

ZITA VERONIKA TÓTH

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RESEARCH AND COMPETENCE

AOS Medieval Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion.

AOC Ancient and Early Modern Philosophy, Metaphysics, Logic.

EDUCATION

- 2017 PhD in Philosophy, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY (expected in May).
(*expected*) Dissertation: “Medieval Problems of Secondary Causation and Divine Concurrence.”
Advisor: Giorgio Pini.
External reader: Marilyn McCord Adams.
- 2016 Diploma Programme in Manuscript Studies, PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES.
Advisor: Timothy Noone.
- 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.”
- 2009 BA/MA in Philosophy, EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY (Budapest, HU).
Thesis: “Empiricism in the Middle Ages.”
- 2009 BSc/MSc in Mathematics, EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY (Budapest, HU).
Thesis: “Descartes’s *Geometry* and Some of Its Applications.”

RESEARCH

PUBLICATIONS

- 2016 “Peter of Palude on Divine Concurrence: An Edition of His *In Sent.*, d.1, q.4,” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* [forthcoming].
- 2016 “How to Think about Nothing: Thought Experiments in John Buridan’s *Treatise on the Void*,” In *Mediaeval Thought Experiments: Poetry and Speculation in Europe, 1100–1500*, ed. Philip Knox, Jonathan Morton, and Daniel Reeve, Brepols [forthcoming].
- 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)

- 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].

PUBLIC TALKS

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

TEACHING AND PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY

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

2012–16 Teaching Fellowship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2014–15 Tomasic Research Fellowship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2010–15 HUNGARIAN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FUND, “Theories of Perspective and Cognition in Early Modern Philosophy,” participating member (project leader: Dániel Schmal).

2013 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Travel Grant, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2012 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Summer Fellowship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2011–12 MELLON Summer Fellowship.

2010–12 Presidential Scholarship, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY.

2010 Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, Central European University, SOROS FOUNDATION.

2005–06 Erasmus Grant, University of Tübingen, TEMPUS PUBLIC FOUNDATION.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

SUMMER SEMINARS

2014 Divine Action in the World. ANALYTIC THEOLOGY PROJECT (Templeton), Innsbruck, Austria.

2011–12 Diploma Programme in Manuscript Studies. THE PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES, American Academy, Rome; PIMS, Toronto.

2011 Aquinas and Peter Geach. THE WITHERSPOON INSTITUTE, Princeton University.

2008 Religion and Politics: The Presence of Sacred and Secular Traditions in Europe and the Middle East. CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY, Budapest.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2015–16 Organizer, Workshops in Philosophy of Religion (recent speakers: Marilyn McCord Adams, John Pittard, Samuel Lebens, Eleonore Stump, John E Hare). Website: nycphilreligion.weebly.com.

2015–16 Coordinator, Dissertation Colloquium, Fordham University.

- 2014–16 Member of the departmental Climate Committee.
- 2012–15 Coordinator, Latin reading group, Fordham Philosophy Department.
- 2014–15 Faculty Meetings Graduate Student Representative.
- 2013–14 Graduate Assistant editor for *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval Thought, History, and Religion*.
- 2013–14 Vice President, Fordham Philosophical Society.
- 2010–12 Graduate Research Assistant, Fordham University, with Brian Davies.

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

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.

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, such as Aquinas, Giles of Rome, and Peter of Palude 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 concurrence in 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 became a central problem in the third debate, between Ockham, Peter of Ailly, and Gabriel Biel (taken 'debate' broadly as these three thinkers were not contemporaries). I show that although Ockham has sometimes been regarded as a proto-Humean and consequently as an occasionalist, his account of divine concurrence is surprisingly Thomistic. Peter of Ailly similarly has long had the reputation of being an occasionalist, but the attribution is again, incorrect. Finally, with Gabriel Biel, the series of debates sparked originally by the confrontation with Islamic occasionalism did indeed return to its starting point: relying on Ockham but modifying his overall account of causation, Biel is perhaps the first one in the West to argue for a full occasionalist view.

In summary, I show that throughout these three, distinct but interconnected debates about divine concurrence, concurrentists were navigating on the tight path between the scylla of occasionalism and the charybdis of mere conservationism, and that they more often than not found themselves in one of the theories they were trying to avoid. The focus of the debate shifted; nevertheless, the three aspects of concurrentism presented through the three debates are all worth considering since they provide answers to questions that are still of interest today since, as I argue, neither occasionalism nor mere conservationism is compatible with theism as it was classically understood in the Christian world.