

# ZITA VERONIKA TÓTH

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## RESEARCH AND COMPETENCE

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*AOS* Medieval Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion.

*AOC* Ancient and Early Modern Philosophy, Metaphysics, Logic, Ethics.

## EDUCATION

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- 2017 PhD in Philosophy, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY (expected in May).  
(*expected*) Dissertation: “Medieval Problems of Secondary Causation and Divine Concurrence.”  
Advisor: Giorgio Pini.  
Dissertation Committee: Marilyn McCord Adams (external reader, Rutgers), Brian Davies, Christopher Cullen, Dana Miller.
- 2016 Diploma Programme in Manuscript Studies, PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES, Toronto.  
Advisor: Timothy Noone (CUA).
- 2014 MPhil in Philosophy, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.
- 2010 MA in Medieval Studies, CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY (with distinction).  
Thesis: “The Concept and Role of *Experimentum* in John Buridan’s *Physics* Commentary.”  
Advisor: György Geréby.
- 2009 BA/MA in Philosophy, EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY (Budapest, HU).  
Thesis: “Empiricism in the Middle Ages.”  
Advisor: Gábor Borbély.
- 2009 BSc/MSc in Mathematics, EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY (Budapest, HU).  
Thesis: “Descartes’s *Geometry* and Some of Its Applications.”  
Advisor: Gábor Kutrovácz.

## RESEARCH

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### PUBLICATIONS

- 2016 “Peter of Palude on Divine Concurrence: An Edition of His *In Sent.* II, d.1, q.4,” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 83 (2016): 49–92.
- 2015 “Descartes’s *Optics* and Medieval Theories of Vision: What Makes an Explanation Causal?” In *Perspective in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Tamás Pavlovits and Dániel Schmal, Budapest: Gondolat Kiado [forthcoming].
- 2011 “Scientific Method in John Buridan,” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 17, ed. Alice Choyke and Daniel Ziemann.
- 2010 “Aquinas and Buridan on the Possibility of Scientific Knowledge,” In *Thomas Aquinas and Thomism Today*, ed. Bulcsú K. Hoppál, Budapest: L’Harmattan.

#### PRESENTATIONS (\* invited)

- 2016 \* “William Ockham and Pierre d’Ailly on Genuine and Sine Quibus Non Causes,” *Medieval Natural Philosophy*, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN.  
“Nebuchadnezzar’s Fire and Causal Powers,” *Canadian Society of Christian Philosophers*, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB.  
“Peter of Palude on Secondary Causes and Divine Concurrence,” *51<sup>st</sup> International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI.
- 2015 “Aquinas on Divine Concurrence and Qualitative Change,” *33rd annual joint meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science*, Fordham University, New York.  
\* “Was Giles a Thomist about Divine Concurrence?” *The University of Toronto Colloquium in Medieval Philosophy*, Toronto.  
“Who Is Responsible for Change? The Debate Between Durand of St.-Pourcain and Peter of Palude,” *Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-century Thought on Change*, KU Leuven.  
“Thought Experiments in John Buridan’s *Treatise on the Void*,” *Medieval Thought Experiments: Poetry and Speculation in Europe, 1100–1450*, New College, Oxford.  
“Understanding the Tongues of Fire: What Nebuchadnezzar’s Fire Can Tell Us about Divine Concurrence and Causal Powers,” *Change and Its Challenges: An Interdisciplinary Academic Conference*, Fordham University.
- 2014 \* “Aquinas on Secondary Causes,” *Dissertation Colloquium*, Fordham University.  
“Mere Conservationism and Its Metaphysical Commitments,” *Divine Action in the World*, Analytic Theology Project, Innsbruck, Austria.  
“Why to Get Rid of the Small Flitting Images: Descartes’s *Optics* and Some Medieval Theories of Vision,” *Southwest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy*, University of New Mexico.  
\* “Descartes and Late Medieval Explanations of Vision: What Makes a Causal Explanation Causal?” *Early Modern Perspectives*, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest.
- 2013 “Scotus on Modality and the Argument for God’s Existence,” *31st annual joint meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science*, Fordham University, New York.
- 2012 “The Role of *Species* in Descartes’s *Optics*,” *Scientiae: Disciplines of Knowing in the Early Modern World*, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver.
- 2011 “Are Horse-legs Horses? Buridan on Material Constitution,” *Graduate Symposium*, Fordham University.
- 2009 “Aquinas and Buridan on the Possibility of Scientific Knowledge,” *Thomas Aquinas and Thomism of Today*, Conference of the Hungarian Thomas Aquinas Society.
- 2007 “Ockham, Autrecourt, and Modern Skepticism,” *National Students’ Conference on Science and Humanities*, Pécs, HU.

#### BOOK REVIEWS

- 2016 *Aristotle in Aquinas’s Theology*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthey Levering, OUP 2015, *Themalios* [forthcoming].

2010 “Borbély Gábor és a középkori filozófia” [Gabor Borbely, *Medieval Philosophy*], *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle* [Hungarian Journal of Philosophy].

#### PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSLATIONS

2016 Descartes, *Dioptrique* (with Daniel Schmal, Tamas Pavlovits, and Balint Kekedi). Budapest: Gondolat (Translation from French to Hungarian).

#### PUBLIC TALKS

2016 “Experiments in Medieval Science and Alchemy.” Hungarian Consulate, NYC.

#### TEACHING AND PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY

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##### INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

Philosophical Ethics, Fordham University, 3 semesters.

Philosophy of Human Nature, Fordham University, 4 semesters.

##### ADVANCED PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES

2014 Jesuit Pedagogy Seminar, participant, Fordham University.

“Reflection Exercises in a Philosophy Class,” invited paper, Conference on Jesuit Pedagogy, Fordham University.

2013 “Challenges in Teaching Philosophy,” invited panel participant, Fordham University.

2012 *Eloquentia Perfecta* certification, Fordham University.

#### AWARDS AND GRANTS

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2012–16 Teaching Fellowship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2014–15 Tomasic Research Fellowship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY (competitive research fellowship for Medievalists at Fordham, amount: \$24,500).

2010–15 HUNGARIAN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FUND, “Theories of Perspective and Cognition in Early Modern Philosophy,” participating member (project leader: Dániel Schmal) (competitive Hungarian national grant in the sciences and humanities, \$10,000 for the whole project).

2013 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Travel Grant, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY (competitive grant within Fordham, amount: \$1,200).

2012 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Summer Fellowship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY (competitive grant within Fordham, amount: \$4,000).

2011–12 MELLON Summer Fellowship (competitive international grant, amount: \$11,000 total).

2010–12 Presidential Scholarship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2010 Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, Central European University, SOROS FOUNDATION (awarded for the student with the best GPA; amount: ca. \$250).

2005–06 Erasmus Grant, University of Tübingen, TEMPUS PUBLIC FOUNDATION (competitive European international grant).

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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### SUMMER SEMINARS

- 2014 Divine Action in the World. ANALYTIC THEOLOGY PROJECT (Templeton), Innsbruck, Austria (competitive summer seminar funded by the Templeton Foundation).
- 2011–12 Diploma Programme in Manuscript Studies. THE PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES, American Academy, Rome; PIMS, Toronto (competitive summer seminar funded by the Mellon Foundation).
- 2011 Aquinas and Peter Geach. THE WITHERSPOON INSTITUTE, Princeton University (competitive summer seminar funded by the Witherspoon Institute).
- 2008 Religion and Politics: The Presence of Sacred and Secular Traditions in Europe and the Middle East. CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY, Budapest (competitive summer seminar funded by the Soros Foundation).

### ACADEMIC OFFICES HELD

- 2016 Intern, Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, with Consuelo Dutschke.
- 2013–14 Graduate Assistant editor for *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval Thought, History, and Religion* (editor: Joseph Lienhard)
- 2010–12 Graduate Research Assistant, Fordham University, with Brian Davies.

### ACADEMIC SERVICE

- 2016–17 Faculty Meetings Graduate Student Representative (elected position).
- 2015–16 Organizer, Workshops in Philosophy of Religion (recent speakers: Marilyn McCord Adams, John Pittard, Samuel Lebens, Eleonore Stump, John E Hare). Website: <http://zitavtoth.com/public/archive/Religion/>.
- 2015–16 Coordinator, Dissertation Colloquium, Fordham University.
- 2014–16 Member of the departmental Climate Committee (elected position).
- 2012–15 Coordinator, Latin reading group, Fordham Philosophy Department.
- 2014–15 Faculty Meetings Graduate Student Representative (elected position).
- 2013–14 Vice President, Fordham Philosophical Society (elected position).

## LANGUAGES

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Hungarian	<b>Native</b>
English,	<b>Full professional proficiency</b>
Latin	
German,	<b>Professional working proficiency</b>
Italian	
French,	<b>Limited working proficiency</b>
Greek	

## REFERENCES

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Giorgio Pini, Fordham ([pini@fordham.edu](mailto:pini@fordham.edu)).  
Marilyn McCord Adams, Rutgers ([mccordadams@gmail.com](mailto:mccordadams@gmail.com)).  
Brian Davies, Fordham ([bd01725@gmail.com](mailto:bd01725@gmail.com)).  
Gloria Frost, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul MN ([fros0034@stthomas.edu](mailto:fros0034@stthomas.edu)).  
Stephen Grimm, Fordham ([sgrimm@fordham.edu](mailto:sgrimm@fordham.edu)).  
Dániel Schmal, PP Catholic University, Hungary ([schmal.daniel@upcmail.hu](mailto:schmal.daniel@upcmail.hu)).  
Nathan Ballantyne, Fordham, Teaching letter ([ballantyne@fordham.edu](mailto:ballantyne@fordham.edu)).

Confidential letters of recommendation can be retrieved directly from Suzanna Appenzeller at the Fordham Philosophy Department: [appenzeller@fordham.edu](mailto:appenzeller@fordham.edu).

## SELECTED GRADUATE COURSEWORK

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### HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: ANCIENT

Presocratics: From Parmenides to Plato	K. Steiger (Eötvös Loránd [ELTE])
Plato	A. Szlezák (Tübingen)
Ancient Natural Philosophy	D. Miller (Fordham)
Hellenistic Philosophy	B. Johnson (Fordham)
Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> Z	I. M. Bodnar (ELTE)

### HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: MEDIEVAL

Introduction to Saint Augustine	G. Pini (Fordham)
Anselm, Aquinas, and Ockham	G. Borbély (ELTE)
Aquinas: Questions on God	B. Davies (Fordham)
The Nominalism of John Buridan	Gy. Klima (Fordham)
Scotus on Causation	G. Pini (Fordham)

### HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: EARLY MODERN

Descartes on Mind and Body	G. Boros (ELTE)
Leibniz and Spinoza	D. Balestra (Fordham)
Descartes and Contemporary Issues	D. Rosenthal (CUNY)

### CONTEMPORARY TOPICS

Modal Logic	A. Máté (ELTE)
Philosophy of Science	M. Rédei (ELTE)
Mind-Body Problem	W. Jaworski (Fordham)
Topics in Contemporary Metaphysics	B. Frances (Fordham)
Moral Intentionality	J. Drummond (Fordham)
Philosophy of Religion and Judaism	Gy. Tatár (ELTE)
Topics in Philosophy of Religion	B. Davies (Fordham)
Reason and Religions	S. Cahn (CUNY)

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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In my dissertation, I explore the problem of how to maintain, on the one hand, that things in the world have and efficaciously exercise causal powers, and, on the other hand, that God is immediately active in every causal interaction in the created world. I present various solutions to this problem as they appeared in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, centered around three debates. I show that the focus of the question itself, as well as the related notions of divine concurrence and causal powers changed considerably in the period between Aquinas and Gabriel Biel. While in the thirteenth century, the main concern was the metaphysical one to avoid mere conservationism and occasionalism, by the time of Biel it became the more epistemological one about the demonstrability of genuine causal relations.

After motivating the problem by reviewing the Latin medieval reception of Arabic occasionalism, the first debate I present concerned whether God is immediately active in every action of a creature, and if yes, what this divine concurring action amounts to. With the notable exception of Durand of St.-Pourçain, most thirteenth-century thinkers thought that the answer to the first question was affirmative. They disagreed, however, on how to understand God's concurring action, and, consequently, on the response to their mere conservationist contemporary.

The second debate, between Peter John Olivi, Duns Scotus, and Peter Aureoli focused on divine concurrence as present in human actions, and what, by looking at human actions, we can learn about divine concurrence in general. Although human action presents special problems, interestingly, Olivi's arguments against the claim that we need divine concurrence in the production of every volition apply to created causes in general, and so does Scotus's refutation of them. With Scotus, the debate expanded to questions about divine foreknowledge, but the main aim remained the same: to work out an account of concurrentism that can avoid falling into occasionalism or mere conservationism.

Occasionalism and the indemonstrability of the causal relation became a central problem in the third debate ('debate' taken broadly as these three thinkers were not contemporaries). I show that although Ockham has sometimes been regarded as an occasionalist, he preserves a clear distinction between genuine, *sine quibus non*, and occasional causes, and thus he is neither a Humean nor an occasionalist about efficient causality. In Peter of Ailly, the distinction is still present, and although he maintains that the connection between a natural cause and its effect is a contingent one, he also maintains that created things have and efficaciously exercise powers even though for parsimony reasons one might prefer a simpler, occasionalist explanation. Finally, with Gabriel Biel the arguments that Pierre d'Ailly proposed merely as thought experiments, became instrumental to establish that God is the only genuine causal agent in the world.

In summary, I show that although the focus of the debate shifted between Aquinas and Biel, concurrentists remained occupied with working out a view that avoids both occasionalism and mere conservationism. Different versions of concurrentism entail different sorts of metaphysical commitments about actions, substances, and powers, and thus whether one thinks any of the concurrentist attempts are successful will turn on whether one thinks these commitments are plausible ones. Looking at these attempts is important even today, since, as I argue, neither occasionalism nor mere conservationism is compatible with theism as it has classically been understood in the Christian world.