

## SMRP 2026 Abstracts

*Abstracts listed in alphabetical order according to last name of presenter*

*Paper abstracts listed before panel abstracts*

### **Rosabel Ansari (Stony Brook University), “Does God Love Those Who Love Him? Avicenna on Sainthood”**

For centuries, readers of Avicenna have debated whether his theology and conception of God is compatible with religious teachings. The question of God's love for the saints is a part of this broader issue which seeks to probe how Avicenna accounts for the teachings of religious scripture such as the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions and if he does so successfully. In his major, canonical works Avicenna presents God as a deity that knows and loves itself. This deity is said to know creation only in a universal way insofar as the former is the principle of the latter. Given that Avicenna also construes God as the Necessary Being from which creation comes forth necessarily, the Avicennan conception of God is thus often understood to entail an impersonal theology that cannot account for religious beliefs and practices. In this paper, however, I examine Avicenna's discussion of sainthood, or the divine-like souls, to show how he can be understood to provide a religious philosophy that accounts for a relationship between God and human beings. These saintly individuals are said to be those who, loving God, grasp or attain (*nayl*) God's manifestation in the world. Critically, he then provides an explanation of what it means to say that God loves those who love him. Using this explanation, I show how we can find a basis for an Avicennan account of divine responsiveness to human beings. As I explore, the saints can be said to fulfil the telos of creation through becoming divine-like, thereby serving as a lynchpin for the God-world dyadic relationship. Thus, while Avicennan metaphysics and theology was repudiated by certain religious authorities, it can nevertheless be understood to accommodate and indeed ground major religious commitments.

**Pia Antolic-Piper (James Madison University), “De partibus intellective virtutis [...] sunt crudeliores errores quam alibi’: Understanding Roger Bacon’s Contribution to Conceptions of Intellect in MS Amiens, BM, 406”**

The contribution of Roger Bacon (1214/1220--1292) to 13th century Latin debates on the nature of the human soul stands out for its endorsement of the claim of divinity of the agent intellect, of so-called “l’Augustinisme Avicennisant” (Gilson). It is very likely that Bacon maintained this view since the beginning of his scholarly career when he was a Master of Arts in Paris (ca. 1240s). However, understanding of its exact contours and of the intellectual milieu in which Bacon's position originated is still evolving. In addition, investigation of Bacon's early dialectical treatment of the agent intellect will shed light on the early Latin Masters' debates on intellect and soul. Specifically, following more recent paleographical work on Bacon's Parisian commentaries (preserved in MS Amiens, BM, 406; S. Donati, 2013) and the line of research on "First Averroism" (B. C. Bazán, 2000), I am investigating authorship and the doctrinal relations between three commentaries on questions concerning the agent intellect and the soul as *forma et hoc aliquid*. I will argue that, (a) contrary to long held opinion, Roger Bacon never considered the agent intellect part of the human soul and that arguments defending an intrinsic agent intellect contained in MS Amiens, BM, 406 should instead be attributed to Ps. Roger Bacon (1240s) and further, (b) that Ps. Roger Bacon's teaching should not be identified with Ps. Adam of Bocfeld's (ca. 1251-1263/5) as previously suggested (D. Calma, 2018). Instead, as I argue, we are dealing with three distinct, roughly contemporaneous authors between whose various commentaries exists doctrinal interdependence which reflect the early Latin Masters' debates on the soul and its faculties.

**Sebastiano Belleggia (Columbia University), “Ammonius and Kilwardby on Nominal Tense”**

In the Western grammatical tradition, tense is typically regarded as a feature of verbs, while nouns are treated as tenseless. Aristotle famously endorses this view in *On Interpretation*, claiming that verbs "additionally signify" time, whereas nouns are "without

time." Yet he elsewhere concedes that nouns can be equivocal with respect to time (SE 4, 165b38-166a6). This paper examines early instances within the Aristotelian tradition in which philosophers recognized that nouns can, in a qualified sense, signify time. The first case is the late-antique commentator Ammonius, who, in defending Aristotle's rule of a-conversion for tensed propositions (in Phil. in APr. I 50, 18-24), introduces the idea that nouns can "co-signify" time. In a sentence such as "Every old man was a boy," the noun "old man" refers to someone old at the time of utterance and co-signifies present time, while the verb additionally signifies past time. Thus, the sentence converts into "Some past boy is now an old man." This distinction allows Ammonius to accommodate a limited form of nominal tense while preserving Aristotle's claim that tense properly belongs to verbs. The second case is Robert Kilwardby, who appeals to Aristotle's concession that nouns can be temporally equivocal to defend e-conversion (in APr. I, 5rb). Kilwardby's solution proved influential and was later adopted by Albert, Radulphus Brito, and William of Ockham. I argue that these discussions anticipate central issues in contemporary debates on nominal tense and offer valuable insight into the semantics of tense.

### **Lucas Nogueira Borges (Humboldt-University, Berlin), "Co-Causality Model in Hervaeus Natalis' Theory of Abstraction"**

In Distinction 17, Question 2 of Book II of the Commentary on the *Sentences*, Hervaeus Natalis raises the question as to whether the intellect can know material objects by abstraction from the phantasm. This question is based on the premise that the abstraction by which the intellect acquires an intelligible species is a type of *realis motio* or *realis actio*, in which the phantasm moves the possible intellect. Accordingly, Hervaeus Natalis proposes a model of co-causality, according to which a certain effect can be brought about only when two agents act together upon a third. According to this model, abstraction occurs through the joint action of the phantasm and the agent intellect upon the possible intellect, such that the intelligible species emerges as a result of their joint action. Hervaeus Natalis seems to reformulate the perspective of abstraction, thereby establishing a causal relationship between the phantasm and the intellect. That said, I address two questions in my presentation: 1) What status does the phantasm assume in the co-causality model? Is

the phantasm a subcause — for example, an instrumental cause — of the agent intellect? How should we frame the causal hierarchy between the material and the immaterial in this model, given that, in the scholastic conception, an inferior material entity cannot move a superior immaterial one? I argue that the phantasm acts as an equal cause alongside the agent intellect, thereby effectively acting upon the possible intellect. Considering this, I hold that Hervaeus's conception tends to break with the inferior/superior paradigm in the cognition of material things.

**Jeffrey Brower (Purdue University), “Substantial Motion—Aquinas on Physics III and V”**

In *Physics* III, Aristotle provides his famous definition of motion (as "the actuality of what is in potentiality, insofar as it is in potentiality") and in *Physics* V he proceeds to identify the species of motion, arguing in particular that there is no motion in the category of substance. According to Aquinas, however, Aristotle is using the term 'motion' differently in these two books. Thus, when Aristotle defines motion in *Physics* III, Aquinas insists that he is using 'motion' broadly enough to include changes in the category of substance. But how could there be a substantial motion? And what would such a motion be? Aquinas doesn't explicitly address these questions. But in this paper, I argue that plausible answers to them can be extracted from his writings.

**Susan Brower-Toland (Saint Louis University) and Jonathan Jacobs (Saint Louis University), “Nominalism without Poverty: Ockham on Things and the Ways They Are”**

Metaphysics is often understood as the study of what there is. But a number of metaphysicians, both historical and contemporary, want to include something further: not just what exists, but how existing things are structured. Call such structure—when it is real, worldly, and explanatory, but not itself an entity—"non-ontic structure". Understood against this backdrop, our paper has two projects. The first is to develop a general framework for understanding non-ontic structure. The second is to consider what non-

ontic structure implies when it comes to questions of parsimony. After all, one way to deny entities, e.g., the Fs, is to relocate them from ontology to structure: i.e., to claim that the Fs are just ways entities are structured. But does that relocation by itself move us in the direction of greater parsimony? In pursuing each of these two projects, we draw on Ockham as a case study. Ockham's metaphysics nicely illustrates our general framework since his metaphysical commitments outrun his ontological commitments. (In particular, for him spatiotemporal arrangement is real, does genuine explanatory work, and is not a thing.) However, Ockham's famed razor and his commitment to a reductionist ontology makes our question about parsimony especially pressing. In what sense, if any, is Ockham's commitment to both things and non-ontic structure a genuinely more parsimonious outlook?

**Nate Balthuis (Saint Joseph's University), "Entia Rationis in Walter Burley's Early Logical Commentaries"**

In a series of logical commentaries in the first decade of the fourteenth century, Walter Burley argues that an *ens rationis* is produced by the mind when it combines or divides one (often extra-mental) thing with, or from, another. He argues that these *entia rationis* are propositions in the mind, with the things the mind combines or divides functioning as its terms. However, his account undergoes a subtle but important development. In two earlier commentaries on *On Interpretation*, Burley argues that the *ens rationis* exists subjectively in the mind, as an accident of it. In a later commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, however, Burley argues that *entia rationis* exist objectively, rather than subjectively, in the mind. I identify two reasons for this development. First, the claim that *entia rationis* exist subjectively rather than objectively in the mind comes under sustained criticism in the early fourteenth century, perhaps best represented by Hervaeus Natalis's arguments against that view in his *De secundis intentionibus*. Second, in his *Posterior Analytics* commentary, Burley develops a theory of mental language, that is, a theory according to which concepts (intelligible species) can be combined into larger syntactic structures, including propositions. Such a theory allows Burley to distinguish between an explicit propositional representation in the mind, the mental proposition, which exists subjectively

in it; and its content, the *ens rationis*, which has merely objective existence. In earlier accounts, in contrast, the *ens rationis* was forced to serve both roles: both as an accident of the mind and what that accident represents.

**Zachary Candy (LMU Munich), "The Attribute of Existence Is the Same for All Essences": Bahshamite Mu‘tazilite Arguments for the Univocity of Existence and Their Afterlife in Avicenna**

A striking feature of Avicenna's ontology is that existence is a single notion common to all existents, even if it differs in other ways such as priority and posteriority. I argue that Avicenna's source for this view was not his Greco-Arabic predecessors, but the Bahshamite Mu‘tazila, whose surviving works record many instances of the maxim that "existence is a single attribute". By this they mean that all existing things have the same kind of existence, even if they have different sorts of essences and attributes. Although this univocal view of existence has long been noted as a central view for the Bahshamites, their arguments for it remain unexplored, as does the connection between their view and Avicenna's; I examine both questions in this paper. The Bahshamites' prime argument is that existence never does anything other than actualize a certain set of attributes for the existing thing, giving us every reason to think that existence itself does not vary (even if these actualized attributes do). This argument is open to at least one serious objection, for which the Bahshamites in turn provide two counterarguments. The Bahshamites also extrapolate from these principles to defend the univocity of existence specifically between God and originate existents. I show that Avicenna faithfully reproduces several of the Bahshamite arguments, though also transposing them into an Aristotelian context. However, he stops short of adopting the Bahshamite theological application of univocity, as this would entail an insufficiently simple divine essence for Avicenna's purposes.

## **Yanfu Chen (KU Leuven), “Godfrey of Fontaines on the Human Understanding in Context”**

"Godfrey of Fontaines (ca. 1250-1309), Regent Master at the University of Paris and a leading figure in late thirteenth-century scholasticism, makes a distinctive contribution to medieval debates on the nature of the human intellect, understanding, and self-cognition. In *Quodlibet* VII.9, he addresses the question of whether the embodied intellect is intelligible in itself prior to any act of understanding. Against a common interpretation according to which Godfrey criticizes Thomas Sutton for assimilating the intellect's potentiality to prime matter, this paper argues that Godfrey shares with Sutton and Aquinas a crucial assumption: the intellect's potentiality does not amount to ontological indeterminacy, but rather to its incapacity to actualize itself in the act of understanding. More importantly, the paper shows that Godfrey advances a sophisticated and original account of human self-understanding (*se intelligere*), grounded in an Aristotelian and anti-intuitionist theory of intellectual cognition. In opposition to the Augustinian model—most notably as developed by Henry of Ghent—Godfrey denies that the intellect can grasp its own essence through an immediate act of "self-seeing" (*se videre*). Instead, he maintains that self-understanding is essentially discursive: the intellect comes to know itself only by reflecting on a prior act of understanding directed toward an external object. Human self-understanding, on this view, involves no privileged or immediate self-access but unfolds through a reflective process conditioned by the intellect's embodied mode of cognition. This account poses a serious challenge to radical Augustinian models of self-knowledge in Godfrey's intellectual milieu.

## **Philip Choi (Yonsei University), “Realism and Anti-Realism about Moral Necessity in the 17th Century”**

Recent scholarship has shown that seventeenth-century Jesuit scholastics engaged in vigorous debates over what they termed moral (im)possibility and necessity—a distinctive kind of modality that, while closely related to natural (or physical) and metaphysical modality, is not reducible to either. This paper investigates their debate concerning the

ontological status of moral modality, focusing on whether moral necessity should be understood as an objective and fundamental feature of the world (realism) or as something constituted by our cognition of the world (anti-realism). The discussion begins with an analysis of the principal arguments for realism and anti-realism developed by Bernaldo de Quiros (ca. 1613-1668), Agustin de Herrera (ca. 1623-84), and Philip Aranda (ca. 1642-95), with special attention to pinpointing the precise locus of their fundamental disagreement. I then examine a recent interpretation (advanced by S. Knebel, B. Embry, among others) that construes Jesuit anti-realism as a precursor to Hume's account of modality. By comparing these anti-realist positions with Hume's view, I clarify both the similarities and differences between their views.

**Caleb Cohoe (Metropolitan State University of Denver), "Introspection and the Limits of Human Nature: Augustine on Why I Need to Know and Love God over Self"**

Augustine is committed to eudaimonism: every choice I make is for the sake of my own happiness. Yet he grounds his ethics in the claim that I should love God more than myself. How do these claims cohere? I explain why Augustine thinks introspection enables me to see that I should love God as the ultimate good. For Augustine, seeing my own lack of determinacy and need for learning and improvement shows me that I am not happy and self-sufficient by nature, but also that I am the kind of thing that can become better by knowing what is true and loving what is good. In knowing and loving truth itself and the unchanging good, I become something worth knowing and loving. If I turn towards myself as ultimate, I ask too much of a nature that is insufficient, on its own, for happiness. For Augustine, these facts about what I am and what an appropriate object of love and knowledge could be are evident to all who reflect carefully and inwardly. Because of this, he consistently attacks the Stoics and other philosophers who have pridefully ignored these introspective truths in order to attempt to find happiness for themselves in this life through their own efforts.

**Ashley Comstock (College of St. Scholastica), “From Unforgivable Words to Forgivable Malice: Sinning unto Death in Aquinas and his Predecessors”**

Any attempt to understand evil in the Middle Ages would be incomplete without an exploration of those actions many considered gravest: sins against the Holy Spirit (i.e. sins unto death or unforgivable sins). Among Christian thinkers, there is broad agreement from at least the fourth century onward that: (1) some types of wrongdoing count as sins against the Holy Spirit, and (2) sins against the Holy Spirit constitute the most serious “perhaps even unforgivable” acts of moral wrongdoing. However, there is disagreement about precisely which actions count as sins against the Holy Spirit and what might make such actions unforgivable. Early thinkers, including Jerome, often identify the sin against the Holy Spirit with a type of unforgivable blasphemy. Augustine, by contrast, agonizes over the very concept of unforgivable sin, ultimately concluding that the only unforgivable sin could be impenitence persisting unto death. By the time Peter Lombard is writing his *Sentences*, previous thinkers have identified a variety of acts, including despair, blasphemy, obstinacy, and envy of a brother's grace as sins against the Holy Spirit, usually because of a presumed connection to impenitence. Briefly tracing key accounts of sinning against the Holy Spirit through figures like Jerome, Augustine, Gratian, and Lombard, I argue the approach Aquinas develops, which becomes paradigmatic in later centuries, shifts focus away from his predecessors' attempts to identify some unforgivable action and toward an attempt to understand what it might mean to act directly against God's goodness. Locating his account of sins against the Holy Spirit within his broader account of willful wrongdoing, Aquinas affirms that acts like obstinacy and despair are sins against the Holy Spirit, focusing not on their connection to lifelong impenitence, but rather their connection to the will.

**Therese Cory (University of Notre Dame), “Repraesentare’ vs. Representation? A Study of Aquinas's Terminology”**

Aquinas sometimes uses the term “repraesentare” and cognates in discussing, but what can we conclude from such language? Does this term have the same valences as the

contemporary notion of “representing”? Aquinas uses the term ‘repraesentare’ and cognates 991 times in his writings. In this paper I draw some conclusions from having reviewed these usages, on what the core sense of ‘representare’ is in Aquinas, and how it does or does not relate to contemporary notions of ‘representing.’

**Milo Crimi (University of Montevallo) “Self-Sacrifice in Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*”**

Scholastic philosophers of the late thirteenth century took great interest in providing philosophical accounts of self-sacrifice. This same subject is present in Marguerite Porete's great work of mysticism, the *Mirror of Simple Souls*. At the *Mirror's* core is a seven-stage path toward spiritual glory, within which the soul must undergo three deaths: the "death of sin" in the first stage, the "death of nature" in the second, and the "death of spirit" in the third through fifth. Throughout, the theme of self-sacrifice is prominent. In Porete's time, scholastic philosophers raised questions about a self-sacrificer's motives: whether they're self-directed or other-directed. Individualists like Henry of Ghent (d. 1293) propose that the motives are self-directed, a way to avoid the "harm of guilt" ("malum culpae") that pollutes those who avoid the act. Anti-individualists like Godfrey of Fontaines (d. 1306 or 1309) maintain that the motives are other-directed, brought on by a higher love than self-love. Godfrey is furthermore a collectivist to the extent that he grounds this higher love in ontological dependence and mereological inclusion. I read Porete as embracing a contextualist view, where each soul death in the seven-stage path constitutes an instance of self-sacrifice exhibiting different kinds of motives, where these are furthermore classifiable in the terminology outlined above: the death of sin exhibits individualist motives, the death of nature exhibits anti-individualist motives, and the death of spirit exhibits collectivist motives.

**Richard Cross (University of Notre Dame), “Peter Auriol on the Distinction of Persons in the Trinity”**

Peter Auriol maintains that the divine persons are distinguished from each other even though none of them includes anything not included by the others. He attempts to make this plausible by considering a parallel case in which this kind of distinction might exist: namely, the transcendental being. As Auriol sees it, different kinds of substance (and accident) are distinct from each other without being in any sense distinct from being. He maintains, against Scotus, that the whatever distinguishes being into different kinds of substance or accident cannot be excluded from being, and thus cannot be conceptualized as something added to being. And, he argues, what goes for transcendental being goes for the First Being too: what distinguishes the divine persons cannot fail to be included in the divine essence, and thus cannot be something in any way added to or subtracted from that essence.

**Jing Fanrui (University of Notre Dame), “Aquinas on Sudden Actions from Moral Habitus: Motivation and Moral Perception”**

This paper defends Aquinas's view that sudden actions from moral *habitus* are primarily motivated by perceptual moral beliefs, not deliberative reasoning or conative states. It argues that the *vis cogitativa* – an interior sense – accesses both the factual information and moral value by perceiving *intentio* as its proper object, combining them discursively to provide direct motivational force. To consistently and instantaneously judge singulars under specific evaluative descriptions, however, requires the cultivation of perceptual habits in this faculty, which serves as a necessary basis for moral habituation and is formed concurrently within this process. By examining the reason's participation in above functions of *vis cogitativa*, the paper reveals the substantial differences between sudden dispositional actions and animal behaviors, despite their apparent phenomenological and motivational similarity.

## Francis Feingold (Kenrick-Glennon Seminary), "Locating Aquinas's Transient Actions: A Relation-Based Model"

Did Aquinas hold that transient (causal) actions [1] exist solely in the patient as "motus ut ab agente," as Aristotle claimed, or [2] also somehow in the agent? Aquinas seems to endorse Aristotle's view unqualifiedly in his *Physics* commentary and, e.g., the *Summa theologiae*'s treatment of creation. Nevertheless, defenders of this reading must account for several earlier passages (from the *In Sent.*, *SCG*, and *DP*) where Aquinas does assert that transient actions inhere in the agent. One strategy is to identify what inheres in the agent as a relation: either the real relation that follows on action proper, as for Ferrariensis and Suarez, or a notional relation intrinsic to action, as for Lonergan (who acknowledges his reading's similarity to Scotus's view). Yet Aquinas's pro-inherence texts compare (rather than identifying) transient action with real (not notional) relation. More promising is Frost's recent argument that transient action itself inheres in the agent, but that "inhering" need not mean "informing" (pace Meehan and Wippel). However, her proposal to instead construe "inhering" as any "mode of being" rooted in an "order" to a subject is too broad (including "clothes" and "effects" themselves as accidents, not just "being-clothed" and "acting"), and neglects Aquinas's insistence that inherence (*in esse*) denotes actual accidental esse in the subject. Instead, I propose focusing on Aquinas's strategy of modeling actions on real relations' essence-esse structure. Like real relations, transient actions inhere with respect to their esse, which they draw from the agent, but not with respect to their outward-directed essence (*ratio*), which in action's case consists in perfecting the patient. This account explains why the *Physics* commentary (focused on Aristotelian *ratio*, not Thomistic *esse*) omits action's inherence, and why that inherence does not contradict Aristotle's central claim that agents are not changed by acting, while preserving operation's radical irreducibility to motion.

**Giacomo Fornasieri (Catholic University of America), “In Praise of Finitude. Peter Auriol on Individuality, Singularity, and Universality”**

This paper reconstructs Peter Auriol's account of individuality and its foundational role in his theory of universals. Auriol argues that every extra-mental item is brutally individual, which means for him that every extra-mental item is brutally non-instantiable. At the same time, Auriol contends that non-instantiable extra-mental items come in two types: singulars and individuals. A singular is a non-instantiable extra-mental item such that it is logically impossible for other co-specific items to exist; an individual, by contrast, is a non-instantiable extra-mental item such that it is logically possible for other co-specific items to exist. The reason why individuals are such that it is logically possible for other co-specific items to exist is that they are finite, non-instantiable items. What Auriol means by that is that an individual exhibits a finite portion of a kind, and this is a primitive feature of theirs. The only singular item Auriol allows for is God. On Auriol's view, then, finitude is key to why individuals, unlike singulars, are capable of dividing a species and thus supporting universal concepts. For it is necessary for something to be an individual for the mind form a concept of it that can be applied to other non-instantiable items. In a nutshell, then, finitude grounds individuality and makes universal cognition possible. The paper concludes by showing that Auriol's position entails that universals are rooted in extra-mental reality precisely because reality is composed of finite individuals, making finitude and individuality conditions for scientific knowledge and human cognition.

**Marek Gensler (University of Lodz), “Aequivocatio circa animam': Geoffrey of Aspill's Attempt at Harmonizing Psychology”**

Geoffrey of Aspill, Oxford philosopher active around the middle of the thirteenth century, is known for his commentaries on Aristotle's psychological and physiological treatises. They belong to the second phase of reception of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the Latin Europe and document the interesting period in the development of medieval Latin philosophy, when the “new” teaching was analyzed and then gradually integrated into the commonly accepted doctrine. It was a daunting task, because the neo-Platonic, Augustinian

psychology was difficult to reconcile, let alone blend, with the Aristotelian one. Geoffrey was aware that even on the level of meaning of the basic terms, such as the soul, the two traditions spoke different languages. At the same time, he was convinced that the task was feasible if it was approached in a proper way, i.e. starting from proper understanding of terms employed in the disputes. In his question commentaries on *De anima* and *De sensu et sensato*, he tries to achieve it, mostly with the help from Avicenna. In this paper, I focus on the central concept of "anima" in order to show Aspill's technique of dealing with the heterogeneous sources in order to achieve a homogeneous whole.

**Daniel Grasso (Saint Louis University), "A New Hope for Aquinas: Aquinas and the Contemporary Hope Literature"**

In recent years philosophers have taken a renewed interest in finding a sufficient analysis of hope. In defining hope, many philosophers start with what is known as "the standard account" such that to "hope that p" is to have a desire that p and a belief that p is possible but uncertain. Yet, given canonical counterexamples, this standard account is taken as defunct. In response, many "third element" accounts of hope augment the standard account with some third condition in an attempt to provide a successful definition. However, Aquinas is surprisingly absent in this discussion given his systematic thought on hope. I suggest that an important reason Aquinas is overlooked is because he is regularly misclassified as a paradigmatic representative of the defunct standard account. In this paper, I argue that Aquinas does not in fact hold a standard account of hope but rather something much closer to a third element account such as Andrew Chignell's Focus Theory. Chignell argues that "focus" is the missing third element in a successful account of hope, such that hope also requires "focus on a desired outcome under the aspect of unswamped possibility." First, I illustrate that Aquinas, much like Chignell, argues that hope requires a third element of attention which involves focusing on the object "under the aspect of being possible." Second, I respond to previous objections to Aquinas's account which arise from misunderstandings about his requirement of hope's object as "possible." Unlike philosophers today, Aquinas is not thinking of logical or metaphysical possibility; rather he

takes an agent-centered view. If I am correct, then my argument helps demarginalize Aquinas and unlock his extensive and systematic thought on hope.

**Reza Hadisi (University of Toronto), “Ibn ‘Arabi’s Reality of Realities and Kantian Transcendental Subjects”**

Suppose we accept, in broad outlines, the Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena. How, then, are we to account for the transcendental subject, i.e., the standpoint from which this very distinction is drawn? The transcendental subject is not an object among phenomenal objects; it and its functions are the conditions for the possibility of such objects. Nor can it be posited straightforwardly as a noumenal object, given Kant's commitment to articulating positive claims about noumenal objects. In short: what is the status of a positive claim about the transcendental subject if it is neither phenomenal nor noumenal? Call this the *Problem of the Transcendental Subject*. Kant is acutely aware of it, but for this talk I set aside his resolution and consider a very different, and admittedly unlikely, path. The response I explore comes from Ibn ‘Arabi's conception of the “Perfect Human” and its standpoint of the “Reality of Realities.” I turn to this source because it shares one crucial structural feature with Kant's transcendental subject while diverging from it sharply. Like Kant, Ibn ‘Arabi posits a universal, necessary standpoint of subjectivity, described as a “border”: for him, the Perfect Human is the threshold between light and shadow. Unlike Kant, however, he invokes the ontology of imagination and “imaginal” objects to make sense of this standpoint. My interest lies here: what does it mean to recruit imagination to explain a standpoint that is neither phenomenal nor noumenal, and what promise does this imaginal approach hold for rethinking the transcendental subject?

**Peter Hartman (Loyola University Chicago), “What Do I have in My Mind? Early 14th-Century Debates about the Ontological Status of *entia rationis*”**

The scholastics typically divided beings into those that are real (*entia realia*) and those that are not but instead mere “beings of reason” (*entia rationis*). According to Hervaeus Natalis,

whereas real beings have "subjective" existence (roughly: they exist either as substances or accidents of substances), beings of reason do not, but instead have mere "objective" existence. Thus, for instance, while a real being such as an act of thinking or a species exists in the mind such that it inheres in the mind as its subject (as an accidental state of the mind), a being of reason exists in the mind such that it merely stands to the mind as object. Hervaeus was motivated to defend this theory, I will argue, by a tension between two commonly-held theses: the *object thesis* according to which acts are distinguished by their objects, both ontologically (an act about a cat is really different from an act about a dog), and also representationally (an act that has a dog as its object is about a dog and one that has a cat as its object is about a cat), on the one hand, and the *intellect thesis* according to which the intellect can have just one act at a given time, on the other. If one holds both theses, then one seems to be incapable of explaining how it is that we think about multiple different objects at the same time. Hervaeus's solution, I submit, is two-fold. First, he refines the object thesis by separating its ontological claim from its representational claim. Second, he introduces the distinction between a primary object and a secondary object. While primary objects distinguish acts ontologically they do not function to fix the content of those acts; indeed, nothing with subjective existence fixes the content of the act. Instead, the content of an act is a function of items with mere objective existence. Thus, while the intellect can only have one act at a given time (conceived of as a real being with subjective existence in the mind), it can have multiple objects at the same time insofar as they have mere objective existence.

### **Jeffrey Hause (Creighton University), "Aquinas on Hope's Attention"**

Aquinas scholars have said surprisingly little about the theological virtue of hope and still about magnanimity, its close cousin among the moral virtues, despite their importance to Aquinas's thought. This neglect may stem from two considerations: (1) Hope's focus on the future leads to fanciful imaginings and failures of attention in the present (McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope," 113); and (2) Even when we DO engage with the present, it will seem less real and less valuable than the future, as Camus points out in "The Myth of Sisyphus." Aquinas can offer plausible responses to these criticisms. The virtue of hope aims at a

future good that is possible yet challenging to attain (*arduum*). This challenging character is in part what sharpens our attention on the present. That is in part because it inspires us to find the resources to achieve that challenging good. In the case of theological hope, the agent develops a trusting relationship with God that results not in complacency but in a confidence that, if one lives virtuously in the present, one will attain beatitude with God in future. In the case of magnanimity, agents develop virtues that ground their confidence in achieving the future challenging good. In both cases, the agents' confidence enables them to consider their future goal as what Chignell calls an "unswamped possibility" ("The Focus Theory of Hope," 11-12) in that opposing considerations are muted or silenced.

### **Eunjin Hong (UC Boulder), "Scotus as a Moral Particularist"**

In this paper, I argue that Duns Scotus is best understood as a moral particularist. Moral particularists, in contrast to moral generalists, hold that no act is morally good or bad independently of its particular situation. Although debates between moral particularism and moral generalism have been extensive in recent decades, their relevance to Scotus's ethics, and more broadly to the history of medieval ethics, has remained relatively underexplored. Against this background, I argue that moral particularism follows from Scotus's core claims about the morality of acts, suggesting that this debate provides a helpful lens for understanding his ethics. I further contend that Scotus's brand of moral particularism is distinctive in two respects: it is asymmetrical, in that it applies only to morally good acts rather than to morally bad ones, and weak, in that it admits a single generalist exception, namely the act of loving God. To support this claim, I reconstruct an argument for moral particularism from Scotus's ethics as follows. Scotus defines the moral goodness of an act as the completeness of its suitabilities (*convenientia*) as dictated by right reason. These suitabilities are divided into that of the object and those of four circumstances: end, manner, time, and place. While the act of loving God is morally good by virtue of its object alone, all other acts are morally good when they possess both a suitable object and suitable circumstances. Furthermore, for Scotus, the manner, time, and place of an act are suitable only insofar as they serve as suitable means to an end; however, the

suitability of a means to an end depends on the particular situation. It follows therefore that for Scotus, the moral goodness of an act depends on its particular circumstances.

**Dustin Kerb (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), “The Presence of Absence: Anselm of Canterbury’s Ontology of ‘Nothing’”**

Anselm of Canterbury has been the focus of debates concerning the topic of existence due to the argument for God’s existence in the *Proslogion*. However, Anselm can also serve as a voice on the subject of non-existence. In the *Monologion*, the topic of the nature of God turns to the nature of “nothing” as Anselm determines what God created the universe from “nothing” can mean. Does “nothing” refer to something that existed alongside God? If it does not refer to something, then how can “nothing” be used in communication? Ordinary language clashes with the technical here and in other works by Anselm. This caused Ben Novak to conclude in “Anselm on ‘Nothing’” that Anselm develops four definitions of nothing. Novak built his case from *Monologion*, *On the Fall of the Devil*, the *Letter to Maurice* (Ep. 97), and the *Philosophical Fragments*. The goal of this paper is to show that Novak’s four definitions of nothing misunderstand Anselm’s multifaceted use of the word “nothing.” To show this, I will argue that within Anselm’s works, the core definition of “nothing” is a name that appears in ordinary language as a reference to a presence, while referring to an absence in technical language. This will be done by comparing Novak’s four definitions of “nothing” with Anselm’s texts (§ I) and reducing the four definitions to a single core definition (§ II).

**James Kintz (Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology), “Why Can’t Angels Know Our Secret Thoughts?: An Exploration of Aquinas’s Understanding of Mindreading”**

According to the Theory Theory model of mindreading, we come to know another person’s mental states by observing her behavior and then formulating a theory to explain that behavior. By contrast, Interaction Theory suggests that we know another’s mental states through our interpersonal interactions--we don’t need to observe the other’s behavior and then draw more or less probabilistic inferences to explain it, for we experience the other’s

mental states directly in our meaningful and contextualized social interactions. While Thomas Aquinas does not offer an explicit account of mindreading, in a handful of passages he makes it clear that angels are not able to know the "secret thoughts" of human beings, and the reasons that he gives suggests that he would endorse a Theory Theory account. Indeed, he indicates that angels, who have superior intellects to humans, must observe our bodily behavior and draw inferences concerning what we are likely experiencing. While this may yield reliable knowledge of what a given human is thinking or feeling, Aquinas is clear that it could not produce intimate or certain knowledge of that person's mental states. This is surprising, though, for at least two reasons. First, given that Aquinas embraces a hylomorphic ontology of the human person, mental states are always embodied, and as such should be at least potentially cognitively available to others, including angels. Second, in select passages Aquinas implies that human beings can know another's mental states in a non-inferential and intimate way, and since we have weaker intellects it is unclear how we could achieve knowledge that angels cannot. Nevertheless, by highlighting the roles of embodiment and the will in human acts of cognition, I will suggest that while Aquinas does indeed embrace a Theory Theory account for angelic mindreading, he at least implicitly endorses Interaction Theory for human mindreading. After discussing the cognitive and conative powers involved in human mindreading, I will close by offering what I take to be important implications concerning human and angelic modes of cognition.

**Anastasia Kopylova (Independent researcher), "Challenging Suárez: Arriaga on the Soul-Power Distinction"**

In this paper, I examine the criticisms directed against Suárez's account of the real distinction between the soul and its powers, as developed by the third-generation Jesuit Rodrigo de Arriaga. Suárez maintains that the powers are categorically distinct from the soul, that is, accidents inhering in the substantial form. As several recent commentators have argued, Suárez's model presupposes a kind of co-activity of the underlying substantial form, namely, the soul's role in regulating or coordinating its powers so as to produce a "harmony" of operations. This raises a problem concerning the nature of the soul's own underlying activity. In this talk, I focus on Arriaga's arguments against Suárez's real-

distinction view. I argue that Arriaga's principal motivation for defending an identity view is not the appeal to parsimony, but rather a deeper metaphysical account of the soul's immediate concurrence and its implications for the operation of the will. For Arriaga, as for Suárez, a substance can be immediately operative both upon other substances and upon its own accidents. The immediacy of the soul's concurrence is crucial for grounding moral responsibility: only an immediately operative soul can be worthy of praise or blame.

**Seth Kreeger (Marquette University), “Avicenna and Aquinas on Neutrally Immaterial Being and Form as a Principle of Esse”**

The present paper examines two important studies, one by John Wippel and the other by R.E. Houser, on the importance of Avicenna for Aquinas' understanding of the nature of metaphysics. It then considers an overlooked text from the Latin Avicenna's *Liber de Philosophia Prima* I.2 which seems to serve as the crucial source text for Aquinas' distinction between what Wippel has term "positively" and "neutrally" immaterial being. This Avicennian text then presents the occasion to further consider how form is a principle of being, Avicenna's continued discussion of this principle in *Liber de Philosophia Prima* II.4 and its adoption by Aquinas. As such, this study suggest that not only is Avicenna of central importance for the Thomistic essence-existence distinction, but that Avicenna is also the central philosophical source for Aquinas' understanding of the intimate relationship of form and esse such that being is only given in and through form (*forma dat esse*).

**Vikram Kumar (Purdue University), “Essence and Modality in Porphyry's *Isagoge*”**

In his *Isagoge*, Porphyry introduces readers to the five predicables: genus, species, difference, property, and accident. In this paper, I address three puzzles about properties and accidents. First, there is a puzzle about how properties fit within the Aristotelian division of attributes into essential and accidental attributes---a division that is intended to be exclusive and exhaustive. I argue that, for Porphyry, properties are a species of accident, despite the fact that they behave like essential predicates. Second, I address a puzzle about accidents. Porphyry characterizes accidents as attributes that 'come and go.' However, his

general characterization of accidents seems difficult to reconcile with his division of accidents into separable (e.g., sleeping) and inseparable accidents (e.g., the black color of ravens), which seemingly cannot 'come and go.' Using evidence from the late antique commentators on the *Isagoge* (e.g., Boethius), I show that separable accidents are separable---i.e., can come and go---from their subjects in both thought and actuality, whereas inseparable accidents are separable from their subjects in thought alone. Third, there remains a puzzle about how properties fit into Porphyry's bipartite division of accidents. I propose that properties are a species of inseparable accident, namely inseparable accidents that convert with their species. Unlike properties, mere inseparable accidents can be predicated of many species. One implication of my account is that the notions of essentiality and accidentality do not neatly map onto necessity and contingency: mere inseparable accidents are contingent, whereas properties are necessary. Indeed, the notion of a necessary accident would become central to medieval logic and ontology.

### **Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt University), The Ethics of the "Floating Man": Human Dignity in Avicenna?**

The metaphysical and psychological aspects of Avicenna's "floating man" thought experiment have been well studied. In this paper, I explore its ethical significance. I argue that the self-consciousness of the floating man suggests ethical dignitarianism not unlike Kant's. I begin by showing that this self-consciousness is not a posteriori or innate knowledge, but rather a priori and intuitive. Against empiricist interpretations that construe this self-consciousness as experiential, I contend that the very purpose of Avicenna's thought experiment is to depict a person devoid of all sensory input who nonetheless apprehends his own existence. Furthermore, Avicenna's anti-innatism, consistent with the Aristotelian tradition, rules out contentual nativism. I then demonstrate that this intuition is objectual (*de re*) rather than propositional, since what the floating man immediately attains is an awareness of his existence as a substantive object, not propositional content. On this basis, I contend that the intuitive character of self-consciousness grants humans access to the noumenal realm. The experiment depicts humans as twofold subjects straddling two worlds: the sensible and the intelligible. Finally,

I consider the prospects of developing an Avicennian dignitarianism in contemporary Islamic ethics through a synthetic approach that creatively engages Avicenna's psychology, Kant's ethics, and analytic intuitionism. The access to the noumenal realm in the experiment grounds human dignity in a material world where everything else has price but not dignity. The de re intuition of self-consciousness thus underwrites a corresponding de re attitude of respect toward humans—the feeling Kant identified as respect for persons as ends in themselves.

### **Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt University), “Necessity, Certainty, and Innateness in Avicenna's Rationalism”**

This paper focuses on a debate among the historians of medieval philosophy as to whether Avicenna's epistemology is rationalist or empirical. To settle the debate, historians have so far focused almost entirely on whether Avicenna invokes emanation or abstraction to acquire the intelligible forms. In this paper, I broaden the debate by articulating two core theses of rationalism: (i) innatism, the view that the mind starts out with certain basic truths or concepts, and (ii) necessitarianism (or certaintism), the view that we can attain necessary or logically certain and substantive knowledge. The former has been insufficiently discussed while the latter has been entirely neglected in the debate. Regarding innatism, I examine two candidates in Avicenna's philosophy: the propositions called *fiṭriyyāt* and the primary concepts of "the existent," "the thing," and "the necessary." I argue that Avicenna is not committed to innatism because the *fiṭriyyāt* are analytic rather than synthetic a priori and the primary concepts are logically but not epistemologically prior to other concepts, consistent with the peripatetic axiom that nothing is in the intellect unless first in the senses. However, I contend, Avicenna is strongly committed in his natural philosophy to necessitarianism. This commitment is evident in his view that the "experientials," which are the major substantive principles of demonstrative syllogisms, are necessarily and certainly true. Avicenna's defense of the principle of sufficient reason further attests to his necessitarianism. I conclude that this necessitarianism subscribes Avicenna to rationalism. This finding helps us understand Avicenna's natural philosophy and legacy in a new light, suggesting that we should view him as a metaphysician seeking

eternal necessary truths rather than as a scientist conducting empirical research revealing contingent facts.

**Giovanni Lasorella (University of Salento, University of Cologne), "Contradictions and Development: John Picard of Lichtenberg and the Historical Interpretation of Aquinas's Theory of *Dimensiones Interminatae*"**

John Picard of Lichtenberg, a Dominican theologian who taught in Cologne during the late 13th and early 14th centuries, significantly contributed to the reception and interpretation of Thomas Aquinas' theological and philosophical ideas in the Teutonian province. His *Quaestiones*, composed nearly three decades after Aquinas' death, represent some of the earliest known debates on Aquinas' thought in the German Dominican milieu.

Explicit quotations of Thomas's name appears in Picard's *Quaestio* 19 which deals with the central problem of the precedence of untermiated dimensions (*dimensiones interminatae*) over the substantial form in prime matter. Originating in the Arab philosophical tradition, particularly in Averroes's *Sermo de substantia orbis*, this debate addresses the necessary conditions for matter's divisibility and reception of distinct corporeal forms.

Picard's analysis reveals what he identifies as a crucial change in Aquinas's position.

Initially, in works such as the *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* and *De spiritualibus creaturis*, and the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas is seen as rejecting the notion that dimensions precede the substantial form in actuality (*realiter*), allowing only for an intelligible precedence. Picard then argues that Aquinas later reversed this stance, embracing the precedence of dimensions in works like his Commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*. The significance of Picard's work is both theoretical and methodological. By highlighting these textual contradictions and chronological shifts, Picard employs an "historical" approach that prioritizes the dynamic development of Aquinas's thought over the maintenance of an unchanging, monolithic doctrinal system. This critical awareness of Thomas's evolution – which acknowledges that an accurate understanding requires recognizing both opposing views he held – exemplifies the fascinating "early Thomistic" attitude, which fruitfully emphasized discontinuity and contradictions in Aquinas' thought rather than harmonizing all of his writings.

## Can Laurens Löwe (Saint Louis University), “The Early Henry of Ghent on the Possible Intellect’s Potency”

Aristotle posits what we might call a *potency analogy* between the senses and the possible intellect. He says that these powers are analogous to one another in that they are both, in their initial state, in potency to their respective objects. As Aristotle writes in *De anima* III, 8, 430b26–27 (trans. J. A. Smith) referring to the possible intellect as the “faculty of knowledge”: “Within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are potentially these objects, the one what is knowable, the other what is sensible.” This paper examines the early Henry of Ghent’s reception of this potency analogy. Focusing on Henry’s *Quodlibet* III, q. 14 (dated to ca. 1280), the paper shows that while Henry accepts the analogy, he weakens it considerably: he maintains that the senses and the possible intellect are, in their initial state, in potency to their objects in two very different ways. A sensory power, he holds, is from the outset in potency to a *specific* object on account of the organ in which it is housed. For example, sight is from the outset in potency to color because it is housed in the eye, which is similar to all colors, in Henry’s view, by virtue of being transparent, transparency being an intermediate state between all colors. By contrast, Henry thinks, the possible intellect is not, from the outset, in potency to a specific object because it lacks an organ that is similar to any specific object. Nonetheless, he maintains, the possible intellect can, in its initial state, be affected by a specific object, and once it has been so affected, it comes to be in potency to this object by acquiring an intelligible species. Thus, while the possible intellect is, in its initial state, not in potency to a specific object, it is in potency to receiving an intelligible species on account of which it then is in potency to a specific object. For Henry, then, the possible intellect is in its initial state in a state of iterated potency: it is in potency to being in potency to a specific object. Thus, the possible intellect and the sensory powers are in potency to specific objects in two very different ways.

**Cameron Lugo (University of Notre Dame), “The Agent Intellect in Bonaventure’s Theory of Cognition”**

Despite an extensive literature on Bonaventure's theory of divine illumination, the agent intellect's precise role in his theory of concept acquisition remains underexplored. In the first part of my paper, I reconstruct Bonaventure's view of the agent intellect and its role in intellectual cognition. Regarding the agent intellect's nature, Bonaventure holds that the agent intellect and the possible intellect are two different powers of the intellect itself which inseparably concur in a single act of cognition. Regarding the agent intellect's role in intellectual cognition, Bonaventure rejects Aquinas's view that the agent intellect suffices for cognition: instead, to reduce the possible intellect to act, the agent intellect must itself not only (i) actually understand but also (ii) be reduced to act by the divine intellect. In the second half of my paper, I reconstruct Bonaventure's related theory of abstraction: how the human intellect acquires intelligible species from phantasms. In particular, I consider whether Bonaventure holds that the agent intellect abstracts intelligible species by stripping away particularizing properties, by selectively attending to certain properties while ignoring others, or by some other means. I show how Bonaventure's rationale for his positions regarding the agent intellect and abstraction derive from key Aristotelian principles—situated in a more Augustinian context. I also address two serious problems with Bonaventure's account: First, if the divine intellect reduces the agent intellect to act, then the agent intellect seems superfluous. Second, if the possible intellect's conversion to phantasms is necessary for the agent intellect to understand in act, then the possible intellect must be reduced to act before it is reduced to act.

**Scott MacDonald (Cornell University), “Augustine’s Ontology of Cognition in *Soliloquia*: An Early Turning Point”**

In his early *Soliloquia* (386/7) Augustine appeals to a principle of ontological inherence derived from Aristotle's *Categories* to argue for the immortality of the rational mind: if the mind cognizes eternal intelligibles, and if cognition of that sort requires that those intelligibles inhere in the mind as in a subject inseparably (as Aristotelian particular

accidents inhere in substances), then the mind must be immortal. But in his unfinished sketch of a projected third book of *Soliloquia* (known to us as *De immortalitate animae*) Augustine articulates misgivings about construing cognition in terms of ontological inherence. Those misgivings explain why the *Soliloquia* project was never completed: Augustine recognizes that a crucial premise of the argument for immortality cannot be substantiated. Abandoning ontological inherence, however, opens up for Augustine a new and productive path in his search for an account of our cognition of intelligible objects, a path he will frequent for the remainder of his career.

**Monika Mansfeld (University of Lodz), “Was There a Revival of Abelardian Ethics in Vienna in the Fifteenth Century? A Curious Case of John Berwart of Villingen”**

At first glance, the question “Utrum homo voluntate mala comitante exteriori operatione simul plus peccet quam voluntate ipsa mala tantummodo” by John Berwart of Villingen appears to be one of those standard commentaries on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* which fit the picture we have of the Viennese tradition in the fifteenth century perfectly: it is full of Augustinian inspirations and views derived from Oxford Calculatores, notably Robert Halifax and Richard Kilvington, with a strong emphasis on voluntaristic ethics. A closer look, however, reveals a more complicated source of inspiration, for, rather unexpectedly, Berwart directly refers to Peter Abelard and, even more riskily, defends his position on the role of intention in evaluating moral judgments against his crystal-clear orthodox opponents, such as Bernard of Clairvaux. He does so on the occasion of introducing a twofold division of thoughts into the ones understood as simple acts of thought that resemble mental impressions, which are generated in the mind spontaneously and, thus, are neutral ethically, and acts of understanding that involve either syllogistic reasoning or trigger the will, which are necessarily either good or bad. This paper focuses on investigating Abelard’s impact on Berwart in more detail. Secondarily, if possible, it is also intended to find out whether it was an isolated instance in Vienna in his milieu or it was a trend that academic studies to date have overlooked.

**André Martin (Humboldt-University, Berlin) “Nominalist Physics apart from a Terminist Semantics? Durand, Auriol, and Ockham and their Minimal Principles of Change”**

According to many prior scholars, late medieval nominalism is best understood as primarily driven by a particular logical-semantic method that ends up with a reduced ontology in practice. Such an approach also appears to line up with a common historical narrative such that late medieval nominalism rose to prominence alongside the resurgence of "Terminist" logic/semantics (in England and then into Paris), which is arguably more congenial to a reduced ontology than the competing "Modist" logic/semantics of the time (see, e.g., Courtenay 1987). In recent years, this so-called "Semantics-First" understanding of late medieval nominalism has received some forceful pushback; e.g., Brower-Toland (2023 & 2025) argues that Ockham's nominalist physics is primarily driven by an intuitive and less demanding principle of change, such that not all change requires the addition or subtraction of some absolute thing, as is clear in the case of locomotion. This alternate understanding of nominalist physics, however, raises the question what role remains, if any, for logic/semantics in this approach? Does this approach even require a specifically Terminist semantics? In this paper, I wish to address these questions by looking back at two slightly earlier figures, Durand of St. Pourçain and Peter Auriol, who arguably engage in a similar nominalist physics, with similar (though not identical) minimal principles of change, although they do not obviously employ any specifically Terminist logic/semantics. More broadly, I hope this paper will also help address the somewhat complicated legacy of Durand and Auriol in the history of later medieval nominalism.

**Fr. Adrian Patrick McCaffery, OP (The Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas), “Architectonic Minds: Aquinas on Angelic Infused Knowledge and Communication Against the Scotist Alternative”**

For the human intellect, the problem of intentionality is typically framed as an epistemic gap between a mental state and an external object. This paper argues that Thomas Aquinas

resolves this problem for the angelic intellect more robustly than John Duns Scotus by grounding intentionality in intrinsic formal identity rather than an extrinsic relation. While Scotus's theory of intuitive cognition requires a direct gaze to verify the existence of singulars, I argue that this move improperly imposes an empirical dependence on the angelic mind. By making the immaterial intellect a spectator of the external world, Scotus renders the angel secondary to the external presence of the object. In contrast, Aquinas posits that the angel knows reality through infused species, thereby resolving intentionality through the internal perfection of the angelic essence itself. The angel, therefore, possesses an architectonic intellect: it does not reach out to discover reality but knows the world through the blueprints by which that reality is constituted. On this framework, intentionality is not a reaction to the presence of a thing, but a participation in divine knowledge that precedes the thing. This Thomistic resolution finds its logical fulfillment in angelic locution or communication. If angelic intentionality is defined by the internal possession of infused species rather than an outward gaze, then communication can't be a generative data transfer of information that the other lacks (the Scotist model). Instead, I defend the Thomistic view of volitional illumination: an act of the will by which the angel directs the peer's attention toward specific truths already possessed through their shared species. By framing communication as a deliberate orientation of the will rather than a passive acquisition by the intellect, Aquinas preserves for angels interior privacy. The angelic mind remains a private interiority, unlocked only through free and personal acts of self-revelation."

**Colleen McCluskey (Saint Louis University), "The Scope Problem in Aquinas's Account of Courage"**

According to Thomas Aquinas's eudemonistic account of ethics, virtues are habits that bring about good character in human beings and enable them to act well. What is good for human beings, what is in harmony with their nature, is to act in accordance with the rectitude of reason. Aquinas identifies three ways in which this comes about: by rectifying reason itself (via the intellectual virtues); by bringing about rectitude in human affairs (via the virtue of justice); and by removing obstacles to rectitude in human affairs (ST II-

II.123.1). He identifies two sources of obstacles: the undue attraction of pleasure, which obstacle is removed by the virtue of temperance; and the undue withdrawal from the difficult or arduous good by the will (ST II-II.123.1 and 3). The virtue of courage addresses this latter set of obstacles. Courage enables one to pursue the difficult good insofar as it removes the obstacles that prevent the agent from pursuing this good. It enables the agent to resist these obstacles (ST II-II.123.1).

Nevertheless, Aquinas has something very specific in mind in terms of the difficult good. The obstacles upon which courage operates stimulate agents' fear of the difficult. They involve situations where their first inclination would be flight and withdrawal or, alternatively, blind aggression. Courage restrains their fear and also moderates their daring (ST II-II.123.3). But one is not brave simply by holding firm in the face of just any adversity; Aquinas calls such cases courage only in a restricted sense (ST II-II.123.4.ad 1). Because the ultimate fear for human beings is the threat of death, courage has to do primarily with holding firm to the highest goods in the face of death (ST II-II.23.4). Furthermore, not just any threat of death suffices for courage. Rather, courage has to do primarily with facing the danger of death in battle, a notion that Aquinas retains from the Aristotelian conception of courage (ST II-II.123.5). But even this is not sufficient. What is relevant about facing death in battle is the connection between (a just) war and the common good. Military action is a paradigm of courage because it promotes the common good at the potential cost of one's life. Thus, courage does not involve simply facing a threat to one's life, but a threat to one's life in defense of the common good. Since war is a paradigm case of facing death while defending the common good, courage has a necessary connection to (virtuous) conduct in war.

Aquinas goes on to identify the principal act of courage as standing firm or enduring in the face of mortal danger by not giving into one's fear (ST II-II.123.6). His emphasis on endurance in the face of danger, especially that of death, fits perfectly with his ultimate paradigm of courage – the martyr. Aquinas describes the martyr as “one who stands firm in truth and justice in the face of the assault of persecution” (ST II-II.124.1), especially under conditions of mortal peril (ST II-II.124.2). The martyr is an individual who suffers death for the sake of what Aquinas calls spiritual goods.

Ultimately, Aquinas's discussion of the two paradigmatic cases of courage specifies four conditions that must be satisfied for the exercise of courage: (1) a threat of death that is (2) necessarily connected to the defense of a good that is more valuable than temporal life, where the agent (3) stands firm and resists the temptation to flee (moderation of fear, resulting in an act of endurance, even unto death) and (4) defends the higher good (moderation of aggression). But the specification of these conditions raises what I call the scope problem. No one would deny that virtuous soldiers and martyrs exhibit courage. But very few of us will ever be called to exhibit courage on a battlefield or to be martyred for the faith. This raises the question of whether ordinary people can possess and exercise the virtue of courage in their ordinary lives.

Aquinas tries to extend courage to ordinary experience by appeal to a metaphorical sense in order to preserve the military paradigm; the individual who visits a sick friend is characterized as engaging in a kind of personal battle. However, what is crucial about the military model is not that it is military, but the way in which it is connected to a threat of death. This connection to an actual death threat is reiterated in Aquinas's discussion of the parts of courage. Thus, I will argue that we should take Aquinas at his word when he states that a threat of death is required for an act of courage. Drawing upon examples from the extraordinary (e.g., the civil rights movement) to the mundane (e.g., driving on the freeway), I will further argue that the four very stringent conditions specified for an act of courage do not rule out the exercise of courage as a genuine virtue in the lives of ordinary people.

### **Bruce McCuskey (University of Notre Dame), "Abraham Bibago's Theological Argument Against the Eternity of the World"**

The fifteenth century Jewish philosopher Abraham Bibago (c. 1420-c. 1489) adhered to the Maimonidean position that the eternity of the world could be neither conclusively proven nor conclusively disproven. Lazaroff (1981) and Nuriel (2000) have both studied Bibago's position. Their work, however, focused on his argument that creation must be accepted on faith because its eternity cannot be conclusively disproven. My paper will examine the other half of Bibago's position, specifically one of his arguments against Averroes's

theological arguments in favor of the eternity of the world. In his *Incoherence of the Incoherence* Averroes argued that the world must be eternal because any change in God's action would compromise his perfection, concomitantly arguing that God must act necessarily. Using both his *Derek Emunah* and especially the more detailed discussions found in his *Etzáyyim*, which survives in Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale de France MS hébreu 995 1r-44v, I will reconstruct perhaps the most interesting of Bibago's numerous arguments against Averroes on this point. Unlike someone like Aquinas, who distinguished between God willing a change and a change in God's will, Bibago grants that a non-eternal world requires a change in God's will. He argues, however, that God's infinity allows God both to change his will so as to create and not to change his will to preserve his perfection. I will then demonstrate that Bibago's argument does in fact presume a kind of dialetheism, which comes into effect only for infinite substances. I will then investigate the notion of infinity that underlies his position, using both the text of the *Etzáyyim* and passages from Bibago's unedited commentary on Aristotle *Metaphysics*, which survives in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MSS Hebrew 57 and 357.

**Matthew McShurley (Catholic University of America), "The Dimensions of Informed Matter: The Real Foundation for Indeterminate Dimensions in Aquinas's Early Writings"**

Thomas Aquinas, following Averroes, sometimes distinguishes between determinate dimensions found inhering in a substance and indeterminate dimensions understood in matter prior to the arrival of substantial form. When Aquinas's recent interpreters consider indeterminate dimensions at all, they generally consider them as in some way characterizing prime matter. My aim in this paper is to challenge the assumption that indeterminate dimensions can be referred to prime matter at all. I argue that, instead, Aquinas understands indeterminate dimensions as the real dimensions of one substance that are considered in relation to another substance, or to the same substance at a later time. Such an interpretation is grounded in Aquinas's discussion of the resurrected body in his *Sentences* commentary as well as a consideration of Aquinas's Averroean source material. This approach thus not only corrects a misunderstanding of what Aquinas means

by indeterminate dimensions but also offers an analysis, long overdue, of the relation between the thought of Aquinas and Averroes on this topic. As a final consideration, I seek to confirm my interpretation of indeterminate dimensions by showing how this understanding dissolves the puzzle of Aquinas's apparent self-contradiction regarding individuation through indeterminate dimensions.

**Simone Luigi Migliaro (Humboldt-University, Berlin), “Thomas Manlevelt and Albert of Saxony on Singular Terms and Material Constituents”**

This paper aims to explore the differing positions of Thomas Manlevelt and Albert of Saxony on singular terms and the material identification of referents. Departing from the traditional doctrine, Manlevelt argues that defining the 'individuum' as that which is predicated of one thing alone may be mistaken if interpreted too rigidly. His point does not concern merely cases in which the same proper name is used "equivocally" to refer to different individuals. Rather, Manlevelt maintains that a singular term can have different referents even when taken "univocally", that is, according to the same act of imposition. Accordingly, the same mental singular term might adequately denote both Socrates in his entirety and Socrates considered without a finger. This is because the semantic extension of a singular term consists of a set of objects corresponding to wholes that differ only partially, while preserving the material components that ground the object's deepest identity. In the case of Socrates, this includes all those components that still allow him to exist as an animate being. In some of his works, Albert of Saxony challenges this line of reasoning. He argues that there are different types of numerical identity, and that these must be taken into account when discussing the function of singular terms. In particular, the name 'Socrates' can refer univocally to numerically distinct wholes only in a diachronic sense, namely insofar as it signifies the same thing across successive temporal states. However, if our focus is restricted to a single moment in time, this name can refer only to Socrates in his entirety and not to Socrates considered without one of his parts. This is because, in this case, the two wholes would no longer share numerical identity, despite their substantial correspondence in many material constituents.

### **Saber Mohsen (Stony Brook University), “Avicenna on Providence and Its Necessitating Function”**

In this paper, I explore the problem of providence in Avicenna’s philosophy as an explanation for the relationality and dependence of quidditative beings upon God in both their existence and quiddity. This relationality, which I refer to as divine intentionality, is analyzed in two steps: First, I argue that divine intentionality is a unitary relation that encompasses God’s knowledge, will, and creation, showing that these attributes cannot be separated or distinguished from one another in explaining the relationship between God and beings. This implies that, when their relation to God is taken into account, we cannot even analytically distinguish between things, their being known, their being willed, and their existence. Secondly, I explore divine intentionality as a necessitating act, showing that this intentional relation is not only itself necessary by virtue of the necessity of God’s Self, but also necessitates its intentional objects, i.e., beings. As I show, all levels of being from God’s Self to each particular existent fall within the scope of divine intentionality and are therefore devoid of possibility, and the duality of essence and existence. To be, in this sense, means to be the object of divine intentionality, both in quiddity and in existence--two levels that are not beside one another but aligned such that existence is given through quiddity.

### **Seyed Mousavian (Loyola University Chicago), “Avicenna on Soul, Body, and Eschatology”**

The prevailing consensus among medievalists and Avicenna scholars, e.g. Van den Bergh, Davidson, Bäck, Druart, Hasse, and Black, to mention some, is that Avicenna's account of the human soul, especially with respect to its origination, individuation, and survival, is unsatisfactory, incomplete, obscure, or ultimately refutable. In this paper, I argue against this consensus. The crux of the problem lies in the fact that Avicenna is committed to three theses that, taken together, appear incompatible: Co-Origination (CO), Substance Dualism (SD), and the Survival of the Soul (SS). According to (CO), the human soul is temporally co-originated with the human body. According to (SD), the human soul and the human body

are two distinct substances. According to (SS), the human soul can survive the corruption of the human body. Various post-Avicennan positions reject one or another of these theses. Some Muslim Neoplatonists reject (CO), holding that the human soul pre-exists the body. Some Muslim Neo-Aristotelians reject (SD), maintaining that the human soul is merely the form of the human body, rather than a distinct substance. Finally, Averroes, in some of his writings, rejects (SS), denying that an individual human soul survives as an individual human soul after death. I argue that Avicenna offers two resources that allow him to consistently uphold all three theses. My proposal is that the human soul, as a (modally) contingent and (temporally) originated abstract (immaterial) object, is individuated by miscellaneous principles synchronically and diachronically, that is, at a single time and across time. After supporting this account with textual evidence, I address several standard objections to Avicenna's position and respond to further, hypothetical challenges. As a corollary, I re-argue against a common interpretation, defended by Gutas, Hasse, Michot, among others, according to which humans share an animal soul with non-human animals. I show that this interpretation conflates two distinct senses of animal soul: (i) the form of a non-human animal body, and (ii) a faculty of an immaterial substance, namely, the rational soul.

### **Nazif Muhtaroglu (Yale University), "Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī on Causality as Necessary Connection, and Occasionalism"**

My presentation examines the relationship between necessity and causality in the philosophies of Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī, with particular focus on occasionalism. I argue that although al-Ghazālī is widely regarded as a critic of Ibn Sīnā's doctrine of causal necessity, his critique implicitly relies on a distinction between de re and de dicto causal necessity. By examining al-Ghazālī's discussions of causality, I show that he does not reject causality altogether. Rather, he denies the universal applicability of de re causal necessitation in the natural world while accepting a de dicto meta-principle of causality, according to which every contingent being must have a cause without assuming, as Ibn Sīnā does, that causes necessitate their effects in an intrinsic and exceptionless way. This distinction allows me to reassess al-Ghazālī's argument for occasionalism. I argue that he develops a nuanced

framework that safeguards contingency in nature while reserving true necessity for divine agency. Building on this insight, I reconstruct a three-step argumentative structure in his writings. First, he establishes the reality of causality through the meta-principle of causality. Second, he argues for the existence of God as the necessary being, using this principle as a key premise. Third, he maintains that God is the sole causal agent through an argument appealing to simplicity. Through this analysis, I show that classical Islamic occasionalism appears not merely as a theological doctrine, but as a philosophically systematic position grounded in a precise modal account of necessity and contingency.

**Nicoletta Nativo (Charles University, Prague), “Averroes, Albert, and the Moderni: Paduan Debates on Psychology”**

In this paper, I will discuss the influence of Albertus Magnus on Renaissance Averroism in Padua. I will focus on the psychological theories of the so-called "moderni", Nicoletto Vernia, Agostino Nifo, and Alessandro Achillini. The idea that there are examples of "Albertism" in Paduan Averroism is not altogether new (e.g., Mahoney, "Albert the Great and the Studio Patavino", 1980); however, its precise forms and implications remain largely unexplored. As I will point out, the use of Albert made by these "moderni" diverges significantly from that of more conservative figures (like the self-proclaimed "Averroist", Marcantonio Zimara), which makes their "Albertism" all the more interesting: why would such "moderns" resort to such a seemingly unmodern thinker, with seemingly unmodern views? One of my contentions is that these "moderni" felt the need to appeal to Albert, as his authority was heavily tied to that of Averroes at the time. Nevertheless, in this paper, I will also show that their views differ even among themselves. I will address this by examining a cluster of issues, e.g., the first object of cognition, the (non-)existence of intelligible species, and the immortality of the human soul. Overall, this paper will highlight two related points: it confirms that Albert was foundational to the development of Averroism, even beyond 13<sup>th</sup>-century thought, and it demonstrates how his thought is varyingly applied to address old puzzles in a new context, shaping the way the Averroes Latinus was read up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Nathaniel Olson (University of Coimbra), “Sensed Objects and Demon Skepticism in Later Scholasticism: The Case of pre-Cartesian Skepticism in Francisco Suarez and John of St. Thomas”**

The later scholastic period was characterized by renewed interest in issues concerning Aristotelian psychology. Theologians were tasked with answering questions concerning the status of objects rendered present to the external senses, and whether there could be external sensation of physically absent objects. Traditional accounts followed Aristotle in arguing the external senses cannot be affected by physically absent objects due to their role in cognition in receiving the forms of sensed objects. Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) considered the issue in his philosophical works and specifically addresses the question of whether God or an angel could affect the external senses in such a way as to sense absent objects. Suarez in breaking with Aristotelian precedent suggests that God or angels could affect the external senses in such a way as to experience sensation with no corresponding sensed object. John of St. Thomas (1589-1644) also considers this issue of divine or angelic skepticism regarding external sensation and argues in the negative, that the external senses cannot be affected in this way, even by God or angels. I argue in this paper that this debate presents a case of pre-Cartesian skepticism regarding external sensation and could be seen as an early anticipation of Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and his methodological doubt. The fact Descartes was influenced by Suarez is uncontroversial, as Descartes cites him on more than one occasion. I argue Cartesian skepticism has important antecedents in the philosophy of Suarez on the issue of external sensation and whether God or angels could affect it.

**Thomas Osborne (University of St. Thomas), “John Duns Scotus’s Two Views on the Will as Collative Power”**

This paper argues that John Duns Scotus offers two distinct accounts of how the will functions as a collative power and that he favors different accounts at different stages of his career. First, he maintains that the will, as a collative power, produces an ordering grounded in a comparison presented to it by the intellect acting as a collative power. He

favors this view in the early *Lectura* and in certain passages of the *Ordinatio*. Second, he also considers the position now commonly attributed to him: that the will produces an ordering independent of the intellect's ordering. He clearly endorses this position in the *Reportatio Parisiensis* II-A and perhaps in other texts. In conclusion, I argue that the second position is philosophically inferior to the first.

### **Samuel Pell (University of Notre Dame), "Albert the Great's Theory of Intentionality"**

Aristotelian theories of mind model the act of perceiving or knowing as the reception of a form, or species, within the sense or intellect. But what makes it the case that a species received inside a subject occasions knowledge of perception of something outside of the subject? This paper will explore Albert the Great's solution to this problem. Albert thinks that all abstract sensible or intelligible species have intentional existence, which is the existence a form has when it exists in something while being predicated of something else. Albert obtains this understanding of intentional existence through a creative re-working of the notions of 'existence in' and 'being predicated of' that Aristotle introduces in Chapter 2 of his *Categories*. When a form has intentional existence, it exists in something not as in a subject but as in a place. I will explore how Albert cashes out this notion in both the case of sense and intellect, such that he can allow both that knowledge is attributed to us when we receive a species in us, but that this species is not an attribute of us. In the case of sense, he avoids a sense datum theory by positing that the species received in the common sense is predicated of the object, not the common sense. In the case of intellect, he is able to allow universals to be multiplied in many intellects without being particularized, since they are located in these intellects without becoming attributes of them."

### **Benjamin Prisk (Georgetown University), "Virtue, Prudence, and Freedom in John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham"**

The primary reason for Scotus' and Ockham's rejection of the unity of virtue rests upon their voluntarism and the conception of prudence that results from it. It is this substantial shift in thinking about the nature of the human mind and moral psychology that leads to

the position that one can be fully virtuous in one domain and lack virtue in any other. I believe, however, that both Scotus and Ockham operate with an idea of prudence that is severely limited and bears almost no relation to prudence as understood by Aristotle. Aristotelian *phronesis* is more than just a habit of the intellect, which is how Scotus and Ockham think of *prudentia*. This, I argue, reveals a fundamental weakness of the arguments offered by Scotus and Ockham against the unity of virtue. One prime example of this can be found in *Ordinatio* I d.17, where Scotus holds that prudence merely attaches to a habit without altering in any way the nature of that habit itself. I will also look at Ockham's four senses of prudence in his *Quaestio de connexione virtutum*. Now, it might not be fair to expect these two to have had a more nuanced view of the nature of this virtue. As such, I conclude my paper with the following question and tentative proposition; is a view of prudence which places it at least partly in the will as a volitional habit compatible with the main concern of voluntarism, i.e. the preservation of the will's freedom at every moment, in every single decision? I suggest that a solution might be found in the remarks Scotus makes about the freedom of the blessed in heaven.

### **César Reigosa Soler (University of Groningen), “Auriol on Omniscience without Future Truth”**

In his *Sentences* commentary, Peter Auriol takes himself to follow Aristotle in saying that future contingents lack truth-value. As a result, Auriol gives up divine foreknowledge but wants to keep divine omniscience. However, on the prevalent view that knowledge requires truth, it is difficult to maintain omniscience unless there are truths about the future. In this paper, I first consider Auriol's line of reasoning as to why future contingents do not have a truth-value and then, I turn to his account of divine omniscience without future truth. Whereas on the standard interpretation, Auriol preserves omniscience at the expense of future contingency, I argue that, on the contrary, Auriol preserves future contingency but is only entitled to what I call “gappy” omniscience. Truth-value gaps are not responsible for “gappy” omniscience, as one might expect. Rather, Auriol's criticisms against prevalent accounts of foreknowledge independently rule out anything close to the stronger notion of omniscience typically attributed to Auriol by modern readers. The

interpretation defended here is more philosophically apt and better explains the medieval reception of Auriol's views.

### **Tad Schmaltz (University of Michigan), "Suárez on Universals, Formal Unity, and Nominalism"**

There is some indecision in the literature over whether to characterize Suárez's account of universals as a form of nominalism or realism. I argue that this indecision can be traced back to the fact that elements of both scholastic traditions are present in this account. A closer investigation of some of Suárez's more realist claims concerning universals reveals that these are consistent as he himself admits with a form of nominalism. However, his appeal to the formal unity of common natures introduces a distinctive kind of realism into his treatment of universals insofar as it suggests a more robust connection of universal natures to reality than is provided by the nominalist insistence that such natures have a basis merely in primitive similarities among individuals.

### **Saad Shaukat (University of California Los Angeles), "Avicenna on Actual Infinity"**

Aristotle's theory of infinity leaves many puzzles unanswered, including whether an actual infinity exists and, if so, how. In this paper, I argue that Avicenna offers an innovative solution to this Aristotelian problem through his metaphysical distinction between essence and existence. Drawing on a crucial but overlooked passage in the *Shifā* where Avicenna states that something can be "potentially infinite," "actually infinite," or "neither in potency nor in actuality," I contend that Avicenna conceives of two types of infinities: quantitative infinity and attributive infinity. Through this distinction, Avicenna shows how infinity can exist potentially, actually, or neither actually nor potentially.

This innovative understanding allows Avicenna to resolve several thorny puzzles in Aristotelian infinity theory. For instance, Avicenna resolves the paradox of infinite divisibility in bounded magnitudes by distinguishing between infinity as "always having something outside" (applying to collections, which exist only potentially) and infinity as existing "without a limit" (applying to processes/capacities like divisibility, which exists

actually). While scholarship has understood Avicenna's theory primarily in quantitative terms, where it largely tracks Aristotle's position, this paper brings attributive infinity into conversation to demonstrate how both types are critical to Avicenna's overall framework. Avicenna's theory thus provides an innovative solution to the Aristotelian conundrum and can be brought into conversation with modern Aristotelian interpretations, especially those of Jonathan Lear and Jaakko Hintikka.

### **Christopher Shields (University of California San Diego), "Moving, Metaphorically"**

In his treatment of the causal efficacy of final causation in *Metaphysical Disputations* xxiii, Francisco Suárez makes a crucial appeal to the notion of *motio metaphysica*, a kind of motion, or, perhaps, a motion—kind of. The context of the appeal is clear enough. He wants to explain how a final cause moves the will, as it must do if it is to meet the basic contours of his general account of causation, according to which a cause is 'a principle that in itself inflows being [*per se influens esse*] into another thing" (DM xii 2). What is unclear, crucially unclear, however, is the content of this appeal. What, precisely, is metaphorical motion? What makes a motion metaphorical? What, for instance, is the contrast class? Literal motion? One may take it that the motion in question is not the form of motion we witness in the domain of efficient causation—else, the final cause would be an efficient cause, intensionally speaking, that is, since nothing precludes its being extensionally so. Suárez is, of course, hardly alone in making an appeal to metaphorical motion in the contexts of final causation and intentionality. Still, we want to avoid the hopeless suggestion that metaphorical motion is merely the kind of motion one encounters when final causation is in view. Further, the initially attractive suggestion that metaphorical motion is merely motion—that is to say, change—outside the category of place, is simply too broad. Fortunately, Suárez offers a promising alternative.

## **John Sica (Providence College), “Resolution to First Principles in Giles of Rome's Posterior Analytics Commentary”**

Both Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome hold that scientific knowledge is perfected by resolving the conclusions of demonstrations back into their principles. Yet a puzzle arises in Aquinas's treatment of resolution. Aquinas claims that all who demonstrate resolve their demonstrations into first principles, and ultimately into the principle of non-contradiction (PNC). At the same time, Aquinas follows indications from Aristotle that the PNC never enters into any demonstration. These claims, however, seem incompatible with Thomas's notion of scientific resolution. If scientific resolution is the act in which the human mind traces the conclusion of a demonstration back to its causes in the premises, and if the PNC is never a premise of a syllogism, then it would seem that no demonstration whatsoever resolves into the PNC. Resolution of any demonstration would seem to halt at other indemonstrable principles, but never at the PNC. In this presentation, I will exposit Giles's solution to this puzzle in his commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics. He distinguishes between propositions that enter demonstrations either "according to substance" or "according to power" (virtually). The former enter demonstrations as premises, while the latter are higher causes that do not enter as premises of demonstration. It is in just this way that Giles secures for the PNC a position as the ultimate item to which resolution is made, despite its not entering demonstrations as a premise. Giles conceives of first principles that enter demonstrations virtually as general causes that operate alongside the premises of demonstrations to yield the necessary conclusion.

## **Eleonore Stump (Saint Louis University), “Can God Annihilate an Angel?”**

As Aquinas explains creation, insofar as God is the creator and creating is making *aliquid* out of nothing, then in creating God is making being out of nothing. And since goodness is a transcendental, it follows that the being which God creates is good. Taken together these claims give rise to a number of puzzles. For example, if God is perfectly good, he must want to maximize being in order to maximize the goodness in the world. But then it seems that it was necessary for God to create, contrary to the Christian doctrine, which Aquinas accepts,

that God was free to create or not create. This is a puzzle that is well-known and discussed in the secondary literature; but in my paper I want to focus on a less frequently discussed puzzle resulting from the same claims. It is not possible for a perfectly good God to remove goodness from the world unless by doing so he produces more goodness in the world. But annihilating something by itself does not produce more goodness in the world. Therefore, as Aquinas recognizes, it seems to follow that God cannot annihilate a creature. And yet in multiple places Aquinas maintains that God can annihilate an angel. In this short paper, my aim is to sketch the puzzle and point to the reasons Aquinas himself gives to resolve it.

**Eileen Sweeney (Boston College), “Marsilio Ficino’s Rewriting of Plato’s *Symposium*: Medieval Sources and Renaissance Transformation”**

Marsilio Ficino's work on Plato's *Symposium* is not a commentary but a rewriting of the seven speeches of the dialogue on love from Ficino's Christian, neo-platonic perspective. When overlaid with Plato's original dialogue, Ficino's *Symposium* reveals as much or more-- its distance from rather than fidelity to Plato's original. This paper will examine Ficino's text and consider how much he is indebted to and yet shifts both the 12<sup>th</sup> century Victorine account of mystical love and Aquinas' account of the passions (the most well-known Medieval account through the Renaissance and into the Modern period) to form his account. Is it a Platonic envelope for the earlier Medieval Christian tradition or a genuinely new view? One way of describing Ficino's transformation of the *Symposium* is that he turns comedy into romance. Love is a cosmic and universal drive, both there from the origin of things and spreading to everything that exists. Ficino locates much more deeply and substantially human to human love as intrinsically valuable, grounded in creation which both originates from and whose primary effect is love. While the original *Symposium* makes a strong distinction between heavenly and earthly love, Ficino's rewrite describes only one kind of love that finds its expression throughout the cosmos. That love is essentially ecstatic, mutual, and universal in ways not found in the original dialogue, echoing Aquinas and the Victorines, but, I will argue, changed when removed from the Aristotelian context in which Aquinas placed his own account.

**Nathaniel Taylor (Catholic University of America), “Averroes, Aquinas, and Avicenna on the Signification of Paronymous Terms”**

Averroes and Aquinas criticized Avicenna for having taught that concrete accident-terms like 'white' primarily signify the subject in which the accident whiteness inheres and only secondarily signifies the accident whiteness. Since these criticisms, scholars in both antiquity and in the modern day have associated this semantic doctrine with Avicenna. But did Avicenna really teach this doctrine? In this study, I argue that Avicenna does not teach the doctrine criticized by Averroes and Aquinas. Further, I argue that the semantic doctrine that Avicenna does in fact teach is one to which Aquinas is committed.

**Jacob Tuttle (University of St. Thomas), “Aquinas on Action, Passion, and Intrinsic Change”**

"In his treatments of efficient causation, Aquinas identifies efficient causation with action, one of Aristotle's ten highest genera or categories. That is to say, Aquinas thinks that an efficient cause produces its effect in virtue of performing an action. However, when he discusses the precise nature of action, he appears to give different accounts in different works. This apparent inconsistency has occasioned considerable disagreement among contemporary scholars of Aquinas. Thus, for example, Frost (2018, 2022), Brower (2014), and Rota (2012) interpret Aquinas as taking more-or-less the standard Aristotelian line on action and passion, according to which action and passion are the same motion, and accordingly exist in the patient. On the other hand, Meehan (1940), Wippel (2000), and several others interpret him as locating action in the agent. This interpretive disagreement also appears in the work of late scholastic interpreters. This paper articulates and defends an interpretive option that has been almost entirely overlooked, namely, that Aquinas's account of action and passion developed over the course of his career. By identifying Aquinas's early view about action and passion, the paper also clarifies an under-appreciated dialectical option in medieval debates about the nature of efficient causation.

**Jacob Tuttle (University of St. Thomas), "Seeing God Face to Face: Aquinas on Human Nature, Heaven, and the Body"**

Mark Twain is sometimes reported to have said, "If I cannot drink bourbon and smoke cigars in heaven then I shall not go." This (probably apocryphal) quotation captures an intuition that many people have about happiness--namely, that in order for a person to be completely happy, he or she must enjoy the goods of the body. Accordingly, if heaven is a state of maximal happiness, it should include the sorts of sensible pleasures that we enjoy in this life. However, a long tradition of Christian philosophers and theologians has rejected the idea that beatitude includes the goods of the body. One such figure is the medieval thinker Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas argues that the blessed in heaven will have perfect, resurrected bodies. However, he also insists that our beatitude will not include any bodily activity. Instead, the blessed in heaven will be totally occupied with contemplating God's essence. Aquinas's account of heaven has puzzled some scholars, because it seems to render the body otiose, or even to alienate us from our human nature. What's the point of having a resurrected body, if that body will not "do anything"--or at any rate, will not do anything that contributes to our highest good? This problem seems especially serious in light of Aquinas's hylomorphic theory of human nature, according to which a human being is composed of a body and a rational, immaterial soul. On Aquinas's view, part of what it is to be human is to have a body. So it might look surprising that the beatific vision, which is supposed to fully satisfy our deepest desires, should not include any bodily activity. In this paper, I argue that Aquinas resolves this tension by appealing to the Christian notion of divinization--namely, that the blessed in heaven come to more closely resemble God than is possible in earthly life. More specifically, I show that scholars have ignored the role of divinization in Aquinas's account of human nature, and have thereby misunderstood some aspects of his hylomorphic account of human beings. I believe that this paper fits well with the conference theme of "materiality."

### **Matthew Wennemann (UC Boulder), “Being and Intuitive Cognition in Duns Scotus”**

One of Duns Scotus's most historically significant philosophical positions is that the intellect is naturally capable of intuitive cognition, cognition of things as they are present and existing. In this paper, I argue that this position is not an isolated part of Scotus's cognitive theory, but a natural development made possible by one of his much more fundamental philosophical claims, i.e., that being is the first object of the intellect. I begin with an overview of intuitive cognition, in which I briefly contrast it with abstractive cognition and rehearse Scotus's less prominent, but more interesting, arguments for the intellect's capacity for intuitive cognition, namely: his arguments from our knowledge of contingent propositions, our knowledge of our own mental acts, and from recollection. In doing so, I highlight as especially significant the fact that, for Scotus, these are different intellectual acts with the same one object. Next, I discuss Scotus's view that being (*ens*) is the first object of the intellect. I show that to be a being is to have *esse*, an act of being. I then argue that the *esse* under question is really two different acts of being: *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*. I argue that their inseparability enables their mutual inclusion under being as the first object of the intellect, while their distinction explains the differing formal grounds that allow for Scotus's dual act of cognition: *esse essentiae* explains the intellect's act of abstractive cognition, quidditative knowledge of an essence, while *esse existentiae* is the basis for the intellect's knowledge of its object as existing.

### **Abigail Whalen (University of Notre Dame), “Individuation by Dimensive Matter in Ibn Rushd's Commentaries on the Metaphysics”**

In this paper, I'll evaluate Ibn Rushd's treatment of the individuation of material objects, focusing primarily on his commentary on the central books of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in his *Arabic Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (LCM) and related comments in the *Short Commentary on the Metaphysics* (SCM). Ibn Rushd accords a clear priority to form in his discussion of hylomorphic composition. Ibn Rushd, for instance, observes that Aristotle calls form “first substance” in his LCM because “it is the cause of the designated particular and the substances of designated particulars become one because of this nature which is

called 'form'" (LCM 761k) and argues that (contra the *Categories*) form is more truly to be considered primary substance than the material object itself (SCM 15-16). Views like these have led many to suppose that form is the principle of individuation (as well as the principle of diachronic identity) or that matter-and-form is the POI for Ibn Rushd. While form gives a material object unity and persistent identity and may ground a plurality of the essential properties of material objects, matter plays a key role in rendering objects distinct from one another. I'll explore Ibn Rushd's claim that prime matter has intrinsic divisibility via an internal dimensive quality which renders it apt for divisibility by reception of form. I'll propose that we can best understand Ibn Rushd's comments about indeterminate dimensions in prime matter and their relation to the determinate dimensions of the material composite in light of the determinate-determinable specification relation.

**Adam Wood (Wheaton College), "The Problem of Hell in St. Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue*"**

From beginning to end St. Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue* is consistently preoccupied with the woeful state humans are in due to their sinfulness. We suffer horribly from our own sins and those of others. Many humans will go on suffering in these ways after death in hell, a state from which there is no return. Grieved by all this, Catherine suggests to God at one point that he would "receive more glory and praise by saving so many people than by letting them stubbornly persist in their hardness," and prays that he might "force their wills and dispose them to want what they do not want." God doesn't respond directly either to her prayer or her request. But he does tell her a great deal throughout the *Dialogue* about the workings of his providence that, taken together, amounts to a distinctive (albeit incomplete) theodicy for sin in general, and hell in particular. A happy trend in recent medieval philosophical scholarship has been toward considering and appreciating contemplatives like Catherine as philosophers in their own right. But while the problem of evil is arguably one of her central concerns, as it is for many medieval contemplatives, the contours of her approach and its relationship to others of her era remain largely unexplored. I'll argue here first that she presents a theodicy, and hence is neither a "skeptical theist" nor an anti-theodicyist like Hadewijch of Antwerp. I'll then point out an

important respect in which her theodicy, while sharing important Augustinian presuppositions with those of Thomas Aquinas and Julian of Norwich, nevertheless differs from both in terms of what she leaves unsaid. In the case of Aquinas, I'll suggest, this is a strength of her account, in Julian's case a weakness.

**Rui Xu (University of Toronto), "Henry of Ghent on the Distinction between Divine Practical and Theoretical Ideas"**

In his reply to the question of "whether there are practical ideas in God" in *Quodlibet* VIII. 1, Henry of Ghent affirms that God has only one set of ideas which is "theoretical in one way and practical in another" (*modo speculativae modo practicae*). Henry's claim raises a basic puzzle: in virtue of what is the same set of divine ideas practical or theoretical? Through a close reading of *Quodl.* VIII. 1, I argue that Henry's practical-theoretical distinction is not intrinsic but entirely extrinsic. Divine ideas themselves are not distinguished into practical or theoretical: rather, divine ideas are rendered practical solely by God's will to act. I further argue that this notion of "practical" no longer characterizes a function intrinsic to the intellect as in the standard Aristotelian account, but a function ascribed to the intellect in virtue of the will. Henry's treatment of divine practical ideas provides clarification on a number of interpretative difficulties in his doctrine of divine ideas. It also exemplifies the reorientation of the discussion of divine ideas in the second half of the thirteenth century noted by Maarten Hoenen.

## Panel abstracts

### Panel

#### **Nate Bulthuis (Saint Joseph's University), "The Ontological Status of the *Ens Rationis* in Early Fourteenth-Century Philosophy of Mind"**

The turn of the fourteenth century saw a number of philosophers argue that "beings of reason" (*entia rationis*) exist in the mind merely objectively and not subjectively, that is, they do not exist in the mind in the way in which other things (acts, dispositions, species) exist in it. This panel explores the roots of that transition. The first paper examines that transition in the early works of Walter Burley, arguing that that development is due in part to his development of a mental language. The second argues that the objective status of *entia rationis* is meant to account for the mind's ability to think about more than one thing at a time. An important throughline of both papers is the role that Hervaeus Natalis plays in identifying *entia rationis* as objective beings.

### Papers

#### Nate Bulthuis (Saint Joseph's University), "*Entia Rationis* in Walter Burley's Early Logical Commentaries"

In a series of logical commentaries in the first decade of the fourteenth century, Walter Burley argues that an *ens rationis* is produced by the mind when it combines or divides one (often extra-mental) thing with, or from, another. He argues that these *entia rationis* are propositions in the mind, with the things the mind combines or divides functioning as its terms. However, his account undergoes a subtle but important development. In two earlier commentaries on *On Interpretation*, Burley argues that the *ens rationis* exists subjectively in the mind, as an accident of it. In a later commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, however, Burley argues that *entia rationis* exist objectively, rather than subjectively, in the mind. I identify two reasons for this development. First, the claim that *entia rationis* exist subjectively rather than objectively in the mind comes under sustained criticism in the

early fourteenth century, perhaps best represented by Hervaeus Natalis's arguments against that view in his *De secundis intentionibus*. Second, in his *Posterior Analytics* commentary, Burley develops a theory of mental language, that is, a theory according to which concepts (intelligible species) can be combined into larger syntactic structures, including propositions. Such a theory allows Burley to distinguish between an explicit propositional representation in the mind, the mental proposition, which exists subjectively in it; and its content, the *ens rationis*, which has merely objective existence. In earlier accounts, in contrast, the *ens rationis* was forced to serve both roles: both as an accident of the mind and what that accident represents.

Peter Hartman (Loyola University Chicago), "What Do I have in My Mind? Early 14th-Century Debates about the Ontological Status of *entia rationis*"

The scholastics typically divided beings into those that are real (*entia realia*) and those that are not but instead mere "beings of reason" (*entia rationis*). According to Hervaeus Natalis, whereas real beings have "subjective" existence (roughly: they exist either as substances or accidents of substances), beings of reason do not, but instead have mere "objective" existence. Thus, for instance, while a real being such as an act of thinking or a species exists in the mind such that it inheres in the mind as its subject (as an accidental state of the mind), a being of reason exists in the mind such that it merely stands to the mind as object. Hervaeus was motivated to defend this theory, I will argue, by a tension between two commonly-held theses: the *object thesis* according to which acts are distinguished by their objects, both ontologically (an act about a cat is really different from an act about a dog), and also representationally (an act that has a dog as its object is about a dog and one that has a cat as its object is about a cat), on the one hand, and the *intellect thesis* according to which the intellect can have just one act at a given time, on the other. If one holds both theses, then one seems to be incapable of explaining how it is that we think about multiple different objects at the same time. Hervaeus's solution, I submit, is two-fold. First, he refines the object thesis by separating its ontological claim from its representational claim. Second, he introduces the distinction between a primary object and a secondary object. While primary objects distinguish acts ontologically they do not function to fix the content

of those acts; indeed, nothing with subjective existence fixes the content of the act. Instead, the content of an act is a function of items with mere objective existence. Thus, while the intellect can only have one act at a given time (conceived of as a real being with subjective existence in the mind), it can have multiple objects at the same time insofar as they have mere objective existence.

### Panel

#### **Caleb Cohoe (Metropolitan State University of Denver), “Augustine's Philosophy of Mind”**

This session explores Augustine's philosophy of mind including his theories of cognition and introspection.

### Papers

#### Caleb Cohoe (Metropolitan State University of Denver), “Introspection and the Limits of Human Nature: Augustine on Why I Need to Know and Love God over Self”

Augustine is committed to eudaimonism: every choice I make is for the sake of my own happiness. Yet he grounds his ethics in the claim that I should love God more than myself. How do these claims cohere? I explain why Augustine thinks introspection enables me to see that I should love God as the ultimate good. For Augustine, seeing my own lack of determinacy and need for learning and improvement shows me that I am not happy and self-sufficient by nature, but also that I am the kind of thing that can become better by knowing what is true and loving what is good. In knowing and loving truth itself and the unchanging good, I become something worth knowing and loving. If I turn towards myself as ultimate, I ask too much of a nature that is insufficient, on its own, for happiness. For Augustine, these facts about what I am and what an appropriate object of love and knowledge could be are evident to all who reflect carefully and inwardly. Because of this, he consistently attacks the Stoics and other philosophers who have pridefully ignored these

introspective truths in order to attempt to find happiness for themselves in this life through their own efforts.

Scott MacDonald (Cornell University), “Augustine’s Ontology of Cognition in *Soliloquia*: An Early Turning Point”

In his early *Soliloquia* (386/7) Augustine appeals to a principle of ontological inherence derived from Aristotle's *Categories* to argue for the immortality of the rational mind: if the mind cognizes eternal intelligibles, and if cognition of that sort requires that those intelligibles inhere in the mind as in a subject inseparably (as Aristotelian particular accidents inhere in substances), then the mind must be immortal. But in his unfinished sketch of a projected third book of *Soliloquia* (known to us as *De immortalitate animae*) Augustine articulates misgivings about construing cognition in terms of ontological inherence. Those misgivings explain why the *Soliloquia* project was never completed: Augustine recognizes that a crucial premise of the argument for immortality cannot be substantiated. Abandoning ontological inherence, however, opens up for Augustine a new and productive path in his search for an account of our cognition of intelligible objects, a path he will frequent for the remainder of his career.

### Panel

**Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt University), “Arabic and Western Philosophy in Dialogue”**

Classical Arabic philosophy exerted a profound influence on Western philosophy, shaping debates in semantics, metaphysics, philosophical psychology, and ethics. This panel brings Arabic philosophy—specifically, Avicenna and Averroes—into dialogue with Western philosophy—Aquinas and Kant in particular—to illuminate both the reception of Arabic philosophy and its enduring philosophical relevance. The first paper examines a long-standing criticism leveled by Averroes and Aquinas against Avicenna's semantics of paronymous terms, arguing that the doctrine they criticize was not in fact Avicenna's and that his actual position is one Aquinas himself endorses. The second paper traces the

Avicennian sources of Aquinas's metaphysics, demonstrating that Avicenna's *Liber de Philosophia Prima* provides the crucial foundation for Aquinas's distinction between positively and neutrally immaterial being, as well as for his understanding of form as a principle of esse. The third paper turns to ethics, exploring the ethical significance of Avicenna's "floating man" thought experiment. It argues that the self-consciousness depicted in the experiment is a priori and objectual (de re) intuition, which grants humans access to the noumenal realm. It then considers the prospects of developing an Avicennian dignitarianism in contemporary Islamic ethics similar to Kantian dignitarianism.

### Papers

Nathaniel Taylor (Catholic University of America), "Averroes, Aquinas, and Avicenna on the Signification of Paronymous Terms"

Averroes and Aquinas criticized Avicenna for having taught that concrete accident-terms like 'white' primarily signify the subject in which the accident whiteness inheres and only secondarily signifies the accident whiteness. Since these criticisms, scholars in both antiquity and in the modern day have associated this semantic doctrine with Avicenna. But did Avicenna really teach this doctrine? In this study, I argue that Avicenna does not teach the doctrine criticized by Averroes and Aquinas. Further, I argue that the semantic doctrine that Avicenna does in fact teach is one to which Aquinas is committed.

Seth Kreeger (Marquette University), "Avicenna and Aquinas on Neutrally Immaterial Being and Form as a Principle of Esse"

The present paper examines two important studies, one by John Wippel and the other by R.E. Houser, on the importance of Avicenna for Aquinas' understanding of the nature of metaphysics. It then considers an overlooked text from the Latin Avicenna's *Liber de Philosophia Prima* I.2 which seems to serve as the crucial source text for Aquinas' distinction between what Wippel has term "positively" and "neutrally" immaterial being. This Avicennian text then presents the occasion to further consider how form is a principle

of being, Avicenna's continued discussion of this principle in *Liber de Philosophia Prima* II.4 and its adoption by Aquinas. As such, this study suggest that not only is Avicenna of central importance for the Thomistic essence-existence distinction, but that Avicenna is also the central philosophical source for Aquinas' understanding of the intimate relationship of form and esse such that being is only given in and through form (*forma dat esse*).

Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt University), The Ethics of the "Floating Man": Human Dignity in Avicenna?

The metaphysical and psychological aspects of Avicenna's "floating man" thought experiment have been well studied. In this paper, I explore its ethical significance. I argue that the self-consciousness of the floating man suggests ethical dignitarianism not unlike Kant's. I begin by showing that this self-consciousness is not a posteriori or innate knowledge, but rather a priori and intuitive. Against empiricist interpretations that construe this self-consciousness as experiential, I contend that the very purpose of Avicenna's thought experiment is to depict a person devoid of all sensory input who nonetheless apprehends his own existence. Furthermore, Avicenna's anti-innatism, consistent with the Aristotelian tradition, rules out contentual nativism. I then demonstrate that this intuition is objectual (*de re*) rather than propositional, since what the floating man immediately attains is an awareness of his existence as a substantive object, not propositional content. On this basis, I contend that the intuitive character of self-consciousness grants humans access to the noumenal realm. The experiment depicts humans as twofold subjects straddling two worlds: the sensible and the intelligible. Finally, I consider the prospects of developing an Avicennian dignitarianism in contemporary Islamic ethics through a synthetic approach that creatively engages Avicenna's psychology, Kant's ethics, and analytic intuitionism. The access to the noumenal realm in the experiment grounds human dignity in a material world where everything else has price but not dignity. The *de re* intuition of self-consciousness thus underwrites a corresponding *de re* attitude of respect toward humans—the feeling Kant identified as respect for persons as ends in themselves.

## Panel

### **Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt University), “Arabic Philosophy: Themes in Avicenna”**

This session explores three central themes in Avicenna's philosophy: (i) his theology and its compatibility with religious commitments, (ii) his account of the soul and its relation to the body, and (iii) certainty, necessity, and innateness in his rationalism. The first paper examines Avicenna's discussion of sainthood to show how his often-criticized impersonal theology can nevertheless accommodate a conception of divine responsiveness to human beings. The second paper defends Avicenna's account of the soul against the prevailing scholarly consensus, arguing that he possesses the resources to consistently uphold the co-origination of soul and body, substance dualism, and the survival of the soul after death. The third paper intervenes in the debate over Avicenna's rationalism by examining certainty, necessity, and innateness in Avicenna, concluding that his defense of necessary and logically certain, substantive knowledge places him within the rationalist tradition. Together, these papers demonstrate the enduring significance of Avicenna's philosophical system for questions in theology, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and epistemology.

## Papers

Rosabel Ansari (Stony Brook University), “Does God Love Those Who Love Him? Avicenna on Sainthood”

For centuries, readers of Avicenna have debated whether his theology and conception of God is compatible with religious teachings. The question of God's love for the saints is a part of this broader issue which seeks to probe how Avicenna accounts for the teachings of religious scripture such as the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions and if he does so successfully. In his major, canonical works Avicenna presents God as a deity that knows and loves itself. This deity is said to know creation only in a universal way insofar as the former is the principle of the latter. Given that Avicenna also construes God as the Necessary Being from which creation comes forth necessarily, the Avicennan conception of

God is thus often understood to entail an impersonal theology that cannot account for religious beliefs and practices. In this paper, however, I examine Avicenna's discussion of sainthood, or the divine-like souls, to show how he can be understood to provide a religious philosophy that accounts for a relationship between God and human beings. These saintly individuals are said to be those who, loving God, grasp or attain (*nayl*) God's manifestation in the world. Critically, he then provides an explanation of what it means to say that God loves those who love him. Using this explanation, I show how we can find a basis for an Avicennan account of divine responsiveness to human beings. As I explore, the saints can be said to fulfil the telos of creation through becoming divine-like, thereby serving as a lynchpin for the God-world dyadic relationship. Thus, while Avicennan metaphysics and theology was repudiated by certain religious authorities, it can nevertheless be understood to accommodate and indeed ground major religious commitments.

Seyed Mousavian (Loyola University Chicago), "Avicenna on Soul, Body, and Eschatology"

The prevailing consensus among medievalists and Avicenna scholars, e.g. Van den Bergh, Davidson, Bäck, Druart, Hasse, and Black, to mention some, is that Avicenna's account of the human soul, especially with respect to its origination, individuation, and survival, is unsatisfactory, incomplete, obscure, or ultimately refutable. In this paper, I argue against this consensus. The crux of the problem lies in the fact that Avicenna is committed to three theses that, taken together, appear incompatible: Co-Origination (CO), Substance Dualism (SD), and the Survival of the Soul (SS). According to (CO), the human soul is temporally co-originated with the human body. According to (SD), the human soul and the human body are two distinct substances. According to (SS), the human soul can survive the corruption of the human body. Various post-Avicennan positions reject one or another of these theses. Some Muslim Neoplatonists reject (CO), holding that the human soul pre-exists the body. Some Muslim Neo-Aristotelians reject (SD), maintaining that the human soul is merely the form of the human body, rather than a distinct substance. Finally, Averroes, in some of his writings, rejects (SS), denying that an individual human soul survives as an individual human soul after death. I argue that Avicenna offers two resources that allow him to

consistently uphold all three theses. My proposal is that the human soul, as a (modally) contingent and (temporally) originated abstract (immaterial) object, is individuated by miscellaneous principles synchronically and diachronically, that is, at a single time and across time. After supporting this account with textual evidence, I address several standard objections to Avicenna's position and respond to further, hypothetical challenges. As a corollary, I re-argue against a common interpretation, defended by Gutas, Hasse, Michot, among others, according to which humans share an animal soul with non-human animals. I show that this interpretation conflates two distinct senses of animal soul: (i) the form of a non-human animal body, and (ii) a faculty of an immaterial substance, namely, the rational soul.

Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt University), "Necessity, Certainty, and Innateness in Avicenna's Rationalism"

This paper focuses on a debate among the historians of medieval philosophy as to whether Avicenna's epistemology is rationalist or empirical. To settle the debate, historians have so far focused almost entirely on whether Avicenna invokes emanation or abstraction to acquire the intelligible forms. In this paper, I broaden the debate by articulating two core theses of rationalism: (i) innatism, the view that the mind starts out with certain basic truths or concepts, and (ii) necessitarianism (or certaintism), the view that we can attain necessary or logically certain and substantive knowledge. The former has been insufficiently discussed while the latter has been entirely neglected in the debate. Regarding innatism, I examine two candidates in Avicenna's philosophy: the propositions called *fiṭriyyāt* and the primary concepts of "the existent," "the thing," and "the necessary." I argue that Avicenna is not committed to innatism because the *fiṭriyyāt* are analytic rather than synthetic a priori and the primary concepts are logically but not epistemologically prior to other concepts, consistent with the peripatetic axiom that nothing is in the intellect unless first in the senses. However, I contend, Avicenna is strongly committed in his natural philosophy to necessitarianism. This commitment is evident in his view that the "experientials," which are the major substantive principles of demonstrative syllogisms, are necessarily and certainly true. Avicenna's defense of the principle of sufficient reason

further attests to his necessitarianism. I conclude that this necessitarianism subscribes Avicenna to rationalism. This finding helps us understand Avicenna's natural philosophy and legacy in a new light, suggesting that we should view him as a metaphysician seeking eternal necessary truths rather than as a scientist conducting empirical research revealing contingent facts.

## Panel

### **Jordan Lavender (Texas A&M University), "Peter Auriol's Metaphysics"**

This session features new work on Peter Auriol's metaphysics.

## Papers

Giacomo Fornasieri (Catholic University of America), "In Praise of Finitude. Peter Auriol on Individuality, Singularity, and Universality"

This paper reconstructs Peter Auriol's account of individuality and its foundational role in his theory of universals. Auriol argues that every extra-mental item is brutally individual, which means for him that every extra-mental item is brutally non-instantiable. At the same time, Auriol contends that non-instantiable extra-mental items come in two types: singulars and individuals. A singular is a non-instantiable extra-mental item such that it is logically impossible for other co-specific items to exist; an individual, by contrast, is a non-instantiable extra-mental item such that it is logically possible for other co-specific items to exist. The reason why individuals are such that it is logically possible for other co-specific items to exist is that they are finite, non-instantiable items. What Auriol means by that is that an individual exhibits a finite portion of a kind, and this is a primitive feature of theirs. The only singular item Auriol allows for is God. On Auriol's view, then, finitude is key to why individuals, unlike singulars, are capable of dividing a species and thus supporting universal concepts. For it is necessary for something to be an individual for the mind form a concept of it that can be applied to other non-instantiable items. In a nutshell, then, finitude

grounds individuality and makes universal cognition possible. The paper concludes by showing that Auriol's position entails that universals are rooted in extra-mental reality precisely because reality is composed of finite individuals, making finitude and individuality conditions for scientific knowledge and human cognition.

Richard Cross (University of Notre Dame), "Peter Auriol on the Distinction of Persons in the Trinity"

Peter Auriol maintains that the divine persons are distinguished from each other even though none of them includes anything not included by the others. He attempts to make this plausible by considering a parallel case in which this kind of distinction might exist: namely, the transcendental being. As Auriol sees it, different kinds of substance (and accident) are distinct from each other without being in any sense distinct from being. He maintains, against Scotus, that the whatever distinguishes being into different kinds of substance or accident cannot be excluded from being, and thus cannot be conceptualized as something added to being. And, he argues, what goes for transcendental being goes for the First Being too: what distinguishes the divine persons cannot fail to be included in the divine essence, and thus cannot be something in any way added to or subtracted from that essence.

### Panel

#### **James Pepe (Saint Louis University), "Angels All the Way Down"**

Angels were never far from the minds of medieval thinkers. Indeed, angels seem to pop up in the unlikeliest of discussions. In this session, our three presenters will discuss topics of metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mind, and angels will find their way into all these conversations. Fr. Adrian Patrick McCaffery, OP will discuss angelic knowledge and the communication of that knowledge between the angels themselves. His paper will argue that Thomas Aquinas resolves the problem of intentionality for the angelic intellect more robustly than John Duns Scotus by grounding intentionality in intrinsic formal identity

rather than an extrinsic relation. Prof. James Kintz will discuss mindreading and why, somewhat counterintuitively, according to Aquinas, humans seem to be able to know the “secrets of the heart” of other humans better than the angels would know the secrets of the heart of other humans. From these considerations, Prof. Kintz will draw out some important implications for both human and angelic cognition. Prof. Eleonore Stump will discuss a puzzle in Aquinas's metaphysics. The puzzle goes like this: It is not possible for a perfectly good God to remove goodness from the world unless by doing so he produces more goodness in the world. But annihilating something by itself does not produce more goodness in the world. Therefore, as Aquinas recognizes, it seems to follow that God cannot annihilate a creature. And yet in multiple places Aquinas maintains that God can annihilate an angel. In her talk, Prof. Stump will unravel this puzzle for us.

### Papers

Fr. Adrian Patrick McCaffery, OP (The Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas),  
“Architectonic Minds: Aquinas on Angelic Infused Knowledge and Communication Against the Scotist Alternative”

For the human intellect, the problem of intentionality is typically framed as an epistemic gap between a mental state and an external object. This paper argues that Thomas Aquinas resolves this problem for the angelic intellect more robustly than John Duns Scotus by grounding intentionality in intrinsic formal identity rather than an extrinsic relation. While Scotus's theory of intuitive cognition requires a direct gaze to verify the existence of singulars, I argue that this move improperly imposes an empirical dependence on the angelic mind. By making the immaterial intellect a spectator of the external world, Scotus renders the angel secondary to the external presence of the object. In contrast, Aquinas posits that the angel knows reality through infused species, thereby resolving intentionality through the internal perfection of the angelic essence itself. The angel, therefore, possesses an architectonic intellect: it does not reach out to discover reality but knows the world through the blueprints by which that reality is constituted. On this framework, intentionality is not a reaction to the presence of a thing, but a participation in divine

knowledge that precedes the thing. This Thomistic resolution finds its logical fulfillment in angelic locution or communication. If angelic intentionality is defined by the internal possession of infused species rather than an outward gaze, then communication can't be a generative data transfer of information that the other lacks (the Scotist model). Instead, I defend the Thomistic view of volitional illumination: an act of the will by which the angel directs the peer's attention toward specific truths already possessed through their shared species. By framing communication as a deliberate orientation of the will rather than a passive acquisition by the intellect, Aquinas preserves for angels interior privacy. The angelic mind remains a private interiority, unlocked only through free and personal acts of self-revelation.

James Kintz (Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology), "Why Can't Angels Know Our Secret Thoughts?: An Exploration of Aquinas's Understanding of Mindreading"

According to the Theory Theory model of mindreading, we come to know another person's mental states by observing her behavior and then formulating a theory to explain that behavior. By contrast, Interaction Theory suggests that we know another's mental states through our interpersonal interactions--we don't need to observe the other's behavior and then draw more or less probabilistic inferences to explain it, for we experience the other's mental states directly in our meaningful and contextualized social interactions. While Thomas Aquinas does not offer an explicit account of mindreading, in a handful of passages he makes it clear that angels are not able to know the "secret thoughts" of human beings, and the reasons that he gives suggests that he would endorse a Theory Theory account. Indeed, he indicates that angels, who have superior intellects to humans, must observe our bodily behavior and draw inferences concerning what we are likely experiencing. While this may yield reliable knowledge of what a given human is thinking or feeling, Aquinas is clear that it could not produce intimate or certain knowledge of that person's mental states. This is surprising, though, for at least two reasons. First, given that Aquinas embraces a hylomorphic ontology of the human person, mental states are always embodied, and as such should be at least potentially cognitively available to others, including angels. Second, in select passages Aquinas implies that human beings can know another's mental states in

a non-inferential and intimate way, and since we have weaker intellects it is unclear how we could achieve knowledge that angels cannot. Nevertheless, by highlighting the roles of embodiment and the will in human acts of cognition, I will suggest that while Aquinas does indeed embrace a Theory Theory account for angelic mindreading, he at least implicitly endorses Interaction Theory for human mindreading. After discussing the cognitive and conative powers involved in human mindreading, I will close by offering what I take to be important implications concerning human and angelic modes of cognition.

Eleonore Stump (Saint Louis University), "Can God Annihilate an Angel?"

As Aquinas explains creation, insofar as God is the creator and creating is making aliquid out of nothing, then in creating God is making being out of nothing. And since goodness is a transcendental, it follows that the being which God creates is good. Taken together these claims give rise to a number of puzzles. For example, if God is perfectly good, he must want to maximize being in order to maximize the goodness in the world. But then it seems that it was necessary for God to create, contrary to the Christian doctrine, which Aquinas accepts, that God was free to create or not create. This is a puzzle that is well-known and discussed in the secondary literature; but in my paper I want to focus on a less frequently discussed puzzle resulting from the same claims. It is not possible for a perfectly good God to remove goodness from the world unless by doing so he produces more goodness in the world. But annihilating something by itself does not produce more goodness in the world. Therefore, as Aquinas recognizes, it seems to follow that God cannot annihilate a creature. And yet in multiple places Aquinas maintains that God can annihilate an angel. In this short paper, my aim is to sketch the puzzle and point to the reasons Aquinas himself gives to resolve it.