

Serge-Thomas Bonino (a cura di)  
**Grandi opere del Tomismo nel Novecento**  
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# Grandi opere del Tomismo nel Novecento

a cura di  
SERGE-THOMAS BONINO



URBANIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

*A mons. Antonio Livi e p. Leo J. Elders  
in memoriam*

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 1996 Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas, maître spirituel*.

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JOSEPH GREDT, O.S.B.

*Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*

1899-1901

† LEO J. ELDERS, S.V.D. – JÖRGEN VIJGEN

## 1. Auctor opusque in contextu

Joseph Gredt was born on July 30, 1863 in Luxembourg, studied philosophy and theology and was ordained a diocesan priest August 24, 1886. Sent to Rome he pursued his studies with such well-known Thomists as Alberto Lepidi o.p. and Francesco Satolli. He entered the Benedictine Seckau Abbey (Austria), where he professed his vows on May 18, 1891. He was sent to Rome where he taught philosophy at the Anselmianum from 1896 to 1940. He died in Rome on January 29, 1940<sup>1</sup>.

In the wake of Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris*<sup>2</sup>, manuals for the study of philosophy and theology were being written<sup>3</sup>. Joseph Gredt

<sup>1</sup> See G.M. MANSER, *Joseph Gredt o.s.b.*, "Divus Thomas" (Fribourg) 18 (1940), 3-5. See also D. BERGER, "Gredt, Joseph August", in D. BERGER – J. VIJGEN (eds.), *Thomistenlexikon*, Nova & Vetera, Bonn 2006, 254 -258; P. ENGELBERT, *Geschichte des Benediktinerkollegs St. Anselm in Rom: Von den Anfängen (1888) bis zur Gegenwart*, (Studia Anselmiana, 98), Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, Rome 1988, 149-154, English translation *San't Anselmo in Rome: College and University; From the Beginnings to the Present Day*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 2015, 141-145

<sup>2</sup> See in particular: «Ceterum, doctrinam Thomae Aquinatis studeant magistri, a Vobis intelligenter lecti, in discipulorum animos insinuare; eiusque prae ceteris soliditatem atque excellentiam in perspicuo ponant».

<sup>3</sup> Other examples of that time are D. MERCIER's *Cours de Philosophie* of which the first volume on logic was published in 1897 (Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain) and É. HUGON's three volume *Cursus philosophiae thomisticae ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis*, published 1903-1907 (Lethielleux, Paris).



became known world-wide through the publication of his two volume *Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*, first published in 1899-1901, and which he continued to update in subsequent editions. During his lifetime seven revised editions were published (the last one in 1937) as well as a German translation and in 1961 the 13<sup>th</sup> edition was published. For this final edition Eucharzio Zenzen, o.s.b., slightly revised the text, in particular regarding certain theories of modern physics and updated the bibliography. Besides the two volumes which established his reputation and were the most widely used manuals up to the 1960's, Gredt published some smaller books and a large number of articles, many of which appeared in the quarterly *Divus Thomas* (now *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*) in Fribourg. Many of these articles, of which not a few dealt with issues in modern physics (the status of electrons, theory of relativity, etc.), were incorporated in subsequent editions of the *Elementa*<sup>4</sup>.

Characteristic of the writings of Joseph Gredt are his objectivity and total concentration on philosophical questions. In his presentation of the major themes his writing is sober, always objective, dispassionate and very precise. Philosophy and the diffusion of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas was his lifelong concern. In his exposés he follows the great commentators such as Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, the Salmanticenses and later Thomists.

## 2. Summa operis

The *first volume* comprises an introduction to philosophy and in part one a treatise of logic divided into formal and material logic. In the introduction he explains that a philosophy *aristotelico-thomistica* essentially consists in rigorously drawing the logical consequences from the Aristotelian doctrine on act and potency. The foundation of this doctrine, as proposed by Aristotle, developed by Aquinas and the "Thomist School" consists in the real distinction between act and potency as its limiting principle<sup>5</sup>. The second part of the book deals

<sup>4</sup> For his bibliography, see *Miscellanea Philosophica R.P. Josepho Gredt OSB, completis LXXV annis oblata*, (Studia Anselmiana, 7-8), Pontificio Ateneo di S. Anselmo, Roma 1938, 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> As such Gredt concurs with the central thesis of G.M. MANSER, *Das Wesen des Thomismus*, Paulusverlag, Fribourg 1949<sup>3</sup>.

with the philosophy of nature: the general considerations on nature are followed by the special philosophy of nature: 1) cosmology; 2) beings subject to change, generation and corruption; 3) the study of living beings and of man. The volume closes with a chapter on the origin of life and a survey and rejection of Darwin's theory of evolution. The second volume deals with metaphysics. After the chapters on being in general, Gredt presents some sixty pages with considerations about "being as considered in the human intellect", in other words on logical truth, the treatise called *criteriology* by modern philosophers, but inserted into metaphysics by Gredt. The section on being in general is followed by the study of immaterial *created* being and that of *uncreated* being, God. The last chapters of this section deal with creation and divine providence. The last part of the second volume contains the treatise of ethics, first in general and next special ethics: natural law in general and social law.

As appears from this survey the two books cover quite completely the subject matter of philosophy as required in the study of philosophy preceding the years of theological studies, which prepare to the priesthood. The Latin of the text is clear and easily readable. Gredt divides the entire text into numbered sections. The first volume lists 612 of these, those of the second volume run from nos. 613 to 1054. Given that the numbering of these sections remained the same throughout the various editions, we will refer to these numbers rather than to page numbers. All the chapters and their main parts are followed by a bibliography, which concentrates on works which appeared shortly before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The subjects mentioned are treated with an incredibly precise verbal expression and completeness. Generally, the exposé is constructed as follows: the *status quaestionis*, which is an introduction to the theme is followed by a thesis which defines the question and demonstrates what is proposed. This thesis is followed by a scholion which explains several details, sometimes mentioning divergent views, e.g. of Scotus, and rejecting them. In these scholia we may find succinct accounts of other opinions, such as e.g. the ancient materialists and modern authors as Lenin about the human soul. Sometimes in a special section in small print some objections are raised and answered. Finally this part of the text closes with very extensive quotations from the works of Thomas Aquinas about the issue treated, one of the most valuable parts of the book which shows that the thesis presents the doctrine of Thomas himself. At the end of volume two an *Index nominum* and an *Index rerum* facilitate consulting the manual.



The treatise on *Logic* runs from nos. 4 to 234. Gredt uses the method of division and divides at the beginning of the treatise our concepts into four groups. After discussing the fourfold opposition of concepts, Gredt follows Aristotle on the relationship between our concepts and words with which we express them: words are arbitrary signs (no. 19). In his admirable survey of formal logic Gredt closely follows Aristotle with some additions.

As for the so-called *material logic*, Gredt points to the necessity of logic in scientific studies. He calls logic a science which is also an art in a broad sense of the term. In nos. 114-130 he deals with the universal, confirming the existence of universals in the human mind, to which corresponds the nature of things outside. After explaining the formation of universal concepts by the process of abstraction he passes to their division into the so-called predicables (genus, species, etc.). Following Porphyry, he discusses the predicaments, and finally indicates how Thomas establishes the difference between the categories of being in *In 5 Metaph.*, lesson 9. Being is said analogically of each of the categories, which are irreducible to each other. Gredt devotes the last pages to the so-called demonstrative logic, the first principles, science and its division.

Regarding the *philosophy of nature* (nos. 235-612), which is the perfect science of being subjected to motion, Gredt first argues that the natural sciences are ordained to the philosophy of nature but that in classical antiquity they were not clearly separated from philosophy. Thomas divides the different parts of the philosophy of nature according to the books of Aristotle: *Physics*, *De caelo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *De anima*. He starts the *general philosophy of nature* with an explanation of what we understand by a body subject to motion. The point of departure of our analysis of material beings is the *plurality* of substances. When dealing with the principles of mobile beings he comes to speak of atomism and dynamism to pass next to the intrinsic principles, matter and form. Matter and form are united immediately by themselves. Gredt believes that between the atomic theory of modern physics and the doctrine of form and matter there is in principle no opposition, provided one conceives the atoms as proximate principles. Quantity is to be distinguished from the substance it determines. After the classical distinction of the species of motion, time and place are analyzed. In his discussion with modern philosophers Gredt devotes attention to the continuum, its divisibility and its parts.

The division of the *special philosophy of nature* into three parts is classic: In *Part One* beings subject to local motion are studied. The

cause of their motion is impulse. He devotes a page to Einstein's theory of relativity and his attempt to account for all movements; he successively deals with some key concepts of modern physics. Entropy, he thinks, is highly probable. Cosmogony by way of development also is. The limitation of the world is demonstrated, consisting as it does of limited components, matter and form, essence and existence. Gredt sides with Thomas as to the impossibility to show by argument that the world has begun to exist.

In *Part Two* beings subject to alteration are dealt with, that is movements in the field of sensible qualities: increase of a quality consists in its more perfect communication to the subject. In a chemical combination the elements do not actually remain present. This combination differs from simple generation in which the previous substance is destroyed (no. 407).

*Part Three* deals with the soul or with beings subject to growth and includes what is now commonly known as philosophy of man or philosophical anthropology. The soul is defined in Aristotle's terms, but Gredt notes that the beginning of all vital movements comes from the outside Mover, God. The faculties of the soul are distinct from the soul itself (Thesis 28). After an excellent analysis of what is characteristic of vegetable life, he quotes *S.Th.* I, 78, 2 to argue that the highest operations at the vegetable level approach the lowest of animal life. As from no. 454 the animal life is studied. A central theme is cognition and the necessity of an immaterial basis for cognition. In one of the finest pages of the book Gredt explains that in addition to his own form the knowing subject also acquires other forms and in this way describes the variety of things in his cognitive faculties. Treating of the cognitive species he quotes *De potentia* 5, 8: physical bodies have a dual action: in addition to activities at the physical level they also communicate their likeness in their environment. The power of sensitive cognition in us spreads from a common root to the different organs of the senses.

After a discussion of the internal senses and the appetite, we pass to the section on the intellectual soul, which is a substance individually proper to each human being. Soul and body constitute one substance. After defining the soul as the substantial form of the body he passes to the question of the origin of the soul (no. 534) and mentions the uncertainties of some of the Fathers of the Church on this point. He argues its immortality from its natural appetite always to live and, secondly, from its nature. The intellect, an inorganic cognitive faculty, has as its formal object being qua being. Gredt draws the conclusion that God is within the range of our intellect which has



the desire to see God, by way of a capacity, but not as an exigency. But this affirmation is too simple. Thomas writes *De causis*, lectio 6: «Dei quidditas est ipsum esse, unde est supra intellectum». Gredt does not mention the concept of *potentia oboedientialis*<sup>6</sup>. The intellect knows its own act of thinking indirectly, but after its separation from the body it sees itself directly (no. 566). In the following chapters the origin of our ideas and the role of the phantasmata and the agent intellect are beautifully explained. Cajetan is quoted to remind us that the agent intellect illuminates the quiddity in the phantasma, leaving aside the individuality. Dealing with the development of our thought Gredt writes that after our first concept, sc. being, we form that of not-being. But it would be more precise to say with Thomas that we notice *quod hoc non est illud*. In the chapter on the will we read that the first object of the will is the good universally conceived. Individual things are willed in so far as they show some goodness. Since the good we choose is limited the will is not necessarily drawn to it. In what follows Gredt describes the series of acts which lead to the choice of the will. The last two theses of the first volume (nos. 603-612) deal with the origin of living beings. The different species of living beings cannot be explained by Darwin's theory of evolution, but a certain development within natural species (*evolutio polyphyletica*) seems possible.

The *second volume* is divided into a treatise of metaphysics and of ethics. The treatise on metaphysics is divided into general metaphysics (nos. 613-703) and special metaphysics (created being: nos. 704-783 and divine being: nos. 787-878). The treatise on ethics is divided into general ethics (nos. 879-978) and *ethica specialis seu ius naturae* (nos. 979-1054).

Gredt rightly rejects the separation established by some authors between metaphysics and philosophical theology. *Ens* is used as a noun and as a participle. *Res* would be synonymous with *ens* (no. 622), but this does not seem quite correct. Continuing the study of the transcendental concepts we notice that no special attention is paid to the one. The section on the good is followed by a page on evil and its division into natural, artificial and moral evil. This is followed by a discussion of the beautiful as a *quasi species boni*. The concept of being is immediately followed by the principle of contradiction, which is acquired when we see the opposition of being and not-

<sup>6</sup> See L.-B. GILLON, *Aux origines de la puissance obéissante*, "Revue Thomiste" 47 (1947), 304-310.

being. The reader wonders what Gredt means by not-being. Thomas himself defines it as «not this but another» (*In 5 Phys.*, lectio 2, no. 656: *quod hoc non est illud*). Next, he mentions the division into being in act and being in potency. Gredt does not formulate a thesis about this division. He considers the subject matter dealt with as foundational both to general metaphysics and philosophical theology, but passes first to what he calls the second part of general metaphysics – being as it is in the human mind – which is followed by special metaphysics the study of immaterial *created* being and next of immaterial *uncreated* being. This division, however, raises some questions: one might prefer to give full treatment of the transcendental properties of being, being's triple division, sc. into act and potency, essence and the act of being, substance and accidents passing to the study of the causes of being and from there to that of God, bringing out better the difference between our being and that of God who is the entirely different reality.

But following Gredt's division we now consider the second part of general metaphysics, on being as it is in the human mind, a treatise somewhat unusual for a student of the works of Aquinas, but clearly provoked by the problems raised by philosophers of the past four centuries. Distancing oneself from the latter theories one could say that the study of the human intellect, as carried out in philosophical anthropology, implies that of its capacity to reach reality. Starting with no. 663 Gredt examines the different ways in which man can reach the truth and attain certitude. Thesis 8 discusses the different forms of skepticism, thesis 9 the so-called methodological doubt. Next, we pass to an examination of the causes of certitude: our cognition is true by its very nature and in general. Thesis 11 (nos. 691-694) defends the veracity of our external senses, against idealism and the so-called critical realism. In the first decades of the twentieth century, when Gredt wrote his books, the influence of Kant was still so strong that many catholic authors (as D. Mercier and J. Geyser) professed a so-called critical realism. Gredt refutes them and speaks of a natural invincible *nisus* which lets us know that the cognitive species we receive refer to the things outside us. But we might better say that the cognitive species of sensible things clearly manifest the existence of the latter. Gredt presents an accurate overview of Kant's system, calling the method of the latter absurd. The so-called synthetic judgment a priori is contrary to reason and Kant's system contains several contradictions. Thesis 14 (no. 699) explains that evidence is the ontological truth of things considered in a true and certain judgment.



We now pass to what Gredt calls *special metaphysics* (nos. 704-878) which comprises in part one the study of immaterial created being and in part two that of God. In the first chapter, in thesis 15 (nos. 704-708) he argues that in all created beings their essence and their being are really distinct. He correctly considers the essence as a real potency and existence as its realization. His proofs are classical: (a) from the limitation of things: being is not limited unless by a potency really distinct from it, but one might object: why can there not be just limited being? (b) from the contingency of things; (c) from our way of conceiving essences without their existence. Nevertheless, in a scholion at no. 707, 4 he speaks of the *realitas essentiae*, meaning that the essence by itself is already act, but not yet an ultimate act. But this is an unfortunate, somewhat essentialistic way of considering essence. For Thomas both essence and the act of being are never separate (see *De Potentia* 3, 5 ad 2: «Ipsa quidditas creatur simul cum esse [...] Deus dans esse simul producit id quod esse recipit»): by themselves they are nothing. Thesis 16 deals with the *possibilia*: their possibility depends upon the divine essence. In chapter two we find the division of being in the predicaments. On how to distinguish the different categories one may consult what Thomas writes in *In V Metaph.*, lesson 9. Thesis 19 deals with subsistence, in connection with doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God, when the natural delimitation of the humanity of Christ by personal human subsistence was impeded. Gredt gives a very extensive commentary, one of the best chapters of the book, but he does not mention how we must understand the text of *De unione Verbi incarnati*, which ascribed created *esse* to Christ. In thesis 21 on the accidents he writes that there appears no impossibility that accidents really exist when separated from their substance, since their definition is saved (*salvatur*). Gredt seems to overlook that their definition implies that they need a subject of inherence<sup>7</sup>. The next chapter (no. 746) deals with causality. Against Leibniz and the occasionalists Gredt strongly affirms the efficient causality of created beings, which can act on other things. Thesis 26 (no. 765) is an excellent treatise on instrumental causality. He explains, against Scotists, that instruments are brought to action by a premotion, by which they are elevated to produce an effect beyond their own level. Final causality is treated in thesis 27. Gredt stresses the importance of goodness, from which depends the ap-

<sup>7</sup> See J. VIJGEN, *The Status of Eucharistic Accidents "sine subiecto"*. An Historical Survey up to Thomas Aquinas, De Gruyter, Berlin 2013.

petite: every agent works for an end, and wherever something is ordained to an end, an intellect must intervene in order to make sure that the end is present in the efficient cause striving to attain the end. Things not gifted with knowledge are directed by another being toward the end. Gredt closes the section by a scholion on chance and on the question whether the past can return.

We come to the study of uncreated being at no. 784. Gredt places his philosophical theology within the context of modern philosophy. At the end of his presentation of the Five Ways he does not reproduce the text of the *Summa theologiae* but rather extensively produces the Aristotelian sources. Gredt adds a sixth proof: man's intellect and will are ordained to the infinite and can only reach happiness in an infinite good<sup>8</sup>. It might be better to stay close to the exposé of Thomas and to connect all attempts to demonstrate God's existence with the different genera of causality. In thesis 31 he argues that God's essence consists in the accumulation of all perfections, which in God are distinguished from one another by a *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*. By means of one concept we cannot grasp the fulness of divine being; the names we predicate of him are analogous, and not synonyms. Attempting to define the most fundamental property of God, Gredt follows those theologians who consider the *aseitas* as the perfection from which all other attributes of God can be deduced. Thomas himself speaks of the *ipsum esse per se subsistens*, and prefers to consider and deduce the five main entitative attributes of God by starting each time from what we find in creation, so that his natural theology remains very close to our experience of created things, conform to what Holy Scripture says that from this visible world we come to know the invisible God (Rom. 1:20). While reaffirming Aristotle's description of God as ἡ νοήσεως νόησις, Gredt rejects Scotus' theory of univocal predication of divine and created perfections.

Divine immutability is demonstrated as following upon the absence of potency. In his description of divine eternity, Boethius' definition is quoted. Gredt understands the oneness or uniqueness of God, mainly in the context of monotheism in contrast with dualism. Thesis 37 (nos. 816-819) considers God as distinguished from the world and presents an excellent survey of polytheism and monism. He stresses both God's transcendence and immanence. – In thesis 38

<sup>8</sup> See J. MALIK, *Gibt es einen eigenen Gottesbeweis, der ausgeht vom Streben des Menschen nach Erkenntnis und Glück?*, in L. ELDERS (ed.), *Quinque sunt viae*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1980, 109-133.



we pass to the study of God's operative attributes, sc. the will, the divine science is being considered later by Gredt, somewhat surprisingly after creation. God wills himself directly, other things than himself out of goodness. He quotes *S.Th.* I, 20, 2: *Amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus*. God's power is explained as God being the prime mover and the first efficient cause. Thomas writes that God is entirely act and thus an active principle.

In thesis 40 we find a complete survey of the meanings of creation. Gredt argues that God is the first cause and the creator of all things. In the *S.Th.* Thomas presents a different demonstration of creation: God is subsistent being, but subsistent being can only be one. All other things are beings by participation. In thesis 41 God's action in created things is described. God also moves the created causes to all their actions, as he explains in thesis 42. God's pre-motion is active wherever there is efficient causality. With this thesis we pass to the theme of divine causality and human free will. Long before Molina, John Damascene had excluded our free decisions from God's predestination (*S.Th.* I, 23, 1, a. 1). In line with the preceding thesis Gredt affirms that God moves the human will to every free decision and shows the inadequacy of Molina's theory of *concursum oblatum* and *concursum collatum*. In several pages, following the footsteps of the great Dominican theologians of the past, Gredt explains the influence of God on the human will. The difficult question of divine pre-motion and human sinful acts is discussed in thesis 46, but Gredt first deals with the conservation of things by God, in virtue of which God is intimately present in all creatures, and with divine providence (thesis 45). Thomas examines divine providence in *S.Th.* I, 22 after the study of God's will and before creation while Gredt discusses it at this place: God works by his intellect and will; his providence is all embracing and infallible, but he moves all creatures according to their nature.

Thesis 46 (nos. 589-863) examines the question of God's causality regarding man's morally evil actions. Evil as the privation of what is due to a being may be caused by God *per accidens*, but moral evil is in no way caused by God, who only gives the entity of the act, not the privation inherent to it. In his thesis Gredt does not clearly distinguish between a physically defective act and a morally defective one. Thesis 47 deals with divine science in so far as it is concerned with created beings. Gredt places the subject at the very end of the chapter on divine operative attributes, whereas Thomas begins his treatise of the operative attributes of God with the question about God's science. Gredt apparently felt that the presence of science in

God follows from God possessing all perfections (thesis 32). God knows the possible beings in his essence (thesis 48) and the so-called *futuribilia* in his decrees subject to conditions. While rejecting the *scientia media* Gredt concludes that the doctrine of Thomas is contradictorily opposed to that of Molina.

After his discussion of metaphysics Gredt presents a basic and fundamental study of *ethics* in 30 theses (nos. 881-1054). The treatise on ethics is divided into general ethics (nos. 879-978) and *ethica specialis seu ius naturae* (nos. 979-1054). Ethics considers human actions in so far as ordained to an end. It is divided in general ethics and special ethics which studies these actions as ordained to the end of man living in society. In this part of ethics natural law is considered. In his opening thesis Gredt shows that in all his actions man acts at least virtually in view of a last end and (thesis 2) man can only direct his actions to one last end. Theses 3 to 6 determine what beatitude consists in, sc. in an act of the intellect. What *moral* acts are, is discussed in chapter 2, while the following series of theses explain what morality is, sc. that by which an act is called good or bad. The first specification is by the object, next by the circumstances (and the end). With regard to its species an act can be morally indifferent, but not as an individual act (thesis 9). He quotes Augustine's definition of the morally bad act: *dictum, factum vel concupitum contra legem aeternam*.

In thesis 10 Gredt shows that in all men natural law, as a participation of the eternal law, is present. But the proximate rule of conduct is the command issued by our reason (thesis 12). Chapter 5 on the passions divides these into the concupiscible and the irascible passions. Augustine's statement is quoted that love is the root of all passions. We then pass to the study of the virtues where it is again Augustine who gives the definition (*bona qualitas mentis, qua recte vivitur et nemo male utitur*). Virtues are divided into moral and intellectual virtues, and the latter into speculative and practical (the arts and prudence). Gredt explains the properties of the virtues and the way in which we acquire them. The four cardinal virtues (which represent and contain all the virtues) are so much interrelated that when one of them is lacking, we miss them all. This very severe position (originally defended by the Stoics) is somewhat softened by Thomas.

In his treatise on special ethics or on natural law (*ius naturae*) Gredt deals first with law in general (nos. 979-987), next with law with regard to the individual person (nos. 988-1006) and finally with regard to society (nos. 1007-1054). He defines its properties such as coactivity, and in theses 18 to 20 discusses the right of prop-



erty and the morality of contracts. Man is a social animal, but if a society is formed, authority is needed (thesis 21). In thesis 22 the domestic society is considered, i.e. marriage and education. In this connection Gredt also mentions the nobility of celibacy and has a paragraph on the emancipation of women. Total emancipation, as e.g. from maternity, is against right reason and our nature. Regarding society Gredt argues that God or the eternal law is the first efficient cause of political authority whereas the proximate cause resides in the people but in an imperfect and instrumental fashion. The final numbers (1047-1054) deal with international law (*ius gentium*) and the morality of war.

### 3. Admissio momentumque operis

Gredt's *Elementa* shows an apologetic trend, in so far as his conclusions clearly oppose many philosophical systems within modern philosophy<sup>9</sup>. Gallus Manser's remarks in his review of the 1937 edition that the fame of the *Elementa* rests upon conceptual clarity, profound insights into the philosophical issues, logical exposition and Thomistic fidelity, captures very well the overall high regard in which the *Elementa* was held<sup>10</sup>. The many editions over the years attest as well to its reputation and widespread use. In general, one may say that Gredt's mind moves in so much light that he does not sufficiently stress the limits of our knowledge. To give an example, Thomas himself notes that it is very difficult to know what the human soul is (*De veritate* q. 10. a. 8 ad 8: «Cognoscere quid sit anima difficilissima est»), whereas Gredt just presents his thesis as if everything is clear. He does give short hints as to the debate on certain questions, but more attention should have been paid to the historical method, as Aristotle himself did. His concern is mainly with philosophers of the scholastic period, such as Scotus, Suarez as well as the German philosophers of the Age of Reason. Obviously, we who live a century later, shift our attention to other authors as well. Nevertheless, the *Elementa* give a remarkably complete survey of classical Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical doctrines. Gredt shows an admirable acquaintance and union of thought with

<sup>9</sup> See for instance the sections on the refutation of atheism and Darwin's theory of evolution.

<sup>10</sup> See G. MANSER, *Review*, "Divus Thomas" 15 (1937), 222

Thomas Aquinas, the scholastic tradition and the main philosophical currents between 1600 and the early twentieth century. The gradual decline of Latin and the antagonism towards manuals contributed as well to the disappearance of Gredt's *Elementa* from the curricula<sup>11</sup>. As Rodrigo Álvarez has shown, Gredt's *Elementa* was instrumental in the writing of Edith Stein's *Endliches und Ewiges Sein* (written 1934-1936 but published posthumously in 1950).

### 4. Bibliographia

During Gredt's life seven editions, revised by the author, were published. The first in 1899-1901 (Desclée, Lefebvre et sociorum, Romae), the second in 1912, the third in 1921, the fourth in 1926, the fifth in 1929, the sixth in 1932 and the seventh in 1937 (Herder, Barcinone). As of the fifth edition Eucherio Zenzen is credited as collaborator. Identical reprints of the seventh edition were published in 1946, 1951, 1953, 1956, 1958 until the 13<sup>th</sup> edition *recognita et aucta ab Eucharzio Zenzen* in 1960-1961.

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<sup>11</sup> For a recent more positive appreciation of the manual tradition see B. BESONG, *Reappraising the Manual Tradition*, "American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly" 89 (2015), 557-584.



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NORBERTO DEL PRADO, O.P.

*De veritate fundamentali totius philosophiae christianae*

1911

JÖRGEN VIJGEN

# 1. Auctor opusque in contextu

Born on June 4, 1852 in Pola de Laviano in the province of Oviedo, Spain, Norberto del Prado entered the Order of Preachers at the age of seventeen in the convent of Ocaña (Toledo) and professed vows in 1870. The choice for the convent of Ocaña will have far-reaching consequences. For not only did the convent function as the novitiate for the Philippines but del Prado was also heavily influenced by the future cardinal Ceferino González o.p. (1831-1895) who at that time was regent of studies in the convent of Ocaña. González had entered the same convent a generation earlier (1844) and completed his studies at the University of St. Thomas in Manila where he taught and published his three volume *Estudios sobre la filosofía de Santo Tomás* (1864) in which he, fifteen years before *Aeterni Patris*, reclaimed the thought of Aquinas in view of a dialogue with contemporary thought<sup>1</sup>. In 1866 González was send back to Ocaña due to health reasons.

In 1873 Norberto del Prado was send to Manila where he received his priestly ordination in 1875, completed his studies and started teaching at the University of St. Thomas. In 1890 he was also sent

<sup>1</sup> See E. FORMENT, *Historia de la filosofía tomista en la España contemporánea*, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 1998, 19-21. For a tribute by del Prado see his *El P. Zeferino*, "Revue Thomiste" 3 (1895), 85-94.