionato da rapporti causali necessari uno spazio vuoto tale da poter essere gestito da soggetti autonomi»: ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *On Fate* (ed. A. Magris), pp. 39-40.

52. Cfr. *ad. v.* «Guglielmo di Moerbeke», in *Enciclopedia Treccani*, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guglielmo-di-moerbeke/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guglielmo-di-moerbeke/) [accessed 2 June 2018].

53. The translations attributed to William of Moerbeke, according to the critical editor, concern the following authors: Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ammonius, Archimedes, Aristotle, Eustochius, Hero of Alexandria, John Philoponus, Galen, Hippocrates, Proclus, Simplicius, Themistius and Ptolemy: cfr. P. THILLET (ed.), *Alexandre d'Aphrodise, De fato ad Imperatores, version de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris 1963, pp. 28-36.

54. Cfr. *ivi*, p. 31.

55. ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *De fato*, n. 11 (ed. P. Thillet), p. 78, lines 84-89.

binning them into a single compound term.<sup>56</sup> When faced with the compound word ἀυτεξούσιον in the text of Alexander of Aphrodisias, William, according to the critical editor, follows three potential paths: he either transliterates it into Latin (simply reporting «*autexusion*»);<sup>57</sup> or, he conducts a so-called «analytical translation», which separates the single Greek term into two terms (turning ἀυτεξούσιον into «*liberum arbitrium*»); or, he uses the Latin equivalent of the Greek words (making the term «ἀυτεξούσιον» into «*propria potestas*»).<sup>58</sup>

The first path of William's translating the *De fato* by merely transliterating the text can be seen when he is confronted with the content of the expression, «that which is in us», both from the perspective of the opinion of the Stoics and the refutation of Alexander of Aphrodisias.<sup>59</sup> In this context, Alexander of Aphrodisias states that τὸ ἀυτεξούσιον is the meaning of the expression «that which is in us». William of Moerbeke translates the passage as follows:

*Licet autem considerare si hec dicentes salvant comune de eo quod in nobis omnium hominum suspiciones. Exquirentes enim se ipsos quomodo possibile est, omnibus existentibus secundum fatum, salvare quod in nobis, non nomen solum ejus quod in nobis ponentes hoc exquirunt, sed et significatum illud, scilicet autexusion, hoc est liberi arbitrii [οὐκ ὄνομα μόνον τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν τιθέντες τοῦτ' ἀπαιτοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ σημαϊνόμενον ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἀυτεξούσιον].*<sup>60</sup>

It is notable that William of Moerbeke, after transliterating the term as *autexusion*, immediately adds the phrase «*hoc est liberi arbitrii*».<sup>61</sup>

The second passage of the *De fato* to be considered, is an example of the second path of analytical translation. In the passage which follows,

56. Cfr. P. THILLET (ed.), *Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, op. cit., pp. 51–52.

57. Please note that transliteration is the transcription of a text in an alphabetic system other than the original one.

58. Cfr. P. THILLET (ed.), *Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, cit., pp. 52–53.

59. Cfr. ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *On Fate*, n.14, 182B (ed. A. Magris), p. 103. On the subject of the determinism of Alexander of Aphrodisias see also: C. NATALI, *Alessandro d'Afrodizia. Il destino*, Introd., vol. 1, Rusconi, Milano 1996.

60. ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *De fato*, n.14 (ed. P. Thillet), p. 80, lines 62–67.

61. Cfr. P. THILLET (ed.), *Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, cit., p. 52.

Alexander of Aphrodisias explains the contradiction of the Stoic positions, which on the one hand support universal necessity or determinism, and on the other hand defend the freedom of the human being.<sup>62</sup> William of Moerbeke translates the Greek text speaking of human freedom as follows:

*Sic enim in omnibus sermonibus observant liberum arbitrium [φυλάσσουν τὸ ἐλεύθερόν τε καὶ τὸ ἀντεξούσιον], tanquam non audierint numquam ab alio tale aliquod dogma, hoc autem provocare quosdam temptantes tanquam faciendi aut non faciendi hoc potestatem habentes ipsi [τοῦ τε ποιεῖν ἢ μὴ ποιεῖν τοῦ το τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχοντες αὐτοί], et provocatis per ipsorum sermones eligere quedam potentibus operabuntur utique contraria silentibus, hoc autem increpantes et vituperantes aliquos velut non convenientia agentes.*<sup>63</sup>

Worth noting in this passage is that William takes the entire Greek phrase, «τὸ ἐλεύθερον καὶ τὸ ἀντεξούσιον», and essentially absorbs the term «ἐλεύθερον» by rendering the entire phrase as «*liberum arbitrium*», including of course the qualification “free” with respect to the will. In this sense, his translation is not as analytic as the critical editor suggests, but rather — in the view of the authors — synthetic.

The third path of William’s translation techniques, that of a literal translation, is the most relevant for our consideration of the text of the Prologue of the *Prima Secundae*. In the example which follows, Alexander of Aphrodisias accuses his opponents of being boastfully obstinate in maintaining an indefensible and unsustainable position, namely, they didn’t seem to recognize that within the human being, is the prerogative of the freedom of choice between contrary outcomes.<sup>64</sup> Here is William of Moerbeke’s translation:

*Cessarent autem utique ab honoris amore in sermonibus et concedentibus esse quod in nobis liberum et proprie potestatis et dominans electioni oppositorum et actioni [τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐλεύθερόν τε καὶ ἀντεξούσιον καὶ κύριον τῆς τῶν ἀντι κειμένων αἰρέσεώς τε καὶ πράξεως] in circumstantibus hominibus justus fieri persuasus similiter ydiotis et legislatoribus.*<sup>65</sup>

62. Cfr. ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *On Fate*, n.18, 188B (ed. A. Magris), p. 116.

63. IDEM, *De fato*, n.18 (ed. P. Thillet), p. 86, lines 65–71.

64. Cfr. IDEM, *On Fate*, n.19, 189B (ed. A. Magris), p. 117.

65. IDEM, *De fato*, n.19 (ed. P. Thillet), p. 86, lines 75–79. The Greek text added in

There are a number of important notes to highlight regarding the translation of William. First, ἀὐτεξούσιον is translated as «*proprie potestatis*» and is used as an adjective. This aspect of the translation constitutes a literal translation. The second element is the sequence of adjectives describing the human being: freedom, power, and dominion over one's acts. The third important note is that «*liber arbitrio*» is not used to translate «ἀὐτεξούσιον». These elements, which no doubt pertain to the work of translation, also highlight the highly interpretive nature of William's work whereby he reveals himself entirely aware of the competence of Alexander of Aphrodisias in regard to Aristotle. Having understood the mind and intention of Alexander with respect to the terminology in Greek, William is then able to expertly translate into Latin.

The juxtaposition of the preceding text with the text of St. Thomas's Prologue highlights the similarity of sequence. Where the text of Alexander of Aphrodisias reads: «*nobis liberum et proprie potestatis et dominans electioni oppositorum et actioni*»; the text of the Prologue states: «*arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum [...] quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem*».<sup>66</sup> The great overlap in these expressions demonstrates that St. Thomas sees in the translation of William of Moerbeke a strong reason why the term ἀὐτεξούσιον should not be translated merely by the phrase «*liber arbitrio*». Further, it also suggests that Aquinas perceives a hidden meaning in the Greek term ἀὐτεξούσιον that is essential for giving a proper treatise on morality. Namely, as a consequence of having an intelligent nature with free will and dominion over one's actions, Aquinas also perceives the unique power of self-determination essential to morality<sup>67</sup>. Through his free choices made with rational knowledge, man shapes the kind of person

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parentheses to allow for comparison is taken from I. BRUNS (ed.), *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora*, Typis et impensis Georgii Reimeri, Berolini 1892, p. 189.

66. *Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imagine significatur intellectuale et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum; postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem; restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem*: THOMAS AQUINAS, ST I-II, prol.

he becomes morally, i.e., by choosing freely to do good, he becomes morally good. This dominion over one's actions really becomes in the view of the authors, the superior translation to what is generally rendered merely as «self-movement».

The above comparison between the translated text of Alexander of Aphrodisias and the Prologue, share in common the influence of William of Moerbeke. While the term ἀυτεξούσιον of the Damascene text is rendered by Burgundio of Pisa simply as «*liberus arbitrio*», William of Moerbeke uses both «*liberus arbitrio*» and the more precise «*proprie potestatis*». St. Thomas, while making use of the translation expertise of William, makes a further interpretive decision to not merely repeat «*proprie potestatis*», but he gives a greater metaphysical emphasis through the expression «*per se*» which underlines the aspect of the action proceeding from nature. Thus, Aquinas combines with the quotation from Damascene, the two translations of ἀυτεξούσιον provided by William of Moerbeke with his own personal interpretive intuition, as the use of the conjunction «*et*» suggests.

Moreover, the study and interpretation of Aristotle and, therefore also his major interpreters, including Alexander of Aphrodisias, was an integral part of the project entrusted to theologians by Pope Gregory IX to verify the compatibility between Aristotelian doctrines and the truths of the Christian faith. From this perspective, it is not surprising that St. Thomas studied and knew Aristotelian thought in depth even through the lens of various commentators. Along these lines, it should also be noted how the influence of the text of Alexander of Aphrodisias indirectly contributes to solving the enigma of the second misalignment of the Damascenian quotation, i.e. the absence of the second part related to likeness or similitude. The Prologue takes a different direction, and the illustration of the essence of likeness or similitude will be present later, throughout the development of the *Prima Secundae*, especially in the treatise on virtues.

Another interpretive insight into the Thomistic addition of the «*et*

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67. The very concept of «dominion over one's actions» in its deepest sense has been taught by Karol Wojtyła in his book, *The Acting Person*, chs. 3–4, when he speaks of «vertical transcendence». This concept widens to include the notion of self-determination as the capability of freely choosing one's own ends.

*per se potestativum*» which harmoniously integrates with the outlined hypothesis above regarding the particle «*et*», is that the «*et*» not only operates as a conjunction linking the third anthropological principle of dominion over one's actions to the two qualities mentioned by Damascene (rationality and free will), but that it also functions as a kind of adverb which introduces a special insight into the translation. This possibility would not alter the semantic value of the Prologue, but would highlight the attention of St. Thomas to language and lexicon, especially that of languages foreign to his own mother tongue.

St. Thomas may have intentionally added the phrase «*et per se potestativum*» in order to combine the current Burgundian translation of the Greek term «*αὐτεξούσιον*», rendered as «*arbitrio liberum*», with the more exact literal rendering of the Greek «*per se potestativum*», that had been given to him by his brother William of Moerbeke. Interpreted this way, the text would read in English, «free in the will, and/or with dominion over one's actions». <sup>68</sup> The particle «*et*», in fact, is also synonymous with «*etiam*», which also includes the meaning of «also», and is also a synonym for «*vel*», which means simply «or». Proof of the plausibility of this theory is found just a few lines later in the Prologue when St. Thomas uses the particle «*et*» with an adverbial function. In this case, while speaking of the human being as the image of God, St. Thomas states, «*et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum ar-*

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68. The sense of «*per se*» and the expressive power it contains in reference to the «*inseitas*», so to speak, of the prerogative of free will as a faculty is echoed in a text by Alexander of Hales: *Item, liberum arbitrium in homine est potestas servandi rectitudinem et etiam deserendi. Cum igitur oppositorum sit illa potentia et determinatur per alterum tantum, quare insufficienter [...] Item, dicit 'propter se', id est rectitudinem; quod non videtur, nam ipsa rectitudo non est finis sibi, immo ad aliud est; ergo nec ipsa rectitudo servanda est propter se: sic enim fieret finis quod non est finis [...] Ad illud quod dicunt, quod non plene definit, quotiam illa potestas oppositorum est, dicimus quod potestas oppositorum est multipliciter: quandoque est ad utrumque per se; quandoque ad alterum per se, sed etiam alterius est, etsi non ad ipsum; quandoque ad alterum tantum, et nullo modo, nec ad alterum nec alterius. Liberum ergo arbitrium sic ad alterum est, quod tantum est alterius, ut praedictum; est unde, quando definitur ad id ad quod est, debet definiri tantum quantum ad hoc quod est servare etc. Illa ergo consideratio intelligenda est: quando est potestas oppositorum et aequaliter: ALEXANDER OF HALES, *Quaestio De libero arbitrio*, q. 13, obb. 2–3 et ad 3, in *Magistri Alexandri de Hales Quaestiones Disputatae 'antequam esset frater'*, vol. 21, ed. V. Doucet, Quaracchi, Roma 1960, pp. 1433; 1434–1435.*

*bitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem*»,<sup>69</sup> translated as «he too is the principle of his acts, as having free will and power over his actions». In this sentence, what follows the «*et*» functions as an adverb.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, a hidden, unreferenced source emerges, namely, Alexander of Aphrodisias, which supports the “anomalous” citation of Damascene provided by St. Thomas in the Prologue, and which contributes to re-interpreting the conceptual links between the *Prima* and *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa*. On the trail of this source, St. Thomas was very likely led by the translation project of William of Moerbeke as opposed to the Parisian network (Burgundio of Pisa, Peter Lombard, Philip the Chancellor), whose interpretations of Damascene began with a debate on human faculties before broadening their perspective to consider the transition of values from the vision of the ancient world to that of the Christian world. The unprecedented opportunity that St. Thomas seized upon was his access to the expertise and precision of the great translator William of Moerbeke. With William’s assistance, the thought and expressions of Alexander of Aphrodisias were able to be fully integrated with the assumptions of faith, allowing St. Thomas to reaffirm at the same time the freedom of the will in the face of the judgment of reason, i.e., of free will as opposed to necessity, and the essence of being «in the image of God». This is further recognized as a kind of power or capacity belonging to the human being, and allows St. Thomas to introduce the notion of «*principium*» from Aristotelian thought. St. Thomas places this power/capacity and principle at the qualitative and quantitative center of the Prologue in the unprecedented analogical comparison between the Exemplar, God, and His image, man. The notion of «*principium*», so relevant and central to the Prologue, comes from Aristotle and is taken up by Nemesius of Emesa and Damascene in the theological debate on the theme of being «in the image of God».

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69. THOMAS AQUINAS, *STI-II*, prol.

70. In Latin, in fact, the conjunction «*et*» can have multiple meanings, including that of a synonym for «*etiam*», to be translated with «too», «also» or, perhaps even more fittingly, with the meaning of «or», a synonym of «*vel*»: cfr. lemma «Et», in *Dizionario Latino Olivetti*, [www.dizionario-latino.com/dizionario-latino-italiano.php?parola=et](http://www.dizionario-latino.com/dizionario-latino-italiano.php?parola=et) [accessed 21 January 2021].

However, the term is not found either in the quotation from Damascene, nor in the (implicit) one of Alexander of Aphrodisias. The explanation for this is found not only in the perspective of causality with respect to one's own acts, which was certainly an integral part of being «in the image of God», but above all in the theological principle that sees in the revelation of creation the origin of knowledge of creatures and the doctrine on being «in the image of God».<sup>71</sup> Read in this light, the center of the Prologue is constituted by the comparison between the Exemplar and His image,<sup>72</sup> from which radiates in a speculative yet open way,<sup>73</sup> the two unique powers of the human being.

Relying on the fruits of the environmental method discussed above, and admittedly with some interpretive audacity, the authors would like to propose in conclusion the following hypothetical, unzipped, and expanded paraphrase of the Prologue:

Let's start from the beginning. The human being is made in the image of God. Damascene says that the term "image" must be understood as referring to the human intellect and free will, and, as the ancients said [or, "or also translatable as..."], having the dominion over one's actions. Now, we have already spoken of the Exemplar, that is, of God, and of all that proceeded from the divine power according to His will. In fact, please recall that in God, power and will are one and the same. Therefore, having spoken of the Exemplar, let us now speak of his master example, that is, the creature made in His image, the human being, to the extent that he too - like the Exemplar - is the principle of his own actions, almost as if he had a totally free will and power over his own works. I say "almost" because although the human being is truly free and not determined, he is neither free nor a principle of his own acts in the exact same way God is. I do not repeat that the human being is intellectual, as stated in the

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71. See in this regard, T. ROSSI, *Saggio sulla metaetica nella Summa Theologiae di San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Angelicum UP, Roma 2011.

72. It should be noted, among other things, that precisely in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas quotes the same text from Damascene with the specification of «*per se potestativum*» (once with the «*et*» and once without), about the treatment of being «in the image of God»: cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *ST I*, q. 93, a. 5, ob. 2 et a. 9.

73. See the metaethical principles found in *Prima Pars* della *Summa Theologiae*, according to the interpretation of T. ROSSI, *Saggio sulla metaetica*, op. cit.

definition of Damascene, because I have already dealt with this topic in the First Part, and because I would like to direct your attention to the human powers that originate from being a “principle,” which is a better suited starting point to a discussion on morality.

As a corollary and in line with a search for the implicit conceptual links of the parts of the *Summa Theologiae*, the reconstruction carried out in this investigation corroborates well with the hypothesis that Aquinas composed the *Summa* while in Italy, living not too far from the residence of William of Moerbeke in those same years. In particular, the strong connection existing between the *Prima Pars* and the *Prima Secundae* regarding the fundamental similarities and differences in the analogy between God and the human being, and between the human being and other creatures. Human causality, arising from being made «in the image of God», is already present in *Prima Pars*, both in the treatment of the essence in which it is substantiated, and in the conceptual chapter concerning the «production of other human beings».<sup>74</sup> However, it is incomplete, since it does not yet treat of the place where the image of God is found most notably and universally — in the dominion over one’s actions, which constitute the primary form of a discussion on morality which is treated in the *Secunda Pars*.

The conceptual framework of Damascene, which remains the privileged inspiration of the Thomistic text, goes well beyond the quotation of the Prologue. It extends to the treatise *De voluntario*,<sup>75</sup> and identifies precise heuristic and theoretical moments that invisibly, but tenaciously, link the questions 80–83 of the *Prima Pars* on the appetitive faculty in creatures (especially in the human being), with article 1 of question 1 of the *Prima Secundae* and with article 1 of question 6 of the *Prima Secundae* on the voluntary nature of human actions.<sup>76</sup> It is a sequence that functions as both a suture and break between the different topics of consideration and which the authors of this article do not hesitate to define as «necessary» to provide the complete vision of human cau-

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74. Cfr THOMAS AQUINAS, *ST I-II*, q. 6.

75. See, in this regard, T. ROSSI, *Saggio sull’etica normativa nella Summa Theologiae di San Tommaso d’Aquino*, vol. 3: *Il Prologo alla Secunda Pars e il “motus rationalis creaturae in Deum”*, Angelicum UP, Roma 2018, pp. 89–123.

76. See, in this regard, *ibidem*.

sality in the context of theological consideration, and at the same time, to exalt the preciousness of ancient reflection in the light of the highest intelligibility of divine Wisdom.

#### CONCLUSION

The present article intended to display the schematic stages of research that led to unveiling the implicit use, by St. Thomas, of a hidden, unreferenced source in his Prologue to the *Prima Secundae*: Alexander of Aphrodisias. The investigation began with a curious and fascinating circumstance – the presence of some variations in St. Thomas’s quotation of Damascene in the Prologue, namely an omission and an addition not found in the Damascene text. Having excluded the hypotheses that Aquinas combined several of Damascene’s texts (the *De fide orthodoxa* or the *Dialectica*) into one, and of a possible dependence on the translation of Burgundio of Pisa, the authors proceeded to formulate the hypothesis of a personal and intentional addition of the expression «*et per se potestativum*» by St. Thomas. This latter hypothesis allowed us to trace, through the environmental method, a link to an unreferenced work of Alexander of Aphrodisias, translated by St. Thomas’s Dominican confrere, William of Moerbeke.

The use of this source, understood in the context of the various protagonists and theological debates of the time, supported by the specific interests of the Christian tradition, provided St. Thomas with an avenue to pass from the treatment of the divine prerogative of providence to the voluntary nature of human actions, the object of St. Thomas’s treatment of morality in the *Summa Theologiae*.

In light of these findings on the subtrack of the Prologue, the general intentionality of the Thomistic moral vision also takes on a new tenor and perspective from which to look at the entire *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, namely, the solution to the Gordian knot of the relationship between fate and human freedom. It was a decisive question to which ancient philosophy devoted much energy, and is perceived by Aquinas in the vision of a providence to which human actions are related by virtue of similitude, and expressed in an innovative combination of sources with an extraordinary impact.