

## THE ETHICS OF JOHN CAPREOLUS AND THE “NOMINALES”\*

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In his discussion about moral theology, Capreolus shows an impartial way of presenting the positions of the *moderni*. Capreolus was aware of the differences between the authors of this group. With respect to the notion of grace, he even regarded Aquinas’s position as a happy medium between authors who were later attributed to the *via moderna*. The topics touched upon on this realm were not exposed to polemics. This can be explained by the explicitly theological character of the dispute. While Capreolus’s polemics were directed against the use of theological tools in philosophical discussion, the realm of theology itself does not present a place of conflict. His discussion of moral theology does not mention voluntarism. These concepts were not part of how the moral theology of the later called *via moderna* was understood at the beginning of the 15th century.

### I. JOHN CAPREOLUS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE VIAE

John Capreolus (known as the “prince of Thomists”),<sup>1</sup> is a most interesting figure for understanding the beginning of Late Medieval philo-

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<sup>1</sup> We still do not know who baptized him this way. Serge-Thomas Bonino informs us that John Mair, a Parisian master at the end of the fifteenth century, called Capreolus “thomistarum longe primus”, but that we do not know who first gave him the title of a *princeps*. For indications on the reception of Capreolus and biographical literature cf. S.-Th. Bonino O.P.: ‘Albert le Grand dans les Defensiones de Jean Cabrol (†1444)’, *Revue Thomiste* 99, 1999 : 370, n. 2.

sophical schools and their division into *via moderna* and *via antiqua*.<sup>2</sup> It is well known that John Capreolus' Commentary on the Sentences was used to interpret Aquinas alongside Cardinal Cajetan's Commentary on the Summa,<sup>3</sup> after the division between the "two ways" and their institutionalisation in Universities and Studies of the Orders was already established. But there was little interest up to now in the fact that he was most influential in engendering that very separation between the two streams of thought.<sup>4</sup>

### *I.I. The intellectual background*

The situation in Paris at the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century was a confused situation in which people were looking for points of orientation. The Catholic church was divided between two popes.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The earliest document for the methodological separation of the "old" and the "new" way dates from 1414: cf. A. G. Weiler, *Heinrich von Gorkum* (†1431). *Seine Stellung in der Philosophie und Theologie des Spätmittelalters*, Hilversum: Benziger, 1962: 57–58. Before the 15th century, there was no doctrinal understanding of the differences and no institutionalisation of a certain method within the curriculum of a University. John Capreolus is therefore an important example for the formation of a doctrinal understanding of the "old" and the "new" way of doing philosophy and therefore of a new type of "Thomism" which is clearly distinct from both the first "thomists" who were spontaneous followers of Saint Thomas up to his canonization in 1323, and from the orientation toward St. Thomas within the Dominican Order during the 14th century. The same distinction needs to be made with regard of the "Ockhamists", "nominalists", or "Buridanists" before the institutionalization of the *via moderna* from the late fourteenth and early 15th century on. For a critical study see W. J. Courtenay: 'In search of Nominalism. Two Centuries of Historical Debate', in: R. Imbach & A. Maierù (eds.): *Gli Studi di filosofia medievale fra otto e novecento*, Rome: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1991: 233–251.

<sup>3</sup> A good example is the recommendation of the General Chapter of the Dominicans held in Salamanca in 1551, to use Capreolus and Cajetan wherever difficulties in the interpretation of Thomas arise. Cf. J. Theiner: *Die Entwicklung der Moralthologie zur eigenständigen (Disziplin Studien zur Geschichte der kath. Moralthologie 17)*, Regensburg: Pustet, 1970: 334.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Grabmann saw this when he mentioned in his famous article that in the second half of the fourteenth century nobody saw the necessity to defend St. Thomas against the *nominales*, and that John Capreolus at that time was the first to do this. Cf. M. Grabmann: 'Johannes Capreolus O.P. der "Princeps Thomistarum" (†7 April 1444) und seine Stellung in der Geschichte der Thomistenschule. Ein Gedenkblatt zu seinem fünfshundertjährigen Todestag', *Divus Thomas* 22, 1944: 87.

<sup>5</sup> On the connection between the schism and apocalyptic visions, cf. L. A. Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars. The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 85–101.

Furthermore, the political opposition between France and England represented the existing tensions and the contrasting points of orientation outside the university. These ecclesiastical and secular–political divisions were not without some impact on the different nation-based colleges at the University and on the flux of scholars.

Inside the university, philosophical discussion had reached a dead end. Aquinas’ model for integrating philosophy and theology (which can be regarded as the result of the discussions during the last third of the thirteenth century) had been put into question by Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and some of his followers from a logical and a theological point of view. On the other hand, an extreme version of “Ockhamism” had also been banished from the university.<sup>6</sup> There was no way to build a bridge between the two philosophical systems (that is, the Thomistically-inspired and the versions of Ockhamism). Fearing the extremes, many scholars at the arts faculty opted for less extreme positions like the one presented by Buridan. But, most “Buridanists” had left the university of Paris at the beginning of the 15th century and gave way for the rise of a new realistic movement.<sup>7</sup>

This situation also showed effects in the theological faculty at the end of the 14th century. There were basically two options: either the strengthening philosophical reasoning in the way of the *antiqui*, i.e., Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, in order to defend Christian theology *ad extra* and render it plausible to human reason. The other basic option one finds is the strengthening of theology for its own sake, defending it *ad intra* and stressing faith as the most important element. This was a view of theology which used the results of fourteenth century philosophy with its emphasis on logic in theology while turning back to Bonaventura and the Church Fathers, especially to Augustine.

John Capreolus took his position in favour of the harmony of philosophy and theology as it was developed by Aquinas. Since he saw

<sup>6</sup> For an overview on the continuing discussion on the exact interpretation of the university documents from 1339 and 1340, cf. Z. Kaluza, ‘Les sciences et leurs langages. Note sur le statut du 29 décembre 1340 et le prétendu statut perdu contre Ockham’, in: L. Bianchi (ed.): *Filosofia e teologia nel trecento. Studi in ricordo di Eugenio Randi (Textes et études du moyen âge 1)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1994: 197, n. 1.

<sup>7</sup> For literature and an interpretation of the anti-nominalist polemic by the first Albertists at the arts faculty in its relationship to Capreolus, cf. S. Müller, ‘Sprache, Wirklichkeit und Allmacht Gottes. Das Bild der *via moderna* bei Johannes Capreolus (1380–1444) und seine Bedeutung für die Schulbildung im 15. Jahrhundert’, in: J. A. Aertsen & M. Pickavé (eds.): *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 31)*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004: 157–172.

the second way of doing philosophy as disastrous, he could not refrain from some polemic remarks where the discussion touched what really was at stake: the right understanding of the world by using Aristotelian tools and the possibility of scientific knowledge. Due to the way he defended his position, Capreolus contributed to cementing the division between two opposing ways of thought. These would then be called the *via moderna* and *via antiqua* and would come to dominate the curricula of the newly founded universities in the northern part of Europe.

### *1.2. A new type of Commentary on Peter Lombard*

The concrete role which John Capreolus played in the development of the *viae* is twofold. On the one hand, he was the starting point for school-specific Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. Whereas before him, Commentaries on the Sentences were not qualified any further than by adding the name of the author, Capreolus started to extend the title by calling his Commentary *Defensiones Sancti Thomae*, and so he became the starting point for Commentaries “*secundum mentem Sancti Thomae*.” This type of commentary discussed the opinions which were contrary to Aquinas and tried to refute them with Aquinas’ own words or, if this was not possible, constructed a new argument according to the thought of Thomas Aquinas. The solution corresponded to Aquinas. A position of one’s own was not necessary nor was it explicitly given.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of hiding one’s position behind an authority, as we find it in Capreolus’ *Defensiones*, corresponded to the general attitude developed by the Faculty of Theology of Paris at time. This situation was marked by the schismatic division of the Catholic Church in which the faculty gained power and influence as never before.<sup>9</sup> This is shown by calls for the restoration of sound theology which marked the conservative tendencies at the University of Paris since John Gerson became Chancellor in 1395 (and already before that, since Gerson’s rules for theology can be traced back to the thought of his predecessor as Chancellor, Peter of Ailly). A leading thread in Gerson’s works is the warning not to look for new theories, not to be “curious”, but to stick

<sup>8</sup> This attitude was accompanied by a strict exegesis of text of Aquinas which contrasts with 14th century lack of concern for literal quotations. Cf. Bonino (1999: 418, n. 2).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. H. Denifle O.P. & A. Chatelain (eds.): *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis III (1350–1394)*, Paris: Didier, 1894: VIII and 486.

with the old tradition, which meant for him a return to authors like Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas. Though Gerson later would be regarded as a nominalist because of his anti-realistic actions at the Council of Constance, he defended and recommended the thirteenth century authors for theological studies, as the followers of the *via antiqua* would do. John Capreolus is not at all fond of the chancellor—he tells us that he was criticized by Gerson for some opinions he defended,<sup>10</sup> and we know that Gerson was part of the university delegation against John of Montesono,<sup>11</sup> which meant effectively against the Dominicans of the province of Toulouse, Capreolus’ place of origin. Nevertheless, Capreolus’ attitude fits Gerson’s call for reforms within the university perfectly.

### 1.3. *A new type of labelling*

Apart from creating a new *genus* of academic literature, John Capreolus also provides a most interesting testimonial to the “labelling” which took place with respect to the late medieval *via moderna*. Though it covered a minimal part of his work, Capreolus was famous for his polemics against the “nominalists”<sup>12</sup> in which he claimed that their errors in philosophy were based on a false use of the doctrine of Divine Omnipotence, and he ascribed these errors collectively to the *moderni* or *terministae* (namely Ockham, Adam Wodeham and Gregory of Rimini). However, a close look reveals that in the detailed discussions of the rest of his work the doctrine of omnipotence had not presented any point of conflict with authors which would later be attributed to the *via moderna*. Instead, Capreolus named the different understanding of the relationship between language and reality as the real dividing line between Aquinas and the *moderni*.<sup>13</sup> Capreolus’ polemical attribution of the abuse of the doctrine of the divine omnipotence to the *nominales* was taken over and became so dominant in the history of late medieval philosophical schools that even the latest research which has pointed out the limits of this view does not meet yet with general acceptance. Typical for this kind of labelling (and of the late medieval *via moderna* in general) is that it collects together a series of authors in spite of their

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bonino (1999 : n. 2, 372, n. 17).

<sup>11</sup> P. Glorieux (ed.): *Jean Gerson. L'œuvre polémique (Œuvres complètes 10)*, Paris: Desclée, 1973 : 3.

<sup>12</sup> John Capreolus does not use this term, instead he talks of *terministae* and *moderni*.

<sup>13</sup> For an interpretation of the polemic passages cf. Müller (2004 : n. 8).

considerable doctrinal differences, and understands them as the representatives of a common stream of thought. Capreolus was one of the first people who not only saw Gregory of Rimini and the *terministae* or *moderni* as followers of William of Ockham, but who called Ockham the “father” of the group and said that its members followed Ockham’s testament.<sup>14</sup>

It seems as if not all the labels of the *via moderna* had been attributed to it at the same time. The polemics of John Capreolus about the use of Divine Omnipotence as an argument in philosophical disputes had its historical setting in the discussions between the Parisian Faculty of Theology and the Dominicans about the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas from 1387 onwards. In a document written on behalf of the theological faculty, Peter of Ailly accused Aquinas of having an understanding of omnipotence which was too philosophical and did not respect the doctrine of the Eucharist.<sup>15</sup> John Capreolus’ polemics seem to be a reply to this reproach: he defended Aquinas and reproached his enemies’ false use of the doctrine of omnipotence. Understanding when the first and most important “label” of the *via moderna* was attributed to the *moderni*, makes one aware of the historical contingency that needs to be respected in order to reconstruct the history of this school of thought.

These premises will be the point of departure for looking at John Capreolus’ discussion with the “representatives” of the *via moderna* in the field of moral theology. This is a very significant field for the historiography of the *via moderna*, since some of most characteristic descriptions of it have been made with respect to moral thought: the vision of a “Divine Command Morality” characterised by voluntarism and Divine Omnipotence.<sup>16</sup> We will find that the discussion on moral thought is much more differentiated and does not even touch Divine Commands.

<sup>14</sup> Def. II S d. 2 q. 2 a. 3, ad arg. c. 4, ad arg. Gregorii, 9° (III, 190a); C. Paban & T. Pègues (eds.): *Johannes Capreolus, Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis I–VII*, Tours: Cattier, 1900–1908. All the following quotations are made according to this edition.

<sup>15</sup> Tractatus ex parte Universitatis Studii Parisiensis pro causa Fidei, contra quemdam Fratrem Johannem de Montesono Ordinis Pradicatorum editus a Petro de Alliaco Epsicopo et Cardinalis Cameracensi circa annum 1388, in: C. Duplessis (ed.): *Collectio Iudiciorum de novis erroribus qui ab initio duodecimi seculi post Incarnationem Verbi, usque ad annum 1632 in Ecclesia proscripti sunt et notati I (1100–1542)*, Paris, 1728: 128.

<sup>16</sup> There are many questions with regard to this label for the moral theory of the *via moderna*. Not only has the interpretation of Ockham’s ethical thought as a “Divine Command Theory of Eternal Destiny” (McCord Adams) be questioned, but there is still not enough evidence of the real impact of the ethical theory of William of Ockham on the moral teaching of the *via moderna*, since for the ethical training at the Arts Faculty Buridan’s commentary on Aristotle was used, and the reception of Ockham’s commen-

2. *THE DISCUSSION ON MORAL THEOLOGY*

If we follow Grabmann in saying that John Capreolus was defending Aquinas against “nominalism”, we can do so only having already said before that in the ranking of opponents (taking into account the frequency of quotation and discussion) a “nominalist” occupies only the third place. The main opponent of John Capreolus was Peter Aureol, followed by John Duns Scotus and then Gregory of Rimini. Thus we are narrowing the perspective when we look specifically at the points of discussions between Capreolus at one side and Gregory of Rimini, Adam Wodeham and William of Ockham on the other side.<sup>17</sup>

However, the result will be disappointing if one expects to find any information about one of the “typical” ingredients of nominalistic ethics, as the concept of a voluntaristic God who gives arbitrary commands to human beings, or the image of human beings who by using their natural reason cannot be certain of fulfilling the divine precepts. The discussion about moral theology that actually took place can be divided in three fields: divine fruition, free will and the concept of grace.<sup>18</sup>

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tary on the sentences before the late 15th century within the Theological Faculty still needs to be examined. For a succinct overview on the traditional and recent interpretation of Ockham’s moral thought, cf. S. Müller: *Handeln in einer kontingenten Welt. Zu Begriff und Bedeutung der rechten Vernunft (recta ratio) bei Wilhelm von Ockham*, Tübingen & Basel: Francke, 2000: 23–41; a new overview is given in: P. V. Spade (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 227–373. For a critical view on the use of Divine Power in 14th century thought, cf. W. J. Courtenay: *Capacity and Volition. A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power (Quodlibet 8)*, Bergamo: Lubrina, 1990.

<sup>17</sup>The three names are ordered according to their frequency of quotation. While Gregory, in the first volume of the edition is quoted 43 times, Adam nine times and Ockham only three times. The relationship remains the same; in book four (volumes VI and VII of the edition), the *moderni* are not mentioned again, which may be due to the circumstances of the redaction of the work. Cf. Bonino (1999:n. 2, 374–375).

<sup>18</sup>The discussion on virtue takes place without any reference to one of the *moderni*. Cf. John Capreolus: *On the virtues*. Translated by Kevin White and Romanus Cessario, O.P. with a Foreword by Servais Pinckaers, O.P., Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001. For understanding how late medieval philosophical schools worked, further research is needed on the relationship between philosophical training in ethics during the Arts studies, (which in the *via moderna* would follow John Buridan) and the moral theology which was developed in the commentaries on the Sentences, treatises, bible exegesis and academic preaching.

### 2.1. *Divine fruition, or: the ultimate good*

In the first distinction of book I of the *Defensiones*, John Capreolus discussed the opinions of Gregory of Rimini and Adam Wodeham. Capreolus did not refer to Gregory as defending terministic opinions, but he criticized him point by point on the grounds of his identification of the volition (*velle*) with love (*dilectio*), tranquillity (*complacentia*) and fruition (*fruitio*). Capreolus himself defended a real distinction between the three different acts of the will, especially between love (*amor*) and *delectatio* or fruition, which he interpreted as the special pleasure resulting from the activity of the intellect directed towards its optimal object, God. He described the relationship between the three acts as a sequence of steps leading to fruition: It starts from a vision that regards its ultimate good in general and can be properly called love (*amor*), followed by the presence of the ultimate good (which would be called *comprehensio*). What Capreolus aimed at was to keep some space open for the activity of the intellect, because he thought that fruition or ultimate happiness could be identified with that joy which resulted from the activity of the intellect, which for Aquinas was the most important activity of which a human being is capable.

The difference between fruition as an intellectual activity, and fruition regarded as an activity of the will had been the subject of many discussions between Franciscans and Dominicans. Therefore we need not be surprised by the fact that Capreolus did not make any remark regarding the *moderni*, but only discussed the topic with Gregory as an individual author, just as he did with Aureoli on the same topic. The discussion itself was old<sup>19</sup> and did not seem to be something typically “modern”. Thus we find that Capreolus disapproved of Gregory’s opinion, but there was no polemical touch to his criticism.

### 2.2. *Free will*

More interesting for our question of how the moral theory of the *via moderna* was “labelled” by Capreolus is the attitude which can be found in Capreolus’ discussion about the free will. He not only exempted Gregory from critique, but even understood him as a defender of his own

<sup>19</sup> For a new interpretation of the history of the discussion about fruition and for literature on the discussion before Ockham, cf. W. J. Courtenay: ‘Between Despair and Love’, in: K. Hagen (ed.): *Augustine, the Harvest, and Theology (1300–1650)*, Leiden: Brill, 1990: 5–20, especially n. 7.



position against the opinion of Duns Scotus, and of a few anonymous opponents whose positions were known to him because they had been discussed by Adam Wodeham and Gregory of Rimini.<sup>20</sup> Scotus argued against Thomas that a volition was not in the power of the will if it was caused naturally by an object.<sup>21</sup> The other opponents tried to show that acts of volition were not dependent on or an effect of acts of cognition.

Capreolus was satisfied with the answers Gregory gave; to some points he added further explanations in order to close the gap between what Gregory said and how Aquinas would have answered. In most cases he also approved of Adam Wodeham's answers, too. He only criticized him once, for some erroneous examples: Adam's errors lay, in the first case, in the fields of the *substantia separata*, where Adam presumed that the separate substances could move other bodies by will alone; in the second case, Capreolus criticized that according to Adam Wodeham the moral evaluation of an exterior act depended on the inside act of the will; in the third case, Adam was being criticized for saying that the attentiveness of the priest offering mass was part of the divine precept and necessary in order to make the act of offering of the mass a good rather than sinful act.<sup>22</sup>

We see that in his detailed discussion, Capreolus distinguishes clearly and impartially between right and wrong answers given by authors which belonged, for him, to the group of the *terministae* or *moderni*. To him, their position on the understanding of the free will was not incompatible with the position of St. Thomas Aquinas. He even used their arguments in order to strengthen his own position.

<sup>20</sup> Def. II d. 25 q. 1 a. 2 c. 1 et 2, arg. quorundam et Adae (ed. IV, 234a–235a); c. 2, arg. aliorum (ed. IV, 239a–b).

<sup>21</sup> Def. II d. 25 q. 1 a. 2 c. 1 et 2, c. Scotum, 2° (ed. IV, 233a).

<sup>22</sup> Def. II d. 25 q. 1 a. 3, ad arg. c. 1 et 2, ad arg. quorundam et Adae, 9° (ed. IV, 244b): "Haec tamen responsio assumit aliqua falsa vel dubia.—Primum est, quod nulla substantia separata possit movere aliquod corpus per solum velle [...] Secundum est, quod executio exterior non sit meritoria, nisi quamdiu durat actus interior voluntatis. Hoc enim falsum est; quia, secundum doctores, ad hoc quod actus exterior sit meritorius, non requiritur continua attentio, vel volitio illius actualis, nec tamen sufficit habitualis, sed requiritur virtualis. Et de hoc sanctus Thomas, I–II q. 1 a. 6 ad 3.—Tertium est, quod dicere divinum officium cum attentione actuali et actuali devotione cadat sub praecepto; ita quod nisi sic dicatur, incurritur peccatum [...]."

### 2.3. *The notion of grace*

The treatment Capreolus gave the “nominalist” authors in the discussion about the notion of grace is even more instructive: With the help of Gregory of Rimini, he defended Aquinas against Scotus, Ockham and Adam Wodeham.<sup>23</sup>

The question which was discussed was whether human beings could fulfil divine precepts without grace.<sup>24</sup> Capreolus defended the opinion of Thomas Aquinas that human beings could produce some good acts without habitual grace, but they needed God’s special help in each case, and they definitely needed habitual grace in order to produce meritorious acts which were directed towards a supernatural good. As opponents, John Capreolus quoted some arguments from Gregory’s commentary on the Sentences. We learn from Gregory’s notes that these arguments are proposed by Scotus, Ockham and Adam Wodeham. These authors who are all called *moderni* by Gregory,<sup>25</sup> and are quoted as defenders of the position that human beings by their natural means could have a judgment of right reason with respect to the ultimate good, and therefore they could love God above all. They could do morally good acts which were characterized by respecting a certain order (*actus ordinatus* or *deordinatus*), and they could fulfil such morally good acts which

<sup>23</sup> This is not the only time Capreolus can see Gregory as a defender of Aquinas’s opinion. We find a similar situation in the discussion about the soul. Capreolus criticised Gregory because he did not distinguish between the different abilities (*potentiae*) of the soul, i.e., its sensitive, reasonable and volitional parts, because for Gregory these *potentiae* were identical with the soul. But he did agree fundamentally with Gregory and acclaimed his defence of Aquinas against *aliqui moderni* (who in this case are Ockham and Hibernicus). Perhaps Capreolus took over *aliqui moderni* from Gregory where is written: “contra ista tamen est opinio aliquorum etiam modernorum.” Cf. Gregor von Rimini, II S. d. 16–17 q. 2 (ed. V, 341); *Lectura super primum et secundum sententiarum tomus V (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Texte und Untersuchungen 10)*. Super secundum, elaboraverunt A. Damasus Trapp, Venicio Marcolino, Manuel Santos-Noya, Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1979. By quoting this, the word *modernus* changed its meaning; Gregory used it to point at his contemporaries (Thomas Hibernicus was at the Sorbonne at the beginning of the 14th century and wrote a Commentary on the first two books of the Sentences). For Capreolus, it meant the authors of the 14th century referred to by the later *via moderna*. Cf. Capreolus, Def. II d. 15 q. 1 a. 3 (ed. IV, 68a). To my knowledge however, we cannot find Hibernicus being attributed to the *via moderna* in later texts.

<sup>24</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1: “Utrum homo sine gratia possit praecepta legis implere” (ed. IV, 282b sqq.).

<sup>25</sup> On the different meanings of the term “modern”, cf. n. 20.

God would regard as meritorious.<sup>26</sup> However, Gregory held the contrary position, namely that human beings not only needed God's special help for knowing the supernatural good, but also for knowing sufficiently what was morally good or evil.<sup>27</sup> Capreolus agreed with Gregory and said that there was no discord between St. Thomas and Gregory. Instead, their positions were basically the same.<sup>28</sup>

Capreolus not only quoted the arguments of the *moderni* from Gregory's text, he also quoted Gregory's answer to them, and repeatedly we find approval for what Gregory replied: "This is what Gregory said, and he said it very well" (*Haec Gregorius et valde bene; haec ille et bene* [. . .]).<sup>29</sup> He only disagreed when Gregory was too rigorous by saying that all the acts of those who did not believe in God (*infideles*) were vicious,<sup>30</sup> and with the reason that Gregory gave for why acts could or could not be morally good or meritorious: while Gregory said it was impossible for those acts to be good because they were not done out of the love of God,<sup>31</sup> Capreolus came to the conclusion that human beings that did not have grace could still do morally good or meritorious acts, because the good quality of those acts was not attributed to human will, but to God's help.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 2, arg. c. 2, arg. quorundam, 2°–4° (ed. IV, 288b).

<sup>27</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 2, arg. c. 1, arg. Gregorii (ed. IV, 287a): "[. . .] arguit Gregorius de Arimino (d. 26 q. 1 concl. 2), probando quod non solum ad cognoscendum veritates supernaturales indiget homo in praesenti statu speciali Dei auxilio, immo etiam ad sufficienter cognoscendum quid volendum vel nolendum, agendum vel non agendum, in his quae pertinent ad vitam moralem."

<sup>28</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 3, ad arg. c. 1, ad arg. Gregorii (ed. IV, 298a): "Ex quibus sequitur quod mens sancti Thomae non discordat a Gregorio, quoad hoc quod uterque intendit quod nullus in statu praesenti constitutus, potest, sine speciali Dei auxilio, perfecte cognoscere quid volendum sit aut nolendum, quid agendum sit aut vitandum in materia morali, non solum quoad omnia agibilia collective sumpta, immo nec quoad aliquod agibile seorsum et in particulari sumptum."

<sup>29</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 3, ad arg. c. 1, ad arg. Gregorii (ed. IV, 299a sqq.).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 3, ad arg. c. 2, ad arg. quorundam, 7° and 8° (ed. IV, 300a–b); under 8°, Aquinas's position is being quoted: "Cum dicitur quod omnis vita infidelium peccatum est, non est intelligendum hoc modo, quod omnis actus eorum peccatum sit; sed quia semper cum peccatis vivunt [. . .]."

<sup>31</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 3, ad arg. c. 2, ad arg. quorundam, 8° (ed. IV, 302b): "Sed contra dicta arguit Gregorius (d. 26 q. 1 a. 1). Nullus actus moralis non ordinatus in Deum finaliter, seu non factus propter Deum, est factus propter illud propter quod fieri debet [. . .]."

<sup>32</sup> Def. II d. 28 q. 1 a. 3, ad arg. c. 2, ad arg. quorundam, 8° (ed. IV, 302b): "Ex quibus apparet quod opera non existentis in charitate possunt esse moraliter bona

Capreolus' position presented itself as being closer to the one taken by the *moderni* than was Gregory's. It is obvious that Capreolus was aware of the differences between the authors of this group. And at least with the respect to the possibility that a human being does morally good acts without habitual grace, Aquinas' and some positions of the *moderni* were in fact not too far from each other, though Aquinas of course preferred a different language, the language which used Gregory when he was claiming the necessity of actual grace for completing morally good acts. Gregory himself had judged his opponents more severely and had drawn a connection between their position and the heresy of Pelagianism.<sup>33</sup> We do not find any reference to that in Capreolus.

### 3. JOHN CAPREOLUS AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE VIA MODERNA

The discussion between John Capreolus and the *moderni* on moral theology invites some remarks about the position John Capreolus held in forming the late medieval schools of thought, and also some conclusions about the historiography of the *via moderna* and its moral doctrines:

#### 1. *The limitation of polemics to philosophy:*

In his discussion about moral theology, Capreolus shows an impartial way of presenting the positions of the *moderni*. The topics touched on in this realm were not exposed to polemics. This can be explained by the explicitly theological character of the dispute. While Capreolus' polemics were directed against the use of theological tools in philosophical discussion, the realm of theology itself does not present a place of conflict. His discussion of moral theology neither mentions voluntarism (e.g., arbitrary commands or the use of the doctrine of Omnipotence for moral questions). These concepts were not part of how the moral theology of the later called *via moderna* was understood at the beginning of the 15th century.

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et alicujus temporalis praemii meritoria, etsi non proper voluntatem a qua eliciuntur, tamen propter divinam motionem quae voluntatem ad talia movet."

<sup>33</sup> Gregory of Rimini, II S. d. 26–28 q. 1 (ed. VI, 19–22 and 58–59); *Lectura super primum et secundum sententiarum tomus VI (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Texte und Untersuchungen 11)*. Super secundum, elaboraverunt A. Damasus Trapp, Venicio Marcolino, Manuel Santos-Noya, Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1980.

2. *The variety of doctrines behind the one "modern school":*

John Capreolus was clearly aware of the variety of positions among the *moderni* in topics related to moral theology. This awareness contrasts with the polemical passages in his work where he collectively attributed to all *moderni* both a wrong view on the relationship between language and reality, and an excessive use of the doctrine of omnipotence. This ambiguity between polemics and academic discussion shows that at the beginning of the polemics there was not a catalogue of doctrines dividing the two lines of thought, but a fundamental difference in the field of philosophy (relationship between language and reality) and a controversy about the exact relationship between philosophy and theology.

3. *The continuity of "old" discussions:*

We can see how "old" antagonisms, as the one between Dominicans and Franciscans on the preference for will or intellect in the vision of God as the ultimate goal of moral theology, were discussed by John Capreolus as a point of difference between Aquinas and some *moderni*. After the establishing of the two *viae* in the universities, these differences were finally interpreted as "typical" for the division between *via moderna* and *via antiqua*.<sup>34</sup>

4. *Roots for later dispute on Moral Theology:*

There was a wide agreement between Capreolus, Adam Wodeham and Gregory of Rimini, the two most prominent *moderni* in the work of Capreolus, on the understanding of free will. The points which were criticised in the doctrine of Adam Wodeham (e.g., the capacity of the separate substances to move others by will alone and the moral evaluation of an act as depending on the intention of the actor and not on the exterior act) can be found as characteristics of the *via moderna*.<sup>35</sup> Therefore we can say that the picture of the *via moderna* which was developed later in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries contains more elements than at the very beginning of the *viae*. The understanding of the *via moderna* underwent a development, and not all doctrines of all authors had caused discussions at the same time.

<sup>34</sup> This difference is on the list of theological differences between the schools, composed by the realist professor of theology Johann Permetter von Adorf at the university of Ingolstadt (datable to around 1508): cf. F. K. Ehrle S.J.: *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia (Franziskanische Studien Beiheft 9)*, Münster, Westf.: Aschendorff, 1925: 341–342.

<sup>35</sup> These elements are not yet on the list of characteristics at 1508: cf. n. 35.

5. *Aquinas as the happy medium between Gregory and Ockham or Wodeham:*

In his *Defensiones*, John Capreolus formulated disagreements with Ockham and Adam Wodeham and agreement with Gregory of Rimini in discussion on the necessity of grace for good and meritorious acts. He uses Gregory in order to refute Ockham and Wodeham to such an extent that it is not possible with respect to moral theology to sustain the thesis that Capreolus defended the doctrine of St. Thomas especially against the *nominales*. The closeness of Gregory's and Aquinas positions on grace and their common opposition to Ockham and Wodeham shows why one could see a big difference between the moral theology of the "moderns" and Aquinas, or see them as very close together. The doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas could be regarded as a happy medium between the extreme positions of authors which all were attributed to the *via moderna*. It is therefore no surprise to find Aquinas and the *moderni* shoulder to shoulder against opposite positions within both lines of thought, and later against other schools.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> In his treatise against John of Montesono, Peter of Ailly uses Aquinas to show that his dominican enemy is guilty of Pelagianism. Cf. *Tractatus* (n. 16), 92. For Gregory's critique of the Pelagianism of the *moderni* cf. n. 34.