

Introduction: Nature and Grace as a Contemporary Theological Problem

The nuns taught us there were two ways through life—the way of nature and the way of grace. You have to choose which one you’ll follow. Grace doesn’t try to please itself. Accepts being slighted, forgotten, disliked. Accepts insults and injuries. Nature only wants to please itself. Gets others to please it too. Likes to lord it over them. To have its own way. It finds reasons to be unhappy when all the world is shining around it. And love is smiling through all things. They taught us that no one who loves the way of grace ever comes to a bad end.

—Terrence Malick, *The Tree of Life*¹

All is grace.

—Georges Bernanos, *Journal d’un curé de campagne*.²

The question of the relationship between nature³ and grace⁴ has been a

1. Blu-ray DVD, directed by Terrence Malick (Los Angeles: Fox Searchlight, 2011).

2. Paris: Plon, 1974, 313. This literal translation departs from the interpretation given to this line in *The Diary of a Country Priest*, trans. Pamela Morris (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1983), 298.

3. In this context, “nature” is used to refer to human nature, as opposed to, for example, the broader creation, which is sometimes referred to by this term.

4. The term *grace*, as it is used in Christian theology, largely owes to the writings of Paul. James D. G. Dunn comments in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 321, that the term would have been understood in first-century context under the rubric of benefaction—that is, “*charis* as ‘favour’ done, and regularly in the plural, *charites*, ‘favours’ bestowed or returned.” According to Dunn, this term appears in several ways in Paul, the first and most notable for this project being “the idea of spontaneous and generous giving,” such that “the most common verbal phrase with *charis* is ‘grace given (by God).’” *Ibid.*, 322–23. Others include action, favors, or benefactions, a unilateral gift from God, and as begetting further grace and good fruits in human beings. Grace thus constitutes an important theological innovation on Paul’s part, using language available in the surrounding Greco-Roman cultural context to describe God’s action in human life. While the conception of grace also drew on precedent from the Hebrew Scriptures, it was Paul’s

classic Christian theological problem dating back to the letters of Paul, and has resurfaced throughout the history of Christianity. Of abiding significance has been the response of Augustine to the Pelagians.⁵ It was a major area of interest to Thomas Aquinas⁶ and became one of the key issues in the Protestant Reformation. Controversies about nature and grace continued in post-Reformation Catholic theology and culture, manifested particularly in the conflicts surrounding Molinism and Jansenism.⁷ The debate about nature and grace has thus served as a catalyst or focal point during many key Christian theological debates since the time of Augustine.

Nature and grace became one of the defining issues in the twentieth-century Catholic theological debates that arguably culminated in the

conception of grace that would define the Christian approach to it, and that effectively defines it for the purposes of this project.

5. J. Patout Burns treats this issue effectively in "Grace," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, OSA (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 391. Augustine's dispute with the Pelagians turns for him on the idea, as he argues in *Nature and Grace*, that "we do not render meaningless the grace of God, which is found in Christ Jesus, our Lord, by a misguided defense of nature." Augustine, *Nature and Grace, in Answer to the Pelagians*, trans. Ronald J. Teske, SJ (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1997), 226. In addition to the necessity of grace, Augustine emphasizes its gratuity, arguing in *The Spirit and the Letter* that "the reward is not regarded as something owed them, but as grace. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace." In *Answer to the Pelagians*, 175.
6. Thomas combines a theological account of grace influenced by that of Augustine with a philosophical conception of human nature influenced by his reading of Aristotle. Particularly important for the issues treated here is his argument in *De veritate* Q.27 that "there is an end for which man is prepared by God which surpasses the proportion of human nature, that is, eternal life, which consists in the vision of God by His essence. That vision is not proportionate to any creature whatsoever, being connatural only to God. It is therefore necessary that there be given to man not only something by which he can work toward that end or by which his appetite should be inclined to that end, but also something by which man's very nature should be raised to a dignity which would make such an end suited to him. For this, grace is given." Translated by Robert Schmidt, S.J. <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdeVer.htm>. The dual Aristotelian and Augustinian emphases present in his thought would be taken to claim Thomas Aquinas as the primary influence, or at least a kind of proof text, for very different theologies of nature and grace.
7. Jansenism had its precursor in the writings of Michael de Bay or Baius, who argued for an Augustinian theology of grace that was condemned by Pope Pius V. Baius was followed by Cornelius Jansen, or Jansenius, who wrote a book, *Augustinus*, in which, according to Henri de Lubac, he "subordinates everything to the vision of a God, terrible in his almighty power, who knows no law, is accountable to no one, saves one, damns another, according to his own good pleasure." *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 32. Jansenius gained a greater following in death than in life due to a following centered around the Port-Royal convent in Paris, with disciples including the philosopher Blaise Pascal. Molinism is named for Luis de Molina, a Jesuit who argued, according to de Lubac, that "the normal last end of man . . . is not the vision of God but some 'natural beatitude' of an inferior order." *Ibid.*, 226. Molina's position, which claimed Augustine as a source but stood exactly opposite to the Augustinianism of Baius and Jansenius, was not condemned, leaving his position relatively free as an acceptable position.

Second Vatican Council. These debates, which began with the Modernist controversy in the first decade of the twentieth century, resurfaced later in the century.⁸ A consensus had been formed and enforced during the nineteenth century, hearkening back to sixteenth-century readings of Aquinas, in defense of a vision of nature and grace centered on a view that nature is not created with an intrinsic desire for grace, but rather has this desire superadded by God as part of the gratuitous gift of grace. This resulted in what is commonly described as a kind of “two-story” vision of nature and grace, in which grace constitutes an extrinsic addition to human nature rather than fulfillment of an intrinsic desire.

This neoscholastic consensus around nature and grace began to come into question during the first half of the twentieth century through contributions from four thinkers—a lay philosopher and three Jesuit theologians: Maurice Blondel, Pierre Rousselot, Henri de Lubac, and Karl Rahner. Blondel and Rousselot wondered whether, in the authentic Christian tradition, grace was in fact extrinsic to human nature or rather an intrinsic desire of the human heart. Both were controversial, yet neither received condemnation—Blondel due to his lay status, and Rousselot due at least in part to his early death in World War I. De Lubac and Rahner, influenced in the former case by Blondel and in both cases by Rousselot (though by different aspects of his thought) followed up on their work by arguing decisively that the neoscholastic consensus on nature and grace was unworkable and needed to be overturned for a renewal of Christian theology and life.

Despite persistent opposition from forces within the church hierarchy and their own Jesuit order, de Lubac and Rahner, who were by no means similar thinkers otherwise and disagreed on some important points regarding even this topic, shaped a new consensus on nature and grace that seemed to be confirmed by the results of the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, by the time de Lubac published

8. Nature and grace had also resurfaced as an issue in the German theological controversy surrounding Johannes von Kuhn, detailed in Karl Josef Mattes, *Die Kontroverse zwischen Johannes v. Kuhn und Constantin v. Schützler über das Verhältnis von Natur und Gnade* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1968).

his most thorough works on nature and grace in the mid-1960s, it hardly seemed to be the controversial topic that it once had been. The ascendancy of Rahner's influence in the theological academy in the 1960s and '70s also seemed to indicate that a renewed worldview on nature and grace had triumphed.

In recent decades, however, interest in nature and grace as a specific area of theological inquiry has declined somewhat. Several reasons can be postulated for why this has been the case, and they are worth exploring. A first possibility is that these discussions were essentially settled following the Second Vatican Council with the triumph of a broad consensus defined by the positions of de Lubac and Rahner. A second is that nature and grace is still very much a live issue, and its discussion has been transmuted into other theologies, particularly those of liberation, inculturation, and religious pluralism, where its expression is transposed into different categories that do not correspond exactly to the traditional ones. A third possibility is that in a Euro-American context where Christianity and its influence seem increasingly relegated to the past, the traditional categories of nature and grace are no longer relevant for either theology or society.

Was the discussion of nature and grace settled in and around Vatican II? As I shall explore in chapter 2, Vatican II itself did not have particularly much to say about this subject, though it does implicitly address nature and grace at times and seems to operate within a new framework that owes much to these new developments in theology. Given that the council was not convened to settle these disputes explicitly and did not in fact purport to do so, it is more accurate to say that the theological atmosphere following Vatican II certainly favored a certain approach to nature and grace. Furthermore, the designation of Henri de Lubac as a cardinal and praise for his works from Pope John Paul II and the future Pope Benedict XVI seemed to indicate an ecclesial approbation for the approach to nature and grace he favored.

Ecclesial atmosphere and trends, however, shift constantly, and this has been true on issues surrounding nature and grace. As I will detail at the end of chapter 1, there is at present a growing movement favoring

the neoscholastic approach to nature and grace opposed by de Lubac, and it is not out of the realm of possibility that this movement might grow in influence, especially among the clergy and church hierarchy. Lack of official settlement of the question and growing opposition to the previous consensus thus demonstrate the need for a continued exploration of nature and grace, using intellectual resources that were not available fifty years ago.

Has the question of nature and grace been channeled into other, newer theological discourses? I think this is indeed the case, and an analysis of these discourses demonstrates that nature and grace is very much a question at the heart of them. The question of whether and how God's grace is communicated in situations of oppression and religious diversity has been crucially important to the formulation of these theologies, and to others that have been concerned with questions of inculturating Christianity into situations where thought patterns and rituals of other religious traditions are deeply embedded. In chapter 2, I will analyze the work of several Latin American liberation theologians in terms of how they view the relationship between nature and grace. At the end of chapter 5, I will also briefly discuss theologies of inculturation and religious pluralism with respect to their treatment of nature and grace.

These new theological discourses have on the whole been a positive force both in theology and in the church that the theological academy serves. Similarly, they present a positive opportunity for the theology of nature and grace to develop in new directions and to raise new questions. Yet I think something has been lost in the shift away from treating nature and grace as a special topic of theology. Part of this has been the ability to negotiate between various theological approaches in terms of the theology of nature and grace. Furthermore, analyzing nature and grace as its own theological topic can help facilitate the fruitful integration of new philosophical currents into this area of theology. It is with this latter possibility that I will be especially concerned in the course of this dissertation, while also concerning

myself with reintegrating these insights into the other discourses in theology previously mentioned.

The social context of religion and theology in the United States and Europe has seen enormous shifts in the past century, especially since the end of World War II. Europe has encountered a notable secularizing trend in this period, with church attendance and religious affiliation plummeting. Reactions to this trend have been varied. Some, such as Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, have lamented Europe's loss of and increasing lack of interest in its historic Christian identity.⁹ Others, such as Karl Rahner, have sought to reformulate Christian theology to better suit a "wintry season" for religious belief.¹⁰ From a different perspective entirely, Muslim thinkers such as Tariq Ramadan have questioned whether secular structures formulated to deal with Christianity are applicable in the same way to Islam.¹¹ In the United States, meanwhile, secularizing trends have acted very differently than in Europe, often in a kind of dialectic with periodic revivals of religious fervor and interest.¹² Recent studies have shown religious belief and practice on the decline in the United States also, particularly among Catholics.¹³

Thesis and Chapters

Given this changed environment of belief and practice, does the theology of nature and grace, especially in its Augustinian formulation,

9. Joseph Ratzinger argues that "Europe will not be able—and will not be permitted—to stop exporting its technology and its rationality. But if it is this is all it does, then it destroys man's great religious and ethical traditions, destroys the foundations of human existence and subjugates others to a law that will destroy Europe itself too." Ratzinger, "Europe: Hopes and Dangers," in *A Turning Point for Europe*, trans. Brian McNeil, CRV (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010), 146.
10. Rahner makes this point particularly in "Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today," *Theological Investigations*, 5:2–12, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966).
11. Ramadan makes this argument particularly well in *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* (Markfield, UK: Islamic Foundation, 2001).
12. José Casanova has analyzed this phenomenon in "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective," *Hedgehog Review* 8 (2006): 7–22.
13. An October 2012 Pew Forum report analyzes the general phenomenon of the growth in "No Religion" as a trend in the United States. Pew Research Center, "'Nones' on the Rise: One in Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation," October 9, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>. William D'Antonio details change and declines in Catholic practice and membership in his article "New survey offers portrait of U.S. Catholics," *National Catholic Reporter*, October 24, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/news/catholics-america/persistence-and-change>.

still have any relevance? Would it not be better, on this account, to focus on other, seemingly less abstract issues? While other foundational issues such as the theology of God and other aspects of theological anthropology, especially those associated with important contemporary ethical questions, are certainly worthy of investigation, nature and grace remains a key issue precisely because of these secularizing trends. The question of the sacred and secular, I think, mirrors closely that of nature and grace. Indeed, as I shall analyze in chapter 1, Henri de Lubac drew close parallels between a problematic theology of nature and grace and secularization in Europe. One does not have to agree fully with that analysis in order to see that the issues are connected.

Given this threefold context, I argue that there is a need for a renewed focus on nature and grace as an area of inquiry for theology. In so doing, I do not seek to call into question any of the theological developments that have eclipsed nature and grace since the 1960s. Rather, I think that a renewed theology of nature and grace can serve to assist with the continued development of these theologies by clarifying some issues and offering a new engagement with theoretical resources, particularly in this case with the work of two important continental philosophers.

The ecclesial and secular context further calls for a renewed emphasis on nature and grace, both on the advances that were made in the twentieth century and on the advances that need to continue as a response to today's context. The growing influence of those who seek to return to the old neoscholastic consensus is problematic for the same reasons as it was when de Lubac and others argued against it in the first place, and for the additional reason that such a separated theology is precisely the wrong way for the church and theology to respond to an increasingly secularized context. Rather, there is more need than ever to emphasize that human nature is created to receive grace. Such an approach offers to the secular world the message that Christianity does not seek to offer something additional and outside the world, but instead calls for human nature to be true to itself in the

deepest way possible and in so doing to seek transformation on both the personal and political levels.

The renewed theology of nature and grace that I am proposing offers benefits to all three “publics” of theology, to use David Tracy’s terminology.¹⁴ To the academy, it offers a further development of important theological developments of the last century while also incorporating important contemporary philosophical theories. To the church, it offers a defense of these developments, particularly in the work of de Lubac, and a resistance to those attempting to reverse them. Additionally, as I shall describe in the conclusion, it offers resources that apply to other areas of church life. Finally, to society, it discusses an issue that is ultimately at the center of many discussions about the sacred and the secular and thus offers resources for these discussions both in a Euro-American context and in new contexts where secularity and, indeed, the sacred take on very different forms. As a political theology, it also views theology as cultivating insights that can be transformative for church and society alike.

My argument in this book centers on a reading of twentieth-century discussions about nature and grace, spanning from the Modernist controversy until the development of Latin American liberation theologies in the 1970s and 1980s. This topic, I argue, is in need of renewed emphasis, especially in the light of theologies of inculturation and religious pluralism that in many ways are in fact discussions of nature and grace. At the same time, I think this renewed emphasis can be brought into conversation with the themes of gift and recognition in continental philosophy. In so doing, I will argue for a theology of nature and grace construed in terms of *recognizing the gift*.

The method I use to carry out this project is indebted in many respects to the method of mutually critical correlation outlined by David Tracy. This method was Tracy’s correction to the method of correlation outlined especially by Paul Tillich.¹⁵ The fundamental flaw

14. Tracy argues that “each theologian addresses three distinct and related social realities: the wider society, the academy and the church.” David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 5.

15. Tracy argues, “If the ‘situation’ is to be taken with full seriousness, then its answers to its own

of Tillich's method, for Tracy, was not acknowledging the dual relationship of religion and context; that is, they are in a back-and-forth, rather than a one-sided, relationship. Thus, my own project is concerned to look at some of the recent conversations between religion and continental philosophy, and to look at precisely how this has been a mutual relationship.

However, since Tracy laid out this method in the 1970s and 1980s, the critique of knowledge proffered by various kinds of postmodernism has made it clear that no method of correlation functions in an absolute way. Thus, I will pay close attention to the fragmentary nature of all knowledge, including theological knowledge. At the same time, I think it is still possible, given all these limitations, to make the kinds of statements characteristic of systematic theology, and I intend to do so.

I will begin this analysis by examining the twentieth-century debates on nature and grace that began with the work of Maurice Blondel and the Modernist controversy in which Blondel was implicated but never condemned. Blondel's work influenced the work of Pierre Rousselot, whose work on nature and grace caused a firestorm of its own before his early death, and both were major influences on Henri de Lubac. De Lubac's work *Surnaturel*, along with a number of essays written before and during World War II, transformed the Catholic discussion on nature and grace by calling into question many of neoscholasticism's assumptions. The work of Karl Rahner on nature and grace, developed in dialogue and at times disagreement with de Lubac, further developed this new trajectory on nature and grace by arguing for a more robust conception of nature and placing the discussion in the framework of a transcendental theology influenced by modern philosophy that would become perhaps the most influential overall Catholic theological project of the twentieth century. I conclude this chapter by examining the work of several contemporary philosophers and theologians who have sought to push back against

questions must also be investigated critically. Tillich's method cannot really allow this." David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 46.

this line of thought in favor of restoring the neoscholastic approach to nature and grace.

My second chapter focuses on the political implications of theologies of nature and grace by engaging two very different perspectives, that of Hans Urs von Balthasar and that of three liberation theologians—Gustavo Gutiérrez, Ignacio Ellacuría, and Juan-Luis Segundo. These two approaches have become emblematic of Catholic theological divides since the Second Vatican Council, with followers of Balthasar tending to reject political theology,¹⁶ while practitioners of political and other contextual theologies are often less interested in Balthasar’s classical and apparently apolitical approach. By reading them closely on nature and grace, however, I will show that these two schools of thought are not as far apart as they may seem, and that they can in fact be brought into a fruitful conversation that moves beyond division to constructive critique and cross-pollination between schools of thought.

The third chapter focuses on the work of Jean-Luc Marion, whose wide-ranging philosophical works have dealt with Descartes, a phenomenology of gift stemming from the work of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and a theological account of God and charity after metaphysics. It is the last two areas, and particularly the second, that are of primary concern in this dissertation. In his phenomenological project focused on gift, Marion develops a conceptual framework that comes very close to constituting a theology of nature and grace. His account of the saturated phenomenon in particular reads like a Christian account of transcendence, and Marion in fact encourages such a reading. Marion’s phenomenology of gift, I will argue, can be of enormous aid and import to the theology of nature and grace, but it is impaired by his related failures to admit of either a politics or an idea of reciprocity in gift giving.

16. Or to develop political theology in a different direction, using Balthasar as a source, as Peter Casarella has done in a number of essays, notably “Solidarity as the Fruit of Communion: *Ecclesia in America*, ‘Post-Liberation Theology,’ and the Earth,” *Comm* 27, no. 1 (2000): 98–123; and “Thinking Out Loud about the Triune God: Problems and Prospects for a Trinitarian Social Ethic in a Procedural Republic,” in *A World for All?*, ed. Will Storrar and Paul Louis Metzger, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 122–34.

To offer a corrective to the lacunae in Marion's thought, I turn to the work of Paul Ricoeur, who deals with phenomenology in a manner similar to Marion's and also engages theology, although in a less direct way than Marion. Ricoeur offers a concept of gift that admits of recognition and reciprocity, categories that are underdeveloped or missing in Marion's thought. By utilizing these categories, I begin in this chapter to develop a theology of nature and grace as a recognition of the gift. It is possible, I argue, for humans to recognize the gift of grace and to render a return gift to God without compromising the gratuity of the gift. At the same time, I argue that such a theology must inevitably also be a political theology.

The final chapter engages the work of John Milbank and Kathryn Tanner, contemporary theologians in the Anglican tradition who have both engaged the work of Marion on gift and written important works on nature and grace. Tanner makes an important contribution through an account of economics and politics as they relate to nature and grace. She also develops her account of nature and grace by developing an idea of human nature that relies radically on God's grace, rejecting Aquinas's robust account of human nature. Milbank, meanwhile, develops a political theology centered around gift and grace that draws on Marion while also criticizing him for his rejection of politics and political theology. In dialogue with Tanner, I further develop the idea of the experience of grace as a recognition of the gift. I conclude by arguing that this recognition necessarily entails a living of the gift through prayer, practices, and politics.

My overall argument, then, is that the categories of gift and recognition can serve very well in developing a renewed theology of nature and grace, and that such a theology must inevitably also be a political theology. This renewed theology can provide the benefit, first of all, of bringing together into conversation figures and schools of thought in contemporary theology that are often seen (and indeed see themselves) as opposed in a way that is not always constructive. Given the strength of the consensus that developed around nature and grace after the work of de Lubac and Rahner, it is worthwhile to return to this

kernel in order to move forward. While many of my arguments, such as that in favor of political theology, may be less consensus forming, I think my starting point may prove helpful on this point.

The second major goal I hope to accomplish in this project is to marshal the language of continental philosophy for theological purposes in a more rigorous and disciplined way than has sometimes been the case. Continental philosophy can offer enormous conceptual resources for theology, but its language needs to be “translated” for theology in a more thorough way. It also must be held accountable to contemporary theological standards, which Marion especially often avoids through locating himself as a philosopher. The integration of continental philosophy and theology cannot take place in a ghetto of its own creation, but must engage with other discourses such as contextual theology.

State of the Question

The discussions of nature and grace in theology, on the one hand, and the relationship of theology and continental philosophy, on the other, will be central to this work. These have been, in important ways, converging discussions, particularly in the authors treated at greatest length in this work, but each subject area has been the subject of a number of substantial works in recent years. This section will analyze those works in order to situate the present work within the existing discussions and to analyze the lacunae within them.

Nature and Grace

The literature on nature and grace since Henri de Lubac’s last work on the topic, the *Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, has been somewhat sparse but contains significant work. Most significant arguably are Stephen J. Duffy’s two works, *Dynamics of Grace* and *The Graced Horizon*, both of which systematically analyze the subject and will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 2.¹⁷ In the same period of the late 1980s, significant works included *Nature and Grace: Towards an Integral*

Perspective by James Carpenter,¹⁸ which explores the issue in several authors, from Augustine to Tillich, Moltmann, and Whitehead; and *Patience and Power: Grace for the First World*, a liberationist approach by Jean-Marc Laporte, SJ.¹⁹ In conversation with these lines of inquiry is Roger Haight's earlier work, *The Nature and Language of Grace*.²⁰

More recently, Donald L. Gelpi, SJ, has proposed, in *The Gracing of Human Experience*, a new theology of nature and grace in conversation with Anglo-American philosophy, notably the works of Charles Peirce, Josiah Royce, and John Dewey.²¹ In the French-speaking milieu, and most directly related to this project, is a work by Alfred Vanneste entitled *Nature et grâce dans la théologie occidentale: Dialogue avec H. de Lubac*.²² In this work, Vanneste argues that de Lubac's genealogy of nature and grace does not go far enough, and that in fact the problem of a dualism of nature and grace extends back as far as Augustine.

German-speaking theology has focused somewhat less on this issue since Rahner's work. There have, however, been several recent studies, notably a 2004 article by Cornelius Keppeler comparing de Lubac and Rahner on nature and grace.²³ Stefan Gradl has also written a significant book titled *Deus Beatitudo Hominis*, looking at the issue of nature and grace in Aquinas with particular reference to de Lubac and the issues coming out of *Surnaturel*.²⁴ Finally, Christian Bauer has produced an article dealing with nature and grace in terms of postmodern critical theory, especially that of Michel Foucault.²⁵

In recent years, there has been some new interest in nature and grace, notably among Evangelicals. This can be seen in the form of

17. Stephen J. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992); and *Dynamics of Grace* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993).

18. James Carpenter, *Nature and Grace: Towards an Integral Perspective* (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

19. Jean-Marc Laporte, SJ, *Patience and Power: Grace for the First World* (New York: Paulist, 1988).

20. Roger Haight, *The Nature and Language of Grace* (New York: Paulist, 1979).

21. Donald L. Gelpi, SJ, *The Gracing of Human Experience* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2001).

22. Alfred Vanneste, *Nature et grâce dans la théologie occidentale: Dialogue avec H. de Lubac* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996).

23. Cornelius Keppeler, "Begnadung als Berechtigte Forderung? Gedanken zur Bedeutung des übernatürlichen Existentials in der Gnadentelehre Karl Rahners," *ZKT* 126 (2004): 65–82.

24. Stefan Gradl, *Deus Beatitudo Hominis* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005).

25. Christian Bauer, "Macht und Gnade: Versuch einer Klärung der Begriffe angesichts von Ohnmacht und Gnadenslosigkeit heute," in *Macht und Gnade*, ed. Rainer Bucher and Rainer Krockauer (Berlin: Lit-Verlag, 2005), 45–60.

two recent dissertations written at Baylor University: *The Possibility of Christian Philosophy* by Adam C. English and *Everything Is Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of Henri de Lubac* by Bryan C. Hollon.²⁶ In the same vein, Evangelical theologian Hans Boersma has written a series of articles dealing with nature and grace, as well as a recent book on the *nouvelle théologie*, entitled *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery?*²⁷ Also relevant to this project is a dissertation from Harvard University, “Desire Divided: Nature and Grace in the Neo-Thomism of Pierre Rousselot” by Robert N. St. Hilaire II.²⁸ This dissertation deals with the thought of Pierre Rousselot, a French Jesuit who was a central influence on de Lubac, Rahner, and Balthasar. St. Hilaire’s dissertation is more directly concerned with the issue of Thomism than is this project, but is very clearly in conversation with the subject at hand.

Interest in the *Surnaturel* controversy has also generated interest in some highly conservative Catholic philosophical and theological circles in recent years, beginning with Ralph McInerny’s *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers*, which offers an attack on de Lubac, Etienne Gilson, and others from an Aristotelian-Thomist perspective.²⁹ In the same vein are *Natura Pura* by Steven A. Long and *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* by Lawrence Feingold.³⁰ The German-speaking theological world has produced a related work, David Berger’s *Thomismus*.³¹ I will deal with the line of thinking represented by these works at the end of chapter 1.

This survey of literature demonstrates that nature and grace, though

26. Adam C. English, *The Possibility of Christian Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2007); Bryan C. Hollon, *Everything Is Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

27. Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

28. Robert St. Hilaire II, “Desire Divided: Nature and Grace in the Neo-Thomism of Pierre Rousselot” (PhD diss., Harvard Divinity School, 2008).

29. Ralph McInerny, *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

30. Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2010).

31. David Berger, *Thomismus* (Cologne: Editiones Thomisticae, 2001).

it has not been in recent years the central topic that it was in the 1940s and 1950s, is far from exhausted as a place of theological interest. What is also clear is that no project has been taken up with the direct sources and kind of argument that I intend to mount in this dissertation. Many of the works cited in this introduction touch on the areas I intend to investigate, and thus prove helpful resources in my own work, but none are concerned directly with the kinds of issues I am raising.

Theology and Continental Philosophy

Continental philosophy, understood in distinction to Anglo-American analytic philosophy, emerged as a subfield in reaction to the work of G. W. F. Hegel and has been later defined by its relationship to the work of Martin Heidegger. In the latter half of the twentieth century, it was characterized especially by a splintering into various kinds of discourses, including structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and the various philosophies described by the term *postmodern*. Certain of these discourses in continental philosophy offer little directly to theology beyond tools for critiquing existing theologies and religious power structures.³² Others, however, engage theology more directly and have indeed been accused of taking part in a kind of covert theological discourse.

The engagement of continental philosophy and theology has taken place particularly in the philosophical subdiscipline of phenomenology, a discourse that has its foundations in the work of Edmund Husserl. Husserl's phenomenology, which he redeveloped throughout his career, is in all its iterations an attempt to reground philosophy in its epistemological foundations. I will go into more detail about Husserl's phenomenology in conversation with Jean-Luc Marion in chapter 3. Husserl's student Martin Heidegger took up and developed the field of phenomenology, and subsequent important thinkers in this area have included Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel

32. For an in-depth account of several of these philosophies, cf. Francois Cusset, *French Theory*, trans. Jeff Fort (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) and Kevin Hart, *Postmodernism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004). Ian James also addresses Marion and another group of thinkers in *The New French Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2012).

Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur, and Jean-Luc Marion. It is with Marion and Ricoeur, and to some extent Levinas, that I will concern myself in this dissertation.

Jean-Luc Marion and Paul Ricoeur have emerged in different ways as highly influential figures in the area of continental philosophy of religion and its dialogue with theology. Marion's work has taken theological themes as direct areas of engagement, particularly in *The Idol and Distance* and *God without Being*, as well as in several volumes of theological essays originally published in the French edition of *Communio*. Marion's phenomenological works also demonstrate an interest in theology, and at times their conclusions venture into theological territory. Ricoeur's engagement with theology tended to be less direct, although he published several volumes of theological essays and held a position at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

In addition to Marion and Ricoeur, it is worth mentioning two other French philosophers from the phenomenological tradition who have taken an interest in religion, even though I will not treat them at length here. Late in his life, Jacques Derrida wrote essays dealing with the subject of religion, though generally in a way that avoids theology as such. These include those collected in *Acts of Religion* and his *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, written upon the death of Levinas.³³ Jean-Luc Nancy, a frequent interlocutor of Derrida, also has written a book on religion, but this is clearly a historical and philosophical work.³⁴

Dominique Janicaud's 1991 essay "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology" expressed some key points which have defined subsequent debates about the relationship of continental philosophy and theology. According to Janicaud, French phenomenologists, beginning with Emmanuel Levinas, have consistently gone beyond the legitimate bounds of philosophy into territory that can only be labeled theological.³⁵ He goes so far, in fact, as to claim that "phenomenology

33. Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002); *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

34. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

35. Janicaud accuses Levinas of incoherence, arguing that "dismissing the majority of

has been taken hostage by a theology that does not want to say its name.”³⁶ Marion comes under particular scrutiny here, with the argument that his work has a “double reference . . . to the problematic of the overcoming of ontology (or metaphysics), and to the properly theological or spiritual dimension.”³⁷ Janicaud’s ultimate argument is not that theology is an unworthy discipline as such, but rather that it is not the same thing as phenomenology, and the two should not be confused: “phenomenology and theology make two.”³⁸

The engagement between phenomenology and theology has thus seemed to many a natural, if complicated, one. I think many of Janicaud’s critiques are well founded, and they could also be made from a theological perspective. There is a need, I will argue, for a theological appropriation of phenomenology to be more attentive to theological rigor and to the canons of existing systematic theologies, rather than avoiding these by dwelling in an interdisciplinary space. This ought to be done both so that this discourse can be taken more seriously on a theological level and furthermore because it is important and thus ought to be expanded and developed further.

Given the overtures of continental philosophy toward theology discussed above, there has unsurprisingly been a great deal of attention paid to it within the theological academy as well as in the field of religious studies. In very different ways, Merrold Westphal and John Caputo have arguably been the leading thinkers in the field of continental philosophy of religion. Westphal has tended to do so as a philosopher who takes a hermeneutical, bracketed approach to religious claims in order to examine them philosophically.³⁹ Caputo, meanwhile, has worked to establish a space between philosophy and theology where religious and philosophical claims can be tested.⁴⁰

phenomenology’s methodological constraints—along with phenomenology—is too easy.” Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology,” trans. Bernard G. Prusak, in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate*, by Janicaud et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 39.

36. *Ibid.*, 43.

37. *Ibid.*, 65.

38. *Ibid.*, 103.

39. Westphal engages very specifically with Marion’s concerns in *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

In the theological academy, Kathryn Tanner, John Milbank, Anthony Godzieba, and Cyril O'Regan have been leading figures in the theological appropriation of continental philosophy. Additionally, David Tracy and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza have been key figures in the theological dialogue with hermeneutical philosophy,⁴¹ in which Ricoeur's work looms large. Tanner and Milbank have incorporated critiques of Marion especially into their own works, which will be discussed at length in chapters 3 and 5 of this dissertation. Godzieba and O'Regan, meanwhile, have published important essays dealing with the theological implications of Marion's work.⁴² Christina Gschwandtner also has published important works on Marion, as well as a treatment of various continental thinkers on religion.⁴³

There has also been a great deal of work by younger scholars on Marion in particular, including notably Brian Robinette's investigation of Christology using Marion's categories.⁴⁴ Peter Joseph Fritz also has written a dissertation, published as *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics*,⁴⁵ that includes Marion in a conversation dealing with several important twentieth-century Catholic thinkers, as well as a recent article in *Theological Studies* juxtaposing Marion and Rahner.⁴⁶ Theological

40. Caputo does this especially in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) and *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

41. Tracy particularly in *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Essays by Fiorenza on hermeneutics include, among others, "Theology: Transcendental or Hermeneutical," *Hor* 16 (1989), 329–41; and "The Conflict of Hermeneutical Traditions and Christian Theology," *JCP* 27 (2000): 3–31.

42. Anthony Godzieba, "Incarnation and Imagination: Catholic Theology of God between Heidegger and Postmodernity," in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. Lieven Boeve and Lambert Jeyssens (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 279–98; Godzieba, "Response to Stijn Van den Bossche: As Much Contingency, as Much Incarnation," in *Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Yves De Maeseneer, and Stijn van den Bossche (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 83–90; Cyril O'Regan, "Jean-Luc Marion: Crossing Hegel," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 95–150.

43. Christina Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); *Degrees of Givenness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); and *Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

44. Marion's category of the saturated phenomenon is a key component of Robinette's book, *Grammars of Resurrection* (New York: Crossroad, 2009), especially pp. 71–77, where he introduces it. His essay "A Gift to Theology? Jean Luc Marion's 'Saturated Phenomenon' in Christological Perspective," *HeyJ* 48, no. 1 (2007): 86–108, elaborates further on this theme.

45. Peter Joseph Fritz, *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

engagement with Marion is thus on the increase, and I think this dissertation will complement and enhance that field by paying attention to Marion's thought on an issue, nature and grace, that is largely implicit and yet very much present in his works.

The work of Emmanuel Falque, a French philosopher and student of Marion, has recently begun to be translated into English and also represents a thoroughgoing engagement of continental philosophy and theology from inside of both. In a trilogy of works centered around the Paschal Triduum, Falque has thoroughly integrated phenomenological and theological categories.⁴⁷ In these works, as well as in other important books and essays, Falque has demonstrated a clear interest in engagement with theology, though still with a comparatively limited focus on the *Communio* school and other sympathetic approaches.⁴⁸

There has been a great deal of theological appropriation of Paul Ricoeur, dating back to his seminal 1960's work *The Symbolism of Evil*. Ricoeur's hermeneutical works have also proven influential, in part through the influence of David Tracy and the 1980s debates between the Chicago and Yale Schools, of which he, Tracy, was a part. Notably in this field, Boyd Blundell's recent *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy* deals with Ricoeur and theological hermeneutics.⁴⁹ Dan R. Stiver's book, *Ricoeur and Theology*, also promises to provide a thoroughgoing analysis of Ricoeur's influence in theology.⁵⁰ A dissertation by Andrea Christina White, "Alterity and the Divine-Human Relation in Karl Barth and Paul Ricoeur," deals with issues that relate very closely to nature and grace in Ricoeur.⁵¹ With respect to

46. Peter Joseph Fritz, "Karl Rahner Repeated in Jean-Luc Marion?," *TS* 73 (2012): 318–38. This essay will be discussed at greater length in chapter 3.

47. Emmanuel Falque, *Le passeur de Gethsemani* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999); *Métamorphose de la finitude* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004); *Les noces de l'agneau* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2011). The middle volume has been released in English as *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

48. Other notable publications included *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, trans. William Christian Hackett (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014); and *Passer le Rubicon* (Paris: Éditions Lessius, 2013), a set of essays concerned specifically with the borders of philosophy and theology.

49. Boyd Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

50. Dan R. Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

Ricoeur, I would argue that this project constitutes an original work in a field of thought that is at present active and dynamic, if not as crowded as it once was.

The theological appropriation of Ricoeur and Marion is a large and growing field, and will likely continue to be so, especially in the case of Marion. They have not, however, been examined for their contributions to a theology of nature and grace. As I shall demonstrate, their respective works can in very different ways be helpful to constructing a renewed theology of nature and grace. I am thus convinced of the import and utility of this project for theology, as well as for the theological appropriation of continental philosophy.

51. Andrea Christina White, "Alterity and the Divine-Human Relation in Karl Barth and Paul Ricoeur" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008).