

gerous, because it abstracts from that notion of the logical priority of Nature to which St. Thomas attached such importance.

If I used an image which seemed (and seems) to me best to express the mind of St. Thomas in non-technical form, rather than the other images showered upon me by Fr. White, it is because I was trying to follow St. Thomas.

I note that he does not deal with the more important parts of my letter, and that in particular he does not criticise the four points showing the incompatibility of Industrialism with Catholic philosophy. Can it be that he concurs? If so, I should be tempted to respond by adopting his suggested image of Spring and Resurrection, which would serve quite well (albeit on a non-Thomist basis) to illustrate the exact thesis of my book.

Yours faithfully,

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January 13th, 1939.

Father Victor White replies :

I fear that Mr. Robbins takes the implications of his 'superstructure' image more seriously than I had supposed. He appeals to St. Thomas. To St. Thomas he shall go.

Grace, St. Thomas teaches (*IaIIae*, cx. 2), is not a substance, but an *accidens*, i.e. not a *quod* (like a superstructure) but a *quo*. It is, moreover, a *qualitas*, i.e. that *whereby* something is *qualis* (viz. Deo gratum). That which it thus 'qualifies' is the very essence of the soul (*ibid.* art. 4).

'Grace presupposes nature,' therefore, as an *accidens* presupposes its subject, i.e. as a *qualitas* presupposes that which it 'qualifies'; therefore, as act presupposes the potency which it actualises, not as one actuality (a superstructure) presupposes another actuality (the substructure). In other words, grace presupposes nature *materialiter*, not *formaliter* or *efficienter* (cf. *De Ver.* xxvii. 3).

'Grace perfects nature'; i.e. it is (as Penguin has pointed out elsewhere) grace itself which perfects nature, not nature which perfects itself for grace. Still less is the perfection of grace in human (as distinct from the angelic—cf. *Summa* I, lxii. 6) nature conditioned or measured by natural perfections, endowments or possessions.

In fact, nature *cannot* dispose or prepare itself for grace without grace (I^oII^{ae}. cix. 6). This is defined by Trent (Sess. VI, cann. 3 *sqq.*).

The reference to 'a sufficiency of those bodily goods whose use is necessary for an act of virtue' cannot by any stretch of imagination be an application of the revealed doctrine of grace and nature. It is in fact borrowed from the heathen Aristotle who knew nothing about grace. It concerns the *exercise* (act) of *virtue*, it has nothing directly to do with the possession or non-possession of grace. It is true (and of great importance) that the *exercise* of grace through certain virtues demands 'bodily goods'; but this in no wise makes them or the nature which uses them prior, preliminary and basic to the free grace of God.

I suspect that all Mr. Robbins wants to say is that it is possible and desirable to remove (*a*) the temporal obstacles to the reception of God's grace, and (*b*) the temporal obstacles to the exercise of grace through the infused virtues. But unfortunately his language suggests an autonomism of nature with respect to grace and a doctrine of the 'logical priority' (as distinct from the purely material priority) of nature which must seriously compromise the movement which he represents. I cannot agree that other matter in his earlier letter is of comparable importance, or of such direct relevance to my article as to call for comment from me. But I must confess that I find his reduction of contemporary social and economic evils to so vague a term as 'industrialism'—covering as it does so vast a complex of things good, bad and indifferent—to be so general and indefinite a diagnosis that I personally am incapable either of assent or dissent. That the evils he enumerates are to be attributed to *certain elements* in that complex is unquestionable. But I feel, personally, that attacks on so general an objective fail to hit anything in particular, and leave us all very much where we were.

(*This correspondence is now closed.—ED.*)