The Roots of Franciscan Theology and Metaphysics: An Integrated Approach Towards Encounter, Participation, and the De-Radicalisation of Difference

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed …… Siân Dawson……

Date ……23 January 2026……
.
This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.
A bibliography is appended.

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I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository**.**

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Dedication

To the memory of
Pope Francis (1936–2025)

A shepherd of encounter,
a witness to humility,
and a voice for the dignity of *the Ordinary Life*.

May this work reflect, in some small way, his vision of
fraternity, participation, and peace.

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Finally, I acknowledge with deep reverence the influence of St. Francis of Assisi, whose life, witness, and simplicity inspired the vision of this thesis. May his spirit of humility, joy, and encounter continue to guide those who seek truth in dialogue.

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the Franciscan theological tradition, rooted in the spiritual attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity, and shaped by metaphysical motifs such as freedom, relationality, and moral goodness, offers a coherent and constructive framework for interfaith dialogue. By retrieving the theological and metaphysical vision implicit in the life and witness of Francis of Assisi, the thesis demonstrates that these elements function not merely as devotional ideals, but as the foundations of a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation.

Chapters 1.0–3.0 trace the emergence of these themes through an exploration of the roots of Franciscan spirituality, with particular attention to hospitality and the agency of the other, as exemplified in Francis of Assisi's historic meeting with the Sultan during the Fifth Crusade. Chapters 4.0 and 5.0 examine how these Franciscan attributes and metaphysical motifs are developed within the medieval scholastic tradition, focusing on the contributions of Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus. Particular attention is given to doctrines such as divine illumination, intuitive cognition, and contingency, showing how these concepts articulate and extend a participatory Franciscan theological vision.

The thesis engages directly with the critique posed by the Radical Orthodoxy movement, particularly its claim that Franciscan theology leads to a flattening of participatory ontology and a fragmentation of theological meaning. In response, it argues that the Franciscan tradition sustains a robust participatory metaphysics grounded in divine freedom and mediated through relationality and moral goodness.

Concluding with a constructive synthesis, the thesis proposes an integrated Franciscan framework for interfaith dialogue that affirms the theological integrity of encounter and the metaphysical significance of participation. This framework is embodied in *the Ordinary Life*, where divine presence is mediated through humility and where interfaith encounter becomes a lived theological practice oriented toward justice and peace within creation.

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The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.
— **Gerard Manley Hopkins, (1844-1889)**
"God's Grandeur"

INTRODUCTION

Inspiration and Commitment

This thesis is inspired and informed by my commitment to the Franciscan tradition in the Anglican communion, where I am situated as a professed tertiary within the European Province of the Third Order in The Society of Saint Francis (TSSF), and as Wales Area Advocate for Creation, Justice and Peace (CJP).

The primary aim of the Third Order in The Society of Saint Francis, is 'to make Christ known and reflect the obedience of those whom the Lord chose to be with him and sent out as his witnesses'.[1] In the Anglican communion, the Franciscan tradition and vision evolved in post-colonial India at the Christa Seva Sangha Ashram, in Puna, through the work of missionaries who aimed to 'heal the wounds of inter-racial strife'.[2]

Their work reflected the Franciscan ethos of 'a radical edginess and risk taking', which aimed to push boundaries in the name of Christ', [3] and they adopted Saint Francis of Assisi as their Patron Saint. Like the early missionaries, tertiaries in The Third Order, The Society of Saint Francis (TSSF) 'bear witness to Christ in their immediate environment and pray and work for the fulfilment of his command to make disciples of all nations'.[4]

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[1] The Third Order, Society of Saint Francis, (European Province), *The Rule of the Order, The Manual*, July 2020 edn.

[2] J. Wilmslow, *Christa Seva Sangha*, (The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: London, 1930), p. 18.

[3] Andrew, Mays, Rev., *Pushing Boundaries in the Name of Christ*, The Opening Address to The Society of Saint Francis, on the 800th Anniversary Celebration of The Third Order, TSSF, General Chapter Meeting, Wells Cathedral, 8 October 2022.

[4] The Third Order, Society of Saint Francis, (European Province), *The Rule of the Order, Day Six*, The Manual, July 2020 Edition, p. A-13.

The second aim of the Rule is 'to spread the spirit of love and harmony, to break down barriers between people and to seek equality for all'. To this end, Third Order Franciscans together with their brothers and sisters in the First and Second Orders 'pledge to fight against the ignorance, pride and prejudice that breeds injustice or partiality of any kind',[5] and are prepared to push the boundaries to fulfil their commitments.

Drawing on the life of St Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan scholastic tradition, particularly, the works of Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, this thesis argues that Franciscan theology articulates a Christocentric metaphysics of participation that grounds a theology of encounter capable of addressing interfaith dialogue and the de-radicalisation of difference. Central to this study is the proposal that a Franciscan metaphysics of participation offers resources for the de-radicalisation of difference, not by erasing or undermining religious particularity, but by grounding encounter in a shared relational openness to the divine that affirms distinctiveness, individuality, and mutual dignity.

A primary concern of Radical Orthodoxy, following Henri de Lubac, is that grace must not be understood as a merely additive reality layered onto an autonomous nature.[6] While this thesis shares that concern, it contends that the Franciscan tradition never posits such autonomy in the first place. Rather, it affirms that nature is always already open to grace, not in a passive or abstract way, but through relational participation.

[5] The Third Order, Society of Saint Francis, (European Province), *The Rule of the Order, Day Six*, The Manual, July 2020 Edition, p., A-13.

[6] Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946); and John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 209–15, both of whom reject any conception of nature as an autonomous domain to which grace is merely added.

In this view, grace is not confined to ecclesial or sacramental mediation but is encountered in the very structure of being. In the Franciscan tradition, participation is the mechanism by which grace and nature are integrated, not merely in the baptized, but in all creation. This metaphysical outlook is not only consistent with orthodoxy but has significant implications for interfaith dialogue in a pluralistic world.

To support conceptual clarity and aid navigation through the theological and metaphysical analyses that follow, the key terms central to this study are briefly outlined below: -

i) Grace and Nature

This thesis adopts the Franciscan conviction that grace perfects nature, not by overriding it, but by bringing it to its fullest realisation. Nature is ordered from the beginning toward union with God, and grace is not external to this order but is its fulfilment, revealing the divine orientation inscribed into creation.[7] This differs from the Radical Orthodoxy reading, which treats grace as intrinsic to nature itself; rather, the Franciscan tradition, distinguishes between grace and nature while maintaining their unity through encounter and participation.[8]

In contrast with Radical Orthodoxy, which tends to identify grace as a quality intrinsic to nature, this thesis distinguishes grace as divine self-communication from the experiential encounter, with grace arising through human openness and relationship.[9]

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[7] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. by Dominic Monti (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), pp. 73–74.

[8] Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), pp. 97–102; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), esp. pp. 199–216.

[9] Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), pp. 50–52.

ii) Participation

In this study, participation refers to the ontological relationship between created beings and the Creator. Participation names the ontological dependence of all creatures on God and the capacity of creation to mediate divine presence.[10] In Franciscan thought, all creation reflects and shares in divine being. Participation is not limited to sacramental life but is expressed in every moment of genuine encounter. For Bonaventure, this participation is exemplified in the Christ-form and for Scotus, in the distinct particularity (*haecceitas*) of each being.[11]

iii) Metaphysics

In the Franciscan tradition, metaphysics refers to the study of created being in relation to divine reality. Franciscan metaphysics is not an abstract system, but a contemplative orientation grounded in the Incarnation.[12] In this study, metaphysics refers specifically to the structure of created being as participating in God, affirming the real presence of the divine in the world and the capacity of all beings to reflect divine order.[13]

iv) Encounter

In this thesis, encounter refers to the transformative meeting in which the divine presence is recognised through relationship, openness, and shared participation in the created order.[14] Rooted in the metaphysics of participation, encounter describes the experiential dimension of grace as it is mediated through

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[10] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Prol., pp. 59–61.

[11] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I.3.1–4; Thomas Williams, 'Haecceitas', in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. by Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 189–205.

[12] Christopher Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 4–6.

[13] Kenan B. Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), pp. 25–29.

[14] Ilia Delio, OSF., *A Franciscan View of the Human Person* (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 42–45.

persons, traditions, and creation. Francis's encounters at San Damiano, with the leper, and with the Sultan exemplify how encounter reveals divine presence beyond ecclesial boundaries and becomes a theological act grounded in relational participation.[15]

In this study, encounter provides a framework for the de-radicalisation of difference by grounding interreligious engagement in relational openness rather than competitive or adversarial postures.[16] With these clarifications in place, the Introduction turns to the broader ecclesial backdrop that shaped the theological impulse for interfaith dialogue, most notably the Second Vatican Council and the influence of Nostra Aetate.

A Call for Dialogue: Vatican II and Nostra Aetate

In his opening address to the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII emphasised the importance of 'looking to the past and to listen to its voice', and in referring to the "bitterness in human relations, and to the constant danger of fratricidal wars",[17] His Holiness asserted "the great problem confronting the world after two thousand years remains unchanged".[18] In a post-war spirit of reconciliation and unity, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on 'The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (*Nostra Aetate*)[19] was proclaimed on 28 October 1965 by his successor, His Holiness Pope Paul VI: -

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[15] Augustine Thompson, OP., *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 65–70, 96–102.

[16] Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2002), pp. 108–12.

[17] Pope John XXIII, Opening Speech to the Second Ecumenical Council, 11 October 1962, <https://www.vatican2voice.org,> [accessed 2 February 2021}.

[18] Ibid.

[19] *Nostra Aetate*, <https://www.vatican/va/archive/hist_councilsii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii> [accessed 2 February 2021].

> In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations', she (the Church) considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.[20]

The essence of Franciscan spirituality was embodied in the papal visions of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, both of whom were members of the Secular Franciscan Order, following the tradition held by Holy Fathers Gregory IX, Blessed Gregory X, Innocent XII, Pius IX, and all the Popes succeeding Pius IX to Pope John XXIII.[21]

This spiritual lineage of Franciscan spirituality is reflected in papal documents associated with Vatican II, including: the 'Dogmatic Constitution of the Church' (*Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964), the 'Declaration of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (*Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965) and 'The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World' (*Gaudium et Spes,* 7 December 1965),[22] which were promulgated by Pope Paul VI. More recently, Pope Francis' encyclical Letters, 'On Care for Our Common Home' (*Laudato Si*, 24 May 2015) and 'On Fraternity and Social Friendship' (*Fratelli Tutti*, 3 October 2020), reflect the inspiration of his Canticle of the Creatures, and the influence of Francis of Assisi's brotherhood.

Gerald O'Collins (*The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 2013), describes Vatican II as 'the first time that any of the twenty-one general councils recognized by Roman Catholics had ever made any such a pronouncement on the state of global humanity',[23] and he acknowledges the influence of Saint Francis of Assisi towards the ethos of *Nostra Aetate* 'as one who had historically espoused a peaceful

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[20] Pope Paul VI., Opening Speech of the second period of the Council, 29 September 1963, A*cta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, vol. II, pars I, T.P.V. (1971) p. 185.

[21] <https://marymediatrix.com/who-we-are/third-order/> [accessed 20 April 2025]

[22] <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/the-second-vatican_ecumenical-council [accessed 20 April 2025]

[23] Gerald O'Collins, S. J., *From Gregory VII to the Twentieth Century*, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 86. Scholarship Online, 2013, < doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199672592.003.0002>.

approach to Muslims who had been condemned by many Christians as the archetypal enemies of their faith'.[24]

The vision of interreligious openness and theological depth that emerged from Vatican II did not arise in a vacuum. It was shaped, in large part, by a movement of theological 'resourcement' that sought to return to the richness of patristic and medieval thought. Among the key figures of this renewal was Henri de Lubac, whose work played a formative role in articulating the Second Vatican Council's understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, particularly in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*. De Lubac's recovery of a participatory, Christocentric anthropology laid theological groundwork not only for the Second Vatican Council, but also for later movements such as Radical Orthodoxy, which would similarly seek to overcome the dualisms of modern thought through a renewed metaphysics of participation.[25]

Inspired by the Declaration of *Nostra Aetate*, in the years following Vatican II, scholars and theologians focused on developing a 'typology' towards a systematic approach to interfaith dialogue that addressed religious pluralism.[26] Twentieth century scholarly debates were impacted by the rapid rise of globalisation along with the development of internet technology and the emergence of social media. Scholars'

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[24] Gerald O'Collins, S. J., *From Gregory VII to the Twentieth Century*, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 85., Scholarship Online, 2013, < doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199672592.003.0002>.

[25] Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques*, 1946, pp. 73, 112, 116.; Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: The Supernatural*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), pp. 73, 112, 116; John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 11–12.

[26] Alan Race, 'Christians, and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions', *Religious Studies,* 20: 3 (1984); Alan. Race, 'John Hick (20 January 1922– 9 February 2012), Champion of Liberal Religious Thought', *Modern Believing* 53, July 1, no. 3, (2012), p. 243; Paul Hedges and Alan Race, eds., *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, SCM Core Text Series (London: SCM Press, 2008), pp. 17–33; Catherine Cornille, *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008); Gavin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Nihilist Textualism?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

efforts to define a typology for interfaith dialogue that adequately addressed pluralism tended to assume the superiority of Christianity and questioned whether adherents to other religious traditions could achieve salvation.

However, in a post-colonial multi-cultural and multi-religious globalised society, this approach created barriers to dialogue. While many theological initiatives since Vatican II have sought to deepen interfaith and intercultural dialogue, certain strands of contemporary theology, most notably Radical Orthodoxy, have instead posited what has been construed as 'the death of dialogue', thereby reaching an impasse regarding genuine engagement with religious others.[27]

While the impetus for this thesis is grounded in a personal commitment to Franciscan life and witness, it also emerges from a sense of theological urgency at a time when interfaith dialogue risks being reduced to abstraction or relativism. This study engages in a deeper appreciation of the Franciscan tradition and its attributes and motifs to uncover how it may be understood, not simply as representing and adhering to spiritual ideals, but as the ground of a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation, that offers a spirituality of peace, and a coherent and constructive framework for engaging difference in a pluralistic and fragmented world.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the enduring theological and metaphysical coherence of Franciscan theology in addressing human difference and plurality, and to respond constructively to Radical Orthodoxy's critique by retrieving a participatory metaphysics grounded in the roots of Franciscan theology.

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[27] Paul Hedges, 'Radical Orthodoxy and the Closed Western Theological Mind: The Poverty of Radical Orthodoxy in Intercultural and Interreligious Perspective', in *The Poverty of Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. by Lisa Isherwood and Marko Zlomislić (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), pp. 119–143.

Emerging from an appreciation of the integration of Franciscan theology and metaphysics, this thesis explores how the Franciscan tradition, when retrieved constructively, can offer a framework for interfaith dialogue grounded in encounter and participation. The study culminates in a vision of *the Ordinary Life,* as a horizon in which the Franciscan principles of humility, poverty, and simplicity do not merely represent doctrinal themes or abstract scholarly disciplines but also reflect modes of being that shape participation and interfaith presence.

The term *de-radicalisation of difference*, used deliberately in the title, points toward a theological process of disarming exclusivism and overcoming the typologies that entrench hierarchy and separation. It draws inspiration from the encounter between Francis of Assisi and the Sultan, an historical event in which hostility gave way to humility, and dialogue became possible. This thesis proposes that a similar transformation is required within theological and interfaith discourse today.

The Following research questions serve as a guide to the study: -

Research Questions

a) How do the attributes and motifs of Franciscan theology, particularly humility, poverty, and simplicity, inform a participatory metaphysics?

b) To what extent does Radical Orthodoxy's critique of Franciscan theology and Scotist metaphysics highlight or misrepresent the Franciscan contribution to theological ontology?

c) Does the Franciscan theological and metaphysical tradition offer a coherent framework for interfaith dialogue grounded in participation and encounter?

d) Can *the Ordinary Life* serve as a site where theological and metaphysical participation becomes embodied and dialogically fruitful in a pluralistic world?

An Original Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis contributes to theological scholarship by retrieving and rearticulating the theological and metaphysical coherence of the Franciscan tradition in response to the broad contemporary critique advanced by the Radical Orthodoxy movement. It engages particularly with Radical Orthodoxy's concerns regarding nature, grace, and participation, not in opposition, but through a constructive retrieval of Franciscan metaphysical insights. This engagement shapes a theological vision grounded in encounter, participation, and relationality, which ultimately illuminates *the Ordinary Life* and contributes to the re-enchantment of modernity.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is interdisciplinary in integrating historical theology and constructive theological critique with metaphysical inquiry. At its core, the thesis adopts a retrieval-based approach that seeks to uncover the spiritual, theological, and metaphysical depth of the Franciscan tradition to rearticulate its contemporary relevance to interfaith dialogue. This approach unfolds through three distinct but integrated movements of thought that correspond broadly to: (i) an appreciation of the theological attributes and lived witness of Francis; (ii) an examination of the metaphysical development of these themes in the Franciscan scholastic tradition; and (iii) a constructive engagement with contemporary critique, culminating in a vision of encounter and participation grounded in *the Ordinary Life*.

Firstly, the thesis adopts an historical-theological lens to explore the lived witness of Francis of Assisi and the early Franciscan community, drawing out the foundational attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity, and the theological motifs of moral goodness, freedom and the will, and relationality. The research gives special attention to Francis's encounter with Sultan al-Kamil as a pivotal historical-theological

moment, wherein the Franciscan attributes and motifs illuminate the role of hospitality, and the agency of the Other in overcoming difference in dialogue. In this study the primary features integral to Francis of Assisi's spiritual formation are interpreted not only devotionally, but as the theological seeds of metaphysical insight.

Secondly, the study undertakes a theological and philosophical analysis of key medieval scholastic texts, focusing particularly on the works of Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus and the doctrines of divine illumination, intuitive cognition, and contingency. This study highlights the continuity and development of Franciscan thought as it moves from theological roots to metaphysical expression and examines the role of the Medieval Transcendentals and analogy in expounding and explicating Franciscan medieval scholastic concepts.

Thirdly, this research project seeks not to oppose Franciscan theology to Radical Orthodoxy, but to re-evaluate and retrieve its insights as a resource for theological encounter. To this end, the thesis critically engages with the Radical Orthodoxy movement, not merely as an external critique, but as a theological conversation partner.

The objective of this thesis is a constructive retrieval of Franciscan metaphysics, one that is theologically coherent and spiritually grounded. It is this retrieval that gives rise to a vision of *the Ordinary Life* as a lived horizon where theology and metaphysics converge in practices of humility, simplicity, and spiritual poverty, facilitated by hospitality and orientated toward participation and encounter in a pluralistic world.

In support of this framework, the study draws upon a broad range of foundational Franciscan texts, including Alexander of Hales' *Summa Halensis* and Bonaventure's major theological works, particularly *The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), the *Breviloquium*, and his *commentaries on the Sentences*.

These sources are further enriched by the metaphysical writings of John Duns Scotus, especially his *Ordinatio*, and his key concepts of intuitive cognition, contingency, haecceitas, and the univocity of being.

The thesis also engages with the work of key figures in the Radical Orthodoxy movement, especially John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, and responds to their critique by positing a constructive theological vision shaped by the integration of a theology of encounter with a metaphysics of participation.

While the scope of the thesis is primarily theological and philosophical, it remains rooted in the Franciscan dialogical hermeneutic of humility, encounter, and participation, orientated towards harmony and peace. The thesis acknowledges certain limitations, including the historical and doctrinal complexity of the traditions involved, and the challenges of translating medieval metaphysics into contemporary contexts. Nevertheless, it proposes that the Franciscan vision, grounded in a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation, offers a coherent and spiritually rich framework for contemporary interfaith dialogue.

Thesis Structure

The first three chapters of the thesis explore the lived witness of Francis of Assisi and the early Franciscan community, to recover the roots of Franciscan theology and examine the foundational attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity, alongside the theological motifs of freedom and the will, relationality, and moral goodness. Taking as its paradigm the historic meeting between Saint Francis and Sultan al-Kamil in 1219, this study explores the role of religious and intellectual hospitality and illustrates how Franciscan theology offers not only a spirituality of peace, but a coherent framework for interfaith dialogue grounded in metaphysical humility and theological depth.

These chapters demonstrate that the primary features of Franciscan theology are not merely devotional; they embody the integration of grace and nature and reveal the seeds of a theological vision that unites a theology of encounter with a metaphysics of participation. A vision that would later inspire the theological and metaphysical works of medieval Franciscan scholars.

Chapters 4.0 and 5.0 trace the inflection of these foundational theological elements within the Franciscan tradition, particularly through the scholastic contributions of Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus. Their work, including contributions to the *Summa Halensis*, explores doctrines such as illumination, intuitive cognition, contingency, and the univocity of being, revealing the profound intellectual and spiritual depth of the tradition.

This study illustrates that Franciscan theology is both grounded in the lived witness of Saint Francis of Assisi and expanded through the speculative thought of key medieval thinkers who present a participatory metaphysics that affirms the immanence of God in creation and the possibility of revealed knowledge of the divine. Moreover, it argues that these metaphysical assumptions, far from being abstract or obsolete, offer concrete insights for contemporary interfaith dialogue.

Radical Orthodoxy: A Contemporary Critique

The theological and metaphysical vision articulated within Franciscan theology has not gone unchallenged in recent scholarship and the most sustained critique is that of the Radical Orthodoxy movement which emerged out of the University of Cambridge in the mid-1990s. Founded by John Milbank and later joined by Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, and others, Radical Orthodoxy seeks to respond to the perceived

dominance of secular reason by recovering a pre-modern Christian vision of participation, grounded in Neoplatonism and shaped by a liturgical and sacramental imagination.

While Radical Orthodoxy shares many metaphysical and theological concerns, with the Franciscan tradition, particularly around participation and sacramentality it raises substantial critiques, especially of the later scholastic developments associated with John Duns Scotus. Central to this critique is Scotus' doctrine of the Univocity of Being, which Milbank interprets as a flattening of the ontological distinction between God and creation.[28] By asserting that 'being' is said in the same way of both God and creatures, Scotus is seen to undermine the analogical structure of participation and open the door to metaphysical autonomy and secular modernity. [29]

Radical Orthodoxy further challenges the Franciscan separation of grace and nature, accusing the tradition, particularly in its late-medieval articulations, of allowing nature to stand as an autonomous domain to which grace is merely added. [30] This, they argue, departs from the classical Christian view in which nature is always already graced and illuminated by divine presence.[31] Milbank and Pickstock critique the Franciscan emphasis on voluntarism and the prioritisation of the will, contending that it fosters a vision of the individual as an autonomous moral agent, disconnected from ecclesial and sacramental life. [32]

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[28] John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), pp. 13–14

[29] Ibid.

[30] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 217–220.

[31] John Milbank, 'The Theological Critique of Philosophy', in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 3–20.

[32] Ibid.

Concerns have also been raised by the movement over the Franciscan embrace of contingency and immanence. While the Franciscan tradition interprets these as expressions of divine generosity and relationality, Radical Orthodoxy views them as potentially undermining transcendence and enabling a drift toward naturalism.[33] Most strikingly, Radical Orthodoxy is sceptical of interfaith dialogue itself, Pickstock suggesting that genuine dialogue can only occur within a shared sacramental participation in the divine Logos. Without this she argues, dialogue risks collapsing into liberal relativism or rhetorical power play.[34]

In this context, Radical Orthodoxy functions in this thesis as a necessary interlocutor and its critique is taken seriously, not as a negation of the Franciscan tradition, but as a lens through which the theological, metaphysical, and dialogical richness of Franciscan theology is brought into clearer focus. Far from opposing Radical Orthodoxy, this thesis seeks to retrieve and clarify the Franciscan vision as a living theological alternative.

Drawing on recent scholarship, particularly the work of Daniel Horan, OFM, this thesis argues that the metaphysical vision of Scotus is more nuanced than Radical Orthodoxy avers. Univocity, in this reading, is not a denial of divine transcendence, but a way of affirming that all being is ordered toward the infinite. Rather than flattening participation, it preserves the radical contingency of creation and grounds knowledge of God in both intuitive experience and divine gift.

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[33] Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (London: SCM Press, 2009), pp. 45–60.

[34] Catherine Pickstock, 'Asyndeton: Rhetoric and Philosophy', in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, ed. by James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 139–156.

Chapter 6.0 moves beyond abstraction and relativism by synthesising the theological and metaphysical insights of the Franciscan tradition and Radical Orthodoxy into a constructive framework for interfaith dialogue. Drawing together the themes of encounter, participation, humility, and hospitality, the concluding chapter reflects on how these principles converge in *the Ordinary Life* as a lived horizon of theological embodiment.

Grounded in the theological and metaphysical vision of Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, and attentive to the critiques raised by Radical Orthodoxy, this thesis proposes a renewed theological framework, one that affirms the dignity and sacramentality of creation and contributes to the de-radicalisation of difference in a pluralistic and secular age.

This introduction has outlined the inspiration, rationale, and scope of the thesis, and presented its central question: how Franciscan metaphysics, particularly the integration of grace and nature and the participatory vision of creation, can inform interfaith dialogue today. To address this, the following chapter turns to the theological foundations of the Franciscan tradition in the life of St Francis of Assisi, where the seeds of this participatory vision first take root, laying the experiential groundwork for the metaphysical framework later developed by Bonaventure and Duns Scotus.

1.0 The Roots of Franciscan Theology

This chapter engages in an historical, literary and theological analysis of Francis of Assisi's biographies, supported by his own writings, and the legends and tributes of his companions and associates, to identify and examine the roots of his theology and spirituality, and determine the theological essence of its key elements. His life is often detailed hagiographically in accounts written by his companions and supporters, nevertheless, theological significance lies in an appreciation of his spiritual journey and the implications for human participation in divine life.

Francis's life is not easily divided into history and theology; his experiences, from the trauma of war to his mystical encounter at San Damiano and his embrace of the leper, are simultaneously personal, spiritual, and theological. Rather than treating them separately, this chapter reads these moments as events of encounter that illuminate the Franciscan understanding of participation, grace, and creation. In this way, Francis's life becomes the first articulation of the metaphysical vision that would later be systemised by Bonaventure and Scotus.

The aim of this study is to highlight the depth and richness of the Franciscan vision and engage in a response to Radical Orthodoxy's critique of the Franciscan tradition; to address the assertion that Franciscan theology diminishes the transcendence of God and the supernatural character of grace by grounding its theology in the Incarnation,[35] and to counter the assertion that Franciscan theology privileges nature at the expense of the divine, thereby separating grace and nature.[36]

[35] John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 7–10.

[36] Ibid.

The objective of pitching an analysis of the roots of Franciscan theology in response to Radical Orthodoxy's broad critique is to highlight the pivotal events in Francis of Assisi's life and spiritual journey that demonstrate the integration of grace and nature. Moreover, to demonstrate that the integration of grace and nature lies at the root of Franciscan theology and is synonymous with the foundations of Franciscan medieval metaphysics in reflecting the integration of a theology of encounter with a metaphysics of participation, grounded in the sacramentality of creation.

1.1 Life in Medieval Umbria

John Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages:* 1150-1309 (1998), describes life in medieval Umbria as affected by cultural and social changes as the familiar values of the feudal system became affected by cultural developments ignited by politics and religion.[37] Mundy recounts, 'the elite of society in Assisi were attracted by career and advancement in a cultural climate which was essentially ecclesiastical'.[38] He suggests this era was exemplified in the epic medieval poem, '*The Song of Roland*' (circa 1040-1115), in which 'the subject was a hero whose Christ-like sacrifice demonstrated a popular model of how to win fame by arms, while in contrast, the religious counterpart of the acquisition of fame by soldiers was the attainment of sanctity by the Saints who were the Church's heroes'.[39]

Andre Vauchez' biography, *Francis of Assisi: the Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (2012), supports these notions and attests that 'the literary expressions and ideals of the knightly epic, courtly poetry and romances of adventure (*chansons de geste et d'amour)* were known by all and expressed through heroes such as Charlemagne,

[37] John H. Mundy*, Europe in the High Middle Ages* (1150-1309), 2nd edn. (London: The Folio Society, 1998), pp. 376–386.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Roland, Merlin, Lancelot et al, whose images were depicted on the entrances and pavements of cathedrals in northern and southern Italy'. [40]

R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (1953*),* recounts that 'this era saw the emergence of social change out of a community of knightly ideals, and a new cultural and social consciousness was evolving in the secular life of Umbria, which found expression in the theory of love and the literature of the passions'.[41] Southern asserts that medieval literature merged the concepts of religious and secular through a metanarrative of good over evil and the portrayal of heroes, who taught lessons through the motif of honour while demonstrating the moral ethics of Christianity.[42]

> In this era, the Christian religion supported the principles of a created world, of man's free will and the soul's immortality, while God's omnipotence gave rise to new inescapable arguments for the world's eternity, the ineluctability of fate and the final merging of the individual in a universal soul. [43]

The medieval theological and ecclesial developments during this period were grounded in the works of St. Anselm of Canterbury's *Faith Seeking Understanding* (*fides quaerens intellectum)* (1033-1109), or 'an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of the beloved', and St. Bernard of Clairvaux's (1090-1153) notion of carnal love seeking its spiritual object. Southern refers to Francis of Assisi as 'the embodiment of the spirit of Christian romance and his life as the climax of these developments'.[44]

Paul Sabatier's scholarly acclaimed biography, *The Life of Saint Francis,* introduced the '*Poverello*' to the modern world in 1894, and describes the Church in the Middle Ages as 'in turmoil and struggling to control the behaviour of the clerics and the

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[40] Andre Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 8.
[41] R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 210.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

many Orders that were emerging out of the disgruntled laity'.[45] Sabatier attests that during this unsettled time, the most powerful and determined enemies of the Church were the Cathars,[46] supporters of Manicheism, who offered a doctrinal reform and took issue with the whole body of Catholic dogma.' He refers to a genuine attempt at a religious revolution by the laity during the thirteenth century which, if it had succeeded, would have ended in a universal priesthood and in the proclamation of the rights of the individual conscience.[47]

Catharism, was the greatest heretical challenge faced by the Catholic Church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and is described by Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (2017), as 'a movement that represented total opposition to the Church, which they viewed as a false and fraudulent organisation that had prostituted itself for power and ill-gotten wealth'.[48] Mundy, (1998) suggests that 'because of the growing disenchantment with the medieval church there was a general aspiration towards church reform, inspired by a desire to return to the apostolic life of the first Christian community (Acts 4: 32-35).[49]

He recounts that 'a religious movement had emerged in Lyons around 1170 led by Waldo Valedesius, a layman who was inspired by the Beatitudes' *'Blessed are the poor',* (Mat. 5: 3),[50] who encouraged his followers to preach the Gospel'. However, their right to preach was disputed at the Third Lateran Council (1179) as they were not

[45] Paul Sabatier, *The Life of Saint Francis*, trans. by Louise Seymour Houghton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1906), p. 34.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (London: Routledge 2017), pp. 1–5.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

showing due respect to the Clergy, and they were subsequently condemned as heretics.[51]

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) [52] set out to standardise doctrine and called for renewed evangelisation, pastoral outreach, and moral renewal. This provided a fertile ground for mendicant orders and offered an opportunity for fresh theological vision that aligned with traditional patristic sources, an environment in which the Franciscan Order thrived.

1.2 A Living Testament: Grace and Nature in Harmony

Francis of Assisi was born into the cultural, social, and religious milieu of medieval Umbria in 1182 as the only son of Assisi's rich cloth merchant, Pietro Bernadone and his wife Pica, a pious woman of French origin. The family enjoyed an affluent lifestyle as members of the developing merchant class in Assisi and Pietro dreamed of Francis becoming a knight and a gentleman. Francis excelled in the role of exemplary host, poet and troubadour and he dreamed of becoming a knight, nevertheless his ambition would take him beyond the boundaries of a culturally supported romantic fantasy, and the stark realities of war would change the course of his life. Brothers Leo, Angelo and Rufino describe Francis of Assisi in *The Legend of the Three Companions* (1240-1241) as: -

> Naturally courteous in manner and never rude or offensive, a light-hearted and undisciplined youth whose reputation was widespread, although many who knew him said that in the future, he would be something great. [53]

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[51] J. H. Mundy., Europe *in the High Middle Ages,* pp. 376–386.

[52] The Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, < https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm> [accessed 10 November 2019].

[53] Brother Leo, Brother Rufino, Brother Angelo, 'The Legend of the Three Companions', in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents,* vol. II, *The Founder*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman and William J. Short, (New York: New City Press, 2000), p. 69, (Hereafter, FA: ED II: The Founder).

Francis of Assisi's writings and biographies provide an historic and living testament to his transformation and conversion and they emphasise divine grace as the driving force behind the harmonious integration of grace and nature. An examination of Thomas of Celano's biography, the First Life (*Vita Prima*), and Bonaventure's official biography, (*Legenda Major),* reveals the roots of Franciscan theology as deeply Christocentric and relational, where grace and nature were interwoven and integrated rather than in competition.

In Francis's life, historical events and theological meaning are deeply interwoven. His experience at San Damiano and his encounter with the leper were not only pivotal moments in his personal transformation but also carry enduring theological significance. This chapter narrates those events with sensitivity to both their historical grounding and the metaphysical vision they inspired. A theological appreciation of Francis of Assisi's pivotal conversion experiences, particularly his revelation at the Church of San Damiano and his encounter with the leper, demonstrates that his transformation embodied the harmonious integration of grace and nature, where these elements were interwoven; moreover, his experiences and encounters with God and the Other highlight that divine grace does not override nature but elevates and transforms it.

In consideration of the theological and metaphysical definitions outlined in the Introduction, Francis's pivotal encounters can be understood as instances of the integration of grace and nature, where grace is divine self-communication meeting nature as the created order already oriented toward God. The transformations Francis experienced reflect a participatory metaphysics in which the divine is mediated through the material, relational, and affective structures of creation.

i) Revelation at the Cross of San Damiano

Francis' encounter with the crucified Christ at San Damiano was not merely devotional, but participatory, a moment in which divine grace reorientated his entire metaphysical vision. Through this encounter, he came to perceive creation not as a resource to be used, but as a relational realm of mutual dependence that reflects and participates in the divine order. Poverty was no longer a deprivation but became a rich site of divine intimacy and transformation.

Bonaventure's biography (*The Life of Saint Francis*, *Legenda Major),* draws on Thomas of Celano's biography (*The First Life*, *Vita Prima)* and recounts Francis' determination to seek God's Will: - 'Francis went out to meditate in the fields, and he walked beside the Church of San Damiano which was threatening to collapse because of extreme age'.[54] On entering Francis noticed a large crucifix hanging among the ruins and was inspired to pray: -

> Most High, Glorious God,
> enlighten the darkness of my heart
> and give me true faith,
> certain hope,
> and perfect charity,
> sense and knowledge Lord
> that I may carry out
> Your holy and true command.
> **Francis of Assisi, The Prayer Before the Crucifix (1205/06)** [55]

Thomas of Celano's biography, (*The First Life, Vita Prima*), recounts Francis' contemplation on the Passion of Christ at the Cross of San Damiano, and his transformative encounter with the divine - 'the revelation at the Cross reflected the

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[54] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), *The Tree of Life*; *The Life of St. Francis*, ed. and trans. by Ewert H. Cousins, (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 191.

[55] Francis of Assisi, 'The Prayer Before the Crucifix' (1205/06), in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents*, vol. I, *The Saint*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, (New York, London and Manila: New City Press, 1999), p. 40., (Hereafter FA: ED I: The Saint).

profound humility of God in taking on humanness and living among us'.[56] This is reflected in Francis of Assisi's *Admonition V* which emphasises God's humility in the Incarnation, His sacrificial love for humanity, and the significant role of the human person created in His image (*imago Dei*). His *Admonition V* distinguishes image (flesh) from likeness (spirit) and links the physical image of humanity to Christ's likeness in the Spirit, emphasising the role of the human person in Creation.

> Consider, O human being,
> in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you,
> for He created and formed you
> to the image of His beloved Son according to the body
> and to His likeness according to the Spirit.
> **Francis of Assisi, Admonition V.** [57]

Dawn M. Nothwehr OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person* (2005), suggests 'it was Francis' consideration and discernment of Christ on the Cross in the dilapidated little church of San Damiano that shaped his understanding of what it meant to be human',[58] as for him, 'the Passion of Christ illustrated in the most powerful way God's unfathomable, abiding and unconditional love for humans, and indeed the whole of creation'.[59] The divine humility of the Incarnation is the theme uniquely revealed in Celano's biography (*Vita Prima*) which describes Francis of Assisi's theology and spirituality as 'a tapestry of interweaving threads framed by the theology of the Word and of the Cross, and fused into a Christology of Incarnation and Passion'.[60]

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[56] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life of St Francis of Assisi* (*Vita Prima*)*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000),* p. 175

[57] Francis of Assisi, 'Admonition V', in FA: ED I: The Saint*,* p. 128.

[58] Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person: Some Central Elements* (New York: St. Bonaventure's University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), p. 7.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), p. 178.

Francis of Assisi's prayerful insights that placed Christ at the centre of human existence underpins his Incarnational theology, and points to the Incarnation and Passion as not merely historical events but profound manifestations of divine grace within Creation. This Christocentric focus challenges Radical Orthodoxy's assertions that Franciscan theology privileges nature at the expense of the divine and diminishes the supernatural character of grace by grounding its theology in the Incarnation.[61] Rather than subordinating grace to nature, Francis' spiritual insights emphasise how the Incarnation mediates divine grace and integrates grace and nature, thereby transforming natural inclinations and relationships through grace.

This study reveals that Franciscan theology affirms the Incarnation's capacity to mediate divine grace and elevate nature, thereby integrating it with divine purpose. Francis' contemplation on the Cross in the Church of San Damiano, and his transformative encounter with the divine, illustrates the harmonious interplay between divine grace and human nature, and demonstrates how grace acts upon nature, redirecting it towards divine will.

ii) Rebuilding God's House

Celano's biography, *The First Life* (*Vita Prima*), refers to Francis as 'Christ's new knight' and 'a model of Christian conversion,'[62] and recounts that as he prayed before the Cross at the Church of San Damiano, the image of Christ spoke to him, 'Francis go re-build my house, as you see, it is all being destroyed'.[63] Bonaventure's official biography (*Legenda Major*) emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit and affirms that the

[61] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 9–13.

[62] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), p. 9.

[63] Thomas of Celano, 'The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul', in FA: ED II. The Founder, pp. 233–240.

principal intention of the divine words spoken to Francis, 'referred to the Church Christ purchased with His own blood which the Holy Spirit later revealed to him',[64] (Acts 20: 28).

iii) Relinquishment of Worldly Possessions

In his The Testament (1226), Francis states, 'the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would pray with simplicity in this way: -

> We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ,
> in all Your churches throughout the whole world
> and we bless you,
> because by Your holy Cross
> you have redeemed the world.
> **Francis of Assisi, The Testament, 1226.** [65]

Thomas of Celano (*Vita Prima*) recounts that Francis was determined to re-build the tiny church of San Damiano at his own expense and through his own effort: - 'fuelled with enthusiasm to rebuild the church of San Damiano, Francis took some cloth to sell and hurried off to the town called Foligno'.[66] Bonaventure draws on Celano's biography, *The First Life* (*Vita Prima*) as his primary source in recounting how Francis' actions deeply displeased his father and he describes the circumstances which led to the breakdown of Francis' relationship with his parents, and his subsequent determination to relinquish all his worldly possessions.

Bonaventure's (*Legenda Major*) affirms that his father led him before the Bishop of the town as 'he wanted to have Francis renounce into his hands his family possessions and return everything he had',[67] and describes how Francis was eager to comply and went before the bishop without delaying or hesitating, 'he did not wait for any words,

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[64] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 2.
[65] Francis of Assisi, 'The Testament' (1226), in FA: ED: I The Saint, pp. 124–125.
[66] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 6.
[67] Ibid., p. 193.

nor did he speak, but immediately took off his clothes and gave them back to his father, moreover, drunk with remarkable fervour, he even took off his underwear, stripping himself completely naked.' Bonaventure (Legenda Major) writes that 'Bishop Guido was amazed at such intense fervour in the man of God, and immediately drew Francis into his arms and covered him with the mantle he was wearing', and before all Francis said to his father:

> Until now I have called you father here on earth,
> but now I can say without reservation,
> Our Father who art in heaven (Matt. 6:9),
> since I have placed all my treasure and all my hope in Him. [68]

The event is depicted in art on a pastel fresco painted by the renowned artist Giotto (1267-1337), whose aesthetic interpretation of Francis' Renunciation of his Father's Inheritance is displayed in the Upper Chapel in the Basilica San Francesco in Assisi.

Fig. 1 (removed due to copyright restrictions) [69]

> Thus, the servant of the Most High King
> Was left naked
> That he might follow
> His naked crucified Lord, whom he loved.
> Thus, the cross strengthened him.
> To entrust his soul
> To the wood of salvation
> That would save him from the shipwreck of the world.
> **Bonaventure, The Life of Francis (Legenda Major)** [70]

[68] Thomas of Celano, *Thomas of Celano's First Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), pp. 3-14.
[69] Giotto, Fresco, *Francis' Renunciation of his Father's Inheritance,* (Florence: Scala Group, 2013), p. 70.
[70] Bonaventure, The Life of St. Francis, (*Legenda Major*), in FA: ED II, The Founder, p. 538.

Celano's second biography, *Legenda Secunda (1245-1247),* recounts that Francis 'would not reach the highest point suddenly for he was about to pass gradually from the flesh to the spirit'.[71] His encounters, especially with the poor and marginalized, served as moments of grace where the divine was encountered within human experience. This was exemplified in his pivotal encounter with the Leper, an event that was emblematic of a synergy of grace and nature, when divine grace transformed his natural revulsion into love and acceptance.

iii) Encounter with the Leper

While Francis's encounter with the Leper is historically attested, it also invites theological interpretation. Later Franciscan thinkers would see in this encounter a seed of participatory metaphysics, where the divine is recognised in the most marginal of places. This moment in Francis's life not only reveals his spiritual transformation but prefigures the Franciscan emphasis on the interpenetration of divine grace and created nature through concrete acts of humility.

Bonaventure's biography (*Legenda Major*), describes Francis' encounter with the Leper as 'a transformational spiritual and mystical experience which inspired him to strive to do greater things in the future'.[72] He affirms that 'formerly Francis had been horrified by lepers, not only in close dealing with them, but by their very sight, even from a distance'.[73] Nevertheless, he attests that 'Francis met a Leper one day along the road and instead of turning away in disgust, he dismounted his horse, gave the leper alms and kissed his hand', he recounts : -

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[71] Thomas of Celano, 'The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul', in FA: ED. II: The Founder, pp. 233–240

[72] Thomas of Celano, *Thomas of Celano's First Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), p. 175.

[73] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 189.

> This experience initially struck him with horror, but he recalled his resolution to be perfect and remembered that he must first conquer himself if he wanted to become a knight of Christ.[74]

This pivotal conversion experience counters Radical Orthodoxy's critique that Franciscan theology privileges nature at the expense of the divine.[75] It demonstrates how divine grace transforms human nature without overriding it and illustrates how divine grace harmonises with human agency. This event emphasises that that human action, while distinct, is always dependent on and perfected by grace, as Francis of Assisi affirmed in his The Testament (1226): -

> The Lord gave me, Brother Francis,
> Thus, to begin doing penance in this way:
> For when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers.
> And the Lord Himself led me among them, and I showed mercy to them.
> And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into
> Sweetness of soul and body.
> **Francis of Assisi, The Testament (1226)[76]**

Ilia Delio OFM., *A Franciscan View of Creation* (2003), associates the sweetness Francis felt after meeting the Leper with the reflection of God's Goodness he experienced at the San Damiano Cross, and she asserts that 'through his appreciation of the humility of the incarnation and the charity of the Passion, he came to discern all of creation as being filled with the abundant goodness of God'.[77] Bonaventure's biography (*Legenda Major*) recounts that 'thereafter, Francis showed deeds of humility and humanity to lepers with a gentle piety, visiting their houses frequently, generously distributing alms to them, and with a great drive of compassion kissing their hands and

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[74] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). p. 189.
[75] Milbank, J., *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason,* pp. 9–13.
[76] Francis of Assisi, 'The Testament' (1226), in FA: ED I: The Saint, pp. 124–125
[77] Ilia Delio, OFM., *A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World* (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), p. 10.

their mouths,' and 'from that time Francis clothed himself with a spirit of poverty, a sense of humility and a feeling of intimate devotion'. [78]

Dawn Nothwehr, OSF., (2005), affirms that Francis believed all humans deserved reverence, he embodied human dignity and embraced the dignity of the Other, and he experienced the transparency of beings to God's Being more fully when he encountered the Other.[79] Following his meeting with the Leper, Francis's appreciation of the beauty of creation emphasises how grace transformed his natural perception into a divine encounter as affirmed in his The Testament (1226).

Francis's formative encounters with the crucified Christ and the leper mark more than turning points in his biography. They became the soil from which the roots of a distinct Franciscan theological vision emerged. His theological insights did not arise from speculative abstraction, but from concrete lived experiences, moments of encounter that revealed the relational structure of creation and its inherent openness to divine grace.

As set out in the Introduction, this study distinguishes between grace as divine self-communication, an ontological reality grounding all creaturely being, and grace as an experiential encounter mediated through relationships and creation. This differs from the Radical Orthodoxy position, which typically identifies grace primarily as a quality intrinsic to nature. In Francis's life these two senses of grace converge: the ontological gift of divine presence is recognised and realised in transformative encounters.

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[78] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 189.

[79] Ibid.

1.2.1 Radical Orthodoxy and Its Critique of Franciscan Integrity

The Radical Orthodoxy movement critiques the Franciscan emphasis on human freedom (or voluntarism) and asserts it risks undermining the primacy of grace.[80] However, Francis of Assisi's conversion experiences, particularly his encounter with the Leper, demonstrate that his actions were not expressions of autonomous will, but rather participatory responses to divine grace. His conversion experiences illustrate human freedom operating under the guidance of grace, where the natural and the supernatural are not opposed but integrated.

Francis' transformative interaction with the Leper exemplifies how grace elevated his natural perception into a divine encounter. Rather than illustrating a separation of grace and nature, this event manifests a profound synergy when grace perfected human nature without negating it. In the same way, the call to 'Rebuild My House' at the Cross in the Church of San Damiano represented not merely a literal instruction but signified a deeper spiritual mission, to renew the Church by aligning human action with divine will.

Francis's decisions to rebuild churches, embrace poverty, and serve lepers, were not synonymous with signs of theological voluntarism, rather they exemplified grace-infused human agency. His acts were inspired by revelatory moments and revealed the harmony between divine initiative and human freedom that was central to a participatory theology of grace.[81]

Radical Orthodoxy expresses concern that Franciscan theology over-emphasises' relationality within creation, thereby 'risking a collapse of the divine into the natural'.[82] However, Francis' spirituality affirms that recognising the divine presence in creation

[80] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, pp. 9–13.
[81] Ibid., pp. 206–10.
[82] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, pp. 162–166.

does not reduce God to nature, rather it reveals creation as a relational gift of grace. This deeply sacramental worldview is rooted in the interconnection of all creatures with one another and with God.[83]

Through his embrace of the Leper Francis illustrated the transformative power of encounter and participation, in breaking down barriers of prejudice and difference. These moments were not human-centric acts of moral will, but instances of sacrificial Love moved by grace. Events in Francis's life and spiritual journey respond robustly to Radical Orthodoxy's concerns by showing that for Francis, human action is always grounded in the divine and his experiences bear witness to a metaphysics of participation, where humility, encounter and compassion converge.

1.3 A New Order

The Franciscan 'Order' of Friars Minor was founded in 1210, when Francis was joined by Brother Bernard and Brother Peter who were originally laymen and members of the nobility. The new medicant Order of Friars Minor was both on the fringes and under the protection of the Roman Church and their very existence was modelled on the life of Jesus. Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), former cardinal and Bishop of Ostia and nephew of Pope Innocent III, was one of the most powerful supporters of the Franciscan Order. His Lauds and Antiphons I and III (1170-1241) reflect the diversity of the Franciscan Orders and the inter-relational ethos of the brothers and sisters who were committed to a gospel-centred life in service to God and humanity: -

> Three were the Orders he arrayed:
> The Friars Minor he called the first
> And the Poor Ladies were next,
> Becoming the middle order
> Then thirdly came the Penitents,
> Comprising men and women. **[84]**

[83] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, pp. 152-55.
[84] Pope Gregory IX, 'Lauds, Antiphons I and III,' in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 34.

Francis' *The Testament* (1226) affirms the inspiration of the Holy Spirit towards the formation of the Rule for his new religious Order, in service to the poor and disadvantaged, and in a spirit of sacrificial love.

> And after the Lord gave me some brothers,
> no one showed me what I had to do,
> but the Most High Himself revealed to me
> that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.
> **Francis of Assisi, The Testament (1226).** [85]

Bonaventure's biography (The Life of Francis, *Legenda Major*) recounts that Francis's Rule was inspired through divine prompting while he was devoutly hearing a Mass of the Apostles: -

> The Gospel was read in which Christ sends out his disciples to preach
> and gives them the Gospel form of life, that they may not keep gold
> or silver or money in their belts, nor have a wallet for their journey,
> nor may they have two tunics, nor shoes nor staff"….
> Hearing this Francis exclaimed, this is what I want,
> this is what I desire with all my heart*!*
> **Bonaventure*, Legenda Major*** [86]

This account is affirmed by John of Perugia in his Anonymous of Perugia: -

> The Lord led him on a straight and narrow path.
> Desiring to possess neither gold nor silver, nor money nor any other thing,
> he followed the Lord in humility, and the simplicity of his heart.
> He walked not in the learned words of human wisdom,
> but in the display and the power of the Spirit.
> **John of Perugia, Anonymous of Perugia**[87]

Thomas of Celano's biography (*The First Life, Vita Prima)* affirms that Francis's life, teachings, and example were grounded in the humility and poverty of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, and in medieval Italy his Order represented a

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[85] Francis of Assisi, 'The Testament' (1226), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 125.

[86] Bonaventure, 'The Life of St. Francis *(Legenda Major)'*, in FA: ED II: The Founder, pp. 542–543.

[87] John of Perugia, Anonymous of Perugia, 'The Life of Saint Francis by John of Perugia', in FA: ED II The Founder, p. 38; Thomas, of Celano, *The First Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. by Christopher Stace, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000, p. 37.

return to the principles of the early Church Fathers. Celano recounts that 'Francis's new religious order revealed a theology of conversion and grace which presented him as God's instrument towards ecclesial renewal and reform, and this brought the freshness of his example into the life of the Church.'[88]

> The Gospel Word heard and proclaimed through Francis's life of conversion brought about a marvellous vision of the Incarnation and through the life of Francis, the Church, with all of creation, is renewed because the Word made flesh, long forgotten, comes to life again.
> **Thomas of Celano, The First Life (*Vita Prima*).**[89]

The Franciscan Order of Friars Minor represented a radical reaction to a society focused on economic gain, self-interest, and conflict, and offered an opportunity for those who had forgotten what it meant to be Christian to return to their roots and connect with the Creator, and this was affected in a spirit of sacrificial Love grounded in obedience, charity and servanthood, in service to the disadvantaged. Paul Sabatier, *The Mirror of Perfection* (1912), asserts that 'Francis's strength was he did not occupy himself with questions of doctrine, as for him faith was not of the intellectual but the moral domain, and he was concerned with the consecration of the heart, which could be attained through penance and love for the Lord.'[90] Sabatier affirms that 'Francis of Assisi's Order of Friars Minor offered a new ideal to shine out before the eyes of his contemporaries, before which all the fantastic sects vanished, 'as birds of the night take flight at the first rays of the sun.'[91]

[88] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life* (*Vita Prima*), FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 175.
[89] Ibid., p. 86.
[90] Paul Sabatier, *Saint Francis of Assisi: The Mirror of Perfection*, p. 9.
[91] Paul Sabatier, *The Life of Saint Francis*, pp. 34–36.

1.3.1 Franciscan Attributes

Francis of Assisi placed the triune God, the Highest Good, at the centre of his new Order, as he affirms in his *The Praises of God and The Blessing* (1224): -

> You are holy Lord, the only God, and your deeds are wonderful.
> You are strong, you are great,
> You are the Most High, you are almighty.
> You holy Father are king of heaven and earth
> You are three in One, Lord God, all good.
> You are good, all good, supremely good,
> Lord God, Living and true.
> You are love, you are wisdom.
> You are humility. You are endurance.
> You are rest. You are Peace.
> You are joy and gladness.
> You are justice and moderation.
> You are all our riches, and you suffice for us.
> You are beauty. You are gentleness.
> You are our protector. You are our guardian and defender.
> You are courage. You are our haven and our hope.
> You are our faith. You are our great consolation.
> You are our eternal life, great and wonderful Lord,
> God almighty, merciful Saviour.
> **Francis of Assisi, The Praises of God and The Blessing *(1224)*** [92]

Francis's *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1209-1215), emphasises the relational essence of the Franciscan Order, as rooted in the Gospel, and grounded in the 'First Principle' of 'Love for God and neighbour' (MK 12: 30), and he links the work of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance to the work of Jesus Christ: -

> To those 'who love the Lord with their whole heart,
> with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength
> and love their neighbours as themselves' *(Mk. 12:30)*
> O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do
> such things and persevere in doing them, (Mt. 22: 39)
> because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them (Isa. 11: 2)
> and make its home and dwelling place among them (Jn. 14: 23)
> and they are the children of the heavenly Father
> Whose works they do (Mt 5: 45) and they are spouses, brothers, and
> mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 12: 50).
> **Francis of Assisi, Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, (1209-1215).** [93]

[92] Francis of Assisi, 'The Praises of God and The Blessing' (1224), FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 109.
[93] Francis of Assisi, 'Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance', (1209-1215), FA: ED: I: The Saint, p. 4.

Thomas of Celano's comprehensive depiction of the leader of the Friars Minor, emphasises his attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity: -

> That lord conformed himself to the ways of the brothers.
> In his desire for holiness
> he was simple with the simple,
> humble with the humble,
> and poor with the poor.
>
> He was a brother among brothers,
> the least among the lesser,
> and in his life and habits strove to behave
> as one of them
> as much as was possible.
>
> He took care to plant this holy religion everywhere Is 50:4
> and in faraway places his glowing reputation,
> from an even more glowing life,
> helped greatly to spread the Order.
>
> The Lord *gave* him *a learned tongue.* Phil 3:18
> With it he confounded the opponents of truth,
> refuted *the enemies of the cross of Christ,*
> *led the strangers back* to the way, Dt 22:1
> made peace between those in conflict,
> and bound together those in peace
> in a stronger *bond of love.* Hos 11:4
>
> In the Church of God
> he *was a lamp burning and shining,* Jn 5:35
> a *chosen arrow* Is 49:2
> ready *at the right time.* Ps 32:6 [Vulgate, Ps 31:6]
>
> Many times, he took off his fine clothes
> and, dressed in rough garments
> and with bare feet,
> like one of the brothers,
> he went *asking for terms of peace.* Lk 14:32
>
> He used to do this with great care whenever necessary
> between neighbour and neighbour, Jer 7:5
> and always between God and the people.
> For this reason,
> God *chose him.*
> **Thomas of Celano, Vita Prima.** [94]

[94] Thomas of Celano, The First Life, (*Vita Prima),* p. 141.

The attributes of humility, poverty and simplicity were emblematic of Francis's theology and spirituality and symbolised his Gospel-centred Order. They were grounded in the sacrificial love of the Lord and emanated from his contemplation on the Passion of Christ at the Church of San Damiano. The essence of these attributes placed the triune God, the 'Highest Good', at the centre of his dialogical interactions with the Other and reflected the holy Virtues in action, as Francis affirms in his *A Salutation of the Virtues: -*

> Hail, Queen Wisdom! May the Lord protect You,
> with Your Sister, holy pure Simplicity!
> Lady holy Poverty, may the Lord protect You,
> with Your Sister, holy Humility!
> Lady holy Charity, may the Lord protect You,
> with Your Sister, holy Obedience.
> Most holy Virtues, may the Lord protect all of You
> from Whom You come and proceed."
> …. there is surely no one in the whole world
> who can possess any of You without dying first.
> **Francis of Assisi, A Salutation of the Virtues**. [95]

In dialogue, the essence of these attributes symbolised the Franciscan Gospel-centred commitment to a life that imitated Jesus Christ. They illustrated obedience (holy Obedience), and servanthood (holy Charity),[96] and demonstrated a practical and experiential commitment to the First Principle in service to God and humankind, rooted in sacrificial love.

i) Humility

> Holy Humility confounds pride,
> all the people who are in the world
> and all that is in the world. [97]

Francis did not assume a hierarchy other than God, and through his attribute of humility he rose above material grasping and the pursuit of worldly success to

[95] Francis of Assisi, 'A Salutation of the Virtues', FA: ED: II The Founder, p. 164.
[96] Ibid., pp. 164–165.
[97] Ibid.

reflect a spiritual richness. Bonaventure's Evening Sermon on Saint Francis (1255) refers to humility as 'the greatest virtue, because by it uniquely God is revered and honoured'.[98] In referring to Francis's humility, Bonaventure asserts: - 'the guardian and the ornament of all the virtues had filled the man of God in copious abundance, and he strove to build himself up upon this virtue like an architect laying the foundations.' [99] (1 Cor. 3: 10; Heb. 6: 1).

Francis's brother and companion Brother Leo's early publication of *The Mirror of Perfection* recounts that 'Francis wanted all the brothers to serve lepers as a foundation for humility.'[100] His commitment to humility was grounded in the sacrificial love of the Incarnation and Passion, as affirmed in Bonaventure's biography (*Legenda Major*) which recounts: - 'Francis showed deeds of humility and humanity to lepers just as the crucified Christ humbly served humanity'.[101]

ii) Poverty

Holy poverty confounds
The desire for riches, greed,
And the cares of this world. [102]

Poverty, a primary principle of the Order of Friars Minor, emulates the life of Christ, 'Who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich' (2 Cor. 8: 9). Francis's *Earlier Rule* and his *Admonitions* link the poverty of spirit to the virtue of humility in the accepting of alms and hospitality through the grace of God. The attribute of poverty linked to humility and simplicity primarily refers to the concept of living without anything of one's own (*vivere sine*

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98 Bonaventure, 'The Evening Sermon on Saint Francis, preached at Paris, 4 October 1262', in FA: ED II: The Founder, pp, 517–521.

99 Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, ed. and trans. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 228.

100 Brother Leo, *A Mirror of Perfection*, trans. and ed. by Paul Sabatier, 1912.

101 Francis of Assisi, 'The Testament' (1226), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p, 124.

102 Ibid.

proprio) as a disciple, and following the teachings of the Beatitudes, being 'poor in spirit', (Mat. 5: 3). For Francis, the Passion and the Incarnation revealed God's Humility and generosity and in living without grasping the incarnate God reflected the Virtue of 'holy Poverty'. Sister Helen Julian CSF., *Living the Gospel*, (2001), [103] affirms that 'it was through his life of poverty which imitated the life of Christ that Francis reflected the sacrificial humility of the incarnation through which he became spiritually rich.' (2 Cor. 8: 9).

> The rule and life of these brothers is this, namely, to live in obedience,
> in chastity and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching
> and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who says: if you wish to be perfect,
> go sell everything you have and give it to the poor
> and you will have treasure in heaven (Mt 19: 21; Lk. 18: 22).
> **Francis of Assisi, The Earlier Rule, (1209/10-1221).[104]**

In his biography, (*Legenda Major*), Bonaventure asserts that 'Francis saw Christ's image in every poor person he met, and he was prepared to give them everything he had.'[105] Thomas of Celano's second biography, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (Vita Secunda*), recounts that 'Francis's teaching was regarded as ground-breaking, and contemporaries saw his evangelical poverty as the return to a long-neglected virtue.'[106]

iii) Simplicity

> Pure Holy Simplicity confounds
> all the wisdom of this world
> and the wisdom of the body.
> **Francis of Assisi, A Salutation of the Virtues**. [107]

Bonaventure's biography (*Legenda Major),* recounts that *'*among the gifts of grace which Francis received from God the generous Giver, he merited as a special

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[103] Helen Julian CSF., *Living the Gospel, The Spirituality of St. Francis and St. Clare,* (Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2001), p. 90.
[104] Francis of Assisi, 'The Earlier Rule' (1209/10-1221), FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 63.
[105] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, ed. and trans. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 228.
[106] Thomas of Celano, 'The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul', in FA: ED II: The Founder, p. 55.
[107] Francis of Assisi, 'A Salutation of the Virtues', FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 165.

privilege to grow in the riches of simplicity through his love of the highest poverty',[108] and he asserts that 'simplicity was what the most Holy father demanded in the brothers, learned, and lay'.[109] In his *The Evening Sermon on Saint Francis* (1262), Bonaventure associates simplicity with wisdom, and asserts: -

> The Gospel tells us: Be simple as doves (Mt. 10: 16)
> it is utterly necessary to draw close to God in the greatest humility
> and simplicity of heart', as 'we should love simplicity and innocence of
> heart if we desire God to enlighten us with the brilliant light of wisdom.
> **Bonaventure, The Evening Sermon on Saint Francis (1262).**

Celano's second biography, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (Vita Secunda),* defines *The Nature of True Simplicity* as a practical and experiential approach towards attaining knowledge and wisdom: -

> This is she who examines herself
> and condemns no one by her judgement
> who grants due authority to her betters
> and seeks no authority for herself.
> This is she who does not consider the best glories of the Greeks.
> and would rather do, than teach or learn.
>
> This is she who, when dealing with all the divine laws,
> leaves all wordy wanderings, fanciful decorations,
> shiny trappings, showy displays and odd curiosities,
> who seeks not the rind but the marrow, not the shell but the kernel,
> not the many but the much supreme and enduring good."
> **Thomas of Celano, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, Vita Secunda**[110]

In his *The Nature of True Simplicity*, Celano links simplicity with wisdom and affirms that 'Francis did not believe holy Simplicity was the contrary of Wisdom but rather her true sister, though easier to acquire for those poor in knowledge, and more quickly to put into use'.[111]

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[108] Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis (Legenda Major)*, p. 239.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Thomas of Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, (*Vita Secunda)*, p. 55.
[111] Ibid.

Francis's commitment to a Gospel-centred life was grounded in action, and in service to the poor he reflected his care for all creation where nature represented a vessel for grace. His radical embrace of humility, poverty, and simplicity and his renunciation of material wealth reflected a life which imitated Jesus and represented his voluntary submission to grace that allowed for a closer communion with God and nature.

Analysis determined that the Franciscan attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity were expressions of Francis's participatory vision that aligned his new Order and the lives of the Franciscan Brothers with divine grace, thereby reflecting divine sacrificial Love in their actions. Francis' spiritual journey illustrates a life that fully participated in divine grace and exemplifies how divine grace perfected and elevated his human nature in service to God and humankind. His theology reflects a deep conviction that grace is not opposed to nature but rather fulfils and sanctifies it.

Although Francis's approach was radically experiential, it was also profoundly ecclesial. His spirituality was formed within the liturgical rhythms of the Church, where the presence of Christ in word, sacrament, and creation shaped his understanding of the world as a place of divine mediation. His embrace of humility, poverty, and simplicity must therefore be read not as an alternative to ecclesial life but as an intensification of its sacramental imagination, expressing a profoundly Christocentric participation.

1.3.2 Franciscan Motifs

A theological analysis of Francis of Assisi's pivotal conversion experiences and his dialogical encounters with God and the Other revealed the primary recurring motifs of freedom and the will, relationality and moral goodness. In dialogue, these motifs merged and synergised to reflect an overarching metanarrative that illustrated the inter-relational essence of his theology and spirituality and demonstrated his practical and

experiential Gospel-centred commitment to the First Principle of Love for God and neighbour.

i) Freedom and the Will

Radical Orthodoxy critiques the Franciscan emphasis on human freedom, seeing it as a risk to the primacy of grace, Franciscan theology however, underscores freedom as a gift of grace, and views freedom as the capacity to respond to divine grace, thereby harmonising human action with God's sovereignty. [112]

The motif of 'freedom and the will' was reflected practically and experientially through Francis's commitment to the First Principle in service to God and humankind. His actions were grounded in sacrificial Love, and in reaching out to the Other in obedience and servanthood, he demonstrated a synergy of divine and human freedom and will that illustrate the inter-relational ethos of his theology and spirituality. Francis's encounters with the Other were synonymous with gifts of grace that effected his transition from image to likeness,[113] towards a deeper knowledge of God and the meaning of being in relation to Him.

ii) Relationality

Through his contemplation on the Passion of Christ on the Cross, Francis perceived the triune God's sacrificial Love as permeating all Creation in a relational oneness, (Jn. 14: 20). In his *Evening Sermon* at the University of Paris in 1262, Bonaventure affirms a comprehensive trinitarian relationality at the centre of Franciscan theology and spirituality, which he defines as the transcendental One God, the Father Who is the root of all fecundity and goodness, together with Christ His Son, the Exemplar, through whom

[112] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 207–212; Laurence Paul Hemming, *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 63–70.

[113] Thomas of Celano, 'The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (*Vita Secunda)'*, in FA: ED II: The Founder p. 55.

he made all things,[114] and the Holy Spirit (the Mediator), the hand of God which bestows the manifold gifts of grace to humankind.[115]

The Franciscan motif of relationality is linked to Francis's profound appreciation of the Incarnation and is reflected in his view of relationality as a gift of grace. The recurring motif of relationality was expressed practically and experientially through his acts of moral goodness. These were facilitated through his divinely gifted freedom and will to reach out to the Other, in service to God and humankind in the community of Creation. In the Franciscan tradition Francis saw all creatures as his brothers and sisters, and relationality is central to the integration of grace and nature in reflecting a deep sense of interconnectedness and participation in God's love. [116]

iii) Moral Goodness

Francis was committed to discipleship and a life which imitated Jesus in service to God and humankind, to live in obedience and chastity without anything of his own, and to follow the teachings and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ, 'I have not come to be served but to serve' (Mt. 20: 28). [117] His actions effected a synergy of divine and human freedom and will and reflected his commitment in service to God and humankind.

Throughout his spiritual journey, Francis's notion of the Other was not restricted to the religious Other, rather it incorporated the neighbour, the fellow pilgrim, the fellow traveller, the poor, the suffering, and the disadvantaged, as fellow creatures, created in the image of God (*imago Dei*), (Gen. 1: 17). In reaching out to the Other in dialogue, and through acts of moral goodness, Francis drew nearer to God and

[114] Bonaventure, 'The Evening Sermon on Saint Francis' (1226), FA: ED: I The Saint, p. 728.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Francis of Assisi, 'The Testament' (1262), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 124.
[117] Francis of Assisi, 'The Earlier Rule', (1209/10-1221), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 63.

experienced the transparency of His Goodness more clearly (James 4: 8). His acts of moral goodness were grounded in the First Principle of 'love for God and neighbour', this was exemplified in his care for the poor, his love for creation, and his commitment to peace, and demonstrated how grace perfected his human nature.

Analysis determined that Francis's dialogical attributes and motifs merged and synergised in an overarching metanarrative that reflected the First Principle and simultaneously illustrated his commitment to a life which imitated Jesus. (Mat. 22: 37-40). In dialogue, they illuminated the inter-connected and inter-relational ethos of his theology and spirituality which was grounded in sacrificial Love, and they illustrate how, empowered by grace, human nature can participate in God's redemptive work, as grace elevates human freedom, deepens relational connections, and inspires moral actions that reflect the divine order.

1.4 The Sacramentality of Creation

Francis of Assisi's understanding of creation was profoundly sacramental, and he saw all of nature as a reflection of divine goodness. His reverence for creation as a reflection of God's Goodness and grace was grounded in his contemplation on the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ and was central to the formation of his theology and spirituality. His recognition of the divine presence in creation affirms creation as a relational gift of grace and emphasises that grace is not an external addition to nature but inherently woven into the fabric of the cosmos.

The Franciscan integration of grace and nature fosters a holistic spirituality that counters Radical Orthodoxy's concerns in aligning with a theology of divine immanence without compromising God's transcendence. The Franciscan vision, where the natural world is seen as a site of divine presence and action, reflects the deepest integration of

grace and nature and illustrates that the Franciscan sacramental view of creation does not collapse grace into nature, rather it reveals how nature points beyond itself to God.

In accordance with the theological and metaphysical definitions set out in the Introduction, where sacramentality is understood as creation's capacity to mediate divine presence through participation in God, Francis's view does not conflate nature with grace; rather, it reveals how creation, by its very structure, points beyond itself to the divine and invites the creature into a deeper participation in God's life.

Francis of Assisi's The Canticle of the Creatures, (1225), written shortly before his death, embodies a vision where creation is not autonomous from God but participates fully in divine life. The Canticle reflects Francis's theological vision of creation as sacramental and emphasises the interconnectedness of all creation as a reflection of divine presence, that reveals the Creator's goodness and calls for reverence and participation.

> Most High Omnipotent Good Lord,
> Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour and all blessing.
> To you alone, Most High do they belong,
> and no one is worthy to mention Your name.
>
> Praised be You, my Lord with all Your creatures, (TB. 8: 7)
> especially Sir Brother Sun,
> who is the day and through whom You give us light.
> and he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour
> and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
>
> Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
> In heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.
>
> Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
> And through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather.
>
> Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water, (Ps. 148: 4,5)
> who is very useful and humble and chaste.
> Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, (Dun. 3: 66)
> through whom you light the night, (Ps. 78: 14)
> and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, (Dn. 3: 74).
Who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You my Lord, through those who give pardon
for Your love, (Mk. 6:12) and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace,
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned."
Francis of Assisi, The Canticle of the Creatures[118]

1.5 A Franciscan Theology of Encounter

The Franciscan tradition affirms a participatory ontology as exemplified by Francis of Assisi's transformation and conversion, which was driven by his participation in prayer and perfected through his encounter with Christ, transforming his natural inclinations and relationships through grace. Franciscan theology stresses that grace transforms the individual's entire way of living, and this was exemplified in Francis's actions following his revelation at the Church of San Damiano and his encounter with the leper. These events inspired in him a holistic vision for encountering God and Others in creation and revealed how humility and grace led him from a natural knowledge to divine communion.

Francis's interactions with the natural world, his identification with the poor and marginalized, and his rejection of material power, reveal a metaphysics of participation in which grace is experienced through relational being. Franciscan theology asserts that 'being' itself is contingent on participation in divine goodness and reflects a deeply trinitarian understanding of creation that aligns more closely with Radical Orthodoxy's participatory vision than its critique suggests.

[118] Francis of Assisi, 'The Canticle of the Creatures', FA: ED: I, The Saint, p. 113.

Radical Orthodoxy critiques Franciscan theology for grounding ethics in nature, potentially sidelining grace. However, Franciscan theology places sacrificial love at the centre of moral goodness, as a divine gift that enables human participation in God's redemptive work. Francis's actions, from serving lepers to founding the Franciscan Order, illustrate the moral and ethical implications of grace transforming human behaviour. His acts, which mirrored Christ's sacrificial Love and affirmed the dignity of all people as mutual creatures in creation, were direct responses to divine grace and flowed from his commitment to live according to the Gospel. Events in his life and spiritual journey highlight that moral goodness was not self-derived but a fruit of his relationship with God, and his actions reflected grace working through human nature.

A Franciscan theology of encounter harmonises humility, divine grace, and natural knowledge, and presents a vision where humility clears the obstacles of pride and opens the path to divine truth. This not only preserves the integrity of natural knowledge but situates it within a theological vision that fully honours the transformative role of grace and the centrality of humility. Humility, as a pre-requisite for receiving grace, acknowledges the human person's inability to fully comprehend or approach God through natural knowledge alone.

1.6 Humility, Grace, and Natural Knowledge

Francis of Assisi's theological vision is grounded in an incarnational spirituality that affirms the unity of grace and nature. His life and spiritual journey reveal a deeply Christocentric orientation in which divine grace is not separate from the natural world but is mediated through it. Rather than emphasising human autonomy, Francis' response to the divine, through his encounter with the leper and the revelation at San Damiano, manifests a humility that is receptive, participatory and transformative.

His experiences illustrate how humility opened the way to a deeper participation in the divine, revealing how grace elevates rather than over-rides nature and how the natural order is not opposed to grace, but rather is illuminated and transfigured by it. Francis's response was not to assert his will but to humbly yield to divine initiative, thus his experiences were both personal and metaphysical.

Francis' conversion experiences reveal a framework in which creation is sacramental and a knowledge of God emerges from an encounter grounded in sacrificial Love and humility. Thus, nature became a site of theological meaning that reflected an expression of divine generosity, and his life and spiritual journey reflected the roots of a participatory metaphysics that affirmed the centrality of Christ and the sacramentality of creation.

By rooting his theological understanding in lived experiences of encounter, humility and transformation, Francis's theology counters the assertion of a disconnectedness between grace and nature and offers a coherent theological response to Radical Orthodoxy's critique, as rather than diminishing the Divine, it reveals how grace suffuses the natural world, and calls the human person into communion and transformation.

This study identified an inner coherence between events in the life of Francis of Assisi, and the notions of humility, grace and natural knowledge. This coherence constitutes a theological framework in which grace fulfils and sustains nature in a profoundly integrated way, and humility (as embodied by Francis), becomes the lens through which a natural knowledge of God is not only affirmed but deepened in practice and contemplation, to reveal a lived expression of what it means to be in communion with God.

Rather than presenting an individualistic or voluntarist ontology, the roots of Franciscan theology reveal its relational, communal and participatory foundations, and reflect a comprehensive trinitarian ethos grounded in the Incarnation and the Passion that affirms the sacramentality of Creation. In the Franciscan tradition, humility the highest virtue, is linked to an acknowledgement and recognition of a complete dependence on God. Humility orientates a human person towards acknowledging that the essence of their being is a divine gift. Humility is therefore not merely a moral or ethical stance but a spiritual posture that disposes the human person to receiving God's grace and enables a deeper participation in the divine.

Humility is synonymous with an act of human surrender to the ego or Self which allows for the receptivity of divine grace and Francis of Assisi's humble disposition enabled him to transcend natural knowledge and enter a deeper union with God. His life and spiritual journey inspired Bonaventure's *Magnum Opus*, *The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum),*[119] in which he describes the role of humility as the foundation for the human ascent to a knowledge of God, where natural contemplation leads to divine illumination.

Fig. 2 (removed due to copyright restrictions)[120]

[119] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, trans. by Philotheus Boehner, (St. Louis: Franciscan Institute, 1956)

[120] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. by Dominic Monti (St. Bonaventure University: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005)**;** Bonaventure; *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, trans. by Dominic Monti (St. Bonaventure University: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2018); Gilson, Étienne, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, trans. by Dom Illtyd Trethowan, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940); Ingham, Mary B., CSF., *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to St. Bonaventure*, (St. Bonaventure University: Franciscan Institute, Publications, 2012).

Bonaventure's vision of the mind's journey into God (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), highlights Christocentric Wisdom (top level) as the source and summit of all knowledge, and illustrates the interplay between humility, grace, and natural knowledge, leading to mystical union.

1.6.1 Theological Structure and Key Elements

i) Humility (Minoritas) - disposes one to receive grace; Franciscan humility reflects a dependence on divine grace and affirms the notion that true wisdom begins in recognising human limitations. Central to Franciscan spirituality, humility recognises human dependence on divine love and is not just a virtue but an ontological stance before God. [121]

ii) Grace (Gratia) - perfects natural knowledge and directs it to divine truth and is the divine gift that perfects and elevates nature, an essential element in the Franciscan understanding of participation in divine truth.[122]

iii) Natural Knowledge (Scientia) – when illumined by grace and grounded in humility leads to Wisdom; For Bonaventure, the capacity for reason and learning is always oriented towards divine illumination, and the human intellect is a gift that requires divine illumination for fullness. Bonaventure sees natural knowledge as participating in divine Wisdom, only when purified by grace.[123]

[121] Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron,* 2.16.
[122] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium,* Part II, c.9.
[123] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Prologue, 3.

iv) Faith & Reason (Fides et Ratio) - Faith and reason the mediating principle, integrates human knowledge with divine truth. This balance prevents rationalism (overemphasis on human reason) and fideism (neglect of reason).[124]

v) Union with God (Participatio Dei) - reflects the Franciscan emphasis on Divine participation, reveals the fullness of divine truth where the integration of humility, grace and natural knowledge lead to a mystical participation in divine life, and echoes the seraphic vision of Bonaventure, where the soul is transformed into the love of God.[125]

In the Franciscan tradition, grace perfects rather than replaces nature and builds on the humility that natural knowledge fosters. In acknowledging human limitations and a dependence on God, humility allows for the reception of grace, which elevates and transforms natural knowledge into an intimate communion with the divine. Bonaventure's theology of divine illumination highlights this relationship and acknowledges that natural knowledge is limited and requires the light of grace to ascend to a fuller understanding of God.[126]

Francis's life offers not only a personal example of transformation but also a theological blueprint grounded in the integration of grace and nature. His emphasis on humility, encounter, and the divine presence in creation formed the experiential foundation for what would become a participatory metaphysics in later Franciscan thought.

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[124] Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, q. 4, trans. by Zachary Hayes (*Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, q. 4, trans. by Zachary Hayes (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 1995), p. 4.

[125] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, VII. 4-5.

[126] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Prologue, 3.

This chapter has shown that Francis's theology was not a theoretical system, but a living theology of encounter, rooted in his radical openness to the presence of God. His conversion was shaped not only by external events but by an inward reorientation of vision, in which participation, humility, and the unity of grace and nature became the foundation of a theological framework later developed by the medieval Franciscan school.

Having examined the theological and spiritual foundations of Franciscan thought, the following chapter turns to a defining moment in Francis's life: his meeting with the Sultan during the Fifth Crusade. This encounter illustrates how humility, poverty, and hospitality are not merely personal virtues, but expressions of a metaphysics of participation. It shows how peace can emerge from a posture of vulnerability and dispossession, offering a model for a theology of encounter and interfaith engagement grounded in lived experience.

2.0 FRANCIS AND THE SULTAN

This chapter builds on the spiritual foundations established in Chapter 1.0 and focuses on Francis' meeting with Sultan al-Kāmil during the Fifth Crusade. It analyses this event as a lived expression of the Franciscan integration of grace and nature, showing how hospitality and humility became vehicles for interfaith encounter. In doing so, this chapter directly responds to Radical Orthodoxy's critique by demonstrating that Francis' interfaith engagement was not a departure from metaphysical orthodoxy but an embodiment of a participatory and sacramental vision of reality grounded in grace.

Through an extended examination of the formation of his theology and spirituality, and his motivation to embark on a mission to the East in 1219, to preach the Gospel of Peace to the leader of the Muslim forces, this historical case study bridges Francis's personal spirituality with the later scholastic articulation of participation. The aim is to show that Francis theological vision was not grounded in abstract theory, but was a lived response to the social, religious, and cultural challenges of his time. Moreover, to demonstrate that his encounter with the Sultan expressed a deeply personal commitment in service to God and humankind and reflected the essence of his theology and spirituality.

The objective of this chapter is to further counter Radical Orthodoxy's critique of Franciscan theology and demonstrate that Francis' encounter with Sultan Malik al-Kāmil stands as an exemplar of the coalescence of grace and nature in dialogue, one that bridged religious and cultural difference and fostered mutual respect through participation and encounter.

2.1 Mission and Crusade

In his *The Little Flowers of Francis of Assisi* (circa 1337), Brother Ugolino recounts that 'in the early years of his conversion, Francis was concerned whether he should give his life entirely to prayer or occasionally preach the Word, and he sought the Will of God through the prayers of others'.[127] He asked that Brother Masseo, Brother Sylvester, and Sister Clare pray for him, and they confirmed that Christ had given them the same message, 'He wants you to go about the world preaching, because God did not call you for yourself alone but also for the salvation of others'. [128]

Prior to the Fifth Crusade, Francis of Assisi had sent his most trusted brothers, Giles, and Elias on exploratory missions to preach the Gospel to the Muslims. Brother Giles became the first Franciscan to travel on a mission to the East when he embarked on a journey to the holy places in Palestine in 1209. Daniel, E. Randolph, The Desire for Martyrdom: *A Leitmotiv of St. Bonaventure*, (1972) affirms, 'he gained valuable experience in preaching to Muslims, and he was careful not to insult Muhammad, while other enthusiastic and less experienced brothers had been martyred for insulting the prophet'. [129]

Brother Elias, a prominent figure in the Order due to his organisational skills and cultural experience, headed the Franciscan mission to the Holy Lands in 1212 to become the first Minister Provincial of Syria. Elias established the foundations for the Franciscan apostolate in all the regions situated in the south-eastern basin of the Mediterranean. The largest of these Provinces, the Province of the Holy Lands, later referred to as The

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[127] Ugolino Br., The *Little Flowers of St Francis*, ed. by Raphael Brown, (New York: Image Books, 1958), p. 75.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Daniel E. Randolph, 'The Desire for Martyrdom: A "Leitmotiv" of St. Bonaventure', *Franciscan Studies*, 32, 1972), 74–87 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44000285> [accessed 4 April 2019].

Order of the Custody of the Holy Lands, with its vast territories and Holy Places, was ultimately entrusted to him.[130]

In 1212, Francis attempted several times to travel to the East to preach the Gospel to Muslim leaders, but various obstacles prevented him. Thomas of Celano's biography (*Vita Prima*) recounts that 'on his first attempt he set sail for Syria, but high winds made it impossible for him to continue his journey';[131] 'soon afterwards, he set out for Morocco to preach to its ruler, but he became seriously ill in Spain and had to turn back, although he was reluctant to do so'.[132]

The Franciscan Order experienced rapid growth, and by 1217 it was divided into provinces with missionaries throughout Europe. Following the death of Pope Innocent III (1161-1216), Francis called a Missionary Chapter meeting of the Friars Minor to be held at St Mary of the Angels near Assisi, where he announced his plan to divide the world into Provinces and send his Friars on missions to all nations. In his *The Mirror of Perfection*, Brother Leo recounts how 'Francis was minded to go humbly into distant parts in like manner as he had sent other brethren, and how he taught the brethren to go humbly and devoutly through the world': -

> Take the road two by two and in the name of the Lord, be humble and sincere.
> Keep silence from dawn until after Terce, praying to God in your hearts
> and do not indulge in idle and unprofitable conversation.
> Although you are travelling, let your words be as humble and devout
> as in a hermitage or cell. For wherever we are, or wherever we go,
> we always take our cell with us.
> **Brother Leo of Assisi, The Mirror of Perfection.** [133]

[130] *Franciscans Serving the Holy Land*, *Custodia Terrae Sanctae*, <https://www.custodia.org> [accessed 23 March 2019].
[131] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life, (Vita Prima),* p. 230.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Brother Leo of Assisi, *The Mirror of Perfection*, p. 65.

Brother Ramon, OFM., *Franciscan Spirituality* (1994), affirms that the brothers were neither called nor expected in the countries to which they would go, they had no knowledge of the languages, cultures or traditions of those regions and they would be without money, authorisation or ecclesial recommendation.[134] Ramon asserts that 'Francis challenged and encouraged his friars, announcing that he would not send them to face any privation and persecution that he would not be prepared to undergo himself, and that included martyrdom'.[135]

The biographies of Thomas of Celano *(The First Life, Vita Prima*) and Bonaventure (*Legenda Major*) employ hagiographical literary motifs to present Francis' personal mission to the East as primarily linked to his desire for martyrdom. In recounting Francis's willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for the love of Christ, their emphasis on the glory of martyrdom served to reinforce the idealistic and radical motivations of the Christian crusades. Bonaventure's official biography (*Legenda Major*) portrays Francis as a knight for Christ on his spiritual journey towards martyrdom, while Celano's biography (*Vita Prima)* emphasises Francis' spiritual progression and draws attention away from his pre-conversion life in the world, to the glorification of his life as a follower of Christ, burning with a desire of martyrdom to meet with the Sultan: -

> The ardour of his charity urged his spirit on toward martyrdom as he set out to preach to the. infidels hoping to shed his blood for the spread of the faith in the Trinity…. **Francis, the intrepid knight of Christ,** hoping to be able to achieve his purpose, decided to make the journey, not terrified by the fear of death, but rather drawn by desire for it. [136]

[134] Brother Ramon, OFM., *Franciscan Spirituality*, (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 88.
[135] Ibid., p. 88.
[136] Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, (*Legend Major)*, p. 268.

> Glowing with the love of God, the most blessed father Francis was ever zealous, to set his hand to brave deeds, and, walking with heart enlarged in the way of God's commandments, he longed to reach the height of perfection. Accordingly, in the sixth year of his conversion, **burning with the utmost desire for holy martyrdom**, he determined to pass over to the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith, and repentance to the Saracens and the other unbelievers. [137]

Nevertheless, Celano's biography emphasises that, 'while Francis was prepared to accept the fate for the glorification of Christ, he did not condone martyrdom for the sake of self-glorification'.[138] These biographical references to Francis's longing for martyrdom towards the height of perfection would not be fulfilled in his meeting with Sultan Sheikh Malik al Kamil as Celano affirms, 'in all this however, the Lord did not fulfil his desire, reserving for him the prerogative of a unique grace,'[139] that of the Stigmata.

2.1.1 The Fifth Crusade: Chronicles and Narratives

On 19 April 1213 Pope Innocent III summoned all Bishops and Abbots of the church as well as priors and chapters of churches and of religious orders, namely Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Hospitallers and Templars, and the kings and civil authorities throughout Europe to attend the Fourth Lateran Council in November 1215. [140] In a Papal decree dated 30 November 1215, the Pope announced a complete remission of all sins and promised indulgences and a swift passage through purgatory to those who participated in the Fifth Crusade against the infidels.[141] The Papal Bull summoned all the faithful, and denounced Muhammad as a false prophet and Muslims

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137 Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, (*Legend Major)*, p. 268.
138 Thomas of Celano, The *First Life (Vita Prima),* p. 55.
139 Ibid.
140 Norman P. Tanner *ed., trans., Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, The Fourth Lateran Council*,1215., < https//www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm> [accessed: 28 September 2023].
141 Julio Mico, 'The Spirituality of St. Francis: Brothers to All', *Greyfriars Review* 4.75 (1994), p. 116.

as perfidious, condemnations which were perpetuated after Pope Innocent III's death by Pope Honorius III and later Pope Gregory IX.[142]

The Crusades were religious military campaigns fuelled by the quest to reclaim Jerusalem and the Holy Lands from the 'infidels', however, the Crusaders also engaged in strategies towards economic power and the accumulation of wealth. This was epitomised in the Crusaders' attack on Damietta, which was both economically and militarily strategic, as being situated at the mouth of one of the easternmost branches of the Nile nearest to the Palestinian coast, the Egyptian city represented a valuable gateway to the East.[143]

Crusader Chronicles and historical narratives written by those who witnessed the spiritual ethos of the Franciscan Orders in medieval Tuscany prior to the launch of missions, and who were present when Francis of Assisi and Brother Illuminato arrived in the middle of the battle for Damietta during the Fifth Crusade, offer an historical and religious context to Francis of Assisi's missionary ambitions.

i) Jacques de Vitry, Bishop of Acre (c1160/70-1240)

Jacques de Vitry is described as 'a noted preacher, historian and church leader, and a critical observer of religious life in the early thirteenth century.'[144] During the summer of 1216 de Vitry travelled to Italy to be consecrated by the Pope and arrived in Perugia shortly after the death of Pope Innocent III. His Letter, written in October 1216, documents his journey through Italy and emphasises the immorality that surrounded the Church: -

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[142] Julio Mico, 'The Spirituality of St. Francis: Brothers to All', *Greyfriars Review* 4.75 (1994), p. 116.

[143] John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan, The Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 29.

[144] 'Writings of Jacques De Vitry', Letter 1', (1216), FA: ED I: The Saint., p. 578.

> I came to the city of Milan, which is a cesspool of heretics.
> I remained there for some days and preached the word of God
> in a number of places. Departing from there I arrived at Perugia,
> there I discovered Pope Innocent dead but not yet buried.
> During the night some thieves had stripped his body of all the
> precious vestments with which he was to be interred
> and left it there in the church virtually naked and already decaying.[145]

On 31 July 1216, De Vitry was subsequently ordained Bishop of Acre by Pope Honorius III,[146] and in his letter he describes his experiences: -

> After I had been in the Curia for a while, I encountered a great deal
> that was repugnant to me. They were so occupied with worldly affairs,
> with rulers and kingdoms, with lawsuits and litigation, that they hardly let
> anyone speak of spiritual things. I did find however one source of consolation
> in those parts. Many well-to-do secular people of both sexes, having left all
> things for Christ, had fled the world. They were called the 'Lesser Brothers' and
> 'Lesser Sisters'.[147]

De Vitry's letters affirm and describe the appeal of the Franciscan Order and refer to the leader of the Lesser Brothers and Lesser Sisters as 'a model for the spiritual renewal of the Church'. [148] He describes the Franciscan Order as 'a revival of a way of living which was almost dead which had been established by God to revive the apostolic life'[149] and he recounts: - 'These people live in the manner of the early church, of which it is written 'the multitude of the faithful were one heart and one soul'.[150]

The Franciscan Orders continued to grow rapidly with many defecting from de Vitry's church to the Order of Friars Minor, nevertheless, he praised the Franciscans, referring to them as 'the salt of the earth, light of the world, valiant knights of Christ, who led a religious life which should be imitated'.[151]

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[145] 'Writings of Jacques De Vitry, Letter I' (1216), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 578.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan,* p. 39.
[150] Ibid.
[151] 'Writings of Jacques De Vitry, Letter VI' (1216), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 585.

Jacques de Vitry, an active supporter of the Crusades, was tasked with providing Pope Honorius III and his collaborators with information on the progress of the Fifth Crusade as well as chronicles on the current campaign, and he was simultaneously writing histories of the Holy Land and former Crusades.[152] Alfred Andrea (*Church History*, 1981) asserts that de Vitry appears to make no attempt at redaction in presenting the evidence, and of de Vitry he says, 'he is considered to be knowledgeable and honest in his reporting and his study serves as a valuable and perceptive record of his religious culture'.[153]

De Vitry's letters document that the theatre of the Crusades was Syria and Palestine (Israel), where most expeditions and nearly all the stages of war took place,[154] and he attests that it was the will of God that Francis of Assisi arrived during the battle for Damietta on the Nile Delta in 1219, where he witnessed the carnage and destruction of the holy war.[155] His *Historia Occidentalis* recounts 'the Crusaders had placed the city under siege and following a series of assaults from the Crusader armies, the city was running out of food and disease was rife in both camps'.[156] This is affirmed in the writings of Oliver of Paderborn (1196-1227), whose Chronicles of the Crusade recount that 'the suffering from sword, starvation and pestilence was great, and malnutrition had caused the growth and spread of a number of diseases, including one that struck its victims blind'.[157]

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[152] Jessalyn Bird, 'The Historia Orientalis of Jacques de Vitry: Visual and Written Commentaries as Evidence of a Text's Audience, Reception and Utilization', West Virginia University Press, *Essays in Medieval Studies, vol. 20*, 2003, pp. 56–74.

[153] Alfred J. Andrea, 'Walter, Archdeacon of London, and the 'Historia Occidentalis' of Jacques de Vitry,' *Church History* 50.2 (1981), pp. 141–151.

[154] Emmanuel Sivan, *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present* (Princeton NJ: Darwin Press, 1985), p. 23.

[155] Jacques de Vitry, Historia Occidentalis, ed. by J. H. Hinnebusch*, Spicilegium Friburgense* 17 (1972): pp. 148–149.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Elizabeth Hallam ed., *Chronicles of the Crusades, Eyewitness Accounts of the Wars between Christianity and Islam* (Wayne NJ: BHB International Inc), p. 353.

De Vitry sailed to Damietta in May 1218, and after surviving the ordeal he wrote extensively about it between 1220 and 1225. He was encamped at Damietta during the Fifth Crusade when Francis of Assisi and his companion, Brother Illuminato arrived in 1219. A central role in his *Historia Occidentalis* is given to Francis' preaching which he describes as exemplary, and he asserts 'Francis of Assisi's approach could have accomplished what the Crusaders failed to do'.[158]

> The head of these brothers, who also founded the Order, came into our camp. He was so inflamed with zeal for the faith that he did not fear to cross the lines to the army of our enemy. [159]

In his letter dated 1220 de Vitry recounts Francis's mission to preach to the Sultan sceptically, nevertheless, he later presents a more positive account of his mission as a model for the evangelical life. In his sixth letter he hagiographically describes the leader of the Friars Minor as 'a model for the spiritual renewal of the Church' and refers to him as *'tantum ebrietatis excessum et feruorum spiritus raptum*' (moved by spiritual fervour and exhilaration). [160]

John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan, The Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter* (2009), affirms that De Vitry recognised the dangers of preaching as any attack on the false prophet (Mohammad) would provoke animosity and endanger their lives and he considered it was better to preach the gospel in a spirit of friendship.[161] Nevertheless, de Vitry's writings declared Francis's meeting with the Sultan as a model to be followed, and his writings recount that Francis had 'preached the Gospel in a spirit of friendship and the Saracens listened gladly to his sermons, as long as they avoided

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158 Elizabeth Hallam ed., *Chronicles of the Crusades, Eyewitness Accounts of the Wars between Christianity and Islam* (Wayne NJ: BHB International Inc), p. 353.

159 *Jacques de Vitry VI I*, pp. 580–581.

160 Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Occidentalis*, p. 77., in John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan (2009),* pp. 36–39

161 Ibid., p. 38.

provoking animosity'.[162] Furthermore, de Vitry's writings attest that while the Crusaders' arms were able to accomplish nothing, the preaching and apostolic life of the Friars Minor offered fresh hope.[163]

i) The Chronicle of Ernoul (1227-1229)

John Tolan, (2009) affirms that the Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Tresorier survived as part of the continuations added to a French translation of William of Tyre's *Chronicle of the Crusades*, (*Historia rerum in partibs transmarinis gestarum),* and formed part of his History of the Holy Land from Muhammad to 1184. This was translated into French in the first quarter of the thirteenth century and received continuations from authors relating to events up to 1229, 1249, 1261, 1265 275.[164] The *Chroniclers of the Fifth Crusade (1999),* describe the author of the *Chronicle of Ernoul* as 'the shield bearer of Balian II of Ibelin, one of the great feudal lords of the Crusader states,[165] whose reminiscences were combined with other anonymous accounts to complete the narrative.[166]

Francis de Beer (1981), affirms that *The Chronicle of Ernoul*, written in 1226 shortly after Francis' death, portrays him as a persuasive philosopher, first convincing the papal legate Pelagius that he should be allowed to go to Malik al-Kamil's camp and then engaging in apologetics before the Sultan and his court.[167] Moreover, the Chronicle affirms that the Saracens listened gladly to Franciscan sermons as long as they preached the Gospel but if they insulted Muhammad they were beaten or killed.[168]

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[162] Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Occidentalis*, p. 77., in John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan (2009),* p. p. 38.

[163] John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan,* p. 39.

[164] Ibid., p. 37.

[165] 'Chroniclers of the Fifth Crusade, Chronicle of Ernoul, (1227-1229)', in FA: ED I: The Saint*,* p. 605.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Francis de Beer, *'*Francis and Islam*'* in *Francis of Assisi Today* ed. by Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristan, trans. by Francis McDonagh, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark Ltd., 1981), pp. 11–12.

[168] Ibid.

ii) The Chronicle of the Two Clerics

John Pryor, *The Eracles and William of Tyre* (1992), attests that anonymous Chronicles written by various authors are assumed to be those of lay nobility.[169] Pryor affirms *The Chronicle of the Two Clerics,* written by an anonymous Chronicler who was purported to be present in the Crusader camp at the same time as Francis, recounts the mission of two clerics to the Egyptian camp who had approached the Cardinal for his blessing to go to Damietta, but he was reluctant to give it as they would be in danger of being killed.[170] The anonymous account of how the clerics begged the Cardinal, and he eventually permitted them to go but without his blessing, supports Ernoul's recollection that the clerics audaciously crossed enemy lines, the Sultan showed them hospitality and respect and expressed admiration for their intentions before providing them with an armed escort to return them safely to the Crusader camp. [171]

2.1.2 The Battle for Damietta

In his Earlier Rule (*Regulata Non Bullata,* 1209/10-1221), Francis of Assisi warned of the conflict between the spiritual' and corporeal, and emphasised the need to guard against those who present an outward religious conviction while not seeking the holiness of an interior spirit: -

> Let us guard ourselves from the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh. Because the spirit of the flesh very much desires and strives to have the words but cares little for the activity; it does not seek a religion and holiness in an interior spirit but wants and desires to have a religion and a holiness outwardly apparent to people'….The Spirit of the Lord, however, wants the flesh to be mortified and looked down upon, considered of little worth and rejected. It strives for humility and patience, the pure simple and true peace of the spirit. [172]

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[169] John Pryor, *The Eracles and William of Tyre: An Interim Report,* ed. by Benjamin Z. Kedar, in *The Horns of Hattin, (*London: Variorum*, 1992),* pp. 270–93.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Tresorier, ed. by L. de Mas-Latrie (Paris, 1871) 431–435., in John Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan*, p. 42.

[172] Thomas of Celano, The *First Life (Vita Prima),* p. 55.

His instructions to his brother to 'beware of all pride and vainglory'[173] was pertinent to the holy war, which was fuelled by the Church's ambitions for religious domination and influenced by political strategies towards economic gain. This was epitomised by Cardinal Pelagius' determination to conquer Damietta and all of Egypt, despite the Sultan's peace proposal to hand-over Jerusalem to the Christians.[174]

The battle for Damietta was analogous of a conflict between darkness and light (Jn. 1: 5), flesh and spirit, (Jn. 6:63) and symbolised the destruction of the created order. Sheikh Malik al Kamil, leader of the Muslim forces, attempted to negotiate peace with the Crusaders and offered to hand over control of Jerusalem on condition that they would leave Damietta and Egypt.[175]

An acceptance of his peace proposal would have fulfilled the religious objective of the Crusades to take back control of Jerusalem, nevertheless, Cardinal Pelagius was determined to take control of the strategically valuable city for commercial as well as religious motives and to ultimately conquer Egypt. Pelagius's actions reflected the worldly motivations of *pride and vain glory* and manifested the vice, *prudence of the flesh*, defined by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in his *Moral Doctrines* of the *Summa Theologae* as a mortal sin. [176]

On 20 July 1219, the Sultan responded with an aggressive attack when his troops were repelled, and a further assault on the Crusader camp on 31 July 1219, saw the Christian armies losing ground,[177] however, Pelagius had sent for reinforcements in his determination to conquer the city. In his second biography, *Vita Secunda* (1246-1247),

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[173] Francis of Assisi, *The Earlier Rule*, Chapter XVII: Preachers: 9, p. 75.
[174] John V. Tolan, Saint *Francis and the Sultan,* p. 38.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* I–II, q. 55, a. 2, obj
[177] Paul Moses, *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*, (2009), pp. 105–106.

Thomas of Celano recounts that 'on 28 August 1219, the night before battle, God spoke to Francis in a dream warning him of an impending military defeat'. Celano further recounts that *'following this revelation Francis warned the Crusaders not to persist with the battle, but he was ignored',*[178] and 'for the leader of the Friar's Minor their persistent aggression was contrary to the Will of God'.[179]

> Let the princes of the world know these things…
> it is not easy to fight against God, that is,
> against the will of God.[180]

Paul Moses, *The Saint and the Sultan* (2009) affirms that on August 29, 1219, the Crusaders were defeated in their attempt to take control of the city, which resulted in many losses on both sides,[181] and the destruction and carnage of war polluted the surrounding countryside with dead and dismembered bodies from both Crusader and Muslim camps.

2.1.3 Reaching Out to the Other

Thomas of Celano's biography (*Vita Prima*) recounts: - *'*Francis always liked starting something new, and he was one who demonstrated with the unexpected.'[182] This was evident when, during a temporary and unexpected truce following the Crusader's defeat, as negotiations and debates were taking place regarding the Sultan's peace proposals,[183] Francis seized the opportunity to cross enemy lines with Brother Illuminato and demand a meeting with Sultan Sheikh Malik al-Kamil.

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[178] Paul Moses, *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*, (2009), pp. 105–106.
[179] Thomas of Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (*Vita Secunda), p. 30.*
[180] Ibid., p. 266.
[181] Paul Moses, The Saint and the Sultan, pp. 116–119.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid., p. 121.

Central to Francis' initiative was his faith in God, defined by Saint Anselm (1033–1109), in his *Monologion* as '*Faith Seeking Understanding* (*fides quaerens intellectum*), or *an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God',* in which he describes the love of God as *'the source of 'supreme Goodness*'.[184] Anselm's writings distinguish between two motivations of the will, the first towards one's own happiness and perfection and the second towards a motivation for justice, an inclination towards what is good in itself and is independent of advantage. [185]

Francis's unexpected initiative to reach out to the leader of the Muslim forces was fuelled by a moral responsibility to fulfil his mission to preach the Gospel in a Spirit of Peace, and he was prepared to risk martyrdom. For Bonaventure, Francis' motivations reflected the parable of *The Good Shepherd* and demonstrated a responsibility to preach to those 'who don't belong to this fold', (Jn. 10: 11-18). His biography *(Legenda Major*) hagiographically recounts that on their journey to see the Sultan, the two friars came upon two lambs and, overjoyed to see them, the holy man said to his companion, '*Trust in the Lord* (Eccl. 11: 22) *Brother, for the Gospel text is being fulfilled in us, Behold, I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst* of wolves' (Mat. 10: 16).[186]

In risking martyrdom, Francis' action reflected Jesus' commitment to lay down his life for others in an act of free will. His personal mission to meet with Sultan Sheikh Malik al Kamil and preach the Gospel of Peace demonstrated his inclination towards justice and was an act of moral goodness rooted in the First Principle of Love for God and neighbour. His actions reflected his commitment to obedience, servanthood, and

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[184] Thomas Williams, 'Anselm, The Theistic Proofs' *in The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* Fall 2021 Edition ed. by Edward N. Zalta<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/anselm/> [accessed 15 September 2021].

[185] Anselm, *De Concordia* 3.11, 281:7–10; *De Casu Diaboli* 12, 255:8–11.

[186] Bonaventure, *The Life of Saint Francis*, (*Legenda Major*), p. 269.

discipleship in service to God and humankind and were made possible through his individual act of free will, defined by Saint Augustine in his *De Libero Arbitrio* as 'the condition of possibility of moral goodness and hence a great good itself'.[187]

Challenged by the sin and injustice of the Fifth Crusade and in his obedience to God, the source of Truth and Goodness, Francis was inspired to reach out to the Other. His unique interaction with Sultan Sheikh Malik al Kamil demonstrated the primary Franciscan motifs of freedom and the will, relationality and moral goodness, and his attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity reflected that the practical and experiential roots of his theology and spirituality were grounded in the Sacrificial Love of the triune God.

2.1.4 Ambassadors for Peace

In reaching out to the Other during a holy war Francis overcame the spiritual forces of evil and broke through barriers of cultural and religious difference to fulfil his personal mission to preach the Gospel to the Sultan in a Spirit of Peace. His initiative to reach out to the Sultan during a temporary truce in the battle for Damietta and preach the Gospel demonstrated his divinely gifted freedom and the will to act in accordance with God's Will. Francis' attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity were analogous of servanthood and reflected the holy Virtues of holy Humility, holy Charity and holy Obedience.[188] His arrival in the Sultan's camp with Brother Illuminato was unthreatening and familiar, as their patched tunics of rough brown cloth held together with a cord resembled the traditional garb of Sufi Muslims whose robes were also made of rough material or wool, tied with ropes rather than belts.[189]

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[187] Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, translated by Dom Mark Pontifex (Westminster: Newman Press, 1955), Intro. 4.

[188] Francis of Assisi, *A Salutation of the Virtues*, p. 164.

[189] Tolan, J. V., Saint *Francis and the Sultan*, p. 15.

Francis had been well advised about missions to the East by Brother Giles who had achieved some success in preaching among the Saracens in Syria by not denouncing Muhammad or the Qur'an. Celano's biography (*Vita Prima)* recounts that, after the Saracen guards threatened Francis, the Sultan himself treated him quite honourably as an ambassador of peace.[190] Fareed Z. Munir, *Sultan al-Malik Muhammad al-Kamil and Saint Francis: Interreligious Dialogue and the Meeting at Damietta (*2008), affirms that the Sultan's commitment to Islam obligated him to cross over the threshold of darkness and war into the light of dialogue with Francis of Assisi for the purpose of peace,[191] as the Prophet's model for this in the Qur'an states: -

> Do thou incline towards peace, and trust in God: for He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things). Should they (your enemies) intend to deceive thee, - verily God suffices thee: He it is that hath strengthened thee with his aid and with (the company of) the believers. He is exalted in might, Wise.
> (Qur'an 8: 61-62).

Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam* (1971), affirms that the Qur'an commands Islam to accept peace over war and compels its adherents to seek peace even in the throes of war.[192] This was reflected in the Sultan's attempt to negotiate peace and his proposal to hand back control of Jerusalem in exchange for Damietta, which was being considered by the Crusaders when Francis arrived at his court.

The Friar and the Sultan were advocates against the holy war which resulted in heavy loss of life on both sides, nevertheless, Francis of Assisi was not acting on behalf of the Crusaders as an official emissary, rather he was on a mission of peace to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ: -

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[190] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life*, (*Vita Prima*), p. 277.

[191] Fareed Z. Munir, 'Sultan al-Malik Muhammad al-Kamil and Saint Francis: Interreligious Dialogue and the Meeting at Damietta', *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, 10:3, 2008, pp. 307–317.

[192] Muhammad Ali Maulana, *The Religion of Islam: A Comprehensive Discussion of the Sources, Principles and Practices of Islam*, (Lahore: Ripon Printing Press, 1971), pp. 460–61.

> This is the peace which Our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed and gave to us (Jn. 14: 27) and which our father Francis reiterated, beginning and ending all his teachings with peace, choosing in all his greetings peace and longing in all his contemplation for ecstatic peace, just like the citizen of Jerusalem, who was peaceful with those who hated peace.
> **Bonaventure, (Itinerarium Mentis in Deum**) [193]

Bonaventure's biography, *The Life of Francis* (*Legenda Major)* describes Francis as a proponent for peace through the force of his teaching and the sincerity of his life and his writings, and he affirms that he began by wishing his hearers peace, saying to them '*God give you peace*'.[194] Thomas of Celano's The First Life (*Vita Prima*), recounts that this greeting was given to Francis by God on the formation of his Order.[195] Celano asserts that in all of his preaching, before he proposed the word of God to those gathered about, Francis first prayed for peace for them, saying, '*the Lord give you peace*.'[196] This would have been his traditional greeting to the Sultan on entering his court, while the Sultan's traditional greeting in accordance with the traditions and customs of Islam was 'Peace be Upon You' (*As-Salamu Alaikum*).[197]

Richard G. Cote, *Re-Visioning Mission (1996)* asserts that Francis opened his heart, mind, and body to inter-religious dialogue with Muslims, he grasped the importance of dialogue with the Sultan and his approach mirrored Islam's concept of *Da'wa,* and both men understood how to conduct it.[198] Sheikh Malik al Kamil was inclined to listen to Francis in his obedience to the Qur'an, which instructs*:* - 'Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching (Muhammad); and

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[193] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God,* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum),* III 2, III 3.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Thomas of Celano, *The First Life*, (*Vita Prima*), 23.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Tolan J. V., *Saint Francis and the Sultan*, p. 6.
[198] Richard G. Cote, *Re-Visioning Mission: The Catholic Church and Culture in Postmodern America* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 7–8.

argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious; for thy Lord knows best' (Qur'an 16: 125).

Sean Edward Kinsella, *The Lord Give You Peace*, (2003), cites *The Legend of the Three Companions* and recounts the effectiveness of Francis's' appeal for peace, and affirms that 'by his own preaching and salutary counsels he was able to unite in peace many who had formerly hated each other and were living in sin'.[199] Thomas of Celano's biography (*Vita Prima*) describes Francis preaching style as: -

> Edifying his hearers not less by his example than by his word, he made a tongue out of his whole body and using physical actions to convey his meaning to his listeners, with fervent gestures and nods, he would transport his hearers wholly to heavenly things',[200] and 'when he preached peace, the efficaciousness of his preaching was a product of both his preaching style and his personal behaviour.[201]
>
> This is supported in the eyewitness account of Thomas, Archdeacon of Spoleto, who describes Francis's effective preaching style and unusual appearance following his return from the East, when he spoke on '*Angels, Men and Demons: Regarding the Re-establishment of Peace Sundered by Violence',* on the Feast of the Assumption (1222): -
>
> Truly, the whole theme of his discourse was the extinguishing of enmities and the restoration of a treaty of peace. Dirty was his habit, contemptible his person, and his countenance unbecoming; but so greatly did God give force to his words that many noble families, among whom ancient hatreds had furiously raged with great bloodshed, to peace returned. [202]

An extended appreciation of the formation of Francis of Assisi's theology, and spirituality and an examination of the impetus for Francis's initiative to embark on a mission to meet the Sultan during the Fifth Crusade, highlights a Franciscan theology

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[199] *The Legend of the Three Companions*, in Sean Edward Kinsella, '*The Lord Give You Peace',* p. 26.
[200] Thomas of Celano, 'The Second Life of St. Francis *(Vita Secunda)',* in FA: ED II: The Founder*,* p. 107.
[201] Thomas of Celano *(Vita Prima*), in Sean Edward Kinsella, '*The Lord Give You Peace'*, p. 81.
[202] Thomas of Spolato, excerpt from *Historia Salonitanorum*, in *Testimonia minora saeculi XIII de S. Francisco Assisiensi*, ed. by Leonhard Lemmens (Quaracchi: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1901), pp. 9–10.

of encounter centred on peace. Francis's meeting with the Sultan emphasises the importance of encountering others in the face of conflict with humility and dignity and challenges the use of violence and power in the name of religion, advocating a way of peace that seeks to reveal God's grace through encounter and participation.

As established in the Introduction, this thesis distinguishes between grace as divine self-communication, an ontological reality grounding all creaturely being, and grace as an experiential encounter mediated through human openness, relationship, and creation. This differs from the Radical Orthodoxy position, which tends to identify grace primarily as a quality intrinsic to nature. Interpreting Francis's meeting with the Sultan through this distinction allows the encounter to be seen not merely as courtesy or diplomacy, but as a moment in which the ontological gift of divine presence is recognised and enacted through humility, hospitality, and mutual regard.

This chapter illustrates how Francis of Assisi's meeting with the Sultan provides a lived historical example of exemplary interfaith dialogue that reflects the integration of grace and nature and demonstrates the transformative power of grace in human interactions. In emanating humility, poverty and simplicity, Francis became a channel for God's peace, and his meeting with the Sultan in a Spirit of peace exemplifies how grace transformed his human nature and empowered him with acts of courage.

This historic encounter reflects a relational and sacramental view of the world, where every meeting is an opportunity to encounter God's presence. Francis's actions demonstrate the pursuit of moral goodness as a participatory act, where every choice contributes to the divine order and the flourishing of creation. His respect for the Sultan

and willingness to engage in dialogue in a spirit of peace reflected his sacramental understanding of creation as infused with God's grace and love.

The dialogue between Francis and the Sultan illustrates a profound theological ethos, wherein both men, from opposing religious traditions, overcame prejudice and difference to engage in an unexpected meaningful encounter during a holy war. This chapter demonstrates that the Franciscan concept of encounter is not an external interaction but an existential participation in the divine economy and illustrates that Francis's encounters, grounded in humility, compassion, and mutual respect, served as moments of grace where the divine was encountered within human experience.

Radical Orthodoxy critiques modern approaches to interfaith dialogue that fail to embrace a sacramental and spiritually rich view of reality, and the movement values the recovery of pre-modern theological insights that emphasize God's sovereignty and the hierarchical nature of divine order. This chapter demonstrates that Francis's virtues of humility, poverty, and simplicity, served as a powerful counter-narrative to hierarchical structures and his embrace of these virtues represented a sacramental way of life that mirrored the humility and sacrificial love of Christ.

Francis's encounter with the Sultan demonstrates that his humility and demeanor of poverty and simplicity broke down barriers and fostered dialogue towards a deeper knowledge of God. This sacramental vision of life counters Radical Orthodoxy's critique by embodying a participatory ontology that emphasises the sacredness of all creation.

This chapter emphasises the importance of the agency of the Other, and presents interfaith dialogue as a mutual, relational journey toward a deeper understanding of God. This vision of relationality aligns with Radical Orthodoxy's

emphasis on a communal and participatory understanding of being and challenges its dismissal of the Franciscan emphasis on the freedom and will of the individual as a site of divine encounter. [203]

Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Kāmil became mutual ambassadors for peace during their unexpected meeting at the Battle for Damietta. Their inter-religious encounter demonstrated not only deep commitment to their respective traditions but also profound obedience to God. Through their practical and experiential exchange of hospitality in a spirit of peace, they established a paradigm that has endured as an exemplar of interfaith dialogue for over eight hundred years.

Francis's historic meeting with the Sultan reveals Franciscan participation in action and grace meeting nature through humility and hospitality. Chapter 3.0 builds on this by exploring hospitality and the agency of the Other as central elements in a theology of encounter, further bridging the historical narrative with the scholarly medieval metaphysical articulation that follows.

3.0 Hospitality and The Agency of the Other

As set out in the Introduction and developed in Chapters 1.0 and 2.0, the Franciscan theological vision rests upon a participatory metaphysics in which grace, nature, and encounter function relationally. In the Franciscan tradition participation refers to the ontological relationship through which all creation shares in the divine being. This relational dynamic is vividly embodied in the open, hospitable posture adopted by both Francis and the Sultan during their historic encounter. Their meeting demonstrates how hospitality becomes a theological act, establishing the conditions for a transformative theology of encounter and revealing divine presence through mutual recognition.

This chapter applies these foundational concepts to the theme of hospitality, not only as a historical feature of Franciscan spirituality but as a constructive theological lens for understanding interreligious engagement. In this study therefore, the historical narrative of Franciscan hospitality is held alongside its theological significance, distinguishing between the descriptive practices of the tradition and the constructive claims this thesis advances regarding participation, relational openness, and the de-radicalisation of difference.

Building on the historical account in Chapter 2.0, this chapter explores hospitality not merely as ethical openness but as a metaphysical stance. In Franciscan thought, the act of receiving the Other becomes a mode of participation in divine life, an incarnational form of grace. The aim of the study is to illustrate Francis's dialogical interaction with the Sultan as a practical and living expression of his theology and to highlight the role of hospitality and the agency of the Other in overcoming barriers of culture and religion and facilitating moments of grace. The objective is to demonstrate that Francis of

Assisi's attributes and motifs in action illustrate a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation that affirms the sacramentality of creation and illuminates the concepts of sacramental relationality and divine presence.

3.1 The Sultan and the Saracens

Sultan Sheikh Malik al Kamil, nephew of the great Kurdish general Saladin, and a member of the Ayyubid dynasty, had been sent to protect the Egyptian city of Damietta, a thriving economic community located on the Nile Delta. In 1219, Egypt was a multi-religious monotheistic country, and while the majority of the population were Muslims, it also incorporated Jewish communities and two Christian communities, the Monophysite Copts and the Melkites (Duophysite Chalcedonian doctrine/Byzantine).[204]

Julien Green, *Gods Fool, The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi,* (1987), describes Saladin's nephew as one of the most refined men of his day, a former student of medicine who was passionately fond of religious poetry, and curious about every sort of intellectual activity.[205] Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission* (1984), affirms that the Sultan was devoted to the famed Sufi poet of love Ibn al-Farid who was purportedly the greatest Sufi poet of the Arabic language, and he surrounded himself with advisors and philosophers, including the Persian, Fakhr al Farisi, a follower of Mansur al-Hallaj the tenth century ascetic teacher and poet of mystical union with God.[206]

[204] Tolan, J. V., *Saint Francis and the Sultan,* p. 5.
[205] Julien Green *God's Fool, The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), pp. 203–204.
[206] Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches to the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 23.

Julio Mico, *The Spirituality of St. Francis, Going Among Non-Believers* (1996) attests that Al Kamil was a year younger than Francis of Assisi, and an able administrator who was known to be humane, generous, and courteous, with a reputation for dealing justly with Christians.[207] Benjamin Kedar (1984), affirms the Sultan was not opposed to religious debate and he had presided over discussions between Muslims and Christians including the Christian patriarchs, Monophysite Cyril III and Melkite Nicholas.[208]

Paul Moses, *The Saint and The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace,* (2009), asserts that al Kamil was a devout Sunni who referred to the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunna as a model in matters of the sacred and in his everyday affairs.[209] This is supported by Julien Green, *Gods Fool, The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi* (1985), who affirms that history depicts him as a moral person and a man of honour who displayed a diplomatic desire for peace.[210]

Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth, The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*, (2007*),* recounts that in the thirteenth century Christianity and Islam experienced the emergence of religious orders linked to the spirituality of their religious founders, and the revival of Islamic Sufism through the works of al-Ghazzali coincided with the rise of Francis of Assisi's Gospel-centred Order.[211] Nasr (2007), cites similarities between the Franciscan Order and Sufi Orders and he affirms that both engaged in ascetics, poverty, and spiritual poetry, and similarities can be found within Franciscan poetry and the Sufi poetry of Rumi.[212]

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[207] Julio Mico, 'The Spirituality of St. Francis, Going Among Non-believers', translated by P. Barrett, *Greyfriars Review* 10.2 (1996), p. 123.

[208] Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches to the Muslims*, p. 23.

[209] Moses, Paul, *The Saint and the Sultan, The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*, pp. 137–138.

[210] Julien Green, *God's Fool, The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi,* pp. 203–204

[211] Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth, The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), pp. 187–188.

[212] Ibid.

An appreciation of the Sultan's background provides not merely historical detail but also demonstrates that the encounter between Francis and al-Kamil involved two spiritually formed, intellectually engaged agents; the Sultan must therefore be recognised not simply as an object of Christian mission but as a dialogical partner whose agency shaped the historic encounter. Recognising the Sultan's religious and intellectual agency foregrounds the significance of the encounter as a moment of relational participation, where hospitality becomes a meeting of two seekers of divine truth rather than the assertion of one tradition over another.

3.2 The Role of Hospitality

Franciscan hospitality cannot be understood merely as courteous behaviour or charitable action, rather it arises from the distinctive spiritual ethos shaped by Francis's attributes and motifs, including humility, poverty, simplicity, and a deep sense of relational moral goodness. These dispositions, formed through his encounters at San Damiano and with the leper, and grounded in his commitment to the holy virtues, express a sacrificial love that reflects the first principle of love for God and neighbour.

In the Franciscan tradition, these lived virtues are not external to metaphysics but constitute the concrete form of participation itself, revealing how divine presence is mediated through relational, embodied, and morally charged encounter. Francis' practice of hospitality thus functions as an expression of participation, revealing how the divine is mediated through relational, embodied, and vulnerable exchange.

This relational dynamic is vividly embodied in the open, hospitable posture adopted by both Francis and the Sultan during their unexpected meeting. Far from being a mere political or diplomatic encounter, their interaction demonstrates the transformative power of reaching out to the Other in a spirit of peace. It highlights hospitality as a framework that enables individuals to reimagine their realities and

reconnect with both their shared humanity and the divine. In this context, Franciscan hospitality is not a strategic gesture, but a theological act and a reflection of divine generosity rooted in Christ's own vulnerability.

Francis and the Sultan were situated both inside and on the fringes of their culturally supported religions and their unexpected encounter was enhanced by their unique individual situatedness. They shared with interest their religious praxis, and being grounded in their respective spiritual traditions, and secure in their own religious and cultural belonging, each man anticipating that the Other would convert to their own religious tradition. Their mutually familiar protocols of religious hospitality were grounded in the traditions of Christianity and Islam and formed the cornerstone for their peaceful inter-religious and inter-cultural interaction. Their greetings of peace, together with the virtue of humility led to the development of empathy between them, providing a temporary release from the destructive theatre of war.

Francis's inspired initiative to reach out to the Sultan and preach the Gospel reflected his obedience to God and his commitment to the First Principle of Love to God and neighbour, and in receiving Francis in a Spirit of peace, the Sultan demonstrated his obedience to Allah and his commitment to the Qur'an. Their historic meeting demonstrates a constructive interaction between opposing religious adherents who were formerly associated with division and hate. Nevertheless, their divinely inspired attributes and virtues reflected their humble obedience and servanthood to God, within a framework of religious hospitality, and their unique dialogical interaction highlighted their mutual commitment in service to God and neighbour.

Elizabeth Newman *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers, (*2007), suggests that offering hospitality is a way of imitating the divine as well as being obedient to God, and asserts that the virtue is embedded in the rich vocabulary of charity, generosity, mercy, and compassion which permeates the entire Qur'an and is found in so many hadiths.[213] Mona Siddiqui *Hospitality and Islam* (2015) asserts that Abraham is held as an exemplary figure of hospitality with links to both Christianity and Islam (Gen. 18: 1-10) (Q51:24–30). Siddiqui (2015) refers to the Prophet as the model for leadership and suggest that his actions serve as a prototype for interfaith hospitality, as one who submitted to God and was the friend of God (*Khalil Allah*).[214]

Welcoming strangers is considered a sacred duty in the three monotheistic religions which cite commandments and etiquette relating to receiving them. Siddiqui affirms that the Islamic tradition presents an imperative to exercise generosity in treating those who are vulnerable with compassion and in offering strangers or travellers both space and shelter with humility and grace.[215] This was reflected in the actions of the Sultan whose provision of hospitality to Francis and Brother Illuminato, is documented in the *Chronicle of Ernoul*, which recounts that the Sultan gave them plenty of food to eat.[216]

Francis's unthreatening appearance and his attributes of humility, poverty and simplicity did not assume a hierarchy other than God, [217]rather, they reflected his commitment to a life which imitated Jesus and demonstrated his relinquishment of the Self in service to God and humankind. The men's familiar protocols for religious

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[213] Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press, 2007), pp. 14–15.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 21.

[216] Tolan, J. V. *Saint Francis and the Sultan*, p.16.

[217] Francis of Assisi, 'A Salutation of the Virtues', in FA: ED I: The Saint, p.164.

hospitality incorporated peace greetings, prayer rituals, discussions, and debate, and the offer of a meal and gifts, and facilitated mutual tolerance and respect towards friendship and relationality in dialogue.

The unique encounter offered Francis and the Sultan an opportunity for the expression of their individual freedom and the will, a uniquely human motif, gifted by God. Their actions demonstrated their obedience to God/Allah, the root of all goodness, as proclaimed by Francis of Assisi in his *The Praises of God and the Blessing,* written on his return from the East in 1224.

> You are Good all Good and your deeds are wonderful.
> **Francis of Assisi, The Praises of God and the Blessing.** [218]

Pim Valkenburg, *Sharing Lights on the Way to God, (2006),* asserts that in Abrahamic religions, hospitality represents an act of friendship in association with God and with others,[219] and this was made evident through the principles of hospitality the Sultan observed when he received Francis into his court. Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* (2015), refers to Qur'an 5: 48 which tells the believer that God could have made all people into one nation, but gave us each different laws and ways (*shir'a, minha*) so that he could test humankind.[220] Siddiqui asserts that in Christianity and Islam, God reveals himself in different ways, and in developing the relationship between the divine and human, Muslims focus on God's modes and purpose in revelation and obey God's will in response to a revealed text, while Christianity views revelation as an aspect of God's self-giving and the meaning and fullness of revelation is found in Jesus Christ.[221]

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[218] Francis of Assisi, 'The Praises of God and The Blessing (1224)', in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 109.
[219] Pim Valkenburg, *Sharing Lights on the Way to God: Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Theology of Religions* (Amsterdam: Rodophi, 2006), pp. 10–11.
[220] Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam,* pp. 124–125.
[221] Ibid., p. 121.

The dynamics of their meeting were synonymous with worship and prayer towards a knowledge of God and the meaning of being and led to a communion with the divine and the Other at the deepest level of communication, as defined by Thomas Merton (1975): -

> It is wordless, it is beyond words, and it is beyond speech,
> and it is beyond concepts.
> Not that we discover a new unity.
> My dear brothers, we are already one.
> But we imagine that we are not.
> And what we have to recover is our original unity.
> What we have to be is what we are.[222]

3.2.1 Overcoming Difference: The Legend of the Trial by Fire

Francis and the Sultan received each Other in a spirit of humility, and this primary virtue was pivotal to their mutual acceptance of each Other within the framework of religious hospitality and in a spirit of peace. Bonaventure's biography (*Legenda Major*) recounts, when the Sultan asked Francis why he had come and whether he was interested in converting to the Muslim faith, he replied that 'he had been sent not by man but by the Most High God, in order to point out to him and his people the way of salvation, and to announce the Gospel of Truth.'[223]

Bonaventure's biography *Legenda Major,* hagiographically introduces the legend of a *Trial by Fire* to the dynamics of the meeting to emphasise Francis' closeness to God and his willingness to sacrifice himself for the love of Him. He metaphorically aligns Francis to the Prophet Elijah who called down fire from heaven to best the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18: 20-40), and the three young friends of Daniel who survived a fiery furnace (Dan.3:19-25). Bonaventure recounts that Francis challenged the spiritual

[222] Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, (New York: New Direction, 1975), p. 308.
[223] Bonaventure, The *Life of St. Francis* (*Legenda Major*), p. 269.

authority of the Islamic priests and offered to prove the supremacy of Christianity in a symbolic theological dual. Francis challenged the Sultan to choose his greatest Mullahs, and he would walk through a fire with them, and those who survived would be those of the true faith: - *'*I will walk into the fire along with your priests so that you will recognise which faith deserves to be held as the holier and more certain'.[224]

The Sultan replied, *'it would be difficult to find men who would accept such a challenge'*, and risking martyrdom, Francis offered to go through the fire alone to prove the truth claims of Christ,[225] but the Sultan chose to decline his offer. Bonaventure's account metaphorically infers the superiority of Christianity over Islam, and Francis' spiritual superiority over the Sultan. The *Trial by Fire* is aesthetically depicted on a fresco painted by the renowned medieval artist Giotto and is displayed on the walls of the Upper Chapel in the Basilica San Francesco in Assisi and is one of a series commissioned by the Papacy to reflect Bonaventure's official biography (*Legenda Major*).

Fig. 3 (removed due to copyright restrictions) [226]

The Qur'an cites the fire motif as symbolic of revelation and a *Certainty of the Truth* as linked with Moses and the attainment of spiritual power (Qur'an 27.6). In the Islamic tradition fire is associated with the three stages of a *Certainty of the Truth* in

[224] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. and ed. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 270.
[225] Arnold and Fry 1988: 56; Moorman 1963: 90-91, *in Mediavistik 16*, (2003).
[226] Giotto, *The Ordeal by Fire before the Sultan of Egypt* (XI), (Florence: Scala Group, 2013).

which Moses said to his household: - '*Verily, beyond all doubt I have seen a fire, I will bring you tidings of it or I will bring you a flaming brand that ye may warm yourselves'* (Qur'an 27: 6). Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth,* (2007), affirms that the spiritual symbolism of fire in attaining a *Certainty of the Truth* represents being consumed by the fire and gaining the highest certainty of it in becoming the fire.[227] Nasr (2007) describes this as 'the goal of the spiritual person to ascend the ladder of certainty until he or she is consumed by the fire of Truth, which some Christian mystics refer to as being consumed by God'.[228]

The Islamic spiritual journey towards the attainment of a *Certainty of Truth* is analogous of Bonaventure's *magnum opus, The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum,* 1259). This posits the notion that rather than highlighting religious difference and superiority, Bonaventure's legend of the *Trial by Fire,* synonymous with the Islamic *Fire Challenge,* metaphorically reflects the human journey towards attaining a certainty of the One Truth, which is associated with the attainment of spiritual enlightenment and a deeper knowledge of God, in both the Christian and Islamic traditions.

Bonaventure's literary emphasis moves away from the *Trial by Fire* to the success of Francis' mission as he recounts, 'Francis refused many lavish gifts offered to him by the Sultan'.[229] Nevertheless, Francis was greatly impressed by the Islamic call to prayer (the *Salat*), which was proclaimed five times a day during his stay in the Sultan's camp, and he accepted the gift of the horn used in the call to prayer, which is displayed in the Basilica San Francesco, in Assisi. The impact of the Islamic call to prayer is reflected in Francis' *Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples,* written on his return from the East in 1220:

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[227] S. H., Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 2007, pp. 30–31.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Bonaventure, *The Life of St Francis* (*Legend Major)*, p. 270.

> May you foster such honour to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement may be made by a messenger or some other sign that praise and thanksgiving may be given by all people to the all-powerful good Lord. [230]

While the historical accuracy of the legend of the *Trial by Fire* is uncertain, it is likely that both men engaged in theological and philosophical debates in which they identified differences and similarities between their religious practices. Bonaventure's legend pays tribute to the Sultan's tolerance and patience and reflects his good character, while Thomas of Celano's biography (*Vita Prima)* emphasises the Sultan's commitment to the virtue of hospitality and Francis' commitment to the virtues of humility, poverty and simplicity*:* -

> The sultan honoured him as much as he was able, and having given him many gifts, he tried to bend Francis' mind toward the riches of the world. But when he saw that Francis most vigorously despised all these things as so much dung, he was filled with the greatest admiration, and he looked upon him as a man different from all others. [231]

At the end of their historic meeting the Sultan ensured that Francis was delivered safely back to the Crusader camp, thereby fulfilling the Prophet's model: -

> If one among the rejecters (of your religion) seek (dialogue) and aid, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of God; and then (whether he accepts the word or not) escort him where he can be secure (Qur'an 9:6).

The Sultan's gesture of protection and hospitality underscores that Franciscan hospitality is never a unilateral act. Rather, it unfolds within a relational dynamic that presupposes the agency of the Other, whose freedom, response, and integrity become integral to the encounter itself. It is this recognition of agency that requires closer theological attention.

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[230] Francis of Assisi, 'Letter to the Rulers of Peoples' (1220), FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 58.
[231] Thomas of Celano 1972a: 277, in Sean Kinsella*, Mediavistik, (*2003), p. 16.

3.2.2 The Agency of the Other

The events which unfolded between Francis and the Sultan illustrate the significance of the agency of the Other in reflecting sacrificial love and servanthood and emphasises the power and influence of reaching out in service to God and the Other in a Spirit of peace. In the Franciscan tradition, servanthood and humility are grounded in the Gospel and exemplified by Jesus' washing the feet of His disciples (Jn. 13: 5). Francis' *Later Admonition and Exhortation,* written on his return from the East (circa 1220), demonstrates his commitment to servanthood and humility in obediently communicating the Love of God.

> I, brother Francis, your lesser servant, with a wish to kiss your feet, beg and implore you in the love that is God, to receive, to put into practice and to observe, as you should, these words and the others of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love.
> **Francis of Assisi, Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.** [232]

Thomas of Celano (*Vita Prima*) affirms that the concept of servanthood involves the relinquishment of the Self (*ego*), as exemplified by Francis when he renounced his worldly relationships and possessions in the town square at Assisi.[233] Bonaventure's biography (*Legenda Major*) describes that following Francis's symbolic sacrifice of his worldly life, he chose a life of, obedience, and servanthood, which reflected the life of Jesus, and 'clothed in a single poor tunic, he served the Lord in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11: 27).[234]

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[232] Francis of Assisi, 'Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful (1220)', in FA: ED I: The Saint, pp, 26–29, 87.

[233] Thomas of Celano*, The First Life, (Vita Prima), Thomas of Celano's First Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), p. 15.

[234] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. and ed. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 219.

In the Franciscan tradition, servanthood is linked to the primary virtue of humility and is grounded in the First Principle, love for God and for each Other (Jn. 13: 35-35). Francis' Admonitions powerfully illustrate the purpose of his life and that of his Brothers:-

> no-one should take superiority upon himself
> but represent the humble servant of God".[235]
> "The Spirit of the Lord… strives for humility and patience,
> the pure simple and true peace of the spirit".
> **Francis of Assisi, Admonitions XVII**. *[236]*

The notion of servanthood linked to the agency of the Other is synonymous with Francis's encounter with the Leper and exemplified in his unexpected initiative to reach out to the Sultan in dialogue. Francis' action was dependent on his freedom and will to reach out to the Other in obedience to God in an act of moral goodness, through which he perceived God's Goodness more clearly, and experienced the deepest meaning of being human, as he affirms in his *The Testament* (1226): - 'what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body'.[237]

The meeting between Francis and the Sultan illustrates the pivotal role of hospitality and the significant role of the agency of the Other towards effecting perfect servanthood and the relinquishment of the Self (ego) in service to God, as through acts of giving and receiving, the men drew nearer to the divine.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2010) highlights the similarities between Christianity and Islam and asserts that the name Islam comes from the Arabic word al-Islam, meaning surrender. He affirms that 'the peace that issues from the act of surrender to God in a spirit of servanthood is dependent upon an individual's free will and should involve the

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[235] Francis of Assisi, 'Admonitions XVII', in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 134.
[236] Francis of Assisi, 'Chapter XVII: Preachers: 9, in The Earlier Rule, *(Regula non bullata)*', in FA: ED: I The Saint, p. 75.
[237] Francis of Assisi, 'The Testament' (1226), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 124.

whole being.'[238] Chittick (2010) refers to the Islamic tradition's concept of the surrender of the Self to God as an awareness of our nothingness before Him and highlights the role of humility in affirming that 'it is in our attitude of praising God, and being always grateful to Him with an awareness that in ourselves we are poor, and God is the Rich from whom all blessings flow, which allows the state of perfect servanthood.'[239]

The Islamic tradition affirms that the very *raison d'etre* of human existence is to worship God and thereby to realise the perfect state of servanthood, which means also to realise what it means to be fully human.[240] Nasr (2010) asserts that in Arabic, the word servanthood (*'ubudiyyah*) is related etymologically to the word for worship (*'ibadah'*). Thomas Michel, *Reflections on Said Nursi's Views on Muslim-Christian Understanding* (2003) cites the Surat al-Jariat (Q. 51: 24-30) and refers to 'the honoured guests of Abraham' to whom he offered a good meal and the greeting of peace, in association with an expression of faith, as an act of worship of God'.[241]

This posits the notion that the unique interaction that took place between Francis of Assisi and Sheikh Malik al Kamil, which allowed for an acceptance of difference and demonstrated respect for the religious traditions of each Other, within a mutually accepted framework for religious hospitality, was analogous of an act of worship that glorified God and led to knowledge and wisdom. Jacques de Vitry's letter from the Crusades, written between February and March 1220, affirms that Francis and the Sultan engaged in prayer together as they strove to please God, and he recounts: -

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[238] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. by William C. Chittick (Bloomington IN: World Wisdom, 2007), p. 46.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Thomas Michael., S. J., *Reflections on Said Nursi's Vi*ews *on Muslim-Christian Understanding*, (Istanbul: Soz Basim Yayin, 2003), p. 68.

> The Sultan, King of Egypt, privately asked Francis to pray to the Lord for him, so that he might be inspired by God to adhere to that religion which most pleased God.[242]

3.3 A Theology of Encounter

The preceding section demonstrated that Franciscan hospitality is inherently relational and presupposes the agency of the Other. This relational openness is foundational to a theology of encounter, in which meeting the Other becomes a privileged site of divine mediation. In the encounter between Francis and Sultan al-Kamil, hospitality is not merely courteous reception, but a participatory act through which grace is experienced, recognised, and shared.

Encounters with the Other represent significant markers on Francis's spiritual journey, and they led him to a deeper knowledge of the divine and a fuller understanding of the contingent relationality between human beings and God, the Creator, the highest being, (*Ipsum Esse*). They metaphorically represent dynamic conversion and re-conversions on his spiritual journey that reveal God's dynamism and His relatedness in the world, a notion Bonaventure defines his *The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis Deum*), (1259), and re-affirms in his *Collationes in Hexaemeron'* (1273), in which he asserts, *"I will see myself better in God than in myself*." [243]

Kenan Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, (2003), affirms that for Francis of Assisi, God was reflected in all of creation, and he encountered Him in all creatures in the condition of contingent beings, particularly in fellow-humans who were disfigured, the outcast, the poor, and the infidel.[244] Francis's appreciation of the significant role of the Other as a mutual being in God's Creation, and his realisation of a

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[242] De Vitry, Jacques, *Lettres,* ed. by R. B. C. Huygens (Leiden: Brill, 1960).
[243] Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* 12-9, v, 386.
[244] Kenan B. Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components* (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), p. 248.

contingent relationality between the Self and the Other towards a deeper knowledge of God, was rooted in his encounters with beggars at the Basilica San Pietro,'[245] his encounter with the poor knight[246] and the Leper on the road,[247] and epitomised in his meeting with Sultan Sheikh Malik al Kamil during the Fifth Crusade. [248]

Francis's encounter with the Sultan reflects the theological and dialogical dynamics of a Franciscan theology of encounter that emphasises tolerance, patience, and respect towards an appreciation of individual uniqueness. Their historic dialogical interaction emphasises the pivotal role of hospitality and highlights the agency of the Other in reciprocally reflecting God's Goodness and facilitating dialogue that broke through barriers of cultural and religious difference. The unexpected encounter reflects a contingent relationality between the Self and the Other towards a deeper knowledge of the divine and the meaning of being in relation to Him, and is analogous of Bonaventure's doctrine of Creation, which affirms the contingency of the created order and God's freedom to create,[249] and asserts that "*all things emanate from and are dependent upon the sustaining Love of God*".[250]

Within this thesis, grace is understood not only as an ontological orientation of creation toward God, but also as something encountered relationally in moments of openness to the Other. Whereas Radical Orthodoxy tends to speak of grace primarily as a quality inherent in nature, the Franciscan tradition emphasises that grace is also manifested in the lived, interpersonal exchanges through which divine generosity is

[245] Thomas of Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, p. 247.
[246] Ibid., p. 244.
[247] Bonaventure, The Life of Francis of Assisi (*Legenda Major),* in FA: ED II: The Founder, p. 534
[248] Ugolino Boniscambi of Montegiorio, 'The Deeds of Blessed Francis and his Companions', in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents,* vol. III: The Prophet, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman and William J. Short, (New York: New City Press, 2000) pp. 490–492. (Hereafter FA: ED III: The Prophet).
[249] Bonaventure, *Collationes*, 11.11.
[250] Bonaventure, *Collationes*, 11.11.15, q. 2, Concl.

disclosed. Francis's meeting with the Sultan thus reveals grace as both ontological and experiential, clarifying the Franciscan integration of nature and grace without collapsing one into the other.

A Franciscan theology of encounter, as exemplified in Francis' encounter with the Sultan, highlights the potential sacramental and transformative nature of human dialogical interactions, and views every human encounter as an opportunity to experience God's grace. An examination of the theological and dialogical dynamics of the event reveals an integrated approach to dialogue, grounded in sacrificial love, which emphasises relationality, divine immanence and the interconnectedness of all creation. Francis's meeting with the Sultan exemplifies this integrated vision. The historic encounter reveals grace as both ontological and experiential, while illuminating the Franciscan capacity to hold together nature and grace within a participatory framework.

From a Franciscan perspective, such reciprocal openness is itself a mode of participation: a sharing in the divine relationality that grounds all being. The encounter becomes a point of mutual transformation, where each participant is drawn more deeply into the mystery of God through the presence, agency, and integrity of the Other. Within this thesis, grace is understood not only as an ontological orientation of creation toward God but also as something encountered relationally in moments of openness to the Other. Whereas Radical Orthodoxy tends to speak of grace primarily as a quality inherent in nature, the Franciscan tradition emphasises that grace is also manifested in the lived, interpersonal exchanges through which divine generosity is disclosed. Francis's meeting with the Sultan thus reveals grace as both ontological and experiential, clarifying the Franciscan integration of nature and grace without collapsing one into the other.

This appreciation of a Franciscan theology of encounter therefore reveals the lived foundations of a Franciscan metaphysics of participation and prepares the ground for the more systematic theological and philosophical articulation of participation explored in Chapter 4.0.

3.4 A Metaphysics of Participation

The exemplary encounter between Francis and the Sultan was analogous of a participatory act through which God's grace was encountered and manifested and reflected an act of worship during a time of crisis. A theological analysis determined that the historic dialogical encounter reflects the integration of a Franciscan theology of encounter with a metaphysics of participation. In embodying a theology of encounter, Francis's actions illuminated a metaphysics of participation, which emphasised and deepened the theological significance of his experiences.

In this sense, Francis's encounters not only reveal the relational and graced structure of creation but also show how participation becomes a lived, experiential reality through which divine presence is discerned and embodied. Therefore, his encounters with the Other reflect a metaphysics of participation grounded in divine goodness, that underscores a vision of creation which was inherently graced and relational and draws all beings into a deeper communion.

Francis's encounters with the Other became moments of grace, where the immanent presence of God was experienced in a tangible practical and experiential way and this was exemplified in his meeting with Sultan Malik al-Kami which presents as an example of participation in God's Grace and mission. His spirituality was grounded in a theology of encounter as the means through which the metaphysics of participation was

lived out. Each encounter became an encounter with God, and for Francis, the humility of God was reflected in the humility of being with others in the depths of their reality."[251]

On his return to Umbria in 1221 and inspired by the knowledge and experience he had gained during his meeting with the Sultan, Francis revised his Rule to include a new missionary clause. His revised Rule (*Regulata Non Bullata, XVI*), while not affirmed by a Papal Bull, provided new instructions for mission, and advice "*for the brothers who go, on how they can live spiritually among the Saracens and non-believers".*[252]

This new clause emphasised the need to be aware of God's Will and the need for spiritual maturity and discernment towards divine inspiration. Francis reminds his brothers that "*they have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ*" and his instructions are clear, to "*announce the Word of God…. in order 'those non-believers may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*" (the Triune God). Moreover, he asserts that "*for the love of Jesus Christ "they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible*".[253]

> The Lord says: 'Behold I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves.' Therefore 'be prudent as serpents and simple as doves,' (Mt 10:16). Let any brother then, who desires by divine Inspiration to go among the Saracens and other non-believers go with the permission of his minister and servant (Lk. 16:2). If he sees they are fit to be sent, the minister may give them permission and not oppose them, for he will be bound to render an accounting to the Lord if he has proceeded without discernment in this and other matters.
>
> As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and non-believers in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature or God's sake and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that (non-believers) may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit… and be baptised…

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[251] Ilia, Delio, *A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World* (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), p. 33.

[252] Francis of Assisi, 'The Earlier Rule, Regulata Non Bullata (1209/10-1221), XVI', in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 63.

[253] Francis of Assisi, 'Those Going Among the Saracens and Other Non-Believers', The Earlier Rule, Regulata Non Bullata, XVI, (1209/10-1221), in FA: ED I: The Saint, pp. 74–75.

> Wherever they may be, let all my brothers remember that they have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. For love of him, they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible.[254]

Francis' *Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* written upon his return from the East (circa 1220), instructs the brothers to engage with others in a loving and constructive way: -

> *And let us love our neighbours as ourselves,*
> *and if anyone does not want to love them as himself,*
> *let him at least not do them any harm,*
> *but let him do good.*[255]

His encounter with the Sultan emphasises that interfaith dialogue is not merely an intellectual exercise but offers the possibility of a relational and sacramental encounter with the divine. The unique historic meeting between the two men became a sacramental act analogous of worship, where both parties participated in and experienced divine grace towards moments of relationality. Religious and intellectual hospitality offered space for mutual transformation and a recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings in God and metaphorically created a bridge between a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation towards a deeper knowledge of the divine and each Other.

This chapter addresses Radical Orthodoxy's critique of Franciscan theology through a nuanced exploration of themes such as humility, encounter, participation, and relationality and illustrates how the Franciscan vision, as exemplified in the encounter between Francis and the Sultan, maintains a profound sense of divine participation in

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[254] Francis of Assisi, 'Those Going Among the Saracens and Other Non-Believers', The Earlier Rule, Regulata Non Bullata, XVI, (1209/10-1221)', in FA: ED I: The Saint, pp. 74–75.

[255] Francis of Assisi, 'The Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance' (circa 1220), in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 45.

creation. It demonstrates that, rather than endorsing a secular, flattened view of reality, Franciscan theology emphasizes that all beings are intimately connected to God.

This counters Radical Orthodoxy's critique, as articulated by John Milbank, that avers Franciscan theology undermines a traditional participatory ontology by flattening the ontological distinction between God and creation.[256] Rather, the Franciscan concept of relationality and contingent being reflects a participatory understanding of existence, where every person and creature is seen as dependent on and connected to God. This addresses Radical Orthodoxy's concerns by affirming the immanence of God while upholding divine transcendence.

Radical Orthodoxy often critiques modern approaches to dialogue that may fail to embrace a sacramental and spiritually rich view of reality and values the recovery of pre-modern theological insights that emphasize God's sovereignty and the hierarchical nature of divine order.[257] This chapter presents the Franciscan attributes of humility, poverty and simplicity, grounded in the holy Virtues, as a powerful counter-narrative to both secular and hierarchical structures and highlights that Francis's embrace of these virtues reflected a sacramental way of life that mirrored gospel-centred principles and reflected the self-sacrificial Love of Christ. His encounter with the Sultan practically and experientially demonstrates that humility facilitates relationality and breaks down barriers to foster a deeper knowledge of God. Moreover, the Franciscan sacramental vision counters Radical Orthodoxy's critique by embodying a participatory ontology that emphasises the sacredness of all creation.

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[256] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason, 2nd* edn. pp. 293–310.

[257] Ibid., pp. 279–312; cf., John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 19–43, 75–102; John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Renewed Split in Modern Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 57–83; John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1–32; John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 95–124; Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 23–50.

Radical Orthodoxy links Franciscan theology to its critique of secular liberalism, particularly for its emphasis on individual autonomy, which it sees as undermining the relational and communal nature of Christian ontology.[258] The meeting between Francis and the Sultan, which has been held as a model for inter-cultural and interfaith dialogue for over eight hundred years, demonstrates how two men from different cultures and rooted in their respective religious traditions, recognised the divine presence in each Other.

The historic meeting is an exemplary instance of interfaith dialogue, facilitated by the power of religious hospitality. This encounter demonstrates how mutual respect, and humility overcame cultural and religious barriers as the Sultan, known for his wisdom and openness, embodied Islamic principles of hospitality and received Francis with generosity, while Francis' attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity facilitated dialogue with the Sultan in a spirit of peace.

In emphasising the role of hospitality and the agency of the other, this chapter demonstrates that true interfaith dialogue is a mutual relational journey towards a deeper understanding (or knowledge) of God. This relational vision aligns with Radical Orthodoxy's emphasis on a communal and participatory understanding of being, while challenging its dismissal of the Franciscan emphasis on the freedom and will of the individual as the site of divine encounter. In fostering a moral ethical engagement, the role of hospitality and the agency of the Other highlights that every encounter is an opportunity to experience divine presence.

[258] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, pp. 293–310.

Giving and receiving religious and intellectual hospitality was deeply rooted in both theological traditions and became a practical and spiritual expression of both men's individuality and interconnectedness and effected a sacred moment when, despite their religious differences, both men recognised and respected the Other's dignity. The dialogical encounter between Francis of Assisi and Sultan Sheikh Malik al Kamil exemplified the virtue of humility, both religious and intellectual, and while both men identified similarities and differences in their religious practices, they also acknowledged that the Truth of all knowledge emanates from the One God and reflects His Infinite Goodness.

The separation of humankind from the source of all Goodness was evident at the battle for Damietta, where the sinful nature of humanity was revealed at its most depraved. In a break in the conflict, Francis' historic interaction with the Sultan metaphysically reflects the imminent and transcendent God in a dialogical relational interaction with humankind at a time of human crisis. Their unique encounter exemplifies Bonaventure's notion of 'the mystery of God's self-diffusive Goodness';[259] this was reflected through Francis attributes of humility, poverty and simplicity, and articulated and illuminated in and through the protocols of religious hospitality.

Bonaventure affirms that spiritual Love can be diffused as goodness to the Other, as 'if God is Love and Goodness (*bonum est sui diffusivum*), therefore Goodness is diffusive of its very self'.[260] This was epitomised in Francis' dialogical encounter with the Sultan and made possible within a temporary hospitable safe space that allowed for a mutual appreciation of differences and similarities in each other's religious practice, and

[259] Zachary Hayes, 'Bonaventure Mystery of the Triune God' in Keenan Osborne ed. *The History of Franciscan Theology* (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2007).
[260] ibid.

which provided them with an opportunity to discern the integrity and dignity of the Other as they worshipped the One God.

The integration of familiar protocols of hospitality in dialogue dynamically transformed their unique historical encounter into an exemplary inter-relational dialogical interaction that bridged barriers of cultural and religious difference. This led to a deeper knowledge of God and an awareness and understanding of the uniqueness of the individual within their own religious, cultural, and political boundaries.

> We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us,
> and whoever is not from God does not listen to us.
> From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
> (1 John: 4: 6, NRSV Bible).

This chapter has demonstrated that hospitality, humility, and the agency of the Other are not merely ethical virtues within the Franciscan tradition, but theological expressions of a metaphysics of participation. Through an appreciation of the historic encounter between Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil, participation is shown to be lived, relational, and sacramental, revealing divine presence through embodied encounter rather than abstract metaphysical assertion.

Francis' historic meeting with the Sultan exemplifies a theology of encounter grounded in vulnerability, mutual recognition, and trust in the precedence of grace. In this context, participation unfolds through relational openness, where theological integrity is not safeguarded by enclosure or domination, but by presence, humility, and attentiveness to the dignity of the Other. Such an approach neither collapses the distinction between God and creation nor diminishes divine transcendence but instead affirms God's immanence as dynamically operative within relational exchange.

In addressing Radical Orthodoxy's critique, this chapter has shown that Franciscan theology does not endorse a flattened or secular ontology. Rather, it articulates a participatory vision in which all created beings remain contingently dependent upon God, while being drawn into communion through grace. Hospitality and dialogue thus become sacramental sites of encounter, where divine goodness is disclosed within the concrete realities of historical, cultural, and religious difference.

By locating metaphysical participation within lived encounter, the Franciscan tradition offers a distinctive theological vision, one that challenges hierarchical models of identity while maintaining strong metaphysical commitments. What emerges is a form of theological integrity rooted not in metaphysical control, but in embodied witness, relational humility, and the trust that divine grace precedes and sustains every genuine encounter.

The historical and experiential dimensions of Franciscan theology, as explored in Chapters 2.0 and 3.0, provide the essential groundwork for understanding its later scholastic development. Chapter 2.0 examined the integration of grace and nature, while Chapter 3.0 illustrated how humility, hospitality, and the agency of the Other become embodied practices of theological presence and participatory metaphysics. These relational and theological insights prepare the way for a more systematic engagement with the medieval Franciscan metaphysical tradition.

4.0 The Medieval Scholastic Era

The relational and theological insights developed in the preceding chapters prepared the way for a more systematic engagement with the medieval Franciscan metaphysical tradition. Building upon these foundations, this chapter turns to the theological and philosophical articulation of participation within the early Franciscan intellectual tradition.

An appreciation of the works of medieval Franciscan scholars, with a particular focus on Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus, explores how the insights implicit in Francis's lived spirituality were articulated within a robust metaphysical framework. In this framework, participation is conceptually developed, as Franciscan thinkers articulate the relationship between God and creation in ways that preserve divine transcendence, while affirming the contingency and relationality of created being.

In developing this scholastic articulation of participation, the medieval Franciscan intellectual tradition has become the focus of contemporary theological debate. Modern critiques have questioned whether key Franciscan developments, especially in the thought of John Duns Scotus, mark a rupture within the metaphysical order of participation. Chapter 4.0 therefore engages directly with the critique associated with Radical Orthodoxy, particularly the claim that Scotus's emphasis on univocity and will signals a departure from a participatory ontology.

By situating these developments within their Franciscan context, this study demonstrates that they remain in continuity with the broader Franciscan vision rather than constituting a metaphysical break. This reading differs from Radical Orthodoxy's interpretation, which locates grace as a property of nature itself; instead, it affirms the

Franciscan scholastics' understanding of participation as expressing both the contingency of created being and its dynamic orientation toward the divine.

Thus, this chapter marks a transition from historical narrative to theological analysis, in examining how Bonaventure and Duns Scotus developed Franciscan metaphysics in dialogue with Aristotelian thought. It explores their respective contributions to participation, the integration of grace and nature, and the Christocentric ordering of creation. In doing so, the chapter articulates, in theological and philosophical terms, what was experienced intuitively in the life of Francis: that grace and nature are integrated through encounter and participation.

4.1 Inspiration and Influences

In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the spirituality and vision of Francis of Assisi found theological expression in the works of Franciscan Scholars at the Franciscan School in the University of Paris under the tutorship of Alexander of Hales. This chapter examines the collaborative works of medieval Franciscan scholars who contributed to Alexander of Hales' '*Summa Halensis*' (1236-1256) and engages in an extended appreciation of the innovative works of eminent Franciscan Friars and scholars, Bonaventure, 'The Seraphic Doctor' (1221-1274), and John Duns Scotus, 'The Subtle Doctor' (1265/6–1308). For the purposes of this thesis, these eminent scholars are not examined merely as historical contributors to medieval theology, but as key architects of the Franciscan metaphysics of participation whose works deepen the themes introduced in Chapters 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0.

4.1.1 The Summa Halensis (1236-1256)

Alexander of Hales' emphasis on speculative theology initiated the golden age of scholasticism,[261] and he is acknowledged to have introduced into the Franciscan School the practice of commenting upon a collection of *sententiae* drawn up by Peter Lombard (1095-1100).[262] These were 'the definitive theological opinions of the Church Fathers along with supporting biblical texts, which became the main textbook in speculative theology until the end of the sixteenth century'.[263] For this thesis, the significance of the *Summa Halensis* lies not only in its historical role as the first Franciscan synthesis but in the way it lays the conceptual groundwork for a participatory metaphysics that develops the intuitive spirituality of Francis into a systematic theological vision.

Lydia Schumacher, *The Summa Halensis, Doctrines and Debates* (2020), affirms that 'the founding members of the Franciscan School at the University of Paris produced the *Summa Halensis* between *1236-1245,* with final additions made to the text between 1255 and 1256'. [264] Schumacher asserts that the 'collaboratively written tome, commissioned by Pope Gregory IX, was overseen by Bonaventure's tutor Alexander of Hales, '*Doctor Irrefragabilis*' (1170/85-1245), and his assistant and co-editor John of La Rochelle (1200-1245)'.[265]

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[261] Gal Gadon, Alexander of Hales, in *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Taylor and Francis, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/biographical/alexander-of-hales-c-1185-1245/v-1>, [accessed 21 October 2021].

[262] Ibid.

[263] Timothy B Noone, 'Scholasticism', in *a Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 61.

[264] Lydia A. Schumacher, ed. *The Summa Halensis, Doctrines and Debates*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), p. 1.

[265] Ibid., pp. 1–7.

Stephen Brown, *The Patristic Background* (2002), describes Alexander of Hales as 'one of the earliest and most influential of Franciscan theologians, who was deeply influenced by his devotion to Franciscan spirituality with its awareness of the presence of God in creation and its focus on Christ as the centre.'[266]

Schumacher (2020), attests that the *Summa Halensis* is grounded in the Franciscan tradition and infused with theological and philosophical insights drawn from the work of earlier theologians and philosophers, Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite (5th – 6th Century), the Greek Father, John of Damascus (676-749), Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), and 'the Victorines', Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141) and Richard of St Victor (1110- 1173).[267] Together, these patristic and medieval sources enabled the Franciscan scholars to articulate a participatory understanding of creation, in which every creature reflects, receives, and is oriented toward the divine exemplar.

Kenan Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (2003), affirms that, the clear foundation for their thought was the theology of the One and Triune God (*De Deo Une et Trino*), and the Word made flesh (*De Verbo Incarnato*).[268] This is affirmed by Ewert Cousins, *St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century* (1976), who asserts that, the Franciscan scholars' approach to knowledge through subjectivity, was grounded in Augustinian writings and influenced by the Pseudo Dionysian notion of God as dynamic with the focus on God's fecundity and His relation to the world.[269] This synthesis reflects the Franciscan conviction that nature is

[266] Stephen F. Brown, 'The Patristic Background', in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, (Oxford: Blackwell: 2002), p. 8.
[267] Lydia A., Schumacher, Summa *Halensis*, *Doctrines and Debates*, pp. 1–7.
[268] K. B., Osborne, OFM, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, p. 2.*
[269] Ewert H., Cousins, *St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century*, p.6.

always already graced, not by collapsing it into the divine, but by grounding it in a dynamic relation of participation, illumination, and dependency upon God.

Bonaventure stands at the threshold of Franciscan scholastic theology, translating the spiritual intuitions of Francis into a metaphysical framework that unites intellect and contemplation, nature and grace, creation and Creator. His approach is shaped not by abstraction, but by a fundamentally Christocentric vision of reality.

This study tracks a deliberate movement from the Summa's transcendental grammar (the One, the True, and the Good), to Bonaventure's doctrines of exemplarism and illumination, and ultimately to Scotus' individuated account of participation. In this way, the *Summa Halensis* reveals the conceptual scaffolding upon which Bonaventure would later construct a more explicitly Christocentric and relational metaphysics of participation.

4.1.2 Bonaventure, The Seraphic Doctor, (1221-1274)

Bonaventure was born Giovanni di Fidanza at Bagnoregio near Orivieto, Italy and entered the University of Paris as a student of theology around 1235 where he studied under the tutorship of Alexander of Hales (1170/85-1245). [270] His *Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences* reveals the roots of his *Doctrine of Grace and Religious Knowledge*,[271] in which he pays tribute to Alexander of Hales as his spiritual father,[272] whom he credits with having identified the notion of intrinsic goodness as intelligible Beauty."[273] For this thesis, the importance of Bonaventure lies in how he transforms

[270] Ewert H., Cousins, *St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century*, p.6.

[271] Bonaventure*, iii Sent*. d. 34, pla, q.1: Brev. v. 6.

[272] Bonaventure, '*Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard'* (II, d. 23, a. 2, q. 3, II, 547 and II, prol. II 1 -2).

[273] Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologica*, I, 3, 3, n. 103 (Quaracchi: *Collegii S. Bonaventurae*, 1924), volume I, p. 162.

these influences into a metaphysics of participation in which all created being is ordered toward God as its exemplar, centre, and final end.

Ewert Cousins, translator of Bonaventure's major works, describes his thought as, influenced by Augustinian subjectivity and Pseudo Dionysius' doctrines of divine fecundity and the diffusion of goodness, which he integrated with Aristotelianism and Franciscan spirituality, with its awareness of the presence of God in creation and its focus on Christ the centre.[274] Cousins asserts that Bonaventure's work is , seasoned with speculative reason, self-reflective analysis and Augustinian dialectic, and his writings are acknowledged to reveal a profound grasp of the mystical tradition, and a sensitivity to the unique place of Francis of Assisi's vision within it.[275] This Christocentric synthesis provides a distinctively Franciscan account of the grace–nature relationship, in which grace fulfils and elevates created nature through a participatory orientation grounded in the Incarnation.

Bonaventure held the position of Regent Master of the Franciscan School in Paris between 1254 and 1257, and while teaching at the University he was elected to the role of Minister General in the Order of Friars Minor, a position which he held from 1257 to 1274. He was tasked with bringing stability to the Order during one of the most difficult periods in its development, and his two Encyclical Letters, written during this challenging time reveal his intense efforts, the depth of his comprehension, and the simplicity of his solution to the difficulties within the Order.[276]

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[274] Ewert H., Cousins, '*St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century*', xix, p. 15.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Dominic Monti, ed. and trans. *The Works of St. Bonaventure, Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order,* (New York: Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), pp. 57–62, 225–229.

At a Franciscan Chapter meeting held at Narbonne in 1260, Bonaventure was commissioned by the Order of Friars Minor to compile 'one good legend' of the life of Saint Francis based on those already in existence.[277] His 'official' biography, The Major Legend of Saint Francis (*Legenda Major)* (1260-1263), is described as, a synthesis of previous works including Thomas of Celano's writings, *Prima Vita* (1228-1229), *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (1245-1247), and *The Treatise on the Miracles* (1259-1252), which he merged with various liturgical pieces including the *Life of Saint Francis* written by Julian of Speyer (1232-1235).[278]

Bonaventure's biography of Francis of Assisi (*Legenda Major)* employs metaphor, analogy and the literary motif of 'journey', which reflects the overall structure of his theology, as for him , Francis had become a symbol of the workings of grace, and to understand the unfolding of his life was to perceive the inner dynamics of the gift of the Holy Spirit.[279] In this way, Bonaventure's metaphysics remains inseparable from the lived spirituality of Francis; his theological system is best understood as the intellectual unfolding of the participatory vision embodied in Francis's encounters and experiences.

An appreciation of Bonaventure's use of analogy can be drawn from his *The Tree of Life* (*Lignum Vita*e) *(1217-1274),* which presents his devotional response to the humanity of Christ. His *magnum opus, The Soul's Journey into God* (*intinerarium mentis in deum)*, (1259), in which he re-employs the literary motif of 'journey' to offer a compact picture of Franciscan spirituality,[280] is analogous of Francis' life experiences and

[277] Francis of Assisi, *Early Writings*, Vol II, The Founder, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, (New York: New City Press, 2000), p. 22.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid., p. 21
[280] Ewert H., Cousins, 'St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century', xix, p. 15.

spiritual development. Ewert Cousins (1976), describes Bonaventure's *The Souls Journey into God* as, a technical statement of his theological vision in which God is reflected in characteristic Franciscan fashion, throughout the created universe.[281]

Through his works, Bonaventure offers a metaphysical vision in which creation itself becomes a sacramental sign of divine presence, thereby establishing a participatory ontology that would be further developed, carried forward and rearticulated in the unique metaphysical moral framework of John Duns Scotus (The Subtle Doctor).

4.1.3 John Duns Scotus: The Subtle Doctor' (1265/6–1308)

John Duns Scotus was born in the village of Duns in Scotland (circa 1226) and was ordained to the priesthood in the Order of Friars Minor on March 17, 1291. He went on to study theology and philosophy at Oxford (circa 1280) where he completed his Commentary on the first two books of '*The Sentences*' (1298-1299).[282] Scotus is considered one of the most influential of Franciscan theologians and philosophers and ranks with Thomas Aquinas and William of Oakham as one of the most important thinkers of the early fourteenth century scholastic period".[283] For this thesis, Scotus is significant not only as a major scholastic figure but as a thinker who rearticulates the Franciscan metaphysics of participation through an account of divine freedom, contingency, and the individuation (Haecceity) of created beings.

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[281] Ewert H., Cousins, '*St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century*', xix, p. 15.

[282] Jorge, J. E. Gracia and Timothy Noone eds. *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 353.

[283] Ibid.

An independent thinker, Scotus valued Augustinian traditions and appreciated the wisdom of Aquinas and Aristotle, as well as Muslim Philosophers".[284] His reputation rests on his theological writings which include his commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and his lectures on Lombard, which were expanded into his *magnum opus* the *Ordinatio*.[285]

Scotus conducted his earliest lectures on *The Sentences* (*Lectura*) in Oxford University between 1298 and 1300,[286] and later transferred to Paris University (circa 1302), where he continued lecturing on *The Sentences* until he was expelled from France along with eighty other friars, for taking Pope Boniface VIII's side in a dispute with King Philip IV of France. He returned to Paris in the autumn of 1303 to resume his lectures and attained his Doctorate in Theology in 1305.[287] Thomas Williams, *John Duns Scotus* (2015) affirms, he was subsequently appointed Franciscan Regent Master at Paris University (1306–1307) and was transferred to the Franciscan *Studium* at Cologne in 1307 where he died prematurely, in November 1308, at the age of forty-two".[288]

Scotus' well-known doctrine of the univocity of being, frequently misinterpreted in modern debates, does not diminish divine transcendence, as Radical Orthodoxy contends; rather, it provides the metaphysical clarity necessary to articulate participation by affirming both the radical dependency of creatures and the absolute primacy of God. His innovative concept of Haecceitas deepens the Franciscan participatory vision by grounding individuality in a divine act of willing, showing that each creature reflects the Creator in its own irreducible singularity.

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[284] Charles Balic, OFM., 'John Duns Scotus', in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 2nd edn. vol IV (Detroit: Gale, 2003), p.1105.

[285] Jorge, J. E. Gracia and Timothy Noone eds. *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 353.

[286] Brampton, C. K., 'Duns Scotus at Oxford, 1288-1301', *Franciscan Studies* 24 (1964), p. 18.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Thomas Williams, *John Duns Scotus*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, 2019.

Taken together, Scotus' metaphysical insights complement Bonaventure's exemplarism by providing a precise account of individuality and contingency, thereby offering a distinct and coherent development of the Franciscan metaphysics of participation.

4.1.4 The Medieval Transcendentals

In the Franciscan intellectual tradition, the Medieval Transcendentals function not merely as abstract metaphysical categories but as the conceptual grammar through which participation, divine exemplarity, and the graced structure of creation are understood. Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure* (1978), asserts that the medieval scholastic metanarrative reveals eastern and western influences as the scholars' developing thought moved along the Dionysian *triplex via* from philosophy into theology.[289] This intellectual progression is reflected in the *Summa Halensis,* which is permeated with the Medieval Transcendentals, the One, the True and the Good, an inheritance from the Church Fathers which Franciscan scholars drew from Pseudo Dionysius' *Divine Names* to explicate and expound their concepts and notions.

The *Summa Halensis* refers to the Transcendentals (the One, the True and the Good), as emanating from God and reflected in all created things, as each build on the other, beginning with the 'One, and proceeding through the True to arrive at the Good.

> In God there is a certain triad, which shines forth,
> and is represented in every creature,
> and in this way a creature is called a vestige,
> and this is noted in three ways: one, true, good.[290]

[289] Ewert H. Cousins, '*St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century', xix,* p. 15

[290] SH I (n. 110), p. 172: *'Dicendum quod in Deo quaedam est trinitas, quae relucet et repraesentatur in Omni creatura, et secundum hoc dicitur vestigium, et haec attenditur secundum haec tria: unum, verum, bonum.*

This structure reflects a participatory ontology in which all created beings are understood as vestiges of God, participating in the One through unity, in the True through intelligibility, and in the Good through the orientation of all things toward their final end in God.

Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought (*2012*),* asserts 'the Transcendentals', which developed in the Latin tradition from around 1225 and first appeared in logical treatises in the twelfth century, exercised a commanding influence over the philosophy and theology of the Latin Middle Ages, and is evident in many of the *Summae* of the period'.[291] Aertsen attributes the expansion of the doctrine of the Medieval Transcendentals in the *Summa Halensis* to Alexander of Hales*,*[292] who drew inspiration from Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite's Divine Names to illuminate and define the appropriations of God through the transcendental concepts of *The One, The True and The Good*.[293]

The developing thought and notions of Medieval Franciscan Scholars' were permeated with the Medieval Transcendentals, and their concepts were explicated through analogy which served to enhance theological analysis. For medieval Franciscan scholars, the life of Francis of Assisi, his example, traditions and teachings, had become an analogy for an ontological argument towards a 'knowledge of God' and 'the meaning of 'Being'. For the Franciscan tradition, analogy thus becomes a bridge between metaphysics and spirituality, enabling the mind to ascend from created likenesses to the divine source in whom all participation is grounded, demonstrating the influence of

[291] Jan A. Aertsen, 'Chapter Four, The Doctrine of the Transcendentals in Franciscan Masters.' In *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 135–176.
[292] Ibid.
[293] SH I, P1, In1, Tr3, in Oleg Bychkov (2021), p. 117.

Pseudo-Dionysius on medieval theological method.: - "*With analogies we are raised upward towards the truth of the mind's vision, a truth which is simple and one".* [294]

4.2 Freedom and the Will

The primary recurring Franciscan motif of freedom and the will is reflected in Francis of Assisi's writings and biographies and is synonymous with his conversion experiences and the development of his new consciousness, which effected his movement from human image to spiritual likeness (*Admonition V).*[295] In the Franciscan tradition, such freedom is never a movement into autonomy but a deepening of participation in the divine life, whereby the will becomes aligned to the Good through grace.

The concept of freedom and the will in early Franciscan thought was not indicative of autonomy but reflected a means of participation in the divine order and was formed by humility and a divinely inspired orientation towards moral goodness.[296] This distinction is important, particularly in light of Radical Orthodoxy's critique, for it clarifies that Franciscan freedom does not imply a self-grounded human agency but a graced orientation of the will toward God.

Francis' actions and initiatives were motivated by his desire to discover God's Will and reflected his Gospel-centred commitment to the First and Second Commandments. His divinely inspired freedom and the will to reach out to God initiated his primary conversion experience at the Church of San Damiano when God spoke to him, and his freedom and the will to reach out to the Other in obedience to God initiated his unexpected encounter with the Leper on the road, when his prejudice and repulsion

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[294] Clarence E. Rolt, Dionysius the Areopagite: *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, vol. 47, (Montana: Kessinger Publishing Company, 1920), p. 53.

[295] Francis of Assisi, *Admonition V*, p.128.

[296] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), p. 99.

was transformed from bitterness to sweetness (The Testament, 1226). [297] These encounters manifest the Franciscan conviction that divine initiative and human freedom operate synergistically, not competitively, and that the will is most free when oriented toward divine goodness.

Francis' pivotal conversion experiences were inspired by the Holy Spirit and reflected interactions between divine grace and human free will. This notion is synonymous with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's account of *Grace and Free Will*, (1128), which posits that, free will consists in consent and is not subject to any constraint or necessity. For Saint Bernard, this consent is ultimately to God and thus to the Good, the source of all freedom.[298] In this respect, Bernard's account resonates strongly with the Franciscan participatory framework, in which the will's consent to God is both the effect of grace and the expression of genuine freedom.

In reaching out to God and the Other Francis' actions illustrated a synergy of divine and human freedom and the will; inspired by the Holy Spirit and grounded in the source of all freedom, his actions reflected God's grace and illustrated God's immensity, ubiquity and Infinite Goodness. These themes set the stage for the scholastic articulation of divine immensity in the Summa Halensis, where Franciscan theologians examined how God's uncircumscribable presence grounds both the possibility of creation's participation and the freedom of the human will.

[297] Francis of Assisi, *The Testament* (1226), p. 124.

[298] Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Grace and Free Choice*, ed. by Daniel O'Donovan, intro. by Bernard McGinn (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1997), in Lydia A Schumacher, *Free Will in the Summa Halensis*, (2021), p. 129.

4.2.1 Divine Immensity

In the *Summa Halensis* scholars debated whether God is somewhere, nowhere or everywhere, and examined the notion of the incircumscribability and the location of God, before going on to define the modality of God's presence in things.[299] Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Divine Immensity in Relation to Space and Time: The Crossroad of the Summa Halensis* (2020), affirms that their response to the question 'God may be nowhere (*nusquam*)', was made in a determinate way, which affirmed that He is everywhere. [300]

In the Franciscan context, divine immensity provides the metaphysical ground for participation: God's uncircumscribed presence enables all created beings to exist in continual dependence upon, and orientation toward, the divine.

4.2.2 Divine Ubiquity

The *Summists* argued that, if God is not contained or limited, he occupies all places simultaneously and ubiquely, by being present in every place through his power, which they described as 'in the way that wisdom fills the wise.[301] They concluded that , God fills, contains, and locates all things everywhere, through his causal power, and to say that God is 'in things' means in reality that things are in God in that he maintains them in their being.[302]

The inversion of things being 'in God' rather than God being restricted 'in things' is essential to the Franciscan metaphysics of participation, for it affirms that all created reality is held within the dynamic presence of God who sustains and perfects nature through grace.

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[299] Tiziana Suarez-Nani, On *Divine Immensity in Relation to Space and Time: The Crossroad of the Summa Halensis (*2020), pp. 76–80.

[300] SH I, In1, Tr2, Q3, Ti3, M1 (nn. 45–49), 70–76., in Suarez-Nani (2021), p.76.

[301] SH I, In1, Tr2, Q3, Ti2, C1 (n. 40), 65., in Suarez-Nani (2021), p. 79.

[302] SH I, In1, Tr2, Q3, Ti2, C3 (n. 42), 67., Suarez-Nani (2021), p. 80.

The thought and notions of medieval Franciscan scholars reflect the influence of Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite, whose *Divine Names*, (circa Fifth Century), describes the immensity and ubiquity of God while affirming his adherence to scriptural Truth: -

> A 'being' in a way beyond being, he bestows existence upon everything.
> and brings the whole world into being, and He remains one among the plurality', unified throughout the procession, and full amid the emptying act of differentiation. Transcendently he surpasses the being of everything….
> He is One and he dispenses his Oneness to every part of the universe
> as well as to its totality, to the single as well as the multiple.
> He is One in an unchanging and transcendent way.
> **Pseudo Dionysius, Divine Names**[303]

The Summists interpreted this Dionysian vision not as collapsing the distinction between God and creation, but as affirming that the created order participates in divine being while remaining wholly dependent upon the transcendent Source.

Tiziana Suarez-Nani (2021) affirms that the *Summa Halensis* concluded that God cannot be circumscribed, since he is limited neither in his being and his power, nor in relation to place, time, or human knowledge,[304] and since God alone is beyond any limitation, his incircumscribability was determined as an attribute exclusive to the divine being.[305]

4.2.3 Divine Infinity

The emergence of the concept of infinity out of divine immensity is posited in the *Summa Halensis* as a perfection intrinsic to the divine essence. [306]Allan B. Wolter, (*The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, 1946) affirms that every pure perfection is compatible with Infinity and is communicable.[307] In

[303] Pseudo Dionysius, Divine Names, 649B/C, 66.
[304] SH I, In1, Tr2, Q3, Ti1, C1 (n. 38), *Respondeo*, 62., in Suarez Nani (2021), p. 76.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Tiziana Suarez-Nani, On Divine Immensity and Infinity in Relation to Space and Time: The Crossroad of the Summa Halensis, p. 75.
[307] Allan B. Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (New York: St. Bonaventure University, The Franciscan Institute, 1946), pp. 167, 174.

Franciscan thought, this communicability does not suggest that creatures become infinite, but that they participate analogically in God's infinite goodness through the perfections appropriate to their nature.

In the *Summa*, scholars describe infinity as, a pure perfection or mode of Being which nothing can exceed,[308] and the Infinity attributed to God characterizes him independently of his relationship to created beings.[309] Allan B. Wolter (1946) avers that for Scotus, God's infinite perfections are grounded in His divine Infinity and are reflected through his divine Freedom and Will to create,[310] moreover, that God as Infinity is not some sort of accidental addition to Being, but an intrinsic mode of Being, and the key component of our best available concept of God.[311]

For Scotus, therefore, divine infinity grounds both the contingency of creation and the possibility of participation, ensuring that creatures receive their being not by necessity but through the generous act of an infinitely free God.

4.3 Relationality

Through his conversion experiences, Francis became aware of the inter-connectedness and contingency of all created reality to God, the Creator. He realised the significant role of humankind created in His image (*imago Dei*), and the mutual contingency of created beings to God, the Supreme Being, and the Source and Cause of all being, as defined by Bonaventure's in his *The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum): -*

[308] Allan B Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, pp. 167, 174.
[309] SH I, In1, Tr2, Q1, C1 (n. 34), 57 in Suarez-Nani (2021), p. 81.
[310] Allan B Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, pp. 167, 174.
[311] Ibid.

> For 'Being' itself is first and last,
> It is supremely one and yet all-inclusive.
> It is all inclusive, precisely because it is supremely one.
> For what is supremely one is the universal principle of all multiplicity,
> hence it is the universal efficient, exemplary and final cause of all things.
> **Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey into God.** [312]

In line with the definitions established in the introduction, Franciscan relationality must be understood as a metaphysical category rather than a merely ethical one. It denotes the intrinsic orientation of all creatures toward God and toward one another, grounded in a shared participation in divine being. The relational vision articulated in Francis's life and developed by the scholastics therefore represents a coherent extension of the Franciscan metaphysics of participation introduced in Chapters 1.0–3.0.

The early Franciscan theological emphasis on relationality is rooted in the vision of all creation as inherently interconnected. This is most vividly articulated in Bonaventure's synthesis of trinitarian theology and metaphysics through his concepts of 'emanation', 'exemplarity' and 'consummation', through which he demonstrates the sacramentality of Creation.

4.3.1 A Comprehensive Trinitarianism: A Paradigm for Relationality

Boyd Taylor Coolman, *The Comprehensive Trinitarianism of the Summa Halensis* (2020), affirms that debates in the *Summa*, the appropriations of the triune God reveal a synthesis of the thought and work of Augustine, Dionysius, John of Damascus and Richard of St. Victor, as early Franciscan theologians and philosophers sought to define a comprehensive trinitarianism which encompassed all of reality, from the divine Nature to the transcendental properties of all being.[313] Coolman avers that the *Summa Halensis*

[312] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium in Deum)*, p. 99.
[313] Coolman, Boyd Taylor, The *Comprehensive Trinitarianism of the Summa Halensis*, in Lydia A. Schumacher ed., *The Summa Halensis*, *Doctrines and Debates*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 107–141.

conceives all created reality, as well as the divine Essence itself, in a triadic way, and defines the divine Being as a unity existing in a plurality of persons.[314] He describes the work of Franciscan scholars in the *Summa* as explicitly indicating that divine Unity (the One), Truth (the True) and Goodness (the Good), are three essential attributes which are conceived of as an integrated triad, coordinated to one to another and having a particular order among them.[315]

This comprehensive trinitarianism provides the metaphysical grounding for participation itself: all created relationality mirrors the divine relationality of the Trinity. Thus, the Franciscan account of participation emerges not from abstraction but from the very structure of divine life, unity-in-distinction and communion-in-difference, which becomes reflected throughout creation.

Bonaventure's *magnum opus, The Soul's Journey into God* (Itinerarium *Mentis in Deum*) is analogous of Francis of Assisi's life and spiritual journey and symbolic of the workings of grace which links the human being (nature) to God the Supreme Being in a transition from 'image to likeness', through which the dynamics of the Holy Spirit can be perceived.[316] Bonaventure's contemplative ascent thus rests upon the conviction that created relationality is always already graced. For him, the movement from vestige to image, and ultimately to likeness, is possible only because the creature participates in God through a dynamic relational dependence.

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[314] Coolman, Boyd Taylor, The *Comprehensive Trinitarianism of the Summa Halensis*, in Lydia A. Schumacher ed., *The Summa Halensis*, *Doctrines and Debates*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 107–141.

[315] SH1, Prologue to Tractate 3, 112., in Boyd Taylor Coolman, Trinitarian Unity Inquiry 1, '*On the Substance of the Divine Unity'* in *The Summa Halensis*, *Doctrines and Debates*, ed. by Lydia Schumacher, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), p. 116.

[316] Bonaventure, '*On Contemplating God in his Vestiges in the Sense World'*, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis Deum*), trans. and ed. by Ewert H. Cousins, (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 69.

Bonaventure integrates anthropology, metaphysics, and spirituality into a unified participatory framework; his innovative concepts reveal the influence of earlier theologians and philosophers towards his establishment of a comprehensive trinitarian theology that reflects a metaphysical relationality between God and all Creation.

> We can contemplate God not only outside us and within us
> but also, above us outside through his vestiges,
> within through his image and above through the light
> which shines upon our minds. (Ps. 47). [317]
> **Bonaventure (Itinerarium Mentis Deum)**

He describes the second level of contemplation as seeing God "in all creatures, which enter our minds through our bodily senses," [318] perceiving them not only as external vestiges but also as realities in which God is present "by his essence, power and presence". [319] For him, creation reflects the Trinity as a footprint of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, so that the whole sweep of reality becomes a mirror of God's fecund goodness.

Bonaventure's thought echoes Alexander of Hales' *Summa Halensis*, which had developed a triadic analysis of creation, identifying the marks of the One, the True, and the Good in every creature, and in rational creatures a fuller image of God through power, wisdom, and will.[320] His use of metaphor in describing all of Creation as vestiges or footprints of the triune God reflects the influence of Hales, whose '*Summa Halensis*' "engages in a transcendental analysis of creation which defines all of created reality, as

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317 Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, p. 94.
318 Ibid.
319 Ibid.
320 Alexander of Hales, *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, ed. by *Collegium S. Bonaventurae,* 4 vols (Quaracchi: *Collegium S. Bonaventure*, 1924-48), pars 1, inq. 1, tract. 1, q, 1, m. 1, c. 2.; see also, Lydia Schumacher, *Early Franciscan Theology: Between Authority and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 87-90.
320 SH I (n. 88), 140: '*Appropriantur Trinitati*', in Boyd Taylor Coolman (2020), p. 116.

well as the divine essence itself, in a triadic way, and consistently observes that these triads are appropriated to the Trinity".[321]

This triadic structure not only informs a metaphysics of being but also undergirds the Franciscan sacramental understanding of creation. If every creature reflects unity, truth, and goodness, then every creature becomes a site of participation, a locus where divine presence may be perceived and encountered. Bonaventure's synthesis therefore transforms metaphysics into a contemplative act: to know creation rightly is to be drawn into the relational life of God.

Building on this, Hales' triadic framework provided Bonaventure with a metaphysical grammar in which creation could be read simultaneously as vestige and image, grounding his vision of the world as a transparent sign of the Trinity.

> In God there is a certain triad, which shines forth
> and is represented in every creature, and in this way a
> creature is called a vestige, and this is noted in three ways,
> one, true, good. There is another (triad) in which the rational
> creature abounds by reason of which it is called the image of God,
> which shines forth alone in it, and it is noted in relation to these: power,
> wisdom and will. *[322]*

Bonaventure's trinitarian worldview is described by Ewert Cousins as "revealing God's dynamism and relatedness to the world, while his inter-relational ethos demonstrates the universal desire of the subject towards the object and the knowledge of God though subjectivity".[323] His vision of creation as vestige and image anticipates his theology of sacramentality, where the whole created order becomes a sign that mediates the presence of the triune God.

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[321] SH I (n. 88), 140: '*Appropriantur Trinitati*', in Boyd Taylor Coolman (2020), p. 116.

[322] SH I (n. 110), p. 172, in *Summa Halensis,* Doctrines and Debates, ed. by Lydia Schumacher, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), p. 116.

[323] Bonaventure, 'On Contemplating God in his Vestiges in the Sense World', in *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), pp. 87–88.

4.3.2 The Sacramentality of Creation: Christ the Exemplar

For Bonaventure, the meaning of creation is summed up in the word 'relationship', and the basis of creation is the Trinity, a community of relationships out of which creation emerges.[324] L. J. Bowman (1975) affirms that Bonaventure's doctrine of *Cosmic Exemplarism* holds that everything in creation has its model or exemplar in the Word of God. Thus, "When the Word becomes flesh, the centre of the Trinity in whom the truth of all reality exists appears at the centre of creation, and as the Word expresses the Father, creation expresses the Word."[325]

Bonaventure's doctrine of the sacramentality of creation was shaped by the influence of fourth-century Cappadocians, Gregory and Basil of Nyssa, who taught that human *physis* bears the image of its divine archetype the Logos, Christ,[326] Who is the fullness of the Father's self-expression, and Exemplar in whom all things are patterned.[327] Ilia Delio (1999) affirms that, "only in light of this Christological exemplarity is the deepest nature of created reality unlocked, for without Christian revelation the philosopher is unable to reduce reality to a first principle".[328]

In his *Hexaëmeron* (1267–1273), Bonaventure describes the Son as "the locus of divine ideas in whom all things are unified and expressed" [329] The divine ideas express God's knowledge through Christ and give rise to the dynamic causes through which creation arises".[330] Hence, the Word is the eternal Exemplar, the model and pattern of

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[324] Alexander Schaeffer, 'The Position and Function of Man in the Created World According to Bonaventure', *Franciscan Studies* 20 (1960), pp. 266–67.

[325] L. J. Bowman, Cosmic Exemplarism, Vol. 55, No. 2. *The Journal of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1975), p. 185.

[326] Goris Wouter, 'Medieval Theories of Transcendentals', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2019 Edition <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/transcendentals-medieval/> [accessed 12 October 21)

[327] Bonaventure, *Hexaëmeron, collation 3*, no. 4: tome 5, pp. 343-44.

[328] Ilia Delio, OFM., 'Bonaventure's Metaphysics of the Good', *Theological Studies* 60, no. 2 (1999), 229.

[329] Bonaventure*, Hexaëmeron, collation 11,* no. 11: tome 5, pp. 381-*82.*

[330] Bonaventure*, Hexaëmeron,* collation *12*, no. 12: tome 5, p. 386.

all creation, as affirmed in the Gospel of John (Jn. 1: 1-4)whom all created things are modelled and through whom they exist: -

> In the beginning was the Word,
> and the Word was with God,
> and the Word was God.
> He was in the beginning with God.
> All things came into being through him,
> and without him not one thing came into being.

Bonaventure frames his sacramental vision within the circle of emanation, exemplarity, and consummation, a triadic movement in which creation flows from God, reflects God, and returns to God. [331] His trinitarian vision presents the Father as *fontalis plenitudo* (fountain of fullness), [332] the source from whom the Word is eternally expressed and in whom all the divine ideas reside; [333] and the Spirit as the bond of love who draws creation back to its source.

He describes Creation metaphorically as a river that "flows from a spring, spreads throughout the land to purify and fructify it, and eventually returns to its point of origin." [334] This imagery reinforces a participatory structure of reality: creation as sacramental not by external designation but by ontological constitution and the flow of emanation and return expresses a metaphysics in which all created reality participates continuously in the life of God, revealing that sacramentality is grounded in the structure of being itself.

Zachary Hayes, (2002*),* asserts that the hermeneutical significance of Bonaventure's metaphysical framework, is that it reignites a trinitarian faith, in presenting the trinitarian God Who is the firstness (*primitas*), the fecundity (*fecunditas*),

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[331] Leonard J Bowman, *The Cosmic Exemplarism of Bonaventure,* pp. 181–198.
[332] Bonaventure, 1 Sentences, dist. 31. Pt. 2., dubium 6, tome 1 (Quaracchi 1882), p. 551.
[333] Bonaventure, *Hexaëmeron*, collation 3, No. 4: tome 5, pp. 343–44.
[334] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, ed. by Philotheus Boehner (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 1956), Ch. 5., No. 2, pp. 80–81.

the *fontalis plenitudo*, and the fountainhead of all that is,[335] and the Spirit as the bond of love who draws creation to its consummation in God. [336] For Bonaventure, the emanation of Creation is rooted in the triune God Who is reflected in created beings, and whose destiny is to return to Him.[337] In this way, Bonaventure affirms both the metaphysical structure of participation and the centrality of Christ as the eternal Word in whom, and through whom all things are made.

This framework affirms the sacramentality of creation and the participatory nature of all being grounding metaphysics in the humility of divine self-gift. Bonaventure's exemplarism thus affirms both the metaphysical structure of participation and the centrality of Christ as the eternal Word through whom and for whom all things are made. Far from marginalising sacramentality, his metaphysics embeds it at the very heart of ontology, ensuring that creation is always Christologically and liturgically ordered to divine presence.

For Bonaventure, creation finds its meaning in relationship, grounded in the Trinity, the eternal communion of love out of which creation emerges. His vision, rooted in the Incarnation and humility, affirms that being itself is participatory, sacramental, and Christological. His account of exemplarism therefore functions not merely as a metaphysical schema but as the foundational structure of Franciscan participation.

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[335] Zachary Hayes, 'Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God', in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. by Kenan B. Osborne (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), pp. 56–60, 62–72.

[336] Bonaventure, 1 *Sentences*, dist. 31. Pt. 2., *dubium* 6, tome 1 (Quaracchi 1882), p. 551.

[337] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, ed. by Philotheus Boehner (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 1956), chapter 5., No. 2, pp. 80–81.

His Christological metaphysics provides the conceptual foundation for a participatory ontology in which the integration of grace and nature becomes intelligible, and Creation's sacramental character is not an optional theological overlay but the natural consequence of its origin in and orientation toward the divine Exemplar.

Bonaventure's theological vision is deeply informed by metaphysical reflection, and his use of the medieval transcendentals, the One, the True, and the Good, provided a contemplative framework for participation and ascent. His use of the medieval transcendentals, the One, the True, and the Good, provides a contemplative grammar for participation and ascent.

Always subordinating philosophy to the primacy of theology and divine illumination, he preserved the unity of faith and reason without reducing theology to a closed metaphysical system. His emphasis on wisdom, beauty, and exemplarism shapes a metaphysical orientation marked by mystery and participation, and prepares the way for the following section, where beauty becomes a pathway into the illumination of the Good.

4.3.3 A Reconnection with Beauty: The Illumination of the Good

Francis' contemplation on the Passion of Christ at the Cross of San Damiano revealed the highest creative power, the creativity of transcendent Love,[338] and for him, the divinity and humanity of Christ linked the triune God with humankind and all creation.[339]

[338] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, *'On Contemplating God in His Image, Reformed by the Gifts of Grace',* p. *86.*

[339] Ibid., p. *87.*

In his *Legenda Major,* Bonaventure captures this intuition, describing Francis as one who, '*contuited Beauty itself in beautiful things, following the footprints of the Beloved as a ladder of ascent to God*'.[340] For Francis, beauty was not merely aesthetic but sacramental, in disclosing the radiance of Christ as the consummate form of divine love, and was a pathway into divine mystery, that linked created reality to its eternal source.

> In beautiful things he (Francis) contuited Beauty itself
> and through the footprints impressed in things
> he followed his Beloved everywhere,
> out of them making for himself a ladder
> through which he could climb up
> and lay hold of him who is utterly desirable. [341]

For Bonaventure, beauty functions as a metaphysical bridge between creation and Creator. Created beauty is not merely symbolic but ontological, disclosing the radiance of the divine Good in and through the forms of the world**.** In this way, beauty reveals the participatory structure of reality and becomes a mode through which the creature is drawn into deeper communion with God.

This vision is grounded in the tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius, whose *Divine Names* identifies the Beautiful with the Good and describes it as creative cause, exemplar, and final end of all things. The Dionysian account provides a metaphysical grammar for Franciscan theology: beauty is the radiance of the divine Good, and all creatures desire and participate in that Beauty which called them into being.

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[340] Bonaventure, *Legenda Major*, IX.1, in *Opera Omnia*, VIII (Quaracchi, 1898), pp. 530–31.
[341] Ibid., pp. 596–597.

In the *Summa Halensis*, scholars drew on the Dionysian heritage and questioned whether beauty is a distinct transcendental or convertible with the Good. [342] In *Suspended Beauty? The Mystery of Aesthetic Experience in the Summa Halensis* (2021), Oleg Bychkov notes that the Summa concludes that while beauty (*pulchrum*) and the good (*bonum*) are identical in substance, they differ conceptually: truth concerns inward form, while beauty expresses outward harmony.[343] The Summa*'s* trinitarian metaphysics provides the paradigm for understanding this structure. The triune God is the One, the true Being, and the supreme Good from whom all creation emanates. Building on this, Bonaventure conceives plurality as inter-relationality grounded in the self-diffusive Good (*bonum est diffusivum sui*).

Bonaventure refers to the image of Christ on the Cross as '*the consummate representation of reductive Beauty',* [344] and he develops this intuition into a theological vision in which beauty is the glory of the divine Good shining through creation, illuminating God's presence and inviting participation in the Trinity. For him, beauty is woven into the very metaphysical structure of reality, for wherever the Good diffuses itself it does so with clarity, proportion, and integrity, the classical marks of beauty. [345]Thus, Creation bears the impress of its Exemplar, the Word (Jn 1:3) and provides both a contemplative pathway to God and a confirmation of creation's sacramentality.

He describes the triune God as a divine artist and creation as a work of art manifesting the glory of its source, while humankind is created capable of recognising

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[342] Oleg Bychkov, 'Suspended Beauty? The Mystery of Aesthetic Experience', in the *Summa Halensis*, *The Legacy of Early Franciscan Thought*, ed. by Lydia Schumacher, (Berlin, De Gruyter: 2021), p. 117.

[343] SH I, P1, In1, Tr3, Q3, M1, C1, Ar2 (n. 103), 162 – 63. Bychkov (2021), p. 117.

[344] Bonaventure*, Legenda Major*, p. 90.

[345] Bonaventure, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi,* II, d. 31, a. 2, q. 1, concl in *Opera Omnia*, II (*Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae*, 1885), p. 733; see Zachary Hayes, Bonaventure: Mystical Writings (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), pp. 54-56.

and sharing that glory.[346] In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, he teaches that an experience of divine beauty arises most fully through the Incarnation, for through Christ's humanity God's divinity is revealed. [347] To contemplate this beauty is to glimpse the ordered harmony of the Trinity reflected in the world.

For Bonaventure, beauty provides both a contemplative pathway to God and a confirmation of creation's sacramentality, since all things bear the mark of their Exemplar, the Word (Jn. 1:3), and to contemplate beauty, therefore, is to glimpse the ordered harmony of the Trinity reflected in the world. In this sense, beauty uniquely reveals the capacity of creation to disclose divine presence in asserting that the beautiful is the same as 'the Good.[348]

In the Summa, scholarly debates leaned in favour of applying the terms *decorum* and *pulchrum* to God indiscriminately together with 'the Good'. Nevertheless, on the question of the essence of the beautiful,[349] they conclude that the beautiful and 'the Good' are identical as far as substance is concerned, but different conceptually,"[350] as the beautiful is convertible with 'the Good' not with Being, and Beauty is the revelatory aspect of both 'the Good' and 'the True'. [351]

> 'Beauty' is the revelatory aspect of both 'the Good' and 'the True' as while 'Truth' is a formal disposition that is related to the inside, 'Beauty' is a formal disposition that is related to the outside: for we habitually call that thing beautiful, which of itself possesses an ability to be perceived visually as something harmonious or becoming (*conveniens*). *352*

[346] Bonaventure, *Soul's Journey into God*, *'On Contemplating God in His Image, Reformed by the Gifts of Grace',* p. 88.
[347] Ibid., p. *86*.
[348] SH I, P1, In1, Tr3, Q3, M1, C1, Ar2 (n. 103), *Respondeo*, 162. Bychov (2021), p.118.
[349] SH II, In1, Tr2, Q3, C1 (n. 75), p. 99. Bychov. (2021), p. 119.
[350] Oleg Bychkov, *Suspended Beauty? the Mystery of Aesthetic Experience,* p. 119.
[351] Ibid.
[352] SH II, In1, Tr2, Q3, C1 (n. 75), *Respondendum*, p. 99.

The *Summa Halensis* presents the triune God as the transcendental One, the Supreme Being, and the Source of all Goodness from whom all creation emanates, offering a paradigm for plurality and relationality. Building on this inheritance, Franciscan theology locates beauty within the Trinity itself. As Kenan Osborne (2013) observes, "the uniqueness of Bonaventure's thought for Western theologians is that he conceives plurality as inter-relationality, grounded in Goodness which is diffusive of itself (*bonum est sui diffusivum*)."[353] This vision is confirmed in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, where the first name of God is Good, eternally diffusive of itself in the fecundity of Father, Son, and Spirit

Bonaventure makes explicit what is implicit in the Dionysian tradition, that beauty is inseparable from the Trinitarian self-diffusion of the Good. Because the Good radiates outward in the eternal processions of Father, Son, and Spirit, the beauty perceived in creation is nothing less than a participation in this divine fecundity. Thus, beauty becomes a metaphysical sign of the Trinity, inviting the contemplative mind to ascend from visible harmony to the eternal source of all splendour.

In his *The Soul's Journey into God (Itinerarium Mentis in Deum),* he insists that the first name of God is Good, and that this Good is self-diffusive in the triune processions. He contemplates God as 'first 'Being', and the Trinity as 'self-diffusive Good'[354] and refers to Pseudo Dionysius who affirms that 'the Good' is God's primary name,[355]. He draws inspiration from Dionysius' *Divine Names* towards his concept of God as the root of self-diffusive goodness in asserting that: - *'*Christ our teacher

[353] Kenan H. Osborne, 'Our Relational World Today: Exploring the Wisdom of St. Bonaventure', *Franciscan Studies,* (2013), pp. 511–539.
[354] Ibid., p. 103.
[355] Pseudo Dionysius, *'Divine Names'* (*De divinis nominibus*), (1920), III, 1; IV, 1.

attributed to God principally and *exclusively the name of Goodness', and* 'No one is good but God alone' *(Mk. 10: 18; Lk. 18: 19).*[356]

His principles of fecund primordiality and the self-diffusion of the Good emphasise the *emanational* mode of the divine Trinity and reveal the concept of self-diffusive goodness as the fundamental ground of Trinitarian plurality".[357] For him, the dynamic self-diffusiveness of 'the Good' can only be realised in the Trinitarian processions, and in presenting a fecund triune God Who diffuses eternal goodness and divine life into creation, [358] he reflects the Franciscan Dionysian heritage[359]: -

> They also describe it as a Trinity, for with a transcendent fecundity it is manifested as three persons. This is why all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is and is named after it. (Eph. 3:15). They call it Cause of beings since in its goodness it employed its creative power to summon all things into being.[360] We, in the diversity of what we are, are drawn together by it and are led into a godlike oneness, into a unity reflecting God.[361]

Drawing on Anselm's logic of perfection, Ewert Cousins (1978) explains, Bonaventure argues that God must contain the fullness of self-diffusion, realised in the fecundity of Father, Son, and Spirit. In this framework, the Father is the fountain-source of divine plenitude, the Son the eternal Word in whom all things are patterned, and the Spirit the bond of love consummating creation's return.[362] Beauty, therefore, is not accidental but belongs to the Trinitarian structure of reality itself.

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[356] Pseudo Dionysius, *'Divine Names'* (*De divinis nominibus*), (1920), III, 1; IV, 1.
[357] B. T. Coolman, *'Comprehensive Trinitarianism', (2020), pp.* 107–141.
[358] Bonaventure, *The Souls Journey into God, The Tree of Life, the Life of St. Francis*, (1978), p. 33.
[359] Robert W Shahan and Francis J. Kovach, eds. *Bonaventure & Aquinas, Enduring Philosophers*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), p. 16.
[360] Pseudo Dionysius, *Divine Names*, (1920), CH4, 177C 13, Ep. 8 1085D 46, Cf., The Apostolic Constitutions VIII, 12.6 (Funk 496. 22).
[361] Ibid., p. 51.
[362] Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey into God (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), trans. and intro. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 54–56.

Francis' language of devotion in his *Praises of God* (1224) is mirrored in the scholastic metaphysical vision and affirms God as the supreme and self-diffusive Good, the source and end of all beauty: -

> You are the holy Lord God Who does wonderful things. Ps 77:15 [Vulgate, Ps 76:15] a
> You are strong. You are great. Ps 86:10 [Vulgate, Ps 85:10]
> You are the Most High.
> You are the almighty king.
> You holy Father, Jn 17:11
> King of heaven and earth. Mt 11:25
> You are three and one, the Lord God of gods; Ps 136:2 [Vulgate, Ps 135:2]
> You are the good, all good, the highest good,
> Lord God living and true.[1] Thes. 1: 9.[363]

Having demonstrated how Franciscan theology unites experience, metaphysics, and devotion, and how beauty discloses the sacramentality of creation, illuminates the Good, and deepens participation in the triune God, this study now turns to Bonaventure's theme of moral goodness, where the glory of the 'Good' shapes the ethical life of the believer within the community of creation.

4.4 Moral Goodness

In the Franciscan tradition the motif of moral goodness is grounded in sacrificial Love and rooted in the First and Second Commandments. In reaching out to the Other on his spiritual journey Francis demonstrated his commitment to the First Principle in service to God and humankind. His obedience to God, and his acts of moral goodness illustrate a synergy of divine and human freedom and the will and reflect the virtue of divine humility, which is grounded in sacrificial love.

> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
> and with all your mind and with all your strength.
> The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
> There is no commandment greater than these.
> (NRSV Bible, Mk. 12: 30:3).

[363] Francis of Assisi, 'The Praises of God, and the Blessing', in FA: ED I: The Saint, p. 109.

In the Franciscan tradition, therefore, moral goodness is not an ethical achievement independent of grace but a manifestation of participation in the self-diffusive Good. Francis' acts of humility and charity are thus understood not simply as moral choices but as responses to divine initiative, revealing the integration of grace and nature in lived form. This vision reflects the Franciscan conviction that humility, poverty, simplicity (and charity) embody the moral response to God's self-diffusive Goodness, grounding ethics in the same participatory framework that informs Bonaventure's metaphysics. [364]

For Bonaventure, moral goodness is not an abstract category but the fruit of participation in divine life, expressed in right relationship with God, neighbour, and the created order. While his metaphysics is rooted in exemplarism and mystical ascent, the work of John Duns Scotus offers a more precise philosophical vocabulary for participation. [365]

Scotus's contributions clarify the ontological status of individuals and their relation to the divine, deepening the Franciscan commitment to the dignity and distinctiveness of creation. His refinements therefore do not replace Bonaventure's participatory metaphysics but specify its philosophical contours. His account of individuality, contingency, and right reason clarifies how creatures can act freely while remaining fully dependent upon the divine Goodness that sustains their being.[366]

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[364] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), I.1–3; Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. by Dominic Monti (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), II.12; Ilia Delio, *Franciscan Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2004), pp. 11–15.

[365] Ibid.

[366] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3; *Ordinatio*, I, d. 39; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 42–56; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 67–89; Antonie Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 112–30.

4.4.1 Freedom and the Affections of the Will

In the Franciscan tradition, freedom is not defined primarily as autonomy or self-determination but as the will's capacity to love rightly, ordered toward God, neighbour, and creation. Bonaventure understands freedom as the fruit of participation in divine Goodness, expressed through humility and charity. His metaphysical framework in the thirteenth century was shaped by exemplarism, sacramentality, and the relational structure of creation. For him, the moral life is inseparable from humility and charity, which reflect the believer's conformity to Christ.[367]

While building on this foundation, in the thirteenth century, John Duns Scotus developed a more precise moral framework in which right action and right reason are rooted in freedom and the will. Nevertheless, he remained committed to many of Bonaventure's theological aims: to uphold the integrity of creation, to affirm divine immanence and transcendence, and to preserve the participatory character of metaphysical reflection.

Scotus's account grounds moral agency in the Incarnation, the supreme revelation of God's love, which orientates the believer's will towards God's Goodness**.** For him, moral action is intelligible only within a participatory ontology in which freedom is ordered toward the divine Good. This ensures that Franciscan moral ethics remains inseparable from metaphysics: the will's capacity for love reflects its grounding in God's infinite freedom.[368]

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[367] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. by Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), I.1–3; Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. by Dominic Monti (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), II.12; cf. Ilia Delio, *Franciscan Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media,
2004), pp. 11–15.

[368] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 6; *Ordinatio*, I, d. 17; *Ordinatio*, III, d. 7; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 97–118; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 153–72.

Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ., *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord, Beauty in The Franciscan Tradition* (2017), asserts that the incarnation, which reflects God's 'Freedom and Will' grounded in love, is the cornerstone of Scotus' metaphysical moral framework, and she affirms that Scotus 'places his emphasis on the importance of divine and human freedom to reflect his own sacramental and artistic vision'.[369] Ingham (2009), further asserts that Scotus' notion of freedom is linked to the ability to love God and neighbour (the First Principle), through which he reframes the moral journey to emphasise love and divine freedom as grounded in God's Humility and Free Will.[370]

Therefore, Franciscan theology unites metaphysics, and ethics and moral goodness flows from participation in the self-diffusive Good, being embodied in humility, poverty, and charity, and finds its fulfilment in love of God, neighbour, and the created order. Thus, moral goodness in the Franciscan tradition flows from participation in the divine life, uniting metaphysics, spirituality, and ethics in a single vision grounded in humility, sacrificial love, and the overflowing Goodness of God.

Allan B. Wolter, *Scotus, A Treatise of God as First Principle* (1966), affirms that Scotus situates the Incarnation within the context of creation as God's *summum opus Dei,* a gift of grace that reflects both divine and human freedom, and the infinite love of the triune God.[371] Within the Franciscan framework, the relationship between divine freedom and human freedom is never competitive. Rather, the creature's freedom participates in and reflects the generous self-communication of the divine will, grounding moral action in a relational ontology rather than in autonomous self-determination.

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[369] Mary E., Ingham, CSJ., *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord, Beauty in The Franciscan Tradition*, (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2009), p. 32.

[370] Ibid.

[371] Scotus, *A Treatise of God as First Principle*, trans. and ed. by Allan B. Wolter (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), p. xvii.

For Scotus, it is the absolute freedom of God, who calls Creation into 'being' as an expression of His love and His divine Will, and he asserts that 'knowledge of the divine is dependent upon divine and human freedom and the will which is central to self-gift and commitment to an 'Other' in love (*firmitas*).'[372] Dawn Nothwehr, OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person,* (2005), notes that for Scotus, the ability to act freely forms the cornerstone of his moral thought. The will, rather than the intellect, is the rational power capable of self-restraint, drawn toward the Good. She adds that Scotus identifies moral 'beauty' (*pulchrum*) with the morally good act, linked to a 'harmony of circumstances' under the direction of right reason and right action, reflecting God's design for human life in relationship with Him and others.[373]

The Franciscan tradition inherits from Augustine the doctrine of free will (*liberum arbitrium*), understood as the will's orientation to the Good. Anselm develops and elaborates on this further, insisting that sin is not an exercise of freedom,[374] but its diminishment, since true freedom is ordered to rectitude and righteousness.[375] On this basis, Anselm concludes that free will can only will what is good, that is, "free will can only will to preserve the rectitude, justice or righteousness of the will, for its own sake."[376] This inheritance provides Scotus with the foundation for articulating a uniquely Franciscan account of freedom: one in which the will is most itself when ordered toward the Good, and in which moral agency emerges from a participation in divine rectitude rather than from sheer autonomy.

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[372] Mary E. Ingham, CSJ, 'The Subtle Doctor', *Franciscan Institute Podcast*, hosted by the Franciscan Institute (Franciscan Institute Publications, 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWnYzlvo_hQ> [accessed 2 November 2020].

[373] Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF, The Franciscan View of the Human Person: in Duns Scotus and John Paul II (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), pp. 78-82.

[374] Anselm, *De libero arbitrio 1.*

[375] Anselm, *De libero arbitrio* 3, 10.

[376] Ibid., 13.

Scotus draws on Augustine's *De Trinitate IX* to affirm that human knowledge of God is contingent upon the divine Will, he describes this as a mutual relational interaction in which both the will of God and the human will are engaged.[377] He also draws inspiration from the works of Augustine, in his *Quodlibetal Questions on God and Creatures,* in which he claims that 'nothing is so in the power of the will as the will itself'.[378]

Building on this inheritance, Scotus argued that freedom involves multiple options at the very moment of choice, and that the key to right reason and right action lies in harmony between the two affections of the will. [379] For Scotus, this harmony reflects the creature's participatory orientation toward God: the affection for advantage expresses the creature's natural desire for flourishing, while the affection for justice orders the will toward the Good for its own sake, mirroring divine love. Freedom therefore consists not merely in choice, but in the will's capacity to participate in God's own rectitude.[380]

As Mary Beth Ingham (2017) explains, Scotus' account of the affections of the will underpins his understanding of freedom as rational and moral living. Unlike Aquinas, who identified the will with the intellectual appetite, Scotus saw the will as a distinct rational power with the capacity for self-restraint. Thomas Williams *John Duns Scotus* (2019) observes that Scotus' account of the two affections of the will was developed in response to Aquinas' claim that the intellectual appetite and the will were identical. Williams notes that for Scotus, the intellectual appetite was only one of the two

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377 *Augustine De Trinitate* IX, 14.15.

378 Scotus, *Quodlibetal* Questions 16.16-17, God and Creatures: 373.

379 Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, d. 6, q. 2; 2, d. 39, q. 2; 3, d. 17, q. un.; and 3, d. 26, q. un.

380 John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 6; *Ordinatio*, III, d. 17; Anselm of Canterbury, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 233–46; Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, II; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 113–34; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 161–78.

fundamental inclinations of the will and affirms that Scotus didn't consider that the intellectual appetite was genuinely free.[381]

Ingham (2017) notes, that Scotus' claim that 'the will is the total cause of its own actions' marked a decisive development in Franciscan thought and it is the two affections of the will that hold the key to Scotus' understanding of freedom of the will through rational behaviour and moral living.[382] Scotus considered the will to have rational power and the capacity for self-restraint, unlike the appetite of the intellect. In his *Reportatio II*, Scotus sets out this vision in full, presenting freedom as rational and moral living grounded in the harmony of the will's affections. [383]

Thus, Scotus's analyses of the affections of the will unfolded within a broader participatory metaphysics in which human agency reflects and responds to divine goodness, and moral freedom is not self-generated but emerges from the creature's relational dependence upon and orientation toward God. In this way, Scotus deepened the Franciscan moral vision while safeguarding the participatory character of human agency, grounding moral goodness in a free and loving orientation toward God, neighbour, and the created order.

4.4.2 Voluntarism

Having demonstrated how Scotus's account of freedom and the affections of the will deepened the Franciscan moral vision, this study turns to the theme of voluntarism. While Scotus' emphasis on the primacy of the will has often been interpreted as an arbitrary voluntarism, his account is more subtle, grounding the will's freedom in love

[381] Thomas Williams, ed., *John Duns Scotus: selected writings on ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[382] M. E. Ingham, CSJ., *Understanding John Duns Scotus, Of Realty the Rarest Veined Unraveller,* (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2017), pp. 83–96.

[383] John Duns Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis II*, d. 25, q. un., n. 41, in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, trans. Allan B. Wolter, ed. William A. Frank (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), p. 188.

and participation in the divine Good. To appreciate Scotus's position, it is important to distinguish his account from later developments in the thought of William of Ockham, which Radical Orthodoxy often conflates with the Franciscan tradition.

For Scotus, the primacy of the will does not imply arbitrary decision-making but reflects the will's capacity to love the Good for its own sake. His voluntarism is therefore relational and participatory, grounded in the will's orientation toward divine goodness, whereas Ockham's later account emphasises divine power and absolute command. Distinguishing these positions is essential for an accurate reading of the Franciscan tradition.[384]

In the *Summa Halensis*, scholars assert that free will is comprised of both reason and the will, which is *arbitrium* according to reason and *liberum* according to will and cannot be reduced to one without the other.[385] Nevertheless, the *Summa's* main source of inspiration was the work of Alexander of Hales whose extensive writings on the definition of free will supported the concept of voluntarism, and this would become the defining feature supported by the Franciscan School, from which Duns Scotus drew inspiration.[386]

This early Franciscan synthesis of intellect and will establishes a framework in which freedom is understood neither as pure rational determination nor as unrestrained choice, but as the harmonious cooperation of reason and will participating in the divine Good. Scotus develops this insight further by emphasising that the will's freedom is rooted in its orientation toward justice and love, rather than indifference.

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[384] See Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Oakham* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), pp. 109-115; cf. Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 82-88.

[385] SH II, In4, Tr1, S2, Q3, T3, C3, Ar4 (n. 401), *Respondeo* 1, 478. Schumacher (2021), p. 147.

[386] Lydia A. Schumacher ed. *The Legacy of Early Franciscan Thought*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), p. 131.

The early Franciscan view concerning voluntarism affirms that all human beings have an innate knowledge of the 'highest Good' that gives them equal access in principle to the knowledge of what is good to do and ultimately God, *ergo,* they have the freedom to choose without any compulsion between good and evil however, their inclination with knowledge of the 'Highest Good' is to make choices in favour of the Good.[387] Lydia Schumacher (2021), cites Oden Lottin *(Psychologie et morale),* who observes that for the medieval scholars, free will has two stages, namely deliberation and choice.

In its first stage, free will judges what to do according to the moral law and secondly it chooses, and in this sense, it can become released from the law to do as it pleases.[388] Yet for Franciscan thinkers, this release does not signify moral autonomy detached from God's goodness; rather, it indicates the will's capacity to choose the Good freely, with deliberation illuminating the moral law and choice enabling participation in divine rectitude. Freedom is therefore fulfilled, not negated, when the will aligns itself with the Highest Good.

In the Franciscan tradition the attributes of humility, poverty and simplicity are not merely reflections of a moral ideal, they are deeply entwined with the theological and metaphysical orientation of early Franciscan scholars and form the epistemic and ontological grounding to Franciscan reflections on freedom, will, relationality and moral goodness. In this way, Franciscan voluntarism reveals a profoundly participatory vision of moral life, in which freedom is exercised not in isolation but in relational openness to the divine Good, and the will's choices become expressions of humility and love and point to the sanctified ordering of creation.

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[387] Lydia *A* Schumacher*, ed. The Summa Halensis*: *Doctrines and Debates*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), '*Free Will*', p. 149.

[388] Lottin, Odon, *Psychologie et morale*, vol. 1., pp. 140–49: in Lydia Schumacher, ed. *The Summa Halensis: Doctrines and Debates on Free Will*, 2020.

4.5 Moral Being and Dignity.

Building on the preceding analysis, this section turns to the Franciscan account of *moral being* and *dignity* and its metaphysical foundation. In the *Summa Halensis*, Alexander of Hales introduced a new and influential concept of *person*, defined within an ontological framework as *moral being* (esse morale), distinct from *natural being* (esse naturale) and *rational being* (esse rationis).[389] For Hales, the dignity of the person is grounded in this moral being: a person is a being of freedom, uniquely marked by the *proprietas* of dignity, reflecting Christ as the Exemplar of moral being.[390] The *Summa Halensis* describes the 'person' as a subsistence:

> A subsistence which is signified by the property of dignity, the incommunicable existence, which is based on certain individualising elements, presupposing the nature, therefore every person is a hypostasis, not the other way around.[391]

Theo Kobusch *Towards a New Concept of Person*, *The Summa Halensis, Doctrines and Debates,* (2020), argues that the historical significance of Hales' concept of person "cannot be estimated highly enough," as it inaugurated a new domain of moral being which shaped medieval and post-medieval thought as '*the being of freedom or will*'.[392]

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[389] Theo Kobush, 'Towards a New Concept of Person', in Lydia Schumacher *ed. The Summa Halensis: Doctrines and Debates*, pp. 162–167.

[390] Ibid.

[391] Alexander of Hales, Glossa III, d. 6, n. 13, 3:78: '*Nota quod persona est hypostasis distincta per Proprietatem dignitatis; hypostasis est exsistentia incommunicabilis ex quibuscumque individuantibus supposita essentia. Unde omnis persona est hypostasis, et non convertitur (n. 32),* in *Kobush (2020),* p. 163.

[392] Bonaventure, *Commentaria* in quatuor *libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* (here- after, In Sent.), II, d. 25, p. 1, a. 1, q. 5, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia,* 10 vols (*Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventurae,* 1882–1902), 2:602., in Kobush (2020), p. 163.

Within the Franciscan framework, the notion of moral being is inseparable from participation. To be a person is not merely to possess rational or natural being, but to exist in relational openness to God, grounded in freedom and oriented toward the Good. Dignity, therefore, is not an external attribute but the metaphysical expression of one's participation in the divine Exemplar.

Allan B. Wolter shows that Hales situates the person in an ontological context in which moral being is 'a being of Truth', not an *ens rationis*, as in some Averoistic readings of Aristotelianism, nor a construct of human thought. Moral being is the *res*, the 'truth of the matter,' convertible with being and marked by dignity. This aligns the Franciscan account of personhood with the transcendental structure of reality as explored earlier.

Wolter argues that Hales places the person in an ontological context as for him moral being, a being of Truth, not a thing of thought (*ens rationis*), as in the Averoistic translation of Aristotelian theories, and not a result of human thought, as it is the '*truth of the matter'* (*res)* which is also *within the matter* and can thereby be grasped by the intellect".[393] For him, this reveals the meaning of the transcendental determination of that which is true, as that which is marked out by dignity and is convertible with being.[394]

In the Franciscan tradition, such dignity is not abstract but metaphysically secured through participation. Within this framework, three interrelated strands unfold:

I) the unique 'thisness' (*haecceitas*) of each created being;

II) a shared grammar of intelligibility enabling discourse about God and creatures;

III) the contingency of creation grounded in the freedom of God.

[393] Allan B. Wolter in Theo Kobush, '*Towards a New Concept of Person'*, pp. 162–167.
[394] Ibid., p. 160.

These strands form the metaphysical foundation upon which Scotus constructs his mature account of moral being.[395] Together with his account of right reason and right action, Scotus' innovative concepts of *haecceitas*, univocity, and contingency articulate and clarify the ontological status of individuals and their relation to the divine, deepening the Franciscan commitment to the dignity and distinctiveness of creation.

4.5.1 Haecceitas (Individuation)

Scotus develops his Franciscan insight by grounding dignity not only in moral being but also in the singularity of each created reality. His innovative concept of Haecceitas focuses on the individual person in relation to God through his theories of **'**Contingency' (relationality), and 'Individuation' (individuality and uniqueness). He grounds his theories in the dignity of the individual and expands upon Alexander of Hales' new concept of person in the development of his concept of *Haecceitas,* towards a being of freedom and uniqueness, an individual who has his or her own identity and dignity, something essential which cannot be shared with anything else.

> The uniqueness, the unrepeatable something of all things, is what gives them their intrinsic and eternal value. There is about everything, every person, an originality that gives new insight into reality, another aspect that has never been seen before. Each person enters into a new enriching relationship of knowledge and love with every new person met, with every new thing encountered.*[396]*

Kenan Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (2003), asserts that Scotus reveals a deeper dimension of creation in ascribing a unique value to each individual created by God in his philosophical principle of *Haecceitas* or Individuation.[397] Osborne

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[395] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3 (on *haecceitas*); *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3 (on univocity as the condition for intelligible discourse); *Ordinatio*, I, d. 39 (on contingency and divine freedom); Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 45–72, 97–118; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 36–58.

[396] Scotus, *De Docrina* I., Vol III, *Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis Oxonnii et Edimburgi, ed., Camille Berube, (Roma Cura Commissionis Scotisticae,* 1968), p. 460.

[397] Kenan B. Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, p. 67.

avers Scotus' philosophical foundation for all realities reveals the dignity of God's creation, and points to the ineffable, or sacredness within each being, and he asserts that his concept of *Haecceitas* reflects the ultimate reality of being and he ascribes a unique value to each. [398]

Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus, Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation (1992),* affirms that, rather than taking the position offered by Aquinas and Aristotle in defining a human being as a rational animal, Scotus' doctrine of Haecceitas affords each individual person a unique value as one singularly wanted and loved by God.[399] Daniel Horan, OFM., (2014), suggests that 'Scotus relocates human value and dignity from *essential substantia* or 'nature' to a place of 'particularity' in his concept of 'Haecceity''.[400] asserts that Scotus grounds his theory in individual inner beauty or goodness and places primacy on the individual, while recognizing the inherent relationality of being in the community of creation, by virtue of the *natura communis* on the one hand, and by the more expansive presupposition of being on the other hand.[401]

Ilio Delio, *A Franciscan View of Creation* (2003), affirms, the term *Haecceitas* derives from the Latin term *'Haec',* and expresses the dignity and uniqueness of each person in creation, and humankind as uniquely God's in mutual relationship,[402] and Scotus' concept refers to that positive dimension of every contingent being which identifies it and makes it worthy of attention.[403]

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[398] Antonie Vos, 'John Duns Scotus: An Anthropology of Dignity and Love,' in *Words Made Flesh: Essays Honouring Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M.,* ed. by Joseph P. Chinnici (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications: 2011), p. 163.

[399] Allan B Wolter, *Duns Scotus, Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation* (Santa Barbara CA: Old Mission, (1992), p. xxvii.

[400] Daniel P. Horan OFM., Beyond Essentialism and complimentarily: Toward a Theological Anthropology Rooted in Haecceitas, *Theological Studies*, 2014, Vol. 75(1), pp. 94–117.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ilia Delio, CSF., *A Franciscan View of Creation, Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*, (2003), p.35.

[403] M. B. Ingham, CSJ., *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus,* (New York: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications 2012), p. 34.

For Scotus, it is Haecceity that makes a singular thing unique and differentiates it from its commonality, as it contracts the indifference of the specific nature to just one unique individual.[404] In his *Ordinatio II*, he asserts that in those beings which are highest and most important, it is the individual that is primarily intended by God and each individual holds inestimable value.[405] In this way, Haecceitas does not merely describe individuality but grounds a participatory metaphysics in which each singular being manifests a unique mode of divine presence. The dignity of the person is therefore not generic but concrete, reflecting the irreducible particularity through which God's creative love is expressed.[406]

> The doctrine of haecceity invests each human person with a unique value as one singularly wanted and loved by God, quite apart from any trait the person shares with others or any contribution he or she might make to society. One could even say, haecceity is our personal gift from God. [407]

In his *Ordinatio* II t Scotus affirms that Haecceitas emphasises the ineffable value of each contingent being and reveals the substrate at the heart of a relationship between creature and creature,[408] which links Love to Beauty and views the dignity of each individual in creation as a thing of indescribable Beauty. His focus on the principle of uniqueness or singularity in each individual being is the ultimate expression of the individual who is 'this' form, 'this' matter and 'this' composite,[409] and he affirms that in those beings which are highest and most important, it is the individual that is primarily intended by God.[410] Eric Doyle, OFM., suggests that the principle of Haecceitas provides

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[404] Allan B., Wolter, trans. Duns Scotus, *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, p. 90.
[405] Scotus, Ordinatio II, d. 3, q. 7, n. 251 (Vatican 7: 514).
[406] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3; *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 45–56, 97–103; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 36–44.
[407] Ibid.
[408] Scotus, Ordinatio II, d. 3, q. 7, n. 251 (Vatican 7: 514).
[409] Scotus, Ordinatio II. d.3, q.5-6, n.187 (Vatican 7: 483).
[410] Scotus, Ordinatio II, d.3.q.7, n.251 (Vatican 7: 514).

the philosophical foundation for all created realities being specified (as specific entities), as it makes a singular thing what it is, and differentiates it from all other things common to it by which it may be compared. [411]

Dawn Nothwehr, OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person* (2005), asserts that Scotus' thought, towards a deeper understanding of Christian humanism, is rooted in the Incarnation, which is central to his vision, together with his recognition of the Trinity as the basis on which he builds his image of the human person, human life, and the call to be more like God.[412] Nothwehr (2005) further affirms that for Scotus, the created order is not best understood as a transparent medium through which a divine light shines (as Aquinas taught) but is itself endowed with an inner light that shines forth from within, an immanent dignity gifted by the loving Creator.[413]

For Scotus, the unrepeatability of an individual existence reveals the manifold truth that each instance of creation or everything that exists is individually and freely willed into existence by God. Daniel Horan, OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity* (2014), affirms that Scotus situates his notion of Haecceity within his concept of the Univocity of Being which sets the foundation for ontological enquiry or metaphysical explication, as for him, the concept of person is relational and ontological.[414] Horan (2014) asserts that Scotus grounds his theory in individual inner beauty or goodness and places primacy on the individual, while recognizing the inherent relationality of being in the community of creation, by virtue of the *natura communis* on the one hand, and the more expansive presupposition of Being on the other hand.[415]

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411 Eric Doyle, OFM., Duns Scotus and Ecumenism, *De Doctrina* I. *Duns Scoti* 3: pp. 633–652.
412 Ibid.
413 Dawn M Nothwehr, OSF*., The Franciscan View of the Human Person*, p. 48.
414 Daniel P. Horan, OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), pp. 157–188.
415 Ibid.

Scotus' innovative concept of Haecceitas underscores a metaphysics of particularity which is linked to the experience of divine Beauty. He proposes that Beauty is reflected by each person through an inner individual Beauty' in creation.[416] Rather than diluting divine transcendence, this account clarifies how participation preserves it, since created beings participate in the divine not through abstract categories but through their concrete, singular existence.

This reinforces the Franciscan emphasis on humility, relationality, and the distinct presence of God in all creation; by affirming the irreducible singularity (haecceitas) of each being, Scotus provides a metaphysical foundation for recognising the dignity of the individual. This vision not only safeguards creation's diversity but also grounds a theological anthropology in which the Other is encountered as a unique site of potential divine presence, a principle of profound significance for interfaith dialogue.

4.5.2 A Univocity of Being

In contrast to Scotus' doctrine of Haecceitas, his innovative concept of a Univocity of Being secures a shared framework of intelligibility, enabling both divine and created being to be spoken of together without collapsing their ontological difference. Far from erasing divine transcendence, univocity functions as a grammar of being that sustains relational participation, making possible a metaphysical vision in which God and creation can be meaningfully related without confusion or reduction.

[416] Nothwehr, Dawn M. OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person*, p. 48.

Daniel Horan OFM., (2014) asserts Scotus establishes his concept as the logical presupposition of analogy, as for him, there is always some univocal notion of 'being' that is present and presupposed in any natural knowledge of God.[417] Scotus himself affirms: -

> I say that God is thought of not only in some concept analogous to that of a creature, that is, one entirely different from what is predicated of a creature, but also in some concept univocal to himself and to a creature.[418]

Scotus' aim is not to diminish the distance between Creator and creation but to secure the conceptual ground for participation. Univocity allows theology to speak truthfully about God without collapsing categories, ensuring that metaphysical discourse remains coherent while safeguarding divine transcendence. This formulation has often been misread as collapsing Creator and creation into sameness, yet his intention is precisely the opposite.

Rather than collapsing Creator and creation into sameness, Scotus' univocity functions as a grammar of being that preserves divine transcendence while enabling relational participation, allowing God and creation to be spoken of within a common framework without erasing their ontological distinction.

E. J. Ashworth, *Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy* (1991), affirms that in his early logical commentaries, Scotus argued it was impossible to have two concepts of being that were related in a prior and posterior way, in the same way it was impossible to have a single concept that captured such a relationship.[419] However, he did argue for a metaphysical analogy whereby God and creatures were related in a prior and posterior way, and his

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[417] Daniel P Horan, OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity*, p. 130.

[418] Scotus, *Lectura 1,* dist. 3, pars 1, q. 1-2, No. 113 (Vatican 16: 266).

[419] Ashworth E. J., 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth Century Logic: A preface to Aquinas on analogy,' in *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 1 (1991), pp. 39-67.

theological works went on to argue that without a unified concept of being', neither metaphysics nor theology would be possible.[420]

Kenan Osborne OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (2003), notes that Scotus' *Commentary on the Sentences* (*Reportatio*) reveals his deep concern regarding the human ability to come to a knowledge of God, a theme he develops further in *On the Being of God and God's Unity*' (*De Esse Dei et Deius Unitate*), and later in his *Treatise on God as First Principle*.[421] Richard Cross (1999), affirms that in Scotus' notion of univocity the incarnation becomes the motif of creation, expressing the way God's being and created beings are related through the one concept of being. [422]

Osborne (2003) posits that 'the Univocity of Being', was the first step in Scotus' theory on how humans come to know about God as 'the First Principle'.[423] Ilia Delio CSF., *A Franciscan View of Creation, Learning to Live in a Sacramental World* (2003), asserts that Scotus' concept of a Univocity of Being reflects the influence of Pseudo Dionysius and the Medieval Transcendentals.[424]

> This – the One, the Good, the Beautiful – is in the uniqueness,
> The Cause of the multitudes of the good and the beautiful.
> From it derives the existence of everything as beings
> what they have in common and what differentiates them,
> their identicalness and differences, their similarities and dissimilarities…
> Hence, the interrelationship of all things in accordance with capacity…….
> Hence the harmony and the love which are formed between them
> But which do not obliterate identity.
> Hence the innate togetherness of everything*'.*
> **Pseudo Dionysius, Divine Names** *[425]*

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[420] Ashworth E. J., 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth Century Logic: A preface to Aquinas on analogy,' *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 1 (1991), pp. 39–67.

[421] Kenan B. Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing its Origins*, p. 58; John Duns Scotus, *Treatise on God as First Principle*, trans. by Allan B. Wolter (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), p. 45.

[422] Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 33–9; Cf., Cyril L. Shircel, *The Univocity of the Concept of Being in the Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1942); Ilia Delio, *A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*, p. 53.

[423] Kenan B Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing its Origins*, p. 58.

[424] Delio, Ilio CSF., *A Franciscan View of Creation, Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*, p. 35.

[425] Pseudo Dionysius, *Divine Names,* 704B/704C.

In his *Reportatio* (1A), Scotus avers that humankind can gain a knowledge of God apart from or prior to revelation through a process of metaphysics and the study of transcendentals,[426] (which naturally infers the existence of God), and he argues that of all the transcendental attributes, being is the primary and most basic transcendental.[427] His use of the transcendentals allowed for a metaphysical exploration of his theories through analogy and served to expound his concepts. Nevertheless, for Scotus, the unrepeatability of an individual existence reveals the manifold truth that each instance of creation, or everything that exists, is individually and freely willed into existence by God.[428]

Daniel Horan OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity,* suggests that Scotus' concept of the Univocity of Being sets the foundation for ontological enquiry or metaphysical explication, as for him, the concept of person is relational and ontological.[*429*] Mary Beth Ingham, *Ethics and Freedom: An Historical Critical Investigation of Scotist Ethical Thought* (1989), asserts that Scotus draws mutuality from divine revelation through which he defines his metaphysical commitment to the Univocity of Being, or the common factor of beingness found in all that exists.[430] Ingham, *Understanding John Duns Scotus (*2017*),* further asserts that Scotus' definition of a Univocity of Being is the relationship of (all) beings to the One, the True and the Good in terms that stress unity, *ergo*, beingness = Univocity of Being (*univocus:* uni = one + *Voc* or vox = voice)".[431]

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[426] Scotus, *Reportio*,1A, prol, q. 3, no. 218. Also in *John Duns Scotus, The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture*: *Reportatio* 1A, ed., Allan B. Wolter and Oleg Bychkov, 2 vols., (New York: St. Bonaventure University Press, 2004-07), Vol 1, pp. 76–77.

[427] Scotus, Ordinatio I., dist. 8, pars 1, q. 3, no. 115 (Vatican 4: 206-7).

[428] Ibid.

[429] D. P. Horan OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity*, pp. 157–188.

[430] Scotus, *Tractatus de primo principio, I.8, Pars I, q.3.n.*89 (IV, 195.16-18), trans. Mary E. Ingham CSJ., *Ethics and Freedom: An Historical Critical Investigation of Scotist Ethical Thought* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1989), p. 20.

[431] Mary E. Ingham., CSJ., *Understanding John Duns Scotus*, 2017.

Univocity therefore secures a grammar of being that allows God and creation to be spoken of together intelligibly, without collapsing their difference

4.5.3 A Franciscan Medieval Synthesis: A Unique Contingency

Bonaventure's exemplarist vision views everything in creation and everything in the universe as ordered to one another and ordered toward a final mutual goal.[432] For him, the created universe reflects God's fecundity and goodness and all created things through the Word made flesh and he ascribes the Son as the archetype of all creation, and the link between divinity and creation being grounded in Him as its eternal Exemplar.[433] His *Breviloquium*, sets out his concept of the order created by God out of nothing (*ex nhilo*) with precision, and asserts that creation is not eternal but has a defined beginning and end, a finite creation ordered by an infinite God.[434]

Alexander Schaeffer, *The Position and Function of Man in the Created World According to Bonaventure* (1960) avers that Bonaventure's thought centres on divine-human relationality and his contemplation on the 'Beauty' of creation which is reflected in order and harmony.[435] Bonaventure's *Collations* present his metaphysics of mutuality as essentially grounded in relationship and his work is concerned with the relationship between God and the created world, which is exemplified by the Trinity, a paradigm for a community of relationships out of which creation emerges.[436] Bonaventure's doctrine of Creation asserts that all things emanate from and are dependent upon the sustaining love of God,[437] and he affirms the contingency of the created order, and God's freedom to create.[438]

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[432] Bonaventure, *I Sent.* d. 47, a. u. 3, conc. (I, 844a-b).
[433] Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, I, 12-17 (V, 331-332).
[434] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium,* 2.1 (V, 219).
[435] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God (Itinerarium Mentis in Deum),* 14–15, 65–68.
[436] Alexander Schaeffer, the Position and Function of Man in the Created World According to Bonaventure, '*Franciscan Studies* 20 (1960), 266–67.
[437] Bonaventure, *Collations*, 11.11.15, q. 2, Concl.
[438] Bonaventure, *Collations*, 11.11.

Lydia Schumacher, *Commentaria, liber primus* (2009) affirms that Bonaventure's radically contingent notions are set out in his metaphysics of 'emanation, exemplarity and consummation',[439] in which he metaphorically refers to his concept of emanation and exemplarity as a circle, with God the Father at the centre, Who radiates eternal reasons or exemplars to the Son Who is the locus of the divine exemplars.[440]

Bonaventure's doctrine of Exemplarism reflects his neo-platonic influences and affirms that everything has its beginning in archetypes in the divine mind, particularly in the Word of God,[441] and everything in creation has its exemplar in the Word who became flesh as the model and exemplar of all things. [442] For Bonaventure, the divine ideas are one with the essence of God, and their instantiation by the Son makes God immediately present in creation. He emphasises the dynamic involvement of the divine in creation and asserts that it is God Who sustains being and affirms the radical contingency of creation, because all things depend on God's sustaining love.[443]

Here contingency becomes the horizon of participation: all being is gift, all existence arises from divine freedom, and every creature remains ordered toward its source. Bonaventure's exemplarism and Scotus' metaphysics converge in affirming that creation's dependency is not a deficiency but the condition of relational communion with God.

[439] Bonaventure, *Collations*, 2.17.
[440] *Commentaria, liber primus,* 6.3, Schumacher (2009), p. 174.
[441] Bonaventure, *I Sent.* d. 35. A. u. q. 2 (I, 605); Hex. 1.13 (V, 331); Hex. 3.4 (V, 343).
[442] Ibid.
[443] Bonaventure, *I Sent.* d. 35. A. u. q. 2 (I, 605); Hex. 1.13 (V, 331); Hex. 3.4 (V, 343).

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ., *Integrated Vision, The History of Franciscan Theology* (2017), asserts that for Bonaventure, the Incarnation is a paradigm for divine-human mutuality, with Christ as the very person in whom this is achieved".[444] Bonaventure affirms that 'in his transfiguration, Christ shares existence with all things and in His human nature He embraces something of every creature in Himself,'[445] and for him, this reveals the contingency of all beings, leading back to God in an inter-relational network of mutuality, as the whole of creation comes from God, reflects His glory, and is intended to return to Him.[446]

Scotus rearticulates this vision by emphasising the distinct presence of each being (haecceitas) and the intelligibility of discourse about God and creatures (univocity), while grounding both in the contingency of created being. Read within the Dionysian horizon, contingency presupposes the one God who freely communicates being; multiplicity proceeds from and returns to the divine source while preserving real distinction and moral responsibility. His theological and philosophical concepts are grounded in Love as First Principle towards his notion of a contingent relationality with God and neighbours in the community of creation; he sets his concept of moral goodness within the larger frame of beauty and harmony at the heart of reality in association with the First Principle, God is to be loved, a self-evident truth which Scotus affirms, as if God exists, then God is to be loved.[447]

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[444] Mary Beth Ingham, *An Integrated Vision: The History of Franciscan Theology* (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2017), pp. 63–78; Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. by Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), I–II; Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. By Dominic Monti (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), II.12; John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3; I, d. 39; Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, IV.

[445] Zachary Hayes trans., Bonaventure, *Sero I Dom. II in Quad* (IX, 215-219), Christ, Word of God, and Exemplar of Humanity, *The Chord,* 46.1 (1996), p. 13.

[446] Jose de Vinck trans. Bonaventure, *Commentarius in Librum Ecclesiastes* 1.7 (V.13b); Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* (Brev.) 2.11.2., trans., Breviloquium, Vol 2, Works of Bonaventure (Paterson NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), p. 101; Ilio Delio, OSF., *A Franciscan View of Creation*, p. 23.

[447] Scotus, *Ordinatio III*, d. 37, unica, n. 5, (Will and Morality: 202); Ingham, *Understanding John Duns Scotus*, 2017, pp. 112–124.

Scotus links mutuality with a comprehensive relationality, as for him, mutuality between God and humankind is a freely chosen act initiated by God, foreseen from all eternity, and he draws divine mutuality from divine revelation which discloses relationality through the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the *Imago Dei*.[448] For him, contingency affirms both divine freedom and created openness, situating being within a dynamic relation of dependence and possibility.[449]

This establishes the metaphysical grammar for ethical participation, where dignity is upheld in each singular person, relationality is safeguarded by a shared intelligibility, and moral agency is grounded in freedom, ordered to the good. For Scotus, the summit of creation is the communion of all persons with one another and with one God,[450] and he proposes a paradigm of mutuality through his concept of a Univocity of Being,[451] which he presents within his ethical framework which emphasises a commitment towards essential order, moral goodness, and a harmony of circumstances, under the direction of right reason.[452]

While Scotus affirms the integrity of both metaphysics and theology as paths that lead to knowledge of God, his vision reflects a distinctly theological orientation. His metaphysical precision, shaped in part by his training in logic, is not an abstract exercise, but one subordinated to the broader theological aim of understanding divine Being, love, and moral order. In this light, the Franciscan tradition offers not a dualism of

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[448] Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person, p.* 45.

[449] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, d. 39 (on contingency and divine freedom); *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3 (on intelligibility and univocity); *Ordinatio*, II, d. 6 (on freedom and moral agency); Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 97–118; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 153–72.

[450] Mary E. Ingham, CSJ., *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus,* The Franciscan Heritage Series (New York: St. Bonaventure University, 2012), p. 40.

[451] Scotus, *Tractatus de primo principio*, I.8, Pars I, q.3.n.89; trans. M. E. Ingham CSJ., *Ethics and Freedom: An Historical Critical Investigation of Scotist Ethical Thought* (Lanham, DD: University Press of America, 1989), p. 20.

[452] Mary E. Ingham, CSJ., *Understanding John Duns Scotus,* pp. 112–124.

disciplines, but an integrated vision in which theology and metaphysics are mutually enriching yet always ordered to the primacy of divine revelation.

While Bonaventure's participatory metaphysics are rooted in divine exemplarism and a hierarchical vision of illumination, Scotus introduces a more individuated and voluntarist framework. His metaphysical emphasis on contingency, haecceity, and univocity reflects a shift away from cosmic participation toward a metaphysics of distinct presence and freedom. While both thinkers affirm creation's capacity to reflect the divine, Scotus's approach reconfigures the mode of that participation, locating it more firmly in the will and the particularity of each created being.

In contrast to Radical Orthodoxy's concern that the univocity of being collapses the distinction between God and creation, Scotus's account safeguards divine transcendence while allowing for genuine metaphysical participation, while affirming a participatory epistemology in which knowledge is not autonomous but received in relation to the divine source. Ergo, the doctrine of Univocity, properly understood, does not subvert theological hierarchy but preserves the very conditions for encounter between Creator and creation.

The metaphysical systems of Bonaventure and Scotus thus sustain a Christocentric framework in which grace and nature are not opposed but mutually illuminating. Participation is not merely a conceptual category, it is the ontological ground of encounter, transformation, and, ultimately, interfaith engagement.

Scotus's doctrines of *haecceitas*, univocity, and contingency form a coherent metaphysical vision that both extends and reconfigures the Franciscan tradition. *Haecceitas* safeguards individuality and grounds a theological anthropology in which each person is encountered as a unique site of divine presence. Univocity secures a

shared grammar of intelligibility, preserving divine transcendence while enabling creation to participate meaningfully in the divine order.

For Scotus, contingency affirms that all being flows from divine freedom, and he situates being within a dynamic relation of dependence and embedding creation within a relational matrix of responsibility and moral orientation. Far from collapsing God and creation, Scotus' metaphysics holds them in dynamic relation, thereby countering the concerns raised by Radical Orthodoxy. In this way, Scotus provides not only a metaphysical grammar for Franciscan theology but also a constructive framework in which freedom, relationality, and humility serve as the foundations of a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation.

This Christocentric framework not only preserves the integrity of creation but also grounds the participatory ontology that underpins this thesis, offering a coherent response to Radical Orthodoxy's critique and establishing the metaphysical basis for interfaith encounter.

Bonaventure and Duns Scotus present two distinct yet complementary articulations of the Franciscan intellectual tradition. Bonaventure's exemplarist metaphysics, centred on divine illumination, emanation, and consummation, affirms the sacramentality of creation and the relational ascent of all being toward its divine source. In contrast, Scotus stresses the irreducible individuality of each created being through *haecceitas*, the intelligibility of creation through the univocity of being, and the grounding of freedom in contingency. Read together, these perspectives reveal a tradition that maintains both the cosmic unity of creation and the irreducible dignity of the individual. Their differences therefore do not signal divergence, but complementary emphases within a shared Franciscan commitment to participation, divine generosity, and the integration of grace and nature.

While their emphases differ, Bonaventure highlighting cosmic harmony and Scotus affirming concrete particularity, together they establish a participatory metaphysics that integrates freedom, relationality, and divine presence. In this sense, Franciscan metaphysics provides the conceptual foundation for a theology of encounter: participation is not merely an ontological category but the structure through which the divine-human relationship unfolds, making the created world a site of recognition, relationality, and transformation.

The metaphysical contributions of Bonaventure and Scotus, though distinct in emphasis, together articulate a coherent Franciscan vision of encounter and participation. Bonaventure's exemplarism and theology of illumination highlight creation's sacramental orientation toward God, while Scotus' doctrines of *haecceitas*, univocity, and contingency emphasise individuality, intelligibility, and freedom. When held in dialogue, these perspectives reveal not a fragmented tradition but a complementary one, as Bonaventure grounds Franciscan thought in cosmic order and divine exemplarity, while Scotus ensures that individuality and freedom are preserved within that order.

Rather than adopting an additive or extrinsic model of grace, as Radical Orthodoxy fears, the Franciscan tradition understands grace as the fulfilment of nature's inherent orientation toward God. This distinguishes Franciscan participation from the Radical Orthodoxy critique and clarifies that Franciscan metaphysics safeguards both divine transcendence and the integrity of creation.

This participatory synthesis grounds a theological anthropology in which the dignity of each created being is affirmed, and the Other is encountered as a potential site of divine presence. Thus, medieval Franciscan metaphysics provides both coherence and depth: coherence in its Christocentric framework that holds together

grace and nature, transcendence and immanence; and depth in its capacity to speak into contexts of plurality and encounter.

Scotus's account of divine and human freedom develops Bonaventure's themes of divine fecundity and the diffusion of goodness, reflecting the Trinitarian appropriations in action. [453] Moreover, for Scotus, freedom is inseparable from knowledge:[454] it yields a metaphysics of contingency and relationality that clarifies the Franciscan account of being.

Chapter 5.0 turns from metaphysical synthesis to the Franciscan question of knowledge: how early Franciscan thinkers understood the possibility of knowing God and speaking meaningfully about being, including the theological significance and contested reception of Scotus's doctrine of Univocity.

[453] Dawn M Nothwehr, OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person,* p. 7.
[454] Mary E. Ingham, CSJ., *Understanding John Duns Scotus,* pp. 112–124.

5.0 A Knowledge of God and the Meaning of Being

Building on the metaphysical framework outlined in Chapter 4.0, this chapter turns to the contested question of 'being' in Franciscan theology, particularly through the thought of John Duns Scotus. By engaging Radical Orthodoxy's critique of Scotus's doctrine of univocity, this chapter clarifies how Franciscan metaphysics integrates freedom, individuality, and participation without collapsing the distinction between Creator and creature. In doing so, it prepares the ground for the concluding synthesis, where metaphysics finds expression in *the Ordinary Life* of humility, poverty, and charity.

This chapter extends the metaphysical and theological insights developed in the previous chapters by examining their conceptual elaboration within the Franciscan scholastic tradition. It highlights the innovative contributions of John Duns Scotus, whose metaphysical framework builds upon, but also significantly departs from, Bonaventure's exemplarist vision. Through an exploration of Scotus' key concepts, univocity, *haecceity*, contingency, and moral freedom, this chapter defends the coherence of Franciscan metaphysics in consideration of Radical Orthodoxy's critique.

Rather than presenting an abstract metaphysical system, the chapter situates Scotus's moral metaphysics within a broader scholastic and theological context, emphasising divine freedom, ethical responsibility, and relational participation. In doing so, it prepares the ground for the final chapter, which will consider how this metaphysical vision informs lived Christian practice and serves as a framework for encounter, participation and interfaith engagement.

The Franciscan vision of knowledge and divine participation is profoundly expressed in the works of medieval Franciscan Friars and scholars, Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus in the development of their theological and philosophical concepts during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries respectively. Their work emphasises an immanent and transcendent God whose infinite perfections are grounded in His divine infinity and are reflected in his divine freedom and will to create. Their theological convictions were firmly grounded in the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, and their developing thought and notions reflect a metaphysical relationality between God and all Creation. rooted in a comprehensive trinitarian theology.

In the middle of the thirteenth century the introduction of Aristotelianism into the Franciscan School at the University of Paris led to a deeper sense of the reasoning of the meaning of God, and scholars referred to the divine as Being Itself, the 'Infinite Being' and the Creator of all things, Who is the 'Efficient Cause' of all that is.[455] Their developing concepts reflect Augustinian and Dionysian influences fused with Aristotelian logic, and they employed the Medieval Transcendentals and analogy to expound and explicate their theories which incorporated revelation, illumination and cognitive reasoning. A closer examination of the works of both scholars reveals not so much a reconciliation as a developmental trajectory in Franciscan theology, as while Bonaventure grounds epistemology in the soul's participation in the divine light, Scotus proposes a cognitive model wherein intuitive knowledge arises from the intellect's direct apprehension of being.

[455] Kenan B. Osborne OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,* p. 2.

5.1 Bonaventure: Divine Illumination and Cognitive Intuition

Kyrian Godwin, OFM, *Bonaventure on the Existence of God as the Foundation of All Certain Knowledge* (2017), affirms that for Bonaventure, the existence of God is the foundation of all certain knowledge, while the existence of the Trinity is the foundation of faith,[456] thus, God's existence is self-evident, and an indubitable truth.[457] Ewert Cousins *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (1978), similarly highlights Bonaventure's allegiance to Augustine's illumination theory, as well as his inspiration from St. Anselm of Canterbury, whose *fides quaerens intellectum* is echoed throughout Bonaventure's theological method.[458]

Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, (1955) stresses that Bonaventure was not hostile to philosophy, but rather he allowed his spirituality to guide his philosophical commitments. [459] In his Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure, Gilson asserts that Bonaventure's epistemology remains firmly theological, accessible only through an act of faith.[460] This is vividly demonstrated in the Soul's Journey into God (Itinerarium Mentis in Deum), where Bonaventure writes: "we must pass over through an imprint that is material, time-bound and outside us to be led on the path of God, so that we might arrive at pondering the First Beginning that is utterly spiritual, time-free and above us."[461]

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[456] Kyrian Godwin, OFM., *Bonaventure on the Existence of God as the Foundation of All Certain Knowledge* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2017), pp. 33–41.

[457] Ibid., pp. 13–19.

[458] Ewert H Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), pp. 27–38.

[459] Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 331.

[460] Ibid., p. 115.

[461] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis Deum*), p. 2b.

In his *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure outlines the relationship between philosophy and theology, noting that philosophy concerns itself with nature and spirit according to rational principles, whereas theology, grounded in faith and divine revelation, guides the soul toward grace and glory.

> Philosophy treats of things as they are in nature, or in the spirit, according to naturally founded knowledge or even acquired knowledge; but theology in the last analysis is knowledge founded on faith and revealed through the Holy Spirit deals with those matters which concern grace and glory, and even eternal Wisdom. Whence it is that theology relegates philosophical knowledge to a lower place and assumes about the nature of things whatever is needed for fabricating the mirror through which a representation of things divine takes place. [462]

Philosophy is thus subordinated to theology as a tool that helps construct "the mirror through which a representation of things divine takes place, as Bonaventure writes: -

> In contemplating intellectually
> He combines faith and reason
> Faith considers the world and its origin and end.
> We see the mode, species and order as well as
> Substance, power, and operation. [463]

Bonaventure affirms that illumination is the source of *a priori* transcendental concept which is impressed on the active intellect,[464] and he draws on Augustine's analogy of *an unchangeable light* in developing his theory of divine Illumination, which reflects the medieval transcendental notion of the True.

[462] Bonaventure, Breviloquium Prologue I, WSB 9.1: OTS 53.
[463] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis Deum*), p. 61.
[464] Lydia A Schumacher, '*Divine illumination in Augustinian and Franciscan Thought*,' (2009).

> If full knowledge requires recourse to a *truth* which is fully immutable and stable, and to a *light* which is completely infallible, it is necessary for this sort of knowledge to have recourse to the heavenly art as to light and truth: a light, *I say*, which gives infallibility to the [created] knower, and a truth which gives immutability to the [created] object of knowledge. [465]

In the fourth of his *Quaestiones disputatae scientia Christi,* Bonaventure asserts that all human beings possess an innate cognitive light, which is infused by Christ when the will is converted to Him. He refers to this light as the knowledge of Being which sends out three primary radiations[466], unity, truth and goodness, and reflect the transcendentals, the One, the True and the Good. Bonaventure's theory of a knowledge of God's existence presents three routes to God: -

a) his Illumination argument towards a certainty of God's existence.

b) his aitiological argument towards a more certain knowledge of God's existence.

c) his ontological argument towards God's existence as a truth that is most certain in itself as the *first and most immediate* truth. [467]

His illuminationist position depends on both divine and created causes, and is inspired by Augustine's description of his inward route to God: -

> And admonished by all this to return to myself, I entered inside myself, you leading, and I able to do so because you had become my helper. And I entered and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, I saw above that eye of my soul, above my mind, an unchangeable light.…Whoever knows the truth knows this light…. O eternal truth and true love and loved eternity, you are my God; to you do I sigh both night and day. [468]

Bonaventure affirms that the human senses are not merely lower faculties to be transcended, but integral to the journey toward God. For him, the path of knowledge begins in the senses, moves through reason, and is fulfilled in mystical union through

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[465] Bonaventure, *De Scientia Christi* q. 4 (ed. Quaracchi V 23).
[466] Bonaventure, Collationes, 4.4.2; 4.4.5, in Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*.
[467] Bonaventure, *In I Sent.* d. 8, art. 1, qu. 2 (ed. Quaracchi I 155).
[468] Augustine, *Confessiones*, 7.10; CCSL 27. p. 103.

illumination. For him, human knowledge comes from *proper principles* of created causes which he defines as: -

a) the passive intellect as material cause within the human soul which receives knowledge.

b) the individual agent intellect as efficient cause which abstracts human knowledge from sensation.

c) the essence of the creature as a formal cause.

He draws on the Augustinian concept of light and truth in advocating for an eternal cause which he asserts is required above and beyond the created causes. In being more certain in the knowledge of God's existence, he supports the neo- platonic aetiological arguments of Boethius and Anselm,[469] and adopts an empirical and participatory position towards an ontological truth at the centre of his metaphysics and his Doctrine of Being: -

> Every truth and every created nature proves and leads to the existence of the Divine truth. For if there is being by participation and from another, there must exist a being due to its own essence and not from another. [470]

He clearly distinguishes between philosophical and theological knowledge and asserts that philosophical knowledge is nothing other than the certain knowledge of truth in as far as it can be investigated,[471] and he affirms that the light of philosophical knowledge is that which enlightens the human person in the investigation of intelligible truth.[472] Kyrian Godwin OFM., *Bonaventure on the Existence of God as the Foundation of All Certain Knowledge* (2017), affirms that Bonaventure did not object to philosophical

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469 Boethius *Consolatio Philosophiae* III, 10; Anselm, *Monologion*, pp. 1–3

470 Bonaventure, *De mysterio trinitatis*, 1.1 concl. (ed. Quaracchi V 49).

471 Zachary Hayes trans. Bonaventure, Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, IV;5, in The *Works of St. Bonaventure XIV*", (New York: St. Bonaventure, The Franciscan Institute, 2008).

472 Zachary Hayes, trans. Bonaventure, 'On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology, 4, in 'The *Works of St. Bonaventure* (New York: St Bonaventure University, The Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996).

knowledge, rather he acknowledged that the relation between philosophical and theological knowledge is apparent, for reason compliments faith by enhancing its understanding. [473] In his *Breviloquium* Bonaventure clearly asserts that theology begins where philosophical knowledge ends: -

> Theology is also the only perfect wisdom, for it begins
> with the supreme cause as the principle of all things that are caused –
> the very point at which philosophical knowledge ends.
> But theology goes beyond this, considering that cause as the reward
> of meritorious deeds and the goal of (human) desires. In this knowledge
> one finds perfect taste, life and the salvation of souls; that is why all Christians
> should be aflame with longing to acquire it.*[474]*

Bonaventure's doctrine of Being reflects Aristotelian universal hylomorphism which he employs to uncover God as the formal cause of truth in creatures,[475] and his *Ontological Argument* defines God's existence as a truth that is most certain, as far as it is the *first* and most immediate *truth*. Aristotle's second mode of *per se,* (*Posterior Analytics,* 73a34-b3), provided Bonaventure with an explanation for why principles are self-evident through the Aristotelian assertion that the essence of the subject *causes* the predicate. Therefore, if the *cause* of the predicate is *included in* the subject, the positive ontological argument contains an inference to the existence of God that runs through the divine essence.[476]

> Since our intellect is never deficient in knowing about God
> *If it is*, so it cannot be ignorant of God's existence, absolutely speaking,
> nor even think God does not exist.[477]

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[473] Kyrian, Godwin, OFM., Bonaventure on the Existence of God as the Foundation of All Certain Knowledge, *Franciscan Connections: The Chord – A Spiritual Review*, Volume 67, Issue 3, Fall 2017, pp. 13–19.

[474] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, in Kyrian Godwin, (2017), pp. 13–19.

[475] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium* 5.3 (ed. Quaracchi V), p. 308.

[476] Bonaventure, *In I Sent.* d. 8, a. 1, q. 1 concl. (ed. Quaracchi. I 151b).

[477] Bonaventure, In *I Sent.* d. 8, a. 1, q. 2 concl. (ed. Quaracchi I 154b).

Bonaventure's*, magnum opus, The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*) is analogous of Francis of Assisi's spiritual journey and he presents the journey into God through stages of contemplation. He describes the fifth stage of *The Soul's Journey into God* as contemplating the divine unity (Trinity) through its Primary Name, which is Being,[478] and in describing the divine essence, Bonaventure refers to the Transcendentals, as they can be predicated non-metaphorically of God, and are primordial, being the 'first notions falling into the mind. [479]

For Bonaventure, the human mind is intrinsically ordered toward divine truth, and his epistemology reflects a dynamic movement of ascent. In his *Itinerarium*, this ascent unfolds through stages in which the mind passes from sensible knowledge, to rational contemplation, and finally to the illumination of divine wisdom. This structure reveals that participation is not merely metaphysical but experiential: the mind is drawn toward God because it is created for union with Him. Having established the mind's participatory orientation toward divine truth, Bonaventure deepens this insight by turning to the question of Being itself, where the Transcendentals provide the metaphysical grammar through which creation's relationship to God may be understood.

Notwithstanding his use of Aristotelian principles, Bonaventure demonstrated his total allegiance to the Augustinian tradition which maintained that the existence of God is self-evident. Etienne Gilson affirms in his *Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure* (1965), that he remained the faithful disciple of St. Anselm from the beginning of his commentary to the end of his career,[480] and maintained that the existence of God is

[478] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium* 3.3. (ed. Quaracchi, V 304a).
[479] Ibid.
[480] Etienne Gilson, *Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, (1965), p. 114.

absolutely evident as God is so universally attested by nature that his existence scarcely needs demonstration.[481]

> For Being itself is first and last.
> It is supremely One and yet all-inclusive
> It is all inclusive, precisely because it is supremely One.
> For what is supremely One is the universal principle of all multiplicity;
> Hence it is the universal efficient, and final cause of all things.

Bonaventure refers to God as First Principle, insisting that to know God is to go beyond the external and ascend to the source who ignites that First Principle within ourselves. Drawing on Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* (VIII.4) and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, he affirms that true knowledge of Being involves understanding its properties, the One, the True, and the Good, as divine transcendentals. For him, philosophical knowledge combines the threefold truths of natural, rational, and moral knowledge, and he asserts that there is nothing in these sciences that does not bear the imprint of the Trinity.[482]

In his *Collationes on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, he draws on Augustine and affirms, 'thus, theological science is founded on faith, just as the philosophical sciences are on their first principles'.[483] Bonaventure's emphasis on the significant role of faith and reason in his *The Soul's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*), *presents* a systematic approach to a knowledge of God which combines revelation, illumination, and cognitive reasoning.

Bonaventure refers to God as 'First Principle' and asserts: - "We must go beyond what is external, most spiritual, and above us, by gazing at the 'First Principle,'[484] which ignites the 'First Principle' within ourselves".[485] In defining the divine 'Being' a*s* 'the

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[481] Etienne Gilson, *Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, (1965), p. 114.
[482] Bonaventure, *Collationes on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, IV: 11.
[483] Ibid., IV: 13.
[484] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis Deum*), (1978), p. 61.
[485] Ibid., 81.

Cause of being', the basis of understanding and the order of living', he takes inspiration from Augustine's *De Civitate Dei VIII, 4,* and he draws on Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite's theory of the 'Medieval Transcendentals' in affirming that we cannot have a knowledge of Being *per se* unless we know its properties which are 'the One', 'the True' and 'the Good'. [486]

Lydia Schumacher, *The Theo-Logic of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge by Divine Illumination,* (2010), emphasizes that for Augustine (and by extension Bonaventure), divine illumination is not an external force but an inner cognitive orientation toward God's goodness.[487] The mind perceives finite realities through belief in the unseen Goodness of God, allowing the intellect to 'see from a divine perspective,' whereby creation reveals the Creator. Schumacher avers that the cognitive process is rooted in the intellectual appreciation of God's Goodness and suggests that a profound appreciation of Augustine's Theory of Divine Illumination as a theo-logic by divine illumination, throws light on the cognitive function of humankind, towards a knowledge of God and the reality of His Goodness. In drawing on the theory of human cognition found in the pages of *trin* with the aim of throwing the operation of illumination in cognition into relief,[488] she refers to recent developments in Augustinian studies that allow for an evaluation of Augustine's theological perspective through a retrospective appreciation of his earlier works, that throws light on the logic of his Illumination Theory.[489]

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[486] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, (*Itinerarium Mentis Deum*), (1978), p. 81.

[487] Lydia *A.* Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 157–174.

[488] Lydia A. Schumacher, *The Theo-Logic of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge by Divine Illumination*, (2010), p. 382.

[489] Scotus, *Ordinatio* XII, 26, 54; 12, 28, 56., in Schumacher (2010), p. 384.

> Since the mind cannot grasp the infinite and immaterial God so long as it operates in the realm of finite, material things, He has made, Augustine states that it reflects God's image in the present by considering the things it can see in the light of belief in His unseen Goodness. By doing this, the intellect perceives reality from a divine perspective, which discloses how everything manifests God's Goodness and so indirectly discloses the nature of God.[490]

Medieval Franciscan scholars were bound by a shared commitment to a theology rooted in humility, contingency, and participation and while Bonaventure's theology of Divine illumination and Cognitive Intuition is steeped in mystical ascent and trinitarian relationality.

In the early fourteenth century, John Duns Scotus asserted that a certain Knowledge of God was attainable through the science of metaphysics. Scotus' apparent rejection of Bonaventure's doctrine of Divine illumination was not a dismissal of theological knowledge, rather it was a move toward the development of his innovative concept of intuitive cognition, a notion that reflected his broader commitment to a metaphysical science of theology.

5.2 John Duns Scotus and Intuitive Cognition

In this thesis, Scotus' doctrine of univocity is not understood as diminishing divine transcendence or collapsing the Creator–creature distinction, as Radical Orthodoxy contends. Rather, univocity functions as a logical condition for meaningful theological discourse: it enables predication about God without implying that God and creatures share a common ontological level. Univocity therefore serves the Franciscan metaphysics of participation by safeguarding both God's incomparability and the intelligibility of divine self-communication.

[490] Schumacher, (2010), p. 382.

Scotus' own account makes this clarification evident, for he begins his discussion by affirming the possibility of a concept through which God may be known in Himself.

> I say to begin with, therefore, that it is naturally possible to have not only a concept in which God is known incidentally, for example in some attribute, but also some concept in which he is conceived *per se* and quidditatively.[491]

In his *Ordinatio II* Scotus presents His Cognitive Theory*,* and asserts that an object one observes face to face, and communicates itself to the person through its actual existence (being) and presence, causes intuitive knowledge, which is revealed through human knowing.[492] In the Prologue to his *Ordinatio*, *Quadlibet,* Scotus links intuitive and abstractive cognition (*causari in intellectu*),[493] through which the divine becomes known when the fullness of human cognitive powers are realised.[494] He defines this concept as being mentally aware of the object perceived, which is possible because of the presence of the object in all its proper intelligibility.[495]

He defines intuitive cognition as an immediate awareness of the presence and existence of God and abstractive cognition, precisely as God, [496] ergo, the divine becomes known through intuitive knowledge and human knowing.[497] Scotus expands the activity of abstractive cognition towards his notion of intuitive cognition through which the mind has direct access to the reality before it in a simple act of knowing.

His metaphysical theory of intuitive knowledge proposes that God (the object) communicates his existence to the subject (humankind) through the Beatific vision;[498] he asserts that the union of the subject to the object in a Beatific embrace reveals the

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[491] Scotus, Ordinatio I, dist. 3, pars 1, q. 1-2, No. 25 (Vatican 3: 16-17), in William Frank and Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus, Metaphysician*, p. 109.
[492] Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II.d.3.q.9.n.6.7; III.d.14. q.3.n.7.
[493] Scotus, *Ordinatio prol.* N. 72; I.d.3. n. 486; II.d.3. q.8. n.17.
[494] Scotus, *Quodlibet,* 14.10.14.36; translated by Alluntis/Wolter, pp. 324–325.
[495] Ibid*.,* p. 325.
[496] Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF., *The Franciscan View of the Human Person*, (2005), p. 52.
[497] Scotus, *Quodlibet,* 14.10.14.36; translated by Alluntis/Wolter, pp. 324–325.
[498] Scotus, *Metaphysics IX*.q.15.n.6; translated by Allan B.Wolter, Will and Morality, p. 145.

fullness of cognitive function as, when the human mind encounters and apprehends God's self-communication, it cannot withhold its assent to the truth of God's reality.[499]

Richard Cross' translation of Dun Scotus' *Ordinatio,* and his *Theory of Cognition* (2014), sets out the concept of 'Intuitive Cognition': -

> The connection between the imagination and the intellect, in the current state, is such that we cognize nothing universal unless we imagine a singular instance of it, and the conversion to phantasms is nothing other than that someone cognizing the universal imagines a singular instance of it. Neither does the intellect see the essence in the phantasms as the things that are seen, but rather when it cognizes the essence shining out in the intelligible species precisely as shining out in the intelligible species, it sees it in the singular that is seen in the phantasm by the imaginative power.[500]

Mary Beth Ingham, (2017), identifies a key shift away from Aquinas' naturalist context in Scotus' work (post Condemnation, 1277), as he calls into question the problematic aspects of Aristotelian thought.[501] Ingham affirms that Scotus' notion of abstractive and intuitive cognition refers to the current state of the imagination and the intellect, which refers to humankind's cognition of life on earth and present knowledge, nevertheless he infers the capability of a higher and more direct understanding of reality and insists that there is a 'shining out' of the deeper reality (as in a theophany), when we truly pay attention to it.[502]

Ingham asserts that 'for Scotus, 'the 'shining out' doesn't come from the agent intellect, which is the concept posited by Aristotle and Aquinas, but from the object itself as it reveals itself'.[503] Furthermore, Richard Cross (2014), points to Scotus' concept of a

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[499] Scotus, *Quodlibet* q.16.n.6; translated by Alluntis/Wolter, pp. 375–376.

[500] Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1 d. 3 q. 3, n. 392 (Vatican 3: 239) trans. Richard Cross, in *'Duns Scotus' Theory of Cognition*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 96, Cf. Mary Beth Ingham, *Understanding John Duns Scotus*, pp. 38–54.

[501] Mary E. Ingham, CSJ., *Understanding John Duns Scotus*, (2017), pp. 38-–54.

[502] Ibid.

[503] Ibid.

second higher act of 'intuitive cognition' which he compares to a direct vision in his *Ordinatio* IV: -

> The intellect not only cognizes universals (which is true of abstractive intellection, about which the philosopher speaks, because that alone is scientific), but also intuitively cognizes those things which the sense cognizes (because the more perfect and higher cognitive power in the same thing cognizes those things which the lower power does), and also cognizes sensations: and each of these is proven by this, that it knows contingently true propositions, and syllogizes from them; but forming propositions and syllogizing is proper to the intellect; the truth of those things is about the objects as intuitively cognized, namely as existent – the same way in which they are known by the sense. [504]

Scotus affirms that a more direct knowing is dependent on the knowledge of the actual existence of objects, sensations and activities that are known in all their dimensions as he insists that intuitive cognition is direct and unmediated. He posits both an internal and an external capacity for intuitive cognition, and an internal state of self-knowledge he refers to as interior perception[505]: -

> We experience that we cognize that act by which we cognize these things (viz. the universal, being, relations between objects that cannot be sensed, the distinction between sensory and non-sensory objects, and second intentions, and do so inasmuch as this act is in us: which is by a reflexive act directed to the direct act, and that receives it (viz. the direct act) … By a certain sense (sensu) that is, by interior perception (perception interior) we experience these acts in ourselves.[506]

For Scotus, the act of knowing is never merely a neutral intellectual operation; it expresses the creature's deeper participation in divine light.[507] Even abstractive knowledge, which concerns universal concepts, presupposes the divine illumination that grounds intelligibility; intuitive cognition sharpens

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[504] Scotus, *Ordinatio* IV d. 45 q. 3, n. 137 (Vatican 14: 181), translated by Richard Cross in 'Duns Scotus' *Theory of Cognition*, pp. 45–46.

[505] Scotus, *Ordinatio*, IV d. 43 q. 2, n. 79, 83 (Vatican 14: 23), translated by Richard Cross, *in Duns Scotus' Theory of Cognition*, p. 53.

[506] Ibid.

[507] Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3 (on intelligibility and illumination); *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3 (on intuitive and abstractive cognition); *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 6; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 89–118; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 63–86.

this insight by directing the knower toward the concrete existence of things as they stand before God. In this way, Scotus' epistemology reinforces a participatory structure in which all knowing is relational, orienting the knower dynamically toward both God and the Other.

5.3 The Science of Metaphysics and the Transcendentals

In the Franciscan intellectual tradition, these scholastic engagements with metaphysics and the sciences are not pursued for the purpose of abstraction but to clarify how created being participates in the divine. Thus, even highly technical debates serve the broader theological purpose of articulating the relationship between God, creation, and the human capacity for knowledge.

5.3.1 The Influence of Aristotle and Avicenna

In the *Summa Halensis*, scholars reflected on the notion of wisdom as synonymous with metaphysics, which in Arabic is translated as the divine science, a term used extensively by Avicenna.[508] They supported their arguments with Augustine's exploration of the difference between wisdom and science, ergo, science refers to human things, but a science still needs to have a strong connection to faith, it needs to bring about faith and protect it.[509] Kenan Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, tracing its Origins and Identifying its Central Components (*2003), suggests that the controversial introduction of Aristotelian thought into the School of Theology at Paris University in the middle of the thirteenth century, was received by Franciscan scholars with cautious reservation. [510]

[508] Scotus, *Ordinatio*, IV d. 43 q. 2, n. 79, 83 (Vatican 14: 23), translated by Richard Cross, *in Duns Scotus' Theory of Cognition*, p. 53.
[509] Augustine *Trinitate* 14.1.3 (PL 42: 1037).
[510] Kenan B Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,* (2003), p. 25.

Franciscan scholars' theological convictions rejected the Aristotelian position of not including a personal God, a Creator God, and in reconciling their faith with logic they modified the Aristotelian 'categories' to ensure their theology remained intact. [511] Their engagement with Aristotelian categories therefore proceeds by purification and re-interpretation. What is retained is the logical clarity Aristotle offers, while what is rejected is any implication that being is closed, self-contained, or devoid of relational dependence on God. This selective appropriation preserves the Franciscan conviction that all being is participated being.

Kenan Osborne (2003) affirms that the introduction of Aristotelian thought presented scholars with the Aristotelian categories as an all-inclusive description of being which was both epistemological and ontological towards an expression of how one thinks of being and beings (epistemologically), or an expression of the quiddity' of what being' and beings are in reality (ontological). He asserts these 'categories' were used by all the prominent medieval theologians who modified them towards their epistemological or ontological theological concepts in varying degrees.[512]

Osborne sets out two major changes made by thirteenth century catholic theologians in their acceptance of Aristotelian Philosophy: -

> God is called Being' itself, *esse ipsum*, Infinite Being and the Creator of all other beings, the Efficient Cause, and the final Cause of all other beings. Scholastic theologians described God in terms of the Infinite Being itself, and all creatures as contingent and temporal, therefore Aristotle's predicamental categories of substance, quality and relation do not apply to being itself.[513]

[511] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, II.12; *Collations on the Six Days*, trans. by J. de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1970), Coll. I–II; John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 17–34.

[512] Ibid.

[513] Kenan B Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,* (2003), p. 25.

i) 'All other beings are created by God and to call all other beings finite, limited and contingent is primarily a philosophical position and to call the same beings 'created' is a theological position since it is a matter of faith to believe in a Creator God'.[514]

ii) All contingent beings (creatures) must be classified as substances or quantities or qualities or relations which are created, contingent and temporal, which is not in accordance with Aristotle's categories for unchangeable being.[515]

John of La Rochelle (1190-1245), co-editor of the *Summa Halensis* highlights the challenges faced by Franciscan scholars who were deeply inspired by the Poverello's devotion to God as a triune unity, not as a speculative doctrine, but as a reality to be worshipped.[516] La Rochelle's formulation highlights a characteristically Franciscan insight: that human knowing is always already oriented toward God because the divine impresses its intelligible marks within the created intellect. This provides a metaphysical grounding for participation, since the mind bears within itself the traces of the One, the True, and the Good.

In an effort to balance the notions of illumination and cognitive reasoning, La Rochelle introduced a metaphysics of causality into the traditional treatise of the *Divine Names* and drew inspiration from the work of William of Auxerre (1140/50–1231) in asserting that, 'on naming God's reality or the divine esse the knowledge of God has been impressed upon us,' (*De Divinis Nominibus*, c.1233): -

514 Kenan B Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,* (2003), p. 25.

515 Ibid., p. 29.

516 John of La Rochelle, *De Divinis Nominibus* in Jacob W. Wood, '*Forging the Analogy of Being'*, in *Summa Halensis*, *Doctrines and Debates*, 2020, ed., Lydia Schumacher, pp. 42, 45.

> We should say that naming the divine *esse* happens in two ways: by its effects and by its impressions of notions placed into the intellect. By effects he is named Creator, Omnipotent and even God… But by impressions of notions, which are placed in the intellect, he is named 'Being' True and Good: for these notions of 'first being', first truth and first good, have been impressed on us. [517]

In Treatise Three of the *Summa Halensis*, the attributes of the Trinity are affirmed by scholars as an integrated triad which associates the notions of the Transcendentals', the One, the True and the Good, with 'Unity' appropriated to the Father, 'Truth' appropriated to the Son, and 'Goodness' to the Spirit.[518] In the same way, the *Summa* reflects the Aristotelian non-material causes in affirming causality as common to the whole Trinity, and the efficient cause as 'appropriated to the Father', 'the exemplary cause to the Son' and the 'final cause to the Spirit".[519]

These appropriations do more than map philosophical categories onto theological doctrine; they reveal a participatory structure in which creation's unity, intelligibility, and goodness flow from the triune life of God. The transcendentals therefore function not merely as metaphysical descriptors but as expressions of the dynamic relation between Creator and creation. Moreover, they affirm the Triune God as the 'Transcendental' uncreated 'Supreme Efficient Cause', the One, The True and the Good Whose emanation is reflected through all of Creation: -

> A Source which has told us about itself in the holy words of scripture.
> We learn, for instance, that it is the cause of everything,
> That it is origin, being and life……
> To those who fall away it is the voice calling "Come back!"
> and it is the power which raises them up again.
> It refurbishes and restores the image of God corrupted within them.
> It is the sacred stability which is there for them when the tide
> of unholiness is tossing them about. [520]

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[517] John of La Rochelle, *De Divinis Nominibus* in Jacob W. Wood, '*Forging the Analogy of Being'*, in *Summa Halensis*, *Doctrines and Debates*, 2020, ed., Lydia Schumacher, pp. 42, 45.

[518] SH 1 (n. 88): *'Apropriantur Trinitati'*; Coolman (2020), p. 129.

[519] SH I (n. 73), p. 115; Coolman (2020), p. 116.

[520] Pseudo Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 51.

Osborne, (2003), affirms that medieval scholastic theologians rejected Aristotle's position of not including a personal God, a Creator God, and modified their approach to Aristotelianism judiciously, as their position was based on the Catholic Faith and the teachings of the Church which were rooted in the Old and New Testaments.[521] Nevertheless, he asserts that both Bonaventure and Duns Scotus were key to the formation of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, and Bonaventure was selective in his use of Aristotle, while some later scholars such as John Duns Scotus used Aristotle creatively".[522]

Jan Aertsen, *The Doctrine of the Transcendentals in Franciscan Masters* (2012), describes the place and function of the Transcendentals in the *Summa Halensis* as determined by the role of metaphysics as it attempted to establish the scientific character of Christian theology for the first time.[523] Treatise Three in the *Summa Halensis* reconciles the logic and science of metaphysics with mainstream medieval Catholic Christian theology, and concludes that all appropriations affirm the triune God as the transcendental (infinite and ubiquitous), uncreated Supreme Self-Efficient Cause, the One, the True and the Good, whose emanation is reflected throughout Creation.

This scholastic landscape was further shaped by newly translated Arabic sources, which expanded the conceptual vocabulary available to Franciscan thinkers. Katharina Strohschneider, The *Summa Halensis on Theology and the Sciences: The Influence of Aristotle and Avicenna* (2021), affirms that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries at the University of Paris, the Franciscan School saw the introduction of better

[521] Kenan B Osborne, OFM., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,* p. 26.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Jan A. Aertsen, Chapter Four, The Doctrine of the Transcendentals in Franciscan Masters, in *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp.135–176.

translations of Aristotle and the introduction of philosophical sources such as Avicenna from the Arabic world on the nature of the sciences, and the subject of whether theology constituted a science was debated widely.[524] Strohschneider attests that the *Summa Halensis* reflects scholars' reaction to the newly available sources translated from the Arabic, which it incorporated into its own framework to present a solution to the novel problem of theology as a science, and she asserts their efforts created a theory of theology which combined the requirements of sacred doctrine with a philosophical, rational concept of science.[525]

> In the history of sacred Scripture, the singular fact is introduced
> in order to signify the universal, and it is therefore
> that there is understanding and science of [this fact].[526]

Strohschneider, (2011), refers to the scholastic debates on theology as a science in which the *Summists* argued that unlike stories and historical reports which refer to individual human acts, Scripture refers to the universal acts and the universal conditions of human nature;[527] therefore the *Summists* affirmed that theological content is universal and intelligible and can belong to a science. [528]

5.3.2 Analogy, Equivocity, and Univocity

The question of how language signified God, whether through analogy, equivocity, or univocity, was central to medieval metaphysics because it determined how creatures could meaningfully participate in divine truth. Scotus' rejection of semantic analogy did not entail a rejection of participatory metaphysics. Rather, it clarified that participation occurred at the level of reality itself, not linguistic mediation.

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[524] Lydia Schumacher ed. *The Summa Halensis* on Theology and the Sciences: the Influence of Aristotle and Avicenna, in *The Legacy of Early Franciscan Thought*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), pp. 49–50.
[525] Ibid.
[526] SH I, Tr1, Q1, C1 (n. 1), Ad obiecta 1, p. 3, Strohschneider *Theology and the Sciences*,(2021), p. 53.
[527] Anna-Katharina Strohschneider Strohschneider, *Theology and the Sciences*, pp. 49–50.
[528] Ibid.

Analogy remained metaphysically valid, and it was linguistic analogy that Scotus deemed insufficient.

Scotus concludes that all the words which are supposed to signify a real relation between things do not actually signify relations that add anything to the real thing, but instead they signify only the foundation of the relation and its cause. For him, relation is therefore grounded not in an external structure between beings but in the internal reality of each being as willed and sustained by God. This strengthens the Franciscan metaphysics of participation, since it locates relationality within the very being of creatures rather than in an accidental or extrinsic link.

During the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the collaborative works of medieval Franciscan scholars merged eastern and western theological and philosophical thought and employed the Medieval Transcendentals and analogy to expound and explicate the development of their theological concepts.[529] Following the introduction of Aristotelian thought into the Franciscan School of Theology in Paris, by the mid thirteenth century, debates relating to knowing and talking about God, saw equivocity and univocity give way to a doctrine of analogy, through which scholars' developing theological concepts were merged with reason (logic), and semantics;[530] these terms are defined by Paul Gerard Horrigan, in his *The Analogy of Being*, (2007) : -

[529] Ewert H Cousins, *St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century in Bonaventure and Aquinas, Enduring Philosophers*, ed. by Robert W. Shahan and Francis J. Kovach (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976)

[530] E. Jennifer Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991), pp. 39–67.

i) Equivocal Terms: - Equivocal terms are terms used with entirely different meanings. In univocal terms the same term, in at least two occurrences of the term, has meanings completely different from one another.

ii) Univocal Terms: - A term is univocal if it signifies the same concept, or essence in (at least) two occurrences of the term. Univocal terms have one and only one meaning. They are constantly used in an identical sense.

iii) Analogical Terms: - Analogical terms are concepts and notions predicated of their subjects in a way that is partly the same and partly different.[531]

When considering the essence and meaning of John Duns Scotus' concept of a Univocity of Being, it is necessary to appreciate that he was both a logician and a theologian. Jennifer Ashworth, *The Treatment of Analogy in Scotus' Logical Works* (2013), presents an examination of the progression of Scotus' thought on the use of analogy when speaking about God and 'being' and suggests his work was heavily influenced by the doctrines of English logicians.[532]

In his *Commentary on the Categories* Scotus questioned whether the word *ens* was purely equivocal or analogical, and he asserts that some authors attribute analogy to terms in three ways" and distinguish three elements: - i) the concept; ii) the ratio as significate; iii) the object of the intellect. Scotus asserts the *ratio* as a real nature in the

[531] Paul Gerard Horrigan, *The Analogy of Being*, Thesis, (2007), p. 50

[532] Ashworth, E. Jennifer, Analogy and Metaphor from Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus and Walter Burley, in *Later Medieval Metaphysics: Ontology, Language and Logic*, ed by Charles Bolyard and Rondo Keele, (Fordham University Press: 2013), p. 236.

things that exist, and he emphasises that for the logician, these terms are simply univocal. [533]

Ashworth, (2013), sets out the progression of Scotus' thought which moved from analogy to a chance equivocal and finally to univocal, and she refers to Scotus' commentary on the *Sophistical Refutations* in which he argues that everything that is conceived by the intellect should be conceived by a distinct determinate *ratio* which cannot be both absolute and comparative.[534] He avers that it is impossible to find a single analogical concept of *ens* that applies to both substance and accidents, and it is therefore impossible (in general), to find a concept which represents one thing according to priority, and another thing according to posteriority, by virtue of attribution to the 'first thing'. Therefore, in answer to the question whether a name could signify one thing as prior and another as posterior,[535] Scotus determines that this kind of analogy seems to be impossible.[536]

Ashworth (2013) asserts that for Scotus, words used in analogy cannot signify priority and posteriority, as we can name the posterior thing without knowing the prior thing. She avers that Scotus determines that confusion lies in the order of signifying, and understanding the order of things, and since it is impossible to order two acts of imposition according to priority and posteriority, the word will be 'a chance equivocal'.[537] Scotus concludes that all the words which are supposed to signify a real relation between things ordered in accordance with priority and posteriority, should be

[533] Ashworth, E. Jennifer, Analogy and Metaphor from Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus and Walter Burley, in *Later Medieval Metaphysics: Ontology, Language and Logic*, ed by Charles Bolyard and Rondo Keele, (Fordham University Press: 2013), p. 236.
[534] Scotus, *In SE*, q. 15, p. 336, in E. J. Ashworth, Analogy and Metaphor (2013), 237.
[535] Ibid.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Scotus, *In SE*, q. 15, p. 336, in E. J. Ashworth, Analogy and Metaphor (2013), 238.

reduced to 'chance equivocals'; he deduces that no genuine deliberate equivocal can exist, and it is our knowledge of the world, not our knowledge of semantics, which helps us to understand how such words as *ens* are to be used. Nevertheless, Scotus affirms that there is indeed an analogy of being, and the metaphysician considers it, but the analogy of words and concepts does not exist.[538]

In appendix II of the *Sophistical Refutations*, *Question XV.,* Scotus' deductions move from a chance equivocal to address the question of whether it is possible to signify one thing primarily and another thing secondarily. His response is that it is not possible, and he argues that there is no medium between the same and diverse, therefore everything that is conceived is either conceived under the same ratio or a diverse ratio, but those things that are conceived under the same ratio are made 'univocal' under that ratio.[539]

In clarifying the theological and logical context of his theories, Scotus affirms that while the natural philosopher and the metaphysician consider the things themselves, the logician however considers beings of reason, hence there are many things that are univocal for the logician but are called equivocal by the natural philosopher.[540] He asserts that the natural philosopher will say that 'body' is said equivocally of higher and lower body, but the logician will say that it is said univocally of both. Hence whatever things a logician can abstract one common ratio from, are said to be united or made univocal in that common ratio, hence, because one can find one common ratio in higher and lower body, since these and those bodies agree in having

[538] E. J. Ashworth, *Analogy and Metaphor,* (2013), p. 238.
[539] Ibid., p. 243.
[540] II.2R, in Ashworth, *Analogy and Metaphor (2013)*, p. 246.

three dimensions, the logician will say that both these <bodies> and those, are univocated in the common ratio".[541]

Duns Scotus demonstrates a markedly different approach in his *Tractatus de Primo Principio*, in asserting that infinity is a primary attribute of God, not a logical abstraction but a qualitative reality. Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *On Divine Immensity and Infinity in Relation to Space and Time,* (2021), explains that 'for Scotus, God's infinity is best understood as the infinite plenitude of qualities like goodness, such that "no more goodness could be added.'[542] Scotus argues that infinite being virtually contains all divine perfections, making it the simplest and most comprehensive concept for understanding God.

Allan B. Wolter 'The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus', *Franciscan Studies*, (1946), affirms that Scotus' metaphysics is deeply theological, grounded in the theory of the transcendentals which ultimately point toward God as the final cause of metaphysical inquiry. Wolter attests that for Scotus, our whole ontology is saturated with Theo-logic, and metaphysics as a theo-logic ends with the notion of God, as it cannot analyse the notion of contingency save in terms of necessity, or the relative without introducing the absolute, or order without a primacy.[543] In this light, metaphysics becomes a theo-logic, incapable of fully analysing contingency or order without invoking necessity, primacy, and absoluteness. Wolter also acknowledges that Scotus preserved a space for revealed knowledge, a supernatural knowledge of God that surpasses reason and depends on special

[541] II.2R, in Ashworth, *Analogy and Metaphor (2013)*, p. 246.

[542] Tiziana Suarez-Nani, 'On Divine Immensity and Infinity in Relation to Space and Time', in *Divine Infinity in Late Medieval Thought*, ed. by Russell Friedman (Leuven: Peeters, 2021), pp. 139–158.

[543] Allan B Wolter, 'Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge', *Franciscan Studies*, 11 (1951), pp. 109–130.

illumination and he affirms that for Scotus, faith in the Trinity and in God as the final goal of human life 'is to take a leap beyond reason.' [544]

5.4 Revealed Knowledge: A Medieval Controversy

Following the introduction of Aristotelianism into the Franciscan School at the University of Paris, 'controversy raged between the Faculty of Arts (philosophers) and the Theological Faculty at the University of Paris on the subject of 'the necessity of divine revelation'.[545] The position taken by Aristotelian philosopher Averroes (the Commentator) and his supporters, resulted in the condemnation by the Bishop Tempier (1277) of two hundred and nineteen of Averroes' propositions which included: -

> Reason is the only source of certitude.
> Theology based on popular fable and fiction can teach man nothing.
> Christian Law on the contrary actually impedes us in our search for knowledge.
> Aristotle is nature's solitary boast.
> It is to him and not to Christ we must turn to discover what perfection human nature is capable of, and it is philosophy not theology that deserves the name of wisdom.[546]

In the Franciscan tradition, intellectual inquiry is never detached from the spiritual orientation of the knower; knowledge is understood as a participatory act in which the human mind engages the divine light that renders truth intelligible. Philosophical reasoning is not an alternative to theology but a mode through which the creature comes to recognise its dependence on and ordered relation toward God. Bonaventure and Scotus both exemplify the Franciscan synthesis of intellect and spirituality. Their metaphysical insights arise not from speculative detachment but from a contemplative posture grounded in the conviction that all truth participates in the

[544] Allan B Wolter, 'Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge', *Franciscan Studies*, 11 (1951), pp. 109–130.
[545] Ibid., p. 234.
[546] Ibid., p. 235.

divine source. Their approaches differ in method yet converge in affirming that creation's intelligibility is rooted in God's self-communication.

Wolter (1951), asserts that 'Scotus was by profession a theologian and intent on defending the necessity of divine revelation and a supernatural theology, and his questions and responses in his *Prologue of the Ordinatio* reflect his attempt to reconcile the warring factions'.[547] Wolter also avers that for Scotus, 'reason prods us to investigate whether or not God has revealed something supernaturally on the subject and paves the way for the acceptance of theology',[548] and for him, Christianity is not simply a matter of reason but requires a jump from the purely natural order to that revealed by faith, and this jump is not a sacrifice of reason, rather it is a perfecting of reason.[549]

Wolter affirms that 'when Scotus began his lectures at the University of Paris, it was the great secular Master Henry of Ghent Ghent's thought which dominated theological circles, and Scotus' doctrines often grew out of agreement or difference with his thought.'[550] He avers that 'in speaking about God', and as a result of his rejection of Ghent's position on analogy, the development of Scotus' thought reflects his skills as a logician and his commitment and conviction as a theologian', as his thought moved from 'analogy' to 'equivocity' and a 'chance equivocal' and concluded with the concept of 'univocal' [551] which led his theological and logical enquiry to find completion in his innovative concept of the Univocity of Being.

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[547] Allan B Wolter, 'Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge', *Franciscan Studies*, 11 (1951), p. 236.
[548] Ibid., p. 237.
[549] Ibid.
[550] Ibid.
[551] E. J. Ashworth, in *Later Medieval Metaphysics: Ontology, Language, and Logic*, 236–247.

5.4.1 Scotus and a Univocity of Being

The medieval scholarly controversy on the necessity of divine revelation was re-kindled in the twenty first century by a sustained and complicated critique of Duns Scotus' concept of a Univocity of Being by the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, which contemporary scholars argue, may have been taken out of context.

The leader of the movement, Professor John Milbank, avers that 'Scotus reflects the classical tradition of insisting on reasoning and non-emotional arguments, which thinks revelation as subject to rational analyses.[552] He suggests that 'this leads to a sharp divide between nature and grace, and the insistence on the autonomy of reason' and posits that 'a later development that goes wrong in the West is a lot to do with the Franciscan tradition'.[553]

Milbank's position is made clearer in his later publication, *The Suspended Middle*, (2014), in which he asserts that 'the metaphysics of Being, which refers to a First Principle, God, is only accessible by way of revelation'.[554] He suggests that 'Scotus effectively extracted grace from nature and created a previously unimagined realm of pure nature when he collapsed whatever was supernatural into the natural'. [555]

This notion is supported by his colleague Catherine Pickstock, *Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance,* (2005), who refers to this as 'the loss of an integrally conceptual and mystical path'.[556] Notwithstanding these assertions, Allan B. Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function of the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (1946), avers that 'knowledge can be both natural and supernatural, as if the theologians

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[552] Professor John Milbank, podcast*, 'On the Eastern Movement of Western Theology'*, <http://youtu.be/_TO_Mc0De> [accessed: February 1, 2022].

[553] Ibid.

[554] John Milbank*, The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural,* p. 5.

[555] Ibid.

[556] Catherine Pickstock, 'Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance', *Modern Theology* 21: 4 (Oct. 2005), 543–574.

claim that the supernatural does not do violence to nature, but is built upon and perfects nature, then it follows that nature must have an inherent or intrinsic capacity to be supernaturalised'.[557]

James Hanvey S.J., *Radical Orthodoxy? - A Catholic Enquiry* (2000) suggests that 'the task that Radical Orthodoxy identifies for theology, and sets as its own programme, rests on the diagnosis of modernity and postmodernity'.[558] Hanvey posits that the movement sees modernity as the emergence of a secular consciousness which excludes God and argues that the root of this lies in the differentiation of faith and reason, which consigns faith to a realm of personal belief and conviction, as opposed to reason which secures knowledge and truth.[559] Nevertheless, Laurence Paul Hemming, *Radical Orthodoxy? – A Catholic Enquiry*, (2000), suggests that 'if correctly understood, Radical Orthodoxy's respectful rudeness, its pugnacity and its seemingly unshakeable convictions of inerrancy, all function as stimuli to debate'.

5.4.2 Scholarly Responses to a Radical Critique

Respectful responses by eminent contemporary scholars to the debate, offer to address Radical Orthodoxy's use of Scotus' innovative concept of the Univocity of Being and correct any mis(interpretations) of his work. Thomas Williams, *The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary* (2005), emphasises the decontextualization of Scotus' work which is reflected in specific notions endorsed by the founders of the Radical Orthodoxy movement. Williams draws attention to Catherine Pickstock's support of Radical Orthodoxy's approach to Scotus' doctrine, which she defines as having a univocalist ontology,[560] and suggests that 'Scotus' Doctrine of The Univocity of Being,

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[557] Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge*, p. 237.
[558] James Harvey, S.J., 'Continuing the Conversation', in *Radical Orthodoxy? – A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Paul Hemming (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 150.
[559] Ibid.
[560] Catherine Pickstock, Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance, pp., 543–574.

which has had deplorable consequences attributed to it, may have been misinterpreted', and he offers 'to correct the incorrect or false references which may have led some people astray'. [561]

Phillip Tonner, *Duns Scotus' Concept of the Univocity of Being* (2007), affirms that 'Scotus' thesis of the Univocity of Being represents a critical reaction to Henry of Ghent's distinctive interpretation of the doctrine of the analogy of being',[562] which at the same time 'allowed him to forge his own position through his critique of Henry's work, in particular towards the philosophy of 'being', in breaking with the view that 'being' was analogical and arguing for a notion of 'being' (and of the other transcendentals), that is univocal to God and creatures".[563] Tonner (2007), suggests that 'Scotus' philosophy could be read in relation to the Thomistic philosophy of analogy, however, he asserts the critical focus of his work was in response to Henry of Ghent, a neo-Augustinian critic of Thomas Aquinas, and the most important theologian of the preceding generation'.[564] He further asserts that 'Scotus had argued against Ghent's neo-Augustinian 'divine illumination' theory and its relationship to theology as a science, and that his concept of a Univocity of Being was primarily concerned with the epistemological question of how to know God'.[565]

Richard Cross (*Duns Scotus*, 1999), finds it important to begin with what appears to be a shared starting point between Aquinas and Scotus,[566] namely the subject of metaphysics as *ens*, with the object of such a science being the arrival by natural reason, of some knowledge of God and he suggests 'the similarity does not extend much further

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[561] Thomas Williams, *The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary*, (2005), pp. 575-585.
[562] Philip Tonner, 'Duns Scotus' Concept of the Univocity of Being', Another Look', *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 18, (2007), p. 18.
[563] Ibid., pp. 129–146.
[564] Philip Tonner, 'Duns Scotus' Concept of the Univocity of Being', Another Look', *Pli,* p. 18.
[565] Ibid., pp. 129-146.
[566] Aquinas, Summa Theologica 1.13.5 (I/I, 67–68); John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.3.1.1 (Vatican III, 1–48).

than this'.[567] Cross observes that 'a crucial difference lies in their assessment of the notion of *ens,* as for Scotus, there is a sense of *ens*, and other key concepts, which is univocal to God and creatures, and for Aquinas there is not'.[568] For Scotus, however, 'the concept of 'being' applies properly to neither God nor creatures which as Cross points out 'is something Radical Orthodoxy has overlooked or mistaken'.[569]

Cross (1999), affirms that 'in addition to Aristotle, Henry of Ghent was deeply influenced by the Aristotelian commentator and philosopher Avicenna (*ibn Sina*) who advocated for 'being' (*ens*), and not God as the subject of metaphysics, *ergo*, there appears to be a primacy of 'being' that suggests an antecedent concept prior to both God and creatures'.[570] Scholastic theologians, drawing on the Metaphysics and other works of Aristotle, held that 'transcendentals could not be predicated of both God and creatures univocally, that is, with the same meaning'.[571] Ghent concluded that at the transcendental level, 'being' forms two proper and distinct concepts corresponding to the two separate and diverse realities of divine and created being.

In addressing Radical Orthodoxy's use of Scotus, Daniel Horan, OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity, a Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (2014), suggests that 'Milbank considers that any separation of metaphysics from theology is problematic and ultimately nihilistic'. For him 'Scotus is the first to make such a move in his desire to establish a pure ontology independent of theology through

[567] Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 38–39.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Ibid., p. 299.
[571] Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (New York: Penguin, 2009), in Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, p. 299.

his univocal predication of 'Being', which is rooted in a separation of metaphysics and theology and creates a space that stands apart from God'.[572]

In his response, Horan asserts that 'Franciscan Medieval thought was grounded in the *a priori* knowledge of the 'Medieval Transcendentals' and in his *Ordinatio*, Scotus argues for Being as the primary and most basic Transcendental'.[573] Stephen Dumont, *Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus* (1998), posits that for Henry, 'a perfection could be abstracted from a creature and conceived with such indeterminacy that it is not just the universal knowledge of a creature but a confused knowledge of both God and creature'.[574] He asserts that 'this exceedingly abstract notion, which Henry calls 'analogously common,' provides the necessary epistemological bridge from creature to God by constituting a concept of both at once".[575]

Henry of Ghent's argument was that a concept of being must be proper to God or proper to creatures but not both, and in support of this he created a two-tier system of analogy ergo, two proper concepts of divine and created beings at the Transcendent level'.[576] Dumont (1998) further asserts that these concepts, while proper and diverse, nonetheless have a community of analogy, the real foundation for which is the causal dependence of the creature on God.[577] Daniel Horan *Postmodernity and Univocity*, (2014) proposes that Henry of Ghent's innovation of analogy was inherited, and 'it was an attempt, albeit a failed one, to transcend or respond to the difficulties he saw with

[572] Daniel P Horan, OFM., 'Radical Orthodoxy's Use of Scotus', in *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Augsburg: Fortress Publishers, 2014), pp. 30, 32.

[573] Scotus, Ordinatio, 1, dist. 8, pars, q. 3, no. 115 (Vatican 4: 206-207).

[574] Stephen Dumont, , 'Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus', *Routledge History of Philosophy* 3 (1998), p. 306.

[575] Ibid.

[576] Ibid.

[577] Ibid., p. 301.

the previously held views and both Dumont and Tonner agree, that 'Henry's position took the philosophy of analogy to its furthest point'.[578]

Horan (2014) asserts that "apart from revelation we have no ability to know or say anything about God", and he suggests that Scotus' 'Univocity of Being' refers primarily and explicitly to the conceptual realm, which is analogous to the possibility of relationality, ergo a 'Univocity of Being' allows for the possibility of grounding revealed truth in a conceptual reality", and he suggests that the doctrine of the 'Transcendentals' may offer a clearer understanding of Scotus' doctrine of a 'Univocity of Being'.[579]

Horan further suggests 'it is important to recall that for Scotus, this is a purely logical exercise, one that deals primarily with concepts in terms of a semantic argument arising from epistemological concerns'.[580] He asserts that for Scotus, 'the process by which we are able to come to a knowledge of God is what he calls metaphysics, the study of the 'Transcendentals', which he sets out in his *Reportatio'.*[581] He affirms that Scotus' thought is grounded in the notion that there is always some univocal notion of 'being' that is presupposed in any natural knowledge of God and for him, in talking about God, there is a presupposed notion of a Univocal concept of 'being', which he sets out in his '*Ordinatio'*: -

> 'I say that God is thought of not only in some concept analogous to that of a creature, that is, one entirely different from what is predicated of a creature, but also in some concept univocal to himself and to a creature.'[582]

[578] Daniel P Horan, OFM., *Postmodernity and Univocity* (2014), p. 23.
[579] Ibid., p. 186.
[580] Ibid., p. 165.
[581] Scotus, *Reportatio* 1, dist. 8, pars, q. 3, no. 115 (Vatican 4: 206-7); in Daniel P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity* (2014), p. 175.
[582] Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1, dist. 3, pars 1, q. 1-2, No 25 (Vatican 3: 16-17).

Scotus defines the meaning of univocity as follows: -

> Lest there be any contention about the word 'univocation' I call that concept univocal that has sufficient unity in itself that to affirm and deny it of the same subject suffices as a contradiction. It also suffices as a syllogistic middle term, so that where two terms are united in a middle term that is one in this fashion, they are inferred without a fallacy of equivocation to be united among themselves.[583]

His theory of Univocity is epistemological linked to 'how to know God', it is rooted in his appreciation of the univocal predication of the primary transcendental, 'being' (*ens),* and he found Henry of Ghent position problematic as he conceived of God as an abstracted and undetermined transcendental. Lydia Schumacher (2009), in agreement with Stephen Marrone, asserts that 'the Subtle Doctor's objections to divine illumination were in response to Henry of Ghent's argument and his two-tier system of analogy. [584]

In her response to Scotus' rejection of Henry of Ghent's theory of divine Illumination, Schumacher posits that 'Scotus interprets Augustine's illumination as his own theory of 'A Univocity of Being',[585] as for him, 'the divine light permeates created reality in a general sense, inasmuch as it causes beings to exist in an immutable mode of being, and through the divine light, creatures become manifestly knowable', *ergo,* 'what is known of them is known of God'.[586]

Schumacher (2009), highlights the divide between Scotus and Ghent which resulted in Scotus' rejection of Ghent's divine illumination theories and recounts Ghent's assertion that 'uncreated exemplars, received through illumination, are essential for certitude, because the objects that serve as the basis for the construction of a created

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583 Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1, dist. 3, pars 1, q. 1-2, No 25 (Vatican 3: 16-17).

584 Stephen P. Marrone, 'Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus on the Knowledge of Being', *Speculum* 63: 1 (1988), pp. 22–57.

585 John Duns Scotus, 'Concerning Human Knowledge,' 115, in Lydia Schumacher *Divine Illumination,* 2009.

586 Lydia Schumacher, (2009), p. 123.

exemplar are *mutable*, as is the knowing subject'.[587] Scotus' argument against this theory was that 'the objects known, and the knower are *immutable'*, ergo, for Scotus, 'objects of knowledge are inherently intelligible, and the human mind is inherently equipped to perceive such intelligibility for certitude to be obtained'. [588]

In his *Ordinatio,* Scotus attests that 'we can know something about God apart from or prior to revelation, through metaphysics, which he refers to as a science or the study of the Transcendentals'.[589] Allan Wolter (1946), asserts that 'it is necessary to understand the function of Scotus' use of the 'Transcendentals' in expounding semantic theories relating to his concepts or notions'.[590] He affirms that "the primary Transcendental 'Being' designates everything according to the proper *ratio* (balance) of each, and this predication is analogous or equivocal, however, he avers that 'It is possible to prescind from all differentiation and to signify by the term merely a common aspect, in which case both the term and the concept are predicated univocally'.[591] Wolter cautions us to be attentive to the distinction between a 'transcendental term' and affirms:-

> By 'transcendental terms' we mean those which are used to designate transcendental concepts, such as being, wisdom and truth, and a 'transcendental term' may have more than one meaning, however, concepts can have but one.[592]

E. Jennifer Ashworth, *Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy* (1991), affirms that in his early logical commentaries on the role of concepts, Scotus argued that it was impossible to have two

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[587] Lydia Schumacher, (2009), p. 254.
[588] Ibid., 123.
[589] Scotus *Reportatio 1A, prol., q.3, no. 218,* in Daniel P. Horan, 'Toward a Correct Reading of Scotus' Univocity of Being', *Postmodernity and Univocity*, p. 175.
[590] Allan B Wolter, *The Transcendentals and their function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, (1946), pp. 53, 56
[591] Ibid.
[592] Ibid.

concepts that were related in a prior and posterior way (as they are both formulated separately) and in the same way, it was impossible to have a single concept that captured such relationship. 'Therefore, 'being' was a 'chance univocal' and 'metaphor', a matter of linguistic usage replacing semantic analogy"'[593] Nevertheless, "Scotus did believe in metaphysical analogy whereby God and creatures, substances and accidents were related in a prior and posterior way, and he argued in his later theological works that without a unified concept of 'being', neither metaphysics nor theology would be possible', and he replaced the claim that 'being' was a 'chance equivocal' with the claim that it was univocal".[594]

Ludger Honnefelder, *Franciscan Spirit and Aristotelian Rationality* (2007), asserts at the core of Scotus doctrine of 'being as being', is the first transcendental concept of human intellection,[595] and he asserts that in his *Ordinatio,* [596] Scotus shows that all the distinct concepts by which we conceive our world imply one concept that goes beyond all categories, predicating nothing but 'being' (*ens*).[597] Honnefelder avers that Scotus' concept of Haecceitas (Individuation) affirms the unrepeatable uniqueness of the human person and defines the notion of 'being' *ens* as the irreducibly simple something or ratio that everything which is able to exist actually has, (*Irdubatui UV d,8 q.1m n. 2. Ed., Viv 17:7*).[598] Scotus defines God as infinite 'Being', the One Who contains all perfections in an infinite mode, 'Who exceeds a finite entity beyond any relative

[593] E. J. Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy', *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 1 (1991), pp. 39–67.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Ludger Honnefelder, Franciscan Spirit and Aristotelian Rationality: John Duns Scotus's New Approach to Theology and Philosophy, *Franciscan Studies*, 66 (2008), pp. 465-478.
[596] Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d.3 p.1 q.1-2 nn. 80-91.; in Honnefelder, p. 471.
[597] Honnefelder, (2008), p. 471.
[598] *Quodlibetum* q. 5. N4, ed., Viv. 25: 199ff., in Ludger Honnefelder, p. 472.

measure or proportion that could be designed', and 'the One Who must be thought of as radical freedom but can be thought of as pure Love'. [599]

This chapter engaged in an extensive examination of the development of Franciscan theology, philosophy and metaphysics towards a knowledge of God and the meaning of being, through the lenses of Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, to illustrate the depth and complexity of participation, contingency, and divine knowledge in the Franciscan tradition. An extensive examination of scholarly responses to Scotus' Univocity of Being revealed his innovative concept was not an ontological claim, rather, it demonstrated that in employing logic and semantics, his thought moved outside the scope of analogy to ensure a meaningful theological language that maintained God's transcendence.

A hybrid of theological and philosophical analysis of the works of medieval Franciscan scholars, particularly Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, demonstrates that early Franciscan metaphysics served as a tool for articulating a deeply participatory, Christocentric, and relational vision of reality. This vision integrated Neoplatonic illumination, voluntarist metaphysics, and a univocal conception of being, all grounded in the intimate relationship between God and creation.

The roots of Franciscan theology and metaphysics were reflected and exemplified in the life and spiritual journey of Francis of Assisi and further developed through Bonaventure's metaphysical triad of Emanation (*exitus*), Exemplarism (*exemplum*), and Return (*reditus*). This triune process, originating from God, reflecting God, and returning to God, is shaped by the medieval transcendentals: the One, the True, and the Good. For Bonaventure, all knowledge depends on divine illumination,

[599] Honnefelder (2008), p. 474.

effected through participation in God's eternal ideas, and uniting faith and reason in the pursuit of ultimate truth.

Bonaventure describes Being itself as a light flowing from God, illuminating the human mind and revealing creation as inherently sacramental. Duns Scotus builds on Bonaventure's metaphysical vision, and his thought shifts from Neoplatonic participation to a more personalist, Christocentric ontology. His doctrine of the Univocity of Being integrates theology and metaphysics and affirms that 'being' is said in the same way (univocally) of both God and creatures. He maintains the infinite distinction between divine and finite being, and his doctrine of the 'formal distinction' preserves divine Simplicity, enabling theological discourse about God's infinite perfections, such as Wisdom, Goodness, and Freedom.

Scotus asserts that God's creative act is not determined by metaphysical necessity but flows from divine Freedom, and that creation itself is radically contingent. In this vision, divine-human relationships are not merely metaphysical structures but bonds of love. Thus, for Scotus, moral action, personal dignity, and participation in divine life are grounded in freedom, love, and relational being. His emphasis on moral goodness as prior to intellectual knowledge reveals his ethical metaphysics as a framework in which the will, guided by love and justice, constitutes the highest participation in divine being.

This chapter sought to defend the coherence and theological promise of Duns Scotus' metaphysical insights in consideration of Radical Orthodoxy's critique, and argued for a Franciscan metaphysics grounded in contingency, relationality, and the dignity of the individual. Taken together, Scotus' concepts of univocity, haecceity, and contingency serve not as abstract metaphysical constructs, but as instruments for affirming the concrete dignity and particularity of every created being. They provide a

metaphysical grammar for presence, freedom, and relational participation, and prepare the way for a theology that recognises *the Ordinary Life* as a site of divine encounter.

Franciscan metaphysics presents a radically participatory, Christ-centred, and personalist vision of reality. Unlike Thomism, which emphasises intellectual contemplation, the Franciscan tradition sees love as the highest mode of participation in God, and the human will, oriented toward divine Love, is more central than abstract cognition. In contrast to the hierarchical and abstract metaphysics of Thomism, it affirms divine freedom, individual dignity, and loving relationship as the foundation of theological participation.

These metaphysical principles do not isolate individuals but embed them within a relational matrix of freedom and responsibility. Each being's unique identity becomes a site of potential divine encounter, affirming participation not through uniformity, but through individuated presence. This metaphysical vision ultimately points beyond itself to a way of life, where theological commitments are not confined to scholastic categories but are enfleshed in a vision of *the Ordinary Life*, where grace and nature meet, and where the metaphysics of participation becomes a metaphor for lived experience grounded in humility, freedom, and encounter.

Thus, the Franciscan understanding of being and knowledge resists abstraction and finds its true expression in lived reality. The ordinary becomes sacramental when viewed through the lens of participation, revealing the depth of divine presence in everyday relationships, material simplicity, and humble service. Against the backdrop of Radical Orthodoxy's critique, this chapter has shown that Franciscan thought does not reduce theology to voluntarism or univocal abstraction but grounds it in a profound theology of humility, presence, and encounter.

As this thesis moves toward its conclusion, the task is to draw these strands into a coherent theological framework capable of responding meaningfully to contemporary interfaith tensions, while remaining faithful to the Franciscan metaphysical vision of encounter and participation.

The complementary contributions of Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus together prepare the ground for a Franciscan vision of *the Ordinary Life* as the lived horizon of metaphysics. The concluding chapter therefore turns from metaphysical articulation and epistemological analysis to their lived and ethical implications, showing how Franciscan participation shapes *the Ordinary Life* and grounds a theological framework for interfaith encounter in contemporary contexts.

6.0 Conclusion

This concluding chapter draws together the theological and metaphysical trajectory developed throughout the thesis, integrating the lived witness of Saint Francis, the contemplative metaphysics of Bonaventure, and the ethical and philosophical precision of John Duns Scotus. Taken together, these figures articulate a coherent Franciscan vision grounded in humility, encounter and participation, towards a transformative encounter with God.

Before turning to the synthesis that follows, it is pertinent to clarify several key terms that have shaped the argument throughout. In Franciscan theology, nature designates the created order as fundamentally good, ordered toward God, and capable of mediating divine presence. In contrast, grace is not a property of nature but the free self-communication of God that restores, perfects, and elevates nature within the movement of participation. In this thesis, grace is therefore not understood as a naturalised quality, as implied in certain interpretations within Radical Orthodoxy, but as the divine gift through which creation receives and responds to God. The integration of grace and nature occurs through encounter and participation, the relational movement that draws creation into communion with its Creator.

Within the Franciscan tradition, this integration is expressed sacramentally: creation itself mediates divine presence and becomes the locus of encounter with God and neighbour. This theological vision forms the basis for the synthesis that follows, in which the Franciscan understanding of *the Ordinary Life* embodies the participatory union of grace and nature in lived experience and interfaith engagement, animating a spirituality of dialogue, humility, and transformation.

In drawing these insights together, this chapter offers a theological synthesis of the key metaphysical and theological themes of the thesis, humility, encounter, participation, the integration of grace and nature, and the sacramentality of creation. It situates these themes within the Franciscan vision of *the Ordinary Life,* where metaphysics and theology become not abstract systems but lived realities of encounter and transformation. In doing so, it demonstrates how the Franciscan framework not only responds to the intellectual challenge of Radical Orthodoxy but also animates a spirituality of dialogue and engagement.

The integration of grace and nature therefore occurs not by conflation but by encounter, an event in which divine generosity draws creation into communion with God. In this way, a Franciscan metaphysics of participation describes the structure of reality as relational, such that all being receives its existence from and returns to the divine source. This participatory vision undergirds a sacramental understanding of creation, where every created reality signifies and mediates God's presence.

In challenging any separation between theology and life, this vision reflects a distinctly Franciscan incarnational worldview in which the Incarnation is not an isolated doctrinal event, but the interpretive horizon for understanding creation, relationality, and participation. In this light, the created order is not merely the context for grace but the concrete medium through which divine presence is encountered and lived.

The preceding chapters have shown how, from Francis of Assisi's radical conversion and meeting with the Sultan, through Bonaventure's inspired metaphysical ascent to God, to Scotus's articulation of freedom and moral goodness, each stage expresses the same movement of return to the divine source. Hence, the Franciscan

synthesis resists the fragmentation of grace, nature, and reason that Radical Orthodoxy critiques.

By affirming creation's goodness and its capacity to mediate divine presence, Franciscan theology offers a metaphysical and ethical vision that is sacramental, incarnational, and participatory. It is within this horizon that the notion of *the Ordinary Life* emerges, not as a separate doctrine, but as the culmination of a metaphysical and theological trajectory where being, love, and participation converge. This thesis has shown that in Franciscan thought, metaphysics becomes spirituality and contemplation becomes encounter, in which intellectual insight and divine love coincide, so that the knowledge of God is realised in lived participation rather than abstract reasoning.

6.1 *The Ordinary Life*: Encounter and Participation

Building on the synthesis established in the preceding chapter, this section explores how the Franciscan vision finds concrete expression in *the Ordinary Life,* the lived horizon where humility, poverty, and charity become the modes of divine participation. Rather than being merely a retrospective summary, it carries the thesis forward into contemporary application, showing how Franciscan metaphysics, rooted in encounter and relationality, offers a dynamic model for theological engagement across traditions.

In this horizon, participation, grounded in relational presence and the integration of grace and nature, becomes the foundation for interfaith encounter and the de-radicalisation of difference. It also responds directly to the critique of Radical Orthodoxy, not only by defending the coherence of the Franciscan tradition, but by showing its capacity to ground a participatory ethic of peace, humility, and shared presence.

The preceding chapters traced a theological arc that unfolded through the lived witness of Saint Francis, the contemplative and participatory metaphysics of Bonaventure, and the individuated, ethical framework of John Duns Scotus. Together, Bonaventure's contemplative ascent and Scotus's moral precision reveal how the Franciscan synthesis unites contemplation and ethical freedom, grounding metaphysics in lived participation and relational responsibility. Each stage of this tradition offered not only a response to Radical Orthodoxy's critique but also contributed to a participatory theology capable of grounding peace, dialogue, and mutual transformation.

Though articulated as a vision, *the Ordinary Life* is not an abstraction, rather it represents a lived horizon where theological and metaphysical commitments are formed through humility, encounter, participation, and embodied presence. Building upon this retrieval, and in dialogue with the critique raised by Radical Orthodoxy, this study traced the contours of a participatory sacramental ontology grounded in divine love; moreover, it sought to recover the essence and ethos of the Franciscan tradition as a coherent vision of theological and metaphysical integration, and in doing so, contribute to a renewed framework for intra-faith engagement and interfaith dialogue.

Francis' conversion experiences, his encounters with the poor, the marginalised, and even those considered enemies, became occasions of participation in God's love. His historic meeting with Sultan al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade illuminated the Franciscan attributes of humility, poverty, and simplicity, not merely as moral disciplines, but as metaphysical conditions for participation in divine life. This event, understood within a participatory framework, exemplified a theology of encounter grounded in the agency of the Other and the hospitality of God.

A comprehensive analysis demonstrated how the Franciscan integration of grace and nature challenges the dualism posited by Radical Orthodoxy, showing that key events in Francis's life embody the union of a theology of encounter with a metaphysics of participation.

An extended appreciation of Francis's spiritual formation, culminating in his historic encounter with Sultan al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade, was deepened by a sustained focus on the role of hospitality and the agency of the Other. This study demonstrated how the historical meeting exemplified Franciscan metaphysical principles and how hospitality and the agency of the Other inspired concrete actions that fostered understanding and peace. Furthermore, it offered a compelling vision of how metaphysical thought can meaningfully contribute to interreligious harmony. It highlighted the integration of a theology of encounter with a metaphysics of participation as a transformative approach to overcoming barriers to dialogue and offered a shared ontological framework that affirmed the interconnectedness of all reality and the presence of divine grace throughout creation.

Analyses demonstrated that by emphasising relationality, immanence, and the sacramentality of creation, Franciscan theology provides both a philosophical and theological foundation for cultivating openness, respect, and collaboration among diverse religious traditions. A close reading of the works of medieval Franciscan scholars, especially Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, revealed how Francis's spirituality of humility and relational love shaped their theological and philosophical vision, giving coherence to the participatory metaphysics that underpins the Franciscan intellectual tradition.

A comprehensive analysis of the works of medieval Franciscan scholars, with a particular focus on Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, revealed the profound influence of

Francis of Assisi's life and spirituality on their theological and philosophical concepts, and demonstrated how the Franciscan attributes, of humility, poverty, and simplicity, and the primary motifs of freedom of the will, relationality, and moral goodness are inflected and intricately woven into their writings. Such insights offered a deeper appreciation of Franciscan theology's richness and provided meaningful responses to critiques posed by Radical Orthodoxy. This synthesis between experience and intellect, and between the lived vision of Francis and the metaphysical articulation of Bonaventure and Scotus, sets the stage for the Franciscan understanding of *the Ordinary Life.*

While Radical Orthodoxy rightly critiques modernity's fragmentation and secular enclosure, its reading of Franciscan theology often underestimates the participatory logic within the tradition. This thesis has shown that the Franciscan framework, particularly through the works of Bonaventure and Scotus, can provide a sacramental vision of reality capable of engaging secularism without collapsing into it, and where grace and nature, knowledge and mystery, creation and Creator remain distinct yet relational.

Ultimately, this research project determined that the Franciscan integration of theology and metaphysics yields a framework for interfaith dialogue that is both conceptually coherent and spiritually grounded, one that fosters peace, justice, presence, and unity, and affirms the dignity of difference within the community of creation.

Having traced how the Franciscan metaphysical and theological vision coheres as a participatory framework, the following section turns to its culmination in *the Ordinary Life*. As developed in this thesis, *The Ordinary Life* emerges from within the Franciscan tradition itself, it reflects Saint Francis of Assisi’s emphasis on humility,

simplicity, and the sanctity of everyday existence, and it functions as a theological category grounded in participation. It is not a modern imposition, but a theological insight drawn from Francis's lived experience, in this way, *the Ordinary Life* becomes a metaphysical and spiritual horizon.

The vision of *the Ordinary Life* does not arise from abstract theory alone, rather it is born from a theological anthropology shaped by humility, metaphysical participation, and the sacramental presence of God in the everyday. It becomes the new horizon where theology is embodied and metaphysics no longer remains abstract but is realised in lived humility, and sacrificial love, towards dialogical openness; it becomes the mode through which relational difference is encountered, not erased and theology does not retreat from the world but enters more deeply into it, transforming encounter into communion, and affecting the de-radicalisation of difference on the path towards peace.

Participation, in this sense, is not merely an ecclesiological or sacramental category, but a way of being in the world and of engaging with others, creation, and God with reverence and mutuality. In retrieving Franciscan metaphysical insights, this thesis does not culminate in abstraction but points to *the Ordinary Life* as a lived horizon where theology and metaphysics are embodied in humility, freedom, and encounter.

The integration of theology and metaphysics thus provides a framework for engaging across differences, whether theological, philosophical or cultural, and offers a meeting ground for dialogue with the Other in the shared exploration of being, purpose, and relationality. In focusing on universal questions of existence, metaphysics offers a space for plurality where diverse perspectives can meet without reducing their distinctiveness and uniqueness or compromising moral and theological integrity.

The section that follows synthesises these insights into a theological framework for dialogue, rooted in the Franciscan ethos, where metaphysics offers a space for plurality in which diverse perspectives can meet without reducing their distinctiveness or compromising moral and theological integrity. In doing so, it extends this participatory vision into an interfaith horizon, where *the Ordinary Life* becomes the ground of humility, encounter, participation and peace.

6.2 Shared Distinctive Commitments: A Synergistic Vision

This section identifies the key theological and metaphysical commitments shared by Franciscan Theology and Radical Orthodoxy and shows how their integration provides the foundation for a renewed model of interfaith dialogue.

The following table presents the shared theological and metaphysical commitments of Franciscan Theology and the Radical Orthodoxy movement, alongside their distinctive insights, and forms the conceptual basis for an integrated framework for interfaith dialogue. The synthesis achieved in *the Ordinary Life* reveals that Franciscan metaphysics does not stand in isolation but resonates deeply with other theological traditions. Among these, Radical Orthodoxy offers a particularly fruitful dialogue partner. Both share a commitment to participation, sacramentality, and the recovery of theological metaphysics as the heart of culture and encounter.

The table below outlines core areas of overlap and distinction: -

Shared Commitments and Comparative Themes

Category	Franciscan Theology	Radical Orthodoxy
Participation	Participation expressed practically and liturgically, through freedom, humility, and contingency.	Participation through liturgical and sacramental structure of being.
Grace and Nature	Nature is dignified and is perfected and transformed through grace.	Grace restores and transcends fallen nature through sacramentality.
Ontology	The goodness of being as contingent and gifted, affirms a pre-modern participatory ontology.	Critiques modern ontology; seeks return to pre-modern participatory ontology.
Knowledge of God	Divine illumination and intuitive cognition through, practical and liturgical encounter and participation.	Knowledge through worship, liturgy, and communal tradition.
Relationality	Personhood and salvation intrinsically relational in community, a triune paradigm.	Community as theological locus; critiques individualism.

Summary: -

i) Participation: - Both Radical Orthodoxy and Franciscan theology affirm participation as the ontological link between God and creation. Radical Orthodoxy emphasizes participation through liturgical and sacramental mediation, whereas Franciscan thought expresses participation through metaphysical humility, freedom, and moral goodness, with particular emphasis on the embodied nature of participation in *the Ordinary Life*.

ii) Contingency: - Franciscan theology places strong metaphysical weight on the contingency of creation as an expression of divine freedom. Radical Orthodoxy also affirms contingency but often subsumes it under its critique of autonomy and univocity. In the Franciscan tradition, contingency is understood not as a philosophical limitation, but as a theological expression of divine freedom and generosity. Although Radical Orthodoxy has implied that Franciscan theology risks diluting the Church's mediatory role, particularly through its emphasis on contingency, simplicity, and participation, this thesis has shown that the Franciscan tradition is, in fact,

deeply embedded within an ecclesial framework. This is evident in its emphasis on the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life, its Christocentric metaphysics, and its commitment to lived community. Such a vision resonates closely with *Lumen Gentium*, which presents the Church as the 'universal sacrament of salvation', and with *Gaudium et Spes*, which affirms the sanctity of ordinary life and the dignity of the human person in relation to the divine.

The Franciscan tradition lives out this vision not through doctrinal centralism, but through relational presence, humility, and shared participation. Contemporary expressions of this ecclesial spirituality, such as the Third Order Franciscan communities within Anglican and Roman Catholic contexts, embody a liturgical and communal life that is both theologically grounded and open to the world. Rather than rejecting theological integrity or the Church, the Franciscan approach reframes both around the relational, participatory nature of divine grace as lived in *the Ordinary Life*.

This study has demonstrated that the perceived divide between Radical Orthodoxy and Franciscan theology is more apparent than real. While Radical Orthodoxy tends to preserve theological integrity through ecclesial centrality and metaphysical systematisation, the Franciscan tradition does so through incarnational witness, humility, and vulnerable openness to the Other.

Both traditions reject the fragmentation of secular modernity and affirm a metaphysics of participation, although they differ in tone and mode. Rather than standing in opposition, they can be read as complementary, as Radical Orthodoxy offers a rigorous theological scaffolding, while Franciscan spirituality embodies that theology in lived, dialogical practice. Together, they offer a model of interfaith and intercultural dialogue that preserves theological depth while embracing radical hospitality.

The insights of Radical Orthodoxy and Franciscan theology, when brought together, offer a theologically robust and spiritually grounded framework for interfaith dialogue. Radical Orthodoxy preserves the metaphysical depth necessary for maintaining theological distinctiveness; the Franciscan tradition ensures that this distinctiveness is lived out through simplicity, humility, and peace. Crucially, this synthesis does not compromise *the Ordinary Life* but rather honours it as the privileged space where divine participation and human encounter meet."

While Radical Orthodoxy has sometimes inferred that Franciscan theology diminishes the Church's mediating and sacramental role, particularly its emphasis on the Eucharist, this thesis has shown that the Franciscan tradition is profoundly ecclesial and Eucharistic in character. Its theology is shaped by the primacy of the Eucharist, and its Christocentric orientation is both sacramental and communal.

This ecclesial commitment is not abstract or juridical, but lived through *the Ordinary Life*, expressed in communities of prayer, service, and solidarity. The continued expression of this tradition in movements such as the Third Order, including within the Anglican Communion, demonstrates that Franciscan spirituality remains embedded in the liturgical and social life of the Church.

Together, the Franciscan and Radical Orthodoxy traditions reveal that doctrinal integrity and dialogical openness are not mutually exclusive but mutually illuminating, forming a theological ecology of encounter that is both rigorous and compassionate. This synthesis between Radical Orthodoxy and Franciscan theology prepares the way for the final section, where these insights converge in a theological framework for interfaith dialogue.

Having shown that participation, grace, and relationality form the common ground between metaphysical depth and lived encounter, the next section turns to their

integration within *the Ordinary Life* as a model for dialogue and peace. Here, the Franciscan vision of humility, simplicity, and hospitality finds its fullest expression, demonstrating how theology, when lived relationally, becomes the ground of encounter across traditions and cultures.

This synthesis between Radical Orthodoxy and Franciscan theology prepares the way for the following section, where these insights converge in a theological framework for interfaith dialogue. Having shown that participation, grace, and relationality form the common ground between metaphysical depth and lived encounter, the next section turns to their integration within *the Ordinary Life* as a model for dialogue and peace. Here, the Franciscan vision of humility, simplicity, and hospitality finds its fullest expression, demonstrating how theology, when lived relationally, becomes the ground of encounter across traditions and cultures.

6.3 Towards A Franciscan Framework for Interfaith Dialogue

The Franciscan theological vision offers not merely a speculative metaphysics but a lived theology of encounter, one that unites contemplation and action, faith and reason, grace and nature. Within this synthesis, the metaphysics of participation becomes the foundation for what this study has termed *the de-radicalisation of difference*: a mode of interfaith engagement grounded not in negation or assimilation but in the mutual recognition of divine presence within all creation.

In this light, the Franciscan way of being, marked by humility, poverty, and relational love, embodies a metaphysical and moral grammar capable of holding unity and diversity together. The Franciscan insight that all creatures participate in the overflowing goodness of God grounds a theology that is both incarnational and dialogical. This vision transforms dialogue from an intellectual negotiation into a shared

participation in divine generosity: a metaphysics of peace that turns difference into encounter, where theological depth and practical compassion are inseparable.

The final section gathers the preceding insights into a coherent framework for interfaith dialogue, illustrating how the Franciscan tradition provides the metaphysical and moral grounding for genuine openness to the Other without loss of identity. In developing a synergistic theological framework for interfaith dialogue, this section draws on the Franciscan tradition's ethical posture, marked by humility, poverty, and simplicity, and its metaphysical foundations in contingency, freedom, and participation. Together, they offer a synergistic vision of interfaith dialogue as not merely a theoretical construct, but a practical framework, rooted in a theology of encounter and a metaphysics of participation and ordered toward justice and peace in creation.

Within this framework, hospitality is not merely a social virtue but a metaphysical disposition, a *hospitality of being* that is relational rather than transactional. It resonates with the Franciscan impulse toward openness and encounter, and with Radical Orthodoxy's call to recover the theological and participatory grounding of all human knowledge and culture.

To welcome the Other is to acknowledge a shared participation in 'being', a shared vulnerability, and a shared desire for the Good. Franciscan theology, grounded in the Incarnation and lived through simplicity, provides a robust theological basis for hospitality as a central feature of interfaith dialogue. It is within this horizon of hospitality and relational participation that we can now consider how the Franciscan and Radical Orthodoxy traditions together offer a meeting ground for dialogue with the Other.

6.3.1 A Meeting Ground for Dialogue with the Other

At its heart, Franciscan theology offers a lived metaphysical framework grounded in humility, encounter and participation. This shared vision between Franciscan theology and Radical Orthodoxy offers a spiritually grounded and theologically integrated framework for interfaith dialogue, articulated through the following foundational insights: -

i) Nature is inherently good and ordered toward God but finds its ultimate fulfilment only through grace.

ii) Grace does not destroy or compete with nature but perfects, transforms, and elevates it, allowing human beings to participate in the divine life.

iii) The world is a sacramental reality, always pointing to God, and human beings are called to recognize and live out this sacred vision in their everyday lives.

This shared vision offers a practical and spiritually rooted framework for interfaith dialogue that expresses the following theological commitments: -

i) A shared ontological foundation that highlights the interconnectedness of all beings and the sacredness of creation.

ii) An affirmation of divine immanence and transcendence, allowing for a deep appreciation of each tradition's unique understanding of God or ultimate reality.

iii) The universality of divine love as a unifying theme that inspires ethical action and collaborative projects.

iv) An affirmation of the uniqueness of each human person, fostering mutual respect and enrichment.

v) An embrace of religious and intellectual humility, recognising the limits of human understanding.

vi) The vision of interfaith dialogue as a journey of spiritual transformation, where participants grow closer to the divine through their encounters with Others.

vii) A call to action for social and environmental justice, rooted in the sacramentality of creation.

These principles form not merely a conceptual synthesis, but a framework for dialogical practice, one that is attentive to difference, anchored in theological integrity, and oriented toward spiritual transformation through encounter. By grounding interfaith dialogue in integrated metaphysics, religious communities can celebrate their common humanity, work for the common good, and deepen their collective spiritual life, while honouring the distinctiveness of each tradition. This approach builds bridges across traditions and calls for a renewed vision of the world as sacred, a space where divine Love and Wisdom continually work through creation.

6.3.2 Metaphysics: A Tool for Dialogue

For both Radical Orthodoxy and the Franciscan tradition, a metaphysics of participation is the key concept that binds God and creation in a dynamic relationship. This study has shown that far from fracturing this link, Scotus' metaphysics, particularly his use of the formal distinction and intuitive cognition, offers a careful means of safeguarding divine transcendence, while honouring the particularity and dignity of created beings.

From this perspective, metaphysics becomes a constructive tool for interfaith dialogue, grounded not in sameness but in shared structures of beauty, desire and relationality. It allows traditions to encounter one another, not through abstract

sameness, but through their mutual participation in the divine mystery. As such, metaphysics remains not only relevant but essential to a theology of encounter, preparing the ground for dialogue that respects both difference and commonality. This vision of metaphysics as dialogical ground leads naturally into questions of public space and theological presence in a pluralistic world.

6.3.3 Plurality and the Nature of Public Space

In a pluralistic world marked by difference and complexity, Scotus' metaphysical insights offer a foundation for a relational theology of public space. Scotus' metaphysical vision, grounded in the singular dignity of every creature, opens a profound space for relational participation. His affirmation of Haecceitas makes possible a theology of presence in which each person can be encountered in their particularity, not as a concept, but as a beloved participant in divine reality. Moreover, Scotus' metaphysical moral theological framework, shaped by right reason, right action right order, and grounded in sacrificial love, places freedom not in autonomy but in relationality. This synergised vision is neither hierarchical nor relativistic, rather it offers a participatory negotiation of doctrinal difference.

This metaphysical and ethical integration prepares the way for a vision of *the Ordinary Life* as the site where theology and metaphysics are lived out, where encounter, difference, and love converge in daily presence. This synergised vision is neither hierarchical nor relativistic, rather it offers a participatory negotiation of doctrinal difference, and affirms the contemplative recognition of shared dependency upon God.

In an increasingly pluralistic world, the Franciscan tradition's commitment to dialogue, peace, and humility emerges as a vital contribution to theology. Public space is never neutral; it is shaped by the metaphysical visions of lived realities. This thesis

argues for a vision of public life grounded in relational ontology, participatory dialogue, and sacramental imagination, towards a horizon capable of transforming conflict into communion.

This study has shown that the divine cannot be confined to systems, typologies, or doctrinal finalities. To attempt to place God in a conceptual box is to risk reducing His Infinite Freedom to human frameworks, a posture that Franciscan theology, with its emphasis on humility, contingency, and reverence, persistently resists. What emerges instead is a participatory vision where sacramental presence and theological hospitality are not theoretical ideals but embodied in the simplicity and depth of daily life.

At the threshold of this vision, we are reminded that theology must always begin in humility before the mystery it seeks to articulate. Radicalisation, whether theological or political, risks placing God in a conceptual box, limiting the divine to human typologies, systems, or structures of control. In such a framework, power subtly shifts from God to humanity, as if grace were ours to manage or restrict. In contrast, the de-radicalisation of difference affirms God's infinite freedom, love, and goodness, not as abstract concepts, but as gifts freely given through grace. This thesis has argued that such a movement from possession to participation is not weakness but the very strength of Christian theology. In this way, *the Ordinary Life* becomes not merely a space for encounter, but a sacred horizon of grace, where God's presence transforms human limitation into communion.

6.4 *The Ordinary Life*: A Metaphysical Horizon

Building on the participatory and relational themes outlined in the previous section, this final section turns to the lived dimension of Franciscan metaphysics as it unfolds in *the Ordinary Life*, the horizon where theology becomes life and participation becomes presence. *The Ordinary Life* ensures that metaphysics is not confined to elite

discourse but becomes lived wisdom where the relational, moral, and participatory dimensions of being become powerful expressions in simple acts of encounter, care and justice.

In Franciscan thought, *the Ordinary Life* is not beneath theology or metaphysics, rather it is the horizon and the sacramental space in which divine grace is mediated, not through grand abstractions, but through individuals in community, where the relational, moral, and participatory dimensions of being become powerful expressions in simple acts of encounter, care and justice.

In the Franciscan tradition the individual is never isolated but situated within the larger body of creation and the divine economy of grace, where participation is not only metaphysical, it is pastoral. *The Ordinary Life* serves as the living ground where metaphysical participation and theological encounter meet and rooted in the Franciscan vision, it becomes a space in which grace is mediated through the rhythms of daily existence. This reclaiming of public theology grounds theological reflection not in abstraction, but in the human condition and honours the dignity of creation, where *the Ordinary Life* becomes the incarnational site for theological discourse, where humility, simplicity, and relationality transform the everyday into a locus of divine encounter.

6.4.1 Grace, Nature, and Dialogue

The Ordinary Life and the mediation of God's Grace through individuals are elements central to the Franciscan tradition which emphasises that divine grace is not restricted to extraordinary or miraculous events but is deeply present in the everyday experiences of life. By incorporating the concept of *the Ordinary Life*, this framework highlights that not only extraordinary religious experiences, but also daily human activities are imbued with divine grace. This perspective affirms that all people, in their

unique individuality and relationships, are vessels of divine grace, reflecting God's Love and Goodness through their actions, presence, and participation in creation.

This view suggests that the actions and relationships that make up ordinary human life are arenas for spiritual participation, where God's presence can be encountered and honoured, and invites a deeper appreciation for how divine grace can be experienced through acts of service, love, and duty in one's everyday environment. The concept of *the Ordinary Life* can also foster interfaith dialogue by emphasizing the shared experiences and values that unite people across religious boundaries. Moreover, in acknowledging the sacredness of everyday life, the framework can create common ground for interfaith understanding, emphasizing that all traditions recognise the divine presence in the routines and responsibilities of human life.

These theological and metaphysical insights are not confined to the academic or ecclesial elite, they are lived in what the Franciscan tradition calls *the Ordinary Life*, where poverty is not privation but posture; humility is not defeat but freedom; and simplicity becomes a mirror of divine clarity. *The Ordinary Life* thus becomes the sacrament of metaphysical participation, a site where grace and nature meet in the rhythms of work, love, prayer, and care. It is in this unassuming arena that interfaith dialogue most truly occurs, not only in words, but in shared presence and the dignity of the real.

6.5 Challenging Secular Views of the Ordinary

Radical Orthodoxy critiques secular modernity for fragmenting reality and eroding its sacred and sacramental dimensions. Secularism, according to Radical Orthodoxy, has reduced human life to material and economic pursuits, disconnecting it from a transcendent source of meaning and value.

An integrated metaphysical framework, that emphasises the sacredness of *the Ordinary Life* and draws on Franciscan theology, engages with secularism and modernity by offering a sacramental vision of reality that re-enchants the world and provides a more integrated understanding of existence. In proposing that all aspects of human life, work, family, community and nature are infused with divine grace, and by emphasising the sacramentality of *the Ordinary Life*, this framework challenges the secular view that everyday existence is purely mundane or devoid of spiritual significance. Rather, it affirms that even the most routine activities are opportunities for divine encounter and participation, towards re-enchanting the world and restoring its sacred meaning.

This sacramental vision has practical implications for how society views human dignity and social responsibilities, and it calls for a renewed sense of reverence for all life, thereby aligning with Radical Orthodoxy's aim of recovering a world where God's presence is recognised as encompassing all created reality. The proposed integrated metaphysical framework addresses Radical Orthodoxy's critiques of secularism and modernity by offering a sacramental vision of reality that provides a theologically grounded basis for human dignity, and social justice. Emphasising the sacredness of *the Ordinary Life* and the relational interconnectedness of all beings, this framework presents a holistic and ethically robust response to the fragmentation and spiritual emptiness of secular modern culture, that aligns with Radical Orthodoxy's call to recover the sacredness of all existence.

This integrated framework bridges religious and secular concerns by respecting modernity's emphasis on human rights and dignity, while reinterpreting these values through a sacramental and metaphysical lens. In asserting that every aspect of human life is sacred and participatory in God's Grace, this framework implies that society has a duty to ensure that individuals can flourish in their ordinary lives, free from oppression,

poverty or discrimination since these rights are rooted in the divine Order. In this view, the protection and upholding of natural rights is not only a moral responsibility, but a spiritual imperative grounded in divine participation. Thus, *the Ordinary Life* offers not only a Franciscan response to secular fragmentation, but also a universal horizon of dialogue where the sacred and the secular meet in the shared pursuit of the Good.

6.6 Future Research: Natural Law and the Ethical Ordinary

This integrated theological and metaphysical proposal opens onto an ethical horizon and invites a reconsideration of natural law in light of a participatory ontology. A natural next step in this research is to consider how such a framework could shape moral theology and interfaith engagement in a pluralistic world.

Engagement with the work of Brian Tierney is essential in recovering the Franciscan contribution to natural law, not as a system of domination, but as one rooted in relationality and gifted freedom. Tierney's insights into natural rights, combined with the Franciscan metaphysical emphasis on divine immanence, offer a framework for responding to modernity with theological depth. This approach affirms that concepts such as human rights are not merely secular constructs but are grounded in the sacred order of creation. By affirming the legitimacy of natural rights while rooting them in a deeper spiritual reality, Franciscan theology could offer a constructive dialogue with modern ethical and political values.

Further study could draw upon the complementary insights of Charles Taylor and Brian Tierney. Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2007) and *Sources of the Self* (1989) provide a cultural and philosophical framework for understanding how moral horizons and *the Ordinary Life* have evolved in late modernity. Tierney's *The Idea of Natural Rights* (1997) and *Religion, Law and the Growth of Constitutional Thought* (1982) trace the development of moral agency and natural law and ecclesial responsibility in the

medieval tradition. Tierney's work bridges theological, political, and legal thought, making him a vital interlocutor for expanding the Franciscan framework into conversations around moral theology and public ethics.

Together, Tierney and Taylor offer robust tools for enriching the theological, moral, and metaphysical dimensions of Franciscan-inspired interfaith dialogue. Their insights point toward a model of ethics not based on imposition or exclusion, but on encounter, mutuality, and the sacred dignity of every person.

6.7 In Conclusion

While Radical Orthodoxy seeks to defend the sacred against secular flattening, the Franciscan tradition restores theological meaning to contingency, freedom, and the dignity of the individual by recognising encounter as the place where grace is mediated through natural relationships, between persons, within communities, and across creation itself. Metaphysics is thus not the enemy of the ordinary, but its illumination. To participate in God is not only to think rightly but to live rightly, and *the Ordinary Life*, lived in humility, simplicity, and peace, becomes both the ground and fruit of theological insight, where participation matures into communion.

In *the Ordinary Life*, the theological and metaphysical framework developed here finds its fullest expression, not as an abstract system but as a lived horizon in which participation, encounter, and humility shape daily existence. Hospitality emerges as a spiritual practice of presence and receptivity; humility as a posture of non-rivalrous being; and justice not only through structural reform but through the restoration of relationship. Difference, in this light, need not be a source of division but may be transfigured through encounter into a deeper unity, one rooted in the sacramentality of creation and openness to the divine presence encountered in the ordinary.

From the life of Francis, through the speculative insights of Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, and into the rhythms of ordinary existence, the Franciscan tradition reveals being itself as relational, participatory, and open to encounter. Through the language of participation, it recovers a sacramental vision of creation and a theological anthropology in which the Other is neither reduced to sameness nor fixed as opposition but recognised as a potential site of divine presence. In this way, Franciscan thought resists the abstractions of both voluntarism and conceptualism, grounding theology in encounter, freedom, peace, and lived relation.

The Ordinary Life thus emerges as the horizon in which a Franciscan integration of theology and metaphysics is fully embodied: a life in which participation is realised through humility, simplicity, mutuality, and shared relationality. Metaphysics is no longer a distant abstraction but a mode of presence and communion, shaping concrete practices of peace-making, hospitality, and common life. Difference is not erased but transformed, and unity is not imposed but received as gift.

This work therefore ends not with resolution but with an invitation, to *the Ordinary Life* itself, where metaphysics is inseparable from prayer, and dialogue becomes the quiet sacrament of humility and shared participation in the love of God. In this spirit, the path forward is one of harmony, peace, and goodwill: *Pax et Bonum*.

> *'From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth,*
> *and he allotted the times of their existence*
> *and the boundaries of the places they would live,*
> *so that they would search for God*
> *and perhaps grope for him and find him –*
> *though indeed he is not far from each one of us'.*
> *Acts 17:26-27 (NRSV Bible)*

Amen.

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