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CHAPTER 7

John Major’s (Mair’s) Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Scholastic Philosophy and Theology in the Early Sixteenth Century

Severin V. Kitanov, John T. Slotemaker, Jeffrey C. Witt*

1 Introduction

A three-volume work, published not long ago, that contains a comprehensive bibliographical register of the contemporaries of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469–1536) provides no entry devoted to the Scottish scholastic theologian and philosopher John Mair, a figure of considerable renown in sixteenth-century university life. Given the fact that John Mair knew Erasmus, at least indirectly,1 was familiar with Erasmus’s writings,2 and employed the services of the Paris printer Josse Bade of Ghent (ca. 1461–1535), who, as the author of the Bade entry points out, “belonged to the chosen few among all printers with whom Erasmus maintained close personal contact over many years,” and who did more than any other printer for the circulation of Erasmus’s many writings,3 the conspicuous absence of a Mair entry from the

* We wish to thank James K. Farge for allowing us to use of his forthcoming article, "John Mair: An Historical Introduction," in A Companion to the Theology of John Mair, ed. John T. Slotemaker and Jeffrey C. Witt (Leiden, forthcoming). We also thank Ueli Zahnd for the use of the textual and bibliographical information compiled on his website: http://jmair.zahnd.be/.

1 Erasmus lived at the Collège de Montaigu at Paris, where he befriended Mair’s compatriot Hector Boece. All three—Erasmus, Mair, and Boece—inhabited the college at the same time. Unlike Mair and Boece, who belonged to the domus pauperum community of the college, however, Erasmus was a boarder on stipend. See Augustin Renaudet, Pré-Réforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d’Italie (1494–1517) (Paris, 1953), 267–9. For the different types of personnel at Montaigu, see Paul J.J.M. Bakker, “The Statutes of the Collège de Montaigu: Prelude to a Future Edition,” History of Universities 22 (2007): 67–111, at 81.

2 Mair was among the theologians asked to evaluate Erasmus’s Paraphrases on Matthew; see James K. Farge, Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology, 1500–1536 (Toronto, 1980), 304–09, at 305.

register raises a justified concern regarding the comprehensiveness and historical accuracy of the work. A careful study of John Mair’s most significant theological work, the commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, will show that Mair was indeed a remarkable sixteenth-century intellectual, a systematic thinker worth mentioning as one of Erasmus’s notable contemporaries—a thinker who, regardless of his strong affiliation with the scholastic method of doing philosophy and theology, and regardless of the fact that he belonged to the camp of scholastic traditionalists and conservatives, was nevertheless very much aware of the ideals of Renaissance and humanist culture. More importantly, as our investigation will make clear, Mair was not only well-versed in the literature of his Renaissance contemporaries, but also had a masterful grasp of the immense scholastic literary heritage, especially that produced during the fourteenth century. Mair’s commentary is a testimony to the fruitfulness and vitality of fourteenth-century scholasticism. In the midst of an increasingly diverse and contentious intellectual milieu, Mair attempted to revive and maintain interest in the immense resources of fourteenth-century philosophical theology by showing its potential for a systematic engagement with theological questions and newly emerging cultural and socio-political problems.

2 John Mair’s Life

John Mair was born in Gleghornie, Scotland, in 1467. Gleghornie is located in East Lothian just southeast of Edinburgh. Mair attended primary school in Haddington, as it was the administrative and cultural capital of Haddington burgh. Not much is known about Mair’s life prior to his enrollment at Cambridge University in 1490, where he resided at God’s House (subsequently Christ’s Church) College. However, Mair did not linger in Cambridge for very long. In 1491 or 1492, he enrolled in the Collège Sainte-Barbe, where he received the licentiate in arts in 1494 and the master of arts in 1495. At Paris, Mair joined the English nation (later German nation), where, as Farge notes, the


5 For primary source documentation of Mair’s student days at Paris, see Farge, "John Mair: An Historical Introduction," notes 4–7.
young student could socialize with his fellow Scotsmen, “at least ten of whom (seven from [Mair’s] own diocese of Saint Andrews) arrived in Paris at the same time he did.”6 While at Paris, Mair studied philosophy and logic with some of the outstanding professors of his time—in particular, John Bolu and Thomas Briscot at Sainte-Barbe as well as Gerónimo Pardo at the Collège de Montaigu.7

Having completed his studies in the arts, Mair entered the Collège de Montaigu to study theology with the Flemish doctor John Standonck and the French divine Noël Beda (Beda was Standonck’s successor as principal of the college).8 Mair studied theology at Paris for about a decade. The statutes of the university stated that during the first six years, a student had to earn credits (credulae) in the study of the Bible and the Sentences of Peter Lombard, prior to spending the following six years lecturing on the Bible and the Sentences to incoming students.9 The curriculum was designed to last upwards of fifteen years, so that Mair completed his studies around the age of 40, receiving his doctorate on November 12, 1506.

Mair’s first publications date from 1499 and 1500. His earliest works, published between 1499 and 1508, are all devoted to logic and were written during the time when Mair was a student of theology at the Collège de Montaigu. While at Montaigu, Mair taught numerous courses on logic, and he also published works on Exponibilia, Praedicabilia, Insolubilia, Termini, Sillogismi, and Obligationes, to name just a few.10 However, although his publishing record during the first decade of the sixteenth century indicates that Mair was primarily focused on logical works, he was simultaneously lecturing on the Sentences and preparing for publication the first volumes of his monumental commentary.

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6 See ibid., the text preceding note 4.
7 For information on Bolu, see Farge, Biographical Register, 50–1; for Briscot and Pardo, see Thomas Sullivan, Parisian Licentiates in Theology, AD 1373–1500: A Biographical Register, vol 2: The Secular Clergy (Leiden, 2011), 113–16 and 405–06, respectively. We thank Farge for directing our attention to Sullivan’s work.
10 See Mair, Exponibilia magistri Ioannis Maioris Scoti (Paris: Guy Marchant, 1499); idem, Praedicabilia (Paris: Antoine Chappiel, 1500); idem, Insolubilia (Paris: Guy Marchant, 1500); idem, Termini (Paris: Guy Marchant, 1501); idem, Sillogismi (Paris: Antoine Chappiel, 1502); and idem, Obligationes (Paris: Denis Roce, 1503).
Mair published his commentary on the *Sentences* between 1509 and 1530. During these two decades, he taught in both the arts and the theology faculties of the universities of Paris, Glasgow, and St. Andrews. He completed his doctoral degree in 1506 and remained in Paris until 1518. In 1518 he returned to Scotland, serving as the principal regent of the University of Glasgow until 1523, when he took a position at the University of St. Andrews. Mair taught philosophy and theology there until he returned to Paris in 1526. Back in Paris, he continued to teach logic at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe, although he resided at the Collège de Montaigu.\(^{11}\) It is probable that while in Scotland he retained close contact with Paris, as there is evidence suggesting that he returned to Paris in 1521; furthermore, all of his publications during this period appeared in France (namely, in Caen, Lyons, and Paris).

The years during which Mair published his commentary on the *Sentences* were some of his most productive. It is not possible here to recount all of his publications during this period, but some works warrant special mention. As will be demonstrated in what follows, John Mair was a student of fourteenth-century scholastic thought. More precisely, he examined numerous fourteenth-century *Sentences* commentaries. His interest in preserving and making these texts available in early printed editions led to the publication of Henry Totting of Oyta’s abbreviation of Adam Wodeham’s *Ordinatio oxoniensis* and John Duns Scotus’s Parisian lectures on the *Sentences*.\(^{12}\) Mair was not only responsible for initiating the publication of these volumes, he was intimately involved in the process of their editing.

Mair remained in Paris until 1530 or 1531, when he returned to Scotland for good. It remains unclear why he returned to Scotland, although Farge offers some clues. It is possible that the growing Protestant Reformation induced him to seek out a more congenial atmosphere, or, perhaps, having completed the majority of his writings, he no longer needed to be close to Paris and its

\(^{11}\) Jules Quicherat, as Farge notes, claims that Mair continued teaching logic at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe when he returned to Paris in 1516. If this is correct, it was at Sainte-Barbe that he possibly came into contact with John Calvin, Ignatius of Loyola, Reginald Pole, and Robert Wauchope, all of whom were studying at Sainte-Barbe at the time. See Farge, “John Mair: An Historical Introduction,” the text preceding note 24.

many publishing houses. Whatever the case, soon after Mair published the final redaction of his commentary on the *Sentences* in 1530, he returned home to Scotland. He resumed his teaching at the University of St. Andrews and became the provost in 1533. Unfortunately, little is known about the last twenty years of his life. He published no new works during this time, and there are few records from his sojourn at St. Andrews. John Mair died on May 1, 1550. He was 83 years old.

3 The Text of Mair’s *Sentences* Commentary

John Mair’s commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard was published in Paris between 1509 and 1530. His commentary, which is no longer extant in manuscript form, is found in thirteen early modern editions. The lack of extant manuscripts is presumably due to the fact that some scholars during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries preferred the traditional manuscripts to early printings, which encouraged both authors and printers to destroy the original manuscripts once the work had been printed.

Mair commented on all four books of the *Sentences*. He published both reprints of previous editions and complete revisions of three of the four books (there is no second redaction of Book III). Thus, the printed tradition includes both (1) *reprints* that are either identical or include only minor printing or editing changes, and (2) *revisions* that include substantial changes to both the structure and content of the book in question. The complete list of reprints and redactions is as follows:

**Book I**

- *Joannis Majoris Hadingtonani, scholae Parisiensis theologi, in primum magistri Sententiarum disputationes et decisiones nuper reposita, cum amplissimis

Book II

• Johannes Maior in secundum Sententiarum. Paris: J. Badius et J. Petit, 1510. [1st redaction]

Book III

• Editio Joannis Majoris doctoris Parisiensis super tertium Sententiarum, de novo edita.16 Paris: J. Granjon et J. Petit, 1517. [1st redaction]

Book IV

• Quartus Sententiarum Johannis Majoris. Paris: P. Piquochet, 1509. [1st redaction]
• Quartus Sententiarum Johannis Majoris, ab eodem recognitus denuoque impressus. Paris: J. Petit, J. Granjon, P. le Preux, 1512. [1st redaction]
• Joannis Majoris doctoris theologi in quartum Sententiarum quaestiones utilissimae supra ipsius lucubrationum enucleatae, denuo tamen recognitae et

15 Throughout the article, we refer to the various reprints and redactions of Mair’s Sentences commentary by an abbreviation of the original Latin title and the year of publication; for example, Mair, In i Sent. (1510). In our quotations, we have modernized the spelling and altered the punctuation of the Latin text.
16 There is no extant commentary on the third book of the Sentences that predates the 1517 edition. Thus, it is unclear why this edition is referred to as de nova edita.
As this list indicates, Mair published two redactions of Book 1, three redactions of Book II, two redactions of Book III, and two redactions of Book IV. Furthermore, during his lifetime his commentaries on Books I and II were printed three times, those on Book III two times, and those on Book IV five times. This is in keeping with Mair’s general remark in Book I that students of his time were more interested in Book IV than Book I.

3.1 Redactions of Book I

Since Mair substantively reworked his commentary on Books I, II, and IV between the individual redactions, it is helpful to give some account of this development. The first book consists of two redactions, printed respectively in 1510 and 1530. The first redaction, like all of Mair’s commentaries, is divided into distinctions and was reprinted in 1519. Book I of Peter Lombard’s Sentences—originally divided into distinctions by Alexander of Hales—contains forty-eight distinctions. In the first redaction, John Mair commented on the majority of the distinctions, with the following exceptions: (1) dist. 5 and 6 are combined into a single distinction; dist. 11 and 12 are combined into a single distinction; dist. 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 32, 36, 41, 43, and 46 are omitted entirely; dist. 25–29 are combined into a single distinction. The majority of the distinctions (that is, 23) consist of one or two questions, while distinction 17 is extraordinary for containing 18 questions on the topics of charity and the intension and remission of forms. The number of distinctions that Mair omits completely, or elides and combines, is quite substantial, although this pattern does not hold in the second redaction.

In the latter, Mair substantively expands on the number of distinctions treated while also recycling much of his original text. First, it is important to note that this commentary is more intentional about including a question or two for each distinction of the Sentences. Thus, the only distinctions that are

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treated together are dist. 39 and 40, while the list of omitted distinctions is limited to dist. 32, 33, and 34. Mair achieves this breadth by often focusing on a single question for each distinction, such that in the table of questions the text states that for distinction 18, and for the following thirteen distinctions, there is a single *quaestio* each. Consequently, in the second redaction Mair is more expansive than in the 1510 edition, increasing the material of several of the discussions of Book i. It is best to consider an example of this expansion, looking briefly at the treatment of distinctions 18–35 in both the 1510 and the 1530 recensions. It is in this material, dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity, that one notices the greatest addition between the two recensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In primum Sententiarum, 1510, dist. 18–35</th>
<th>In primum Sententiarum, 1530, dist. 18–35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 18: Utrum Spiritus Sanctus sit donus ab aeterno, an in tempore tantum datum (fol. 60rb–60va)</td>
<td>Dist. 18: Utrum Spiritus Sanctus sit donus ab aeterno, an in tempore tantum datum (fol. 60rb–60va)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 20: Utrum personae divinae sint aequales, et an Deus effectus naturaliter conservet (fols. 83va–84va)</td>
<td>Dist. 21: Utrum haec “solus Pater est Deus” sit vera (fols. 60vb–61ra)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dist. 24, qu. 1: An quantitas discreta sit aliqua res quantis inhaerens (fols. 84vb–87rb); qu. 2: Utrum unum de quolibet dicatur, et an unitas sit res distincta a re una (fols. 87va–88vb)</th>
<th>Dist. 24: An Sancta Trinitas sit numerus (fol. 61va–61vb)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 25: Utrum personae divinae ipsis proprietatibus constituantur, et abinvi- cem distinguantur (fol. 89ra–89va)</td>
<td>Dist. 25: Utrum persona sit relativa, an absoluta (fol. 61vb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 26: Utrum essentia divina et proprietas constituant personas in divinis (fols. 61vb–63ra)</td>
<td>Dist. 26: An paternitas et spiratio activa distinguantur (fol. 63ra–63rb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 27: An paternitas et spiratio activa distinguantur (fol. 63ra–63rb)</td>
<td>Dist. 28: Utrum inascibilitas sit proprietas Patris in divinis (fol. 63rb–63va)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 28: Utrum in ascibilitas sit proprietas Patris in divinis (fol. 63rb–63va)</td>
<td>Dist. 29: Utrum in divinis sit principium (fol. 63vb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 30: An relatio a fundamento et termino distinguatur (fol. 64ra–64vb)</td>
<td>Dist. 30: An relatio a fundamento et termino distinguatur (fol. 64ra–64vb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 32: Utrum Pater in divinis sit sapiens sapientia genita (fol. 65rb–65vb)</td>
<td>Dist. 32: Utrum in Deo persona vel proprietas personalis distinguatur ab essentia divina (fol. 92rb–92vb)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As one can see, in his second redaction of Book I, Mair returns to Peter Lombard’s Trinitarian discussion in distinctions 18–35, adding considerably to the 1510/19 redaction. The Trinitarian material that Mair chooses to include in the second redaction is closely related to the Lombard’s original discussions, which Mair often states explicitly. For example, he begins dist. 21 by stating that “[p]ro distinctione xxi quaeritur de veritate huius quam tangit magister in litera: solus Pater est Deus.”¹⁹ This specific question, as Mair recognizes, is taken explicitly from the second chapter of dist. 21 of the first book of the Sentences. In this distinction, the Lombard asked whether or not one could state that “the Father alone is Father,” “the Son alone is Son,” or “the Father alone is God,” etc.²⁰ Furthermore, while the various propositions considered by the Lombard seem to indicate that the topic of the chapter is somewhat broad, Mair justifiably reduces the discussion to the single proposition, solus Pater est Deus, because that is in fact the only one Peter Lombard really considered.²¹ Thus, to summarize the changes made by Mair to dist. 18–35 of Book I of his commentary, it should be said that in the second redaction Mair expands the number of distinctions treated and follows the content of the Sentences more closely.

Beyond the Trinitarian discussion in dist. 18–35, in the second redaction Mair also revised significantly the prologue and the first three distinctions by expanding the number of questions asked. It is not necessary here to provide a complete list of all the questions, but the numbers themselves are telling.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prologue: 7 questions</th>
<th>Prologue: 11 questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 1: 8 questions</td>
<td>Dist. 1: 21 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 2: 2 questions</td>
<td>Dist. 2: 1 question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 3: 4 questions</td>
<td>Dist. 3: 7 questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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¹⁹ Mair, In 1 Sent. (1530), dist. 21, fol. 60vb.
²⁰ See Peter Lombard, Sentences, i, dist. 21, chap. 2 (1: 175²⁷–³⁰): “Post haec quaeritur utrum sicut dicitur: solus Pater est pater, vel solus Filius est filius, ita possit dici: solus Pater est Deus, vel solus Filius est Deus, ita et de Spiritu Sancto; aut Pater est solus Deus, Filius est solus Deus.”
²¹ See ibid., 175–6.
The upshot of this second list is that with respect to questions of theological epistemology, the will, and human cognition, the second redaction contains a much more substantive engagement with the material. In this particular case, the expanded list of questions is only loosely related to the questions of the Lombard’s text (in other words, the questions asked are not necessarily those of the Lombard). The one exception is perhaps the discussion of the *imago Trinitatis* in dist. 3, qu. 6 of the second redaction, a theological topic that was completely absent from the first redaction.\(^{22}\)

### 3.2 Redactions of Book II

The textual tradition of Mair’s commentary on Book II is the most complex, given that there are three distinct redactions of this work printed respectively in 1510, 1519, and 1528. It is not necessary to narrate here every addition or omission in the three redactions, but it is instructive to present a broad overview of the textual tradition.

In contrast to his commentary on Book I, in the first printing of Book II Mair included at least one question for each of the forty-four distinctions of the Lombard’s original work. In this sense, the first redaction of Book II is somewhat more comprehensive than the first redaction of Book I. The majority of the distinctions in the first redaction of Book II contain one or two questions, with a few notable exceptions (dist. 2, eight questions; dist. 14, eight questions; dist. 30, six questions; dist. 42, fourteen questions; dist. 44, eight questions). The content of the individual distinctions often follows the content of the *Sentences* closely; for example, in distinction 10, Mair considers the question of whether or not all angels are given or sent (*Utrum omnes angeli mittantur*).\(^{23}\) Indeed, this question comes from Peter Lombard, and even in his citations from established authorities (such as the books of Daniel, Isaiah in the Old Testament, on the one hand, and Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Celestial Hierarchy*, on the other) Mair follows faithfully the theological content established by Peter Lombard.\(^{24}\) Nevertheless, he does not follow the Master slavishly in dist. 10, as is clear from the fact that he contributes to the discussion a relevant passage from Zachariah 2 that Peter Lombard had omitted.\(^{25}\) In other distinctions, Mair diverges quite significantly from the Lombard’s original

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\(^{22}\) See Mair, *In I Sent.* (1530), dist. 3, qu. 6, fol. 33r. Note that the foliation in the top left corner of the page indicates fol. xxxi, but this is clearly a mistake.

\(^{23}\) Mair, *In II Sent.* (1510), dist. 10, qu. un., fol. 20rb–va.

\(^{24}\) See Peter Lombard, *Sentences*, II, dist. 10, chap. 1 (1: 377–8).

\(^{25}\) See Mair, *In II Sent.* (1510), dist. 10, qu. un., fol. 20rb: “…angelus qui loquebatur in me egrediebatur et alius angelus egrediebatur in occursu[m] eius et dixit ad eum curre
topic. For example, in dist. 13 (chap. 2), the Lombard investigated the nature of light mentioned in Genesis 1:3 (fuit lux . . .). In his account of light, he had limited himself to citing the exegetical discussion found in Augustine’s commentary on Genesis (De Genesi ad litteram). Mair, by contrast, presents a purely Aristotelian analysis of light and optics. This is not entirely surprising, in that the first redaction of Mair’s commentary on Book 11 resembles numerous fourteenth-century commentaries in integrating theological and philosophical material depending on the subject matter in question.

The second redaction, printed by Granjon in 1519, represents Mair’s most extensive treatment of this book. In the first redaction, Mair was comprehensive in treating all of the individual distinctions, but in the second redaction he multiplied the number of questions in many of the distinctions. The first redaction, published by Badius in 1510, extends to 103 folio pages (two columns, 64 lines per column), while the second redaction is almost twice the size of the first, lengthened to about 195 folio pages (two columns, 60 lines per column). It is perhaps instructive to consider the expansion of the number of questions in the first three distinctions, as well as in dist. 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dist. 1: 1 question</th>
<th>Dist. 1: 13 questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 2: 8 questions</td>
<td>Dist. 2: 13 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 3: 3 questions</td>
<td>Dist. 3: 13 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 14: 8 questions</td>
<td>Dist. 14: 17 questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the 1519 redaction represents a significant expansion of the content treated in the second book of the Sentences. The topics considered are often focused on questions of natural science and cosmology; for instance, dist. 14, qu. 1 asks whether there are several heavens, and speculates on their order (an sit plures caeli, ed de ordine eorum); dist. 14, qu. 10 asks whether the moon is the lesser light (an luna sit luminare minus); and dist. 14, qu. 12 asks whether the

———

loquere ad puerum istum dicens absque muro habitabitur.” This passage is not cited in Peter Lombard’s treatment of angels in Book 11.

26 See Peter Lombard, Sentences, ii, dist. 13, chap. 2 (1: 389–90).

27 See Mair, In ii Sent. (1510), dist. 13, qu. un., fol. 23ra–vb.
earth's center of gravity coincides with the center of its magnitude (an centrum gravitatis terrae coincidat cum centro magnitudinis eiusdem).\textsuperscript{28}

The third redaction of In secundum Sententiarum, published by Badius and Petit in 1528, is textually closer to the 1510 redaction than to the 1519 one. It contains 120 folio pages (two columns, 64 lines per column), thus being 75 folios shorter than the second redaction. The questions are often the original ones found in the 1510 redaction, with a few additions from the 1519 redaction. Thus, the text is a hybrid between the 1510 and 1519 redactions, including material from both of these commentaries.

3.3 Redactions of Book III

J. Granjon and J. Petit published John Mair’s commentary on the third book of the Sentences in 1517. The title included the phrase de novo edita, indicating that the 1517 redaction was a new edition of the work. However, the remark seems to be an editorial mistake since there is no evidence that Mair wrote an earlier recension of his commentary on Book III. This first edition published in 1517 is a complete commentary, containing at least one question on each of the 40 distinctions of Book III. Mair published a revised version of this work in Paris in 1528 through J. Badius and J. Petit. While the table of questions is identical for the two works, the 1517 edition concludes on folio 164, whereas the 1528 edition concludes on folio 138. However, this discrepancy in length is not due to a reduction of text: Badius and Petit (1528) simply included more material per folio, in that the 1517 edition has about 60 lines per column, while the 1528 has averages 65 lines per column. That said, the 1528 revision is a separate recension of the work, for while it preserves an identical table of questions as the 1517 edition, its content is slightly altered. Interestingly, Mair tends to support the same theological and philosophical conclusions in both the 1517 and 1528 editions, but occasionally provides different arguments for those conclusions.\textsuperscript{29}

The third book of the Sentences can be divided into two parts: (1) the first part of the book treats the nature of Christ and his redemptive work (dist. 1–22); (2) the second part considers the theological virtues (dist. 23–32), the cardinal virtues (dist. 33), the gifts of the Spirit understood as virtues, the relation of the virtues to charity (dist. 34–36), and the Decalogue (dist. 37–40).

\textsuperscript{28} Mair, In II Sent. (1519), dist. 14, qu. 1, fols. 71va–72va; qu. 10, fols. 82rb–83va; and qu. 12, fols. 84va–85ra. Note that for folio 85 the text has 87, but it is clearly a misprint that is corrected in the following foliation.

\textsuperscript{29} We are grateful to Richard Cross for bringing this point to our attention. Our initial transcription of the table of questions suggested that the two works were identical, such that the 1528 edition was simply a reprint of the 1517 edition.
Mair’s commentary follows these basic divisions. In the first 22 distinctions, he considers the nature of Christ and Christ’s redemption of fallen humanity. These distinctions closely follow the theological content discussed by Peter Lombard himself. For example, in dist. 10 the Lombard considers whether or not Christ is an adoptive son according to His humanity or in some other way (An Christus sit adoptivus filius secundum quod homo vel aliquo modo).²⁰ Mair rephrases the question slightly, but only to focus it on the Lombard’s original topic (An Christus secundum quod homo sit filius adoptivus Dei).²¹ Throughout the first 22 distinctions, then, Mair retains the basic content and structure of the Lombard’s work. But, starting with dist. 23, he begins to expand on the basic framework of the Sentences. This is evidenced by the fact that in the 1528 edition, the first 22 distinctions extend through folios 1 to 38, while the remaining 18 distinctions stretch from folios 38 to 138.

The largest additions occur in dist. 33 and 37: the former, treating the four cardinal virtues, contains 33 distinct questions and occupies about 25 folios; the latter, on the nature of the law, contains 37 questions and occupies about 28 folios. Interestingly, the general theme of these two distinctions—that is, the four cardinal virtues and the law—follows Peter Lombard’s general theme, although Mair elaborates a great deal upon the theological and philosophical purview of the topic at hand. In some sense, Mair’s casuistic approach to ethical questions emerges already in these discussions. For example, in dist. 37, qu. 31 and 33, he considers whether simple fornication (fornicatio simplex) and adultery are great sins.²² In his treatment of the law, Peter Lombard maintained a broader approach and did not consider in detail the nature of individual sins. Thus, Mair’s commentary on Book III is a valuable source of information when considering his methodological approach to ethical questions.

### 3.4 Redactions of Book IV

Mair wrote two commentaries on Book IV: the first redaction was published in 1509 and reprinted in 1512; the second redaction was published in 1516 and reprinted in 1519 and 1521. In the first redaction, Mair covers all 50 distinctions of the Sentences. This first redaction is already a sizeable work that amounts to over 200 folio pages. The majority of the distinctions are treated with a few questions, the notable exceptions being dist. 15 and 49, which consist of 34 and 18 questions respectively.²³ Similarly to the comprehensive distinctions found

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²¹ Mair, In III Sent. (1528), dist. 10, qu. un., fol. 18r–v.
²² See Mair, In III Sent. (1528), dist. 37, qu. 31, fol. 119r–120r, and qu. 33, fols. 121v–122v.
²³ See Mair, In IV Sent. (1509), dist. 15, fols. 70r–111v, and dist. 49, fols. 207v–223v.
in Mair’s commentary on Book III, these distinctions demonstrate Mair’s casuistic approach to moral questions and positive valuation of an exceptionally concrete and practical theology.34

Mair’s second redaction of Book IV is even bulkier than the first: in Bade’s 1519 edition, the text itself, not including the table of questions, is almost double the size of that of the first redaction. Much of the expansion takes place in dist. 15, which in the second redaction balloons up to 50 questions and by itself occupies 86 folios.35 This massive expansion of dist. 15 is also remarkable because dist. 15, explicitly concerned with the possibility of making satisfaction to God for one’s sins, became the standard place for debates about the restitution of unjustly acquired goods. In effect, the distinction was the *locus classicus* for discussions about the nature of property rights, a topic that was increasingly in vogue in the sixteenth century. Thus Mair clearly recognized and responded to this new trend.36 A similar expansion occurs in several other distinctions; for example, dist. 24 expands from 6 questions in the first redaction to 22 in the second; dist. 38 expands from 6 to 25 questions; dist. 49 increases from 18 to 27 questions.37 These four distinctions—that is, 15, 24, 38, and 49—occupy approximately 183 folios, or about 47% of the commentary.

Both redactions of Mair’s commentary on Book IV should be considered major works. In both, Mair treats all of the original Lombardian distinctions. In the second redaction, however, he includes four significantly lengthened distinctions that function as small, almost independent, treatises on questions of ecclesiology, personal morality, and social ethics. As already noted, Mair realized that the students were much more interested in the practical questions of Book IV than in the speculative questions of Book I. Mair’s two substantial commentaries on Book IV show that he took his students’ interests seriously.

34 This is evident, for example, in Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1509), dist. 15, qu. 24, fols. 103v–104v. In question 24, Mair considers whether it is usury (a case of excessive interest) for a seller of wheat to withhold his crop and not sell during a particular time of the year, knowing that he can charge a higher price at a later date. Nor is this an isolated consideration. Mair goes on in questions 25–28 to identify other scenarios and to debate whether these are also instances of usury.

35 See Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1519), dist. 15, fols. 83v–169r.

36 See Annabel S. Brett, *Liberty, Right and Nature: Individual Rights in Later Scholastic Thought* (Cambridge, 1997), 23 n. 45. See also Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance, *Francisco de Vitoria, Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 240 n. 14: “Lombard’s treatment of *restitutio* (**Sent.** iv.15) was the standard occasion for theologians’ discussions of dominium…”

37 See Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1509), dist. 24, fols. 130v–145r; dist. 38, fols. 165v–180r; and dist. 49, fols. 207v–223v; Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1519), dist. 24, fols. 209r–245r; dist. 38, fols. 290r–321v; and dist. 49, fols. 357v–387v.
4 Mair’s Sources

Before examining the diversity and breadth of Mair’s sources, we need to note that a survey of Book 1 (1510/1519) shows that there are two distinct ways in which Mair cites and uses his sources. The first way is intra-textual: that is, the name of a given author is referred to and appears within the body of the text itself. The second way is through a marginal reference. Most often, where there is a marginal reference the name of the author is not present intra-textually. Instead, we find an anonymous reference to *quidam doctor* or *alius doctor* in the body of the text. Such anonymous references were not an uncommon scholastic practice;³⁸ in fact, they were the standard way of addressing one’s contemporaries. However, as we shall see, Mair tends to view even those who wrote nearly 200 or more years prior as contemporary dialogue partners!

In sum, we suggest that these differences in citation are not accidental but represent two distinct ways in which Mair views, appropriates, and converses with the intellectual tradition he inherits. The names and references interspersed intra-textually typically provide authoritative support for a given argument, whether or not that argument is ultimately accepted or rejected. This methodology is characteristically scholastic and the authorities we see are fairly standard: the names of Aristotle, Augustine, and Averroës pepper the text. Less often, but still in the same manner, we observe the use of other authorities such as Euclid, Boethius, and Anselm. However, despite their frequent appearance within the text of the commentary, these names rarely, if ever, appear in the margins. Thus, the names of Avicenna, Averroës, and Galen show up only once in the margins.

Generally speaking, marginal citations seem to function differently than intra-textual ones. Here the position of the cited authority is simply being acknowledged, rather than being used as the final court of appeal. The truth of the author’s position still requires evaluation. A few examples will make this clear.

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³⁸ In discussing the commentaries of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, Katherine Tachau notes how the bachelors’ disputations on the *Sentences* were increasingly incorporated into their formal lectures on the *Sentences*. These disputational traces are replete with references to the opposing opinions of anonymously cited authors. Tachau’s example of Holcot’s *Sex articuli sufffijices to illustrate the similar use of sources visible in Mair. See Katherine Tachau, "Introduction," in *Seeing the Future Clearly*, ed. Paul Streveler and Katherine Tachau (Toronto, 1995), 1–56, at 6: “Hic incipiunt sex articuli de diversis materiais prius tacticis, contra quos quidam socii rationabiliter instetereunt” (emphasis ours).
One instructive example appears on the first pages of Mair’s prologue. As is customary to the way he begins all of his distinctions, Mair explicitly refers to Peter Lombard as the reason for approaching the subject matter now under consideration. After explaining the division of questions, he begins with question 1—how is it possible for the pilgrim (viator) to acquire faith?—and defines some terms, the first of which is viator. Mair explains that viator is defined by someone (a quodam) as “one who does not have the intuitive knowledge of the Deity which is possible for him from the ordained power of God.” In the left margin the name “Ockham” appears. Shortly thereafter, however, Mair alerts us to the provisional, rather than authoritative, status of this definition. He writes: “But this description is suspect,” and employs Augustine as an authority to identify some of the problems with this definition. Then another possible definition is presented, again attributed to “some other doctor” (quidam alius doctor). The margin identifies this doctor as “Peter d’Ailly.” Once more, Mair questions this definition, before finally offering his own.39

A similar situation can be observed in the same place, immediately after the explication of the term viator. The text presents three opinions regarding the manner in which faith is generated. The text simply says “some posit” (aliqui ponunt), but the margin lists Holcot, Ockham, and Gregory without clarifying which opinion belongs to whom, or whether all three are associated with one position, or whether each definition articulates a distinct position.40 Mair then goes on to evaluate these definitions and ultimately appears to agree with what he thinks Ockham (and perhaps Rimini) says. Nevertheless, at the outset of the discussion, these opinions of Ockham and Rimini carry no authoritative weight. They are treated as opinions that require further examination.

Although these examples show what Mair thinks about the status of the authorities identified in the margins of the text, there is no pattern determining where these citations appear within a given question. Sometimes they are used to open a question, but they can also be used to address sub-questions and corollary positions.41 What the examples do reflect is the general attitude that Mair adopts with respect to authorities marked anonymously within the text of the commentary and identified in the margins.

It is likely that Mair made the marginal citations himself, or that he was at least heavily involved in their placement. It is, after all, not an easy matter to

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40 It seems most likely that Holcot is supposed to be identified with the second, and Rimini and Ockham are to be identified with the third, leaving the first opinion unattributed; see Mair, *In i Sent.* (1519), prol., fol. 1rb.
41 See Mair, *In i Sent.* (1519), dist. 17, qu. 5, fols. 54vb–57rb.
read an anonymous position in the text and then identify the actual source of the position; it would take a separate editor a considerable amount of work first to understand the position being expressed, and subsequently to identify the authority behind the position. It seems much more likely that Mair himself entered these marginal citations, either at the time of writing, or during the typesetting process.\footnote{386}{See also note 44 below for another example of how these references made their way into the margins.}

The extra effort required for marginal citations is likewise suggested by the fact that Mair (or the scrupulous editor) appears to have abandoned this kind of arduous work after the first redaction of the first book. For, the 1530 redaction of Book I contains no marginal notations whatsoever. Likewise, the 1510, 1519, and 1528 printings of Book II contain no marginal notations, and the same is true for Book III (1517 and 1528). And while the 1509 edition of Book IV does contain marginal notations, they are all organizational in type—such as \textit{prima conclusio, secunda conclusio}, etc.\footnote{386}{See Mair, \textit{In iv Sent.} (1509), dist. 3, qu. 1; somewhat out of step with his normal pattern of marginal citations in Book IV, the margin notes the opinion of Jerome (fol. 18rb). This is a solitary reference to an author amid several marginal notes about the organizational structure of the text.} (The 1516, 1519, and 1521 printings of Book IV contain no marginal notations of any kind.) However, this change in marginal citations does not necessarily reflect a change in Mair’s use of sources. In each of the texts without marginal notes, the anonymous intra-textual references to non-authoritative positions can still be found. For example, in Book II Mair opens dist. 3, qu. 3 by listing the opinion of \textit{quidam doctor}… \textit{tenens partem affirmativam}\footnote{386}{Mair, \textit{In ii Sent.} (1510), dist. 3, qu. 3, fol. 12ra. One can actually see some development of how these citations move to the margins when one compares the prologues of Book IV from 1509 and 1512. On fol. 7ra of the 1509 text, Scotus is referenced intra-textually. On fol. 6vb in the 1512 text, the same sentence appears, except that Scotus’s name has been replaced with \textit{quidam}, his name having been moved to the margin.} and then follows this by referring to \textit{ante eum quidam alius}.\footnote{386}{Mair, \textit{In ii Sent.} (1510), dist. 3, qu. 3, fol. 12ra.} In Book I, the reference to one doctor and then another \textit{ante eum} was commonly used to indicate the respective opinions of Gregory of Rimini and Adam Wodeham.\footnote{386}{See Mair, \textit{In i Sent.} (1519), dist. 17, qu. 9, fol. 66ra: “Ad hoc argumentum respondet quidam doctor in hac distinctione et ante eum quidam alius dicens…”} But there one was helped by the marginal identifications. One can surmise here in Book II that if Mair does not identify these anonymous references for the editor, then this leaves an editor inclined to identify these sources with a tremendous amount of work. Unsurprisingly, therefore, we do
not see the fruit of this extra effort in subsequent editions. The 1512 printing of Book IV adds one final exception. This text, while not a new redaction of the 1509 text, has been newly typeset. In this version, the organizational notes (prima conclusio, etc.) present in the margins of the 1509 text are preserved. But added to these, there are new citations of the names of authors referred or alluded to within the text, similar to the authorial citations found in the 1510/1519 printings of Book I.47

The undocumented anonymous sources in Books II–IV make it difficult for us to fully appreciate Mair’s full range of sources. Only a modern critical edition that attempts to identify every reference will ultimately allow us to provide a complete and exhaustive list. However, the documentation of sources in Book I allows us to use that book as a case study for the kinds of sources on which Mair relies, marginally or intra-textually, and for their frequency and proportion to one another.

A survey of the marginal citations reveals that they are mostly concerned with fourteenth-century authors. Most frequently cited is Gregory of Rimini, who appears 41 times in the margins (19% of all marginal citations); he is mentioned at least 10 more times by name within the text. Ockham is present 21 times in the margins (10%) and at least four more times within the text. Peter d’Ailly appears 17 times in the margins (8%) and at least three more times within the text. Adam Wodeham appears in the margins 14 times (6%), but also nine more times within the text. Scotus also makes frequent appearances, showing up 11 times in the margins (5%) and in at least 7 places within the text. Likewise, Mair refers to Scotus’s followers—the Scotistae—once in the margins. John Buridan appears 10 times in the margins (5%) and at least two more times in the text. But alongside these fourteenth-century authors, Thomas Aquinas and William of Auxerre are cited with nearly the same frequency as Wodeham and Scotus. Aquinas is cited 10 times in the margins (5%) while his school—the Thomisticae—is present three times in the margins. Aquinas’s name appears at least 7 more times in the text as well. William of Auxerre appears 11 times in the margins (5%) and at least nine more times within the text.

These dominating figures, however, in no way exhaust the list of Mair’s sources. Also appearing within the margins, but with lesser frequency, are

47 Compare the prologue of In IV Sent. (1509) with the prologue of In IV Sent. (1512). In the latter, one will find marginal citations of Baptista Mantuanus (fol. 2rb), Petrarch (fol. 2rb), Nicholas of Lyra (fol. 4ra), Lorenzo Valla (fol. 4ra), Alexander of Hales (fol. 4va), John Gerson (fol. 5rb), and Martinus Magistris (fol. 5va). Because the 1512 text is difficult to obtain, our comparison has been limited to the prologue. This comparison, however, sufficiently demonstrates the addition of marginal citations of authors to the original text.
Richard Kilvington (9 times, 4%), Robert Holcot (8, 4%), Andrew of Novo Castro (6, 3%), Durand of Saint-Pourçain (6, 3%), Lorenzo Valla (5, 2%), Albert of Saxony (4, 2%), Walter Burley (4, 2%), Marsilius of Inghen (4, 2%), St. Bonaventure (4, 2%), Alexander of Hales (3 times, 1%), Alphonsus Vargas Toletanus (2, 1%), Martinus Magistris (2, 1%), Monachus Niger (2, 1%), and Roger Rosetus (2, 1%). Making a single appearance in the margin are the names of Albert the Great, Averroës, Avicenna, Henry of Ghent, Hibernicus (that is, Richard FitzRalph), John Capreolus, Monachus Cisterciensis, Nicholas of Lyra, Peter Auriol (who also appears at least four more times within the text), Praepositinus, Thomas Bradwardine, and Thomas of Strasbourg. These names exhaust the marginal citations and anonymous intra-textual citations.

Mair’s intra-textual citations reveal an even wider array of dialogue partners, some of whom he treats as authorities while others function as non-authoritative opinions. Besides the uses of Aristotle, Augustine, and biblical authors, which are too numerous to count, Mair’s sources include the following names: Ambrose of Milan (at least 3 appearances), Anaxagoras (3), Anselm of Canterbury (16), Bernard of Clairvaux (2), Bernard de Sylvestro (1), Boethius (2), Bokinkam [Thomas Buckingham?] (1), Democritus (2), Dionysius (1), Euclid (5), Eustratius (1), Gilbert of Poitiers (3), Giles of Rome (2), Godfrey of Fontaines (2), Gregory the Great (9), Hermes Trismegistus (2), Hugh of Saint-Victor (3), John Cassian (2), John of Damascus (5), John Gerson (4), John of Ripa (1), Origen (2), Plato (5), Plutarch (1), Pythagoras (1), Roger Bacon (1), Sallust of Carthage (1), Rabbi Salomon (1), Seneca (1), Simplicius (2), Themistius (2), Theophrastus (1), Virgil (2), and Zeno (1).

While the above surveys include many authorities who are common to many scholastic writers, what is remarkable about Mair’s text is the multiplicity and diversity of fourteenth-century citations. The very fact that Mair cites such a diverse array of fourteenth-century authors suggests that he viewed fourteenth-century thought as a high point of intellectual productivity: a period that one must take into account if one is to address adequately the pressing issues of the day, and to demonstrate intellectual competence and versatility.

5 Philosophical Theology in Mair’s Sentences Commentary

As an illustration of Mair’s overall approach to theology in his Sentences commentary and his use of scholastic sources, we offer an account of two separate theological discussions—the discussion of theology’s purpose or final cause, and the discussion of beatific enjoyment. In each discussion, Mair demonstrates his ability to converse with scholastic theologians (esp. fourteenth-
century sources), and to develop unique and thoughtful positions of his own within the broader conversation.

5.1 **Theology as a Practical Science**

Mair’s commentary is replete with familiar speculative questions about God, creation, humanity, and happiness, but it is also notable for the ways in which these questions are intertwined with extremely detailed practical questions. For example, in Book IV, he not only asks about the nature of usury, but proposes highly specific scenarios and inquires as to whether or not such scenarios represent licit situations. In dist. 38, qu. 1 of the same book he discusses the minutiae and routines of the religious life; “whether a person is obligated to every vow, and whether he can be released from a vow,” “whether a religious can own property,” or “whether a Carthusian in extreme need is able to eat meat.” Nor are these kinds of concerns confined only to Book IV. In Book III, dist. 23, qu. 2—amidst many speculative questions regarding the nature of faith—he asks “whether confession of faith counts as an act of faith and fulfills the command to believe.” And in dist. 25, he asks about how much belief is needed for eternal life; must all the contents of faith be believed explicitly, or is it permissible for the faithful to believe some tenets implicitly? Seen within the context of pastoral duties and the pressing questions of caring for human souls, few questions strike us as more down to earth and practical in nature.

The prevalence of both highly speculative and everyday concerns raises the question of how these very different focal points can be unified. Fortunately, Mair, like most scholastics before him, asks this same question in the prologue to his commentary on Book I. More precisely, he asks “whether theology is

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50 See Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1509), dist. 15, qu. 24, fol. 103vb–qu. 28, fol. 106vb.

51 Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1509), dist. 38, qu. 1, fol. 164vb.

52 Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1509), dist. 38, qu. 2, fol. 168ra.

53 Mair, *In IV Sent.* (1509), dist. 38, qu. 5, fol. 178vb.

54 Mair, *In III Sent.* (1528), dist. 23, qu. 12, fol. 47ra.

55 See Mair, *In III Sent.* (1528), dist. 25, qu. 1, fol. 48vb.
practical or speculative.” It is here that he gives attention to how the varied interests present in his commentary can be unified.

At issue in this introductory question is: what is the point of theology? What is the goal of the entire intellectual undertaking? What are these speculative and practical considerations attempting to accomplish? And how does theology distinguish itself from other intellectual enterprises? Within the context of these questions, Mair faces the following objection: “If the love of God were a practice, then metaphysics would be a practical science because metaphysics considers God under the aspect (ratio) of goodness and, as a consequence, under the aspect of lovability.” Mair responds that metaphysics does indeed teach us that God is the highest thing worthy of love. However, metaphysics does not tell us “how or in what way God ought to be loved.” The unique task of theology lies precisely in what metaphysics does not and cannot accomplish. This sentiment is reminiscent of Augustine’s eloquent critique of the philosophers who see the ultimate end from far off, but do not know the way to it.

The primary goal of the theology of the wayfarer, therefore, is in showing us how we ought to love that which metaphysics on its own is capable of showing us is the highest good and most lovable thing. But how does theology instruct us in this way, and what kinds of operations does it prescribe? Mair’s answer involves some clarifications deeply indebted to his reading of fourteenth-century authors—clarifications of the meaning of the terms “practice,” “speculation,” “practical knowledge,” and “speculative knowledge.”

Among four possible definitions of a practice (praxis or operatio)—a list attributed to Eustratius which Ockham and Gregory of Rimini had reviewed nearly two hundred years prior—Mair singles out the third definition as the

56 Mair, In i Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 15ra: “Si dilectio Dei esset praxis, metaphysica esset practica, nam metaphysica considerat de Deo rationem bonitatis, et per consequens diligibilitatis.”

57 Mair, In i Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 15ra: “Ad primum, nego consequentiam, quamvis enim metaphysica consideret Deum esse summum et perfectum bonum, ex quo sequitur dato quod sit maxime diligibile, nusquam tamen docet nec dirigit qualiter aut quomodo Deus est diligendus.”

58 See Augustine, Confessions, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (London, 1961), x.21, p. 156: “It is one thing to descry the land of peace from a wooded hilltop and, unable to find the way to it, struggle on through trackless wastes where traitors and runaways, captured by their prince, who is lion and serpent in one, lie in wait to attack. It is another thing to follow the high road to the land of peace, the way that is defended by the care of the heavenly Commander.”

59 Eustratius, In Eth. Nichom. 1, 1, ed. H. Paul F. Mercken (Leiden, 1973), 12; see also William of Ockham, Scriptum in librum primum Sententiaria (Ordinatio), ed. Gedeon Gál, Opera
meaning of practice that he has in mind: a practice, then, is any act that is within our power. By this he means a voluntary act which proceeds from a dictate of reason, but not necessarily according to right reason. The added condition of an operation voluntarily chosen in accordance with right reason is part of the fourth and strictest definition of practice. Mair, however, believing himself to be following the common opinion, insists that this is too strict because even malicious actions, when done voluntarily or guided by erroneous reason, should be counted as practices by definition.

This definition can be fine-tuned even further. Every act of the will, Mair points out, is a practice in the sense of, first, an elicited act of the will (actus elicitus) and, subsequently, an act commanded by the will (actus imperatus). Thus, the commanded act of the will translates into an act executed by another power. Among scholastic thinkers, there is some debate about whether or not an intellectual act can be considered a practice. Scotus, for one, insists that speculation, which is an act of the intellect, is a practice only in a loose sense (extendendo nomen). In this loose sense, the intellect is said to “extend” itself to the activity of speculation. Strictly speaking, however, no intellectual act is a practice, and it is this strict sense of “extension” which is meant when we say

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60 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 14rb: “Tertio capitut pro operatione quae est in potestate operantis. Ista acceptio est illa de qua communiter auctores loquuntur.” Mair shows his preference for this definition in his first proposition: “prima est: omnis actus voluntatis est praxis patet; quia est actus existens in potestate operantis, ergo est praxis; per eius diffinitionem, primo actus elicitus, postea actus imperatus ab eo.”

61 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 14rb: “Quarto modo accipitur pro omni operatione conformiter elicka dictamine rectae rationis.”

62 Scotus was read by later readers as holding that this fourth and strictest definition was the most proper definition of a practice. (See, for instance, Gregory of Rimini, Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum, vol. 1, ed. A.D. Trapp and Venicio Marcolino (Berlin/New York, 1981), liber 1, prol., qu. 5, art. 1, p. 152.) Scotus’s view is understandable, since a practice guided by reason requires practical knowledge, and yet it hardly makes sense to call something knowledge if it leads us to make bad decisions. For Scotus’s influential definition of a practice, see Ordinatio, vol. 1, ed. C. Balić (Vatican City, 1954), liber 1, prol., pars 5, qu. 1–2, no. 228, p. 155. It is the third and last condition in this definition that Rimini understood to commit Scotus to the fourth and strictest definition of a practice.

63 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 14rb: “Ex his sequuntur aliquae propositiones. Prima est omnis actus voluntatis est praxis patet; quia est actus existens in potestate operantis, ergo est praxis, per eius diffinitionem, primo actus elicitus, postea actus imperatus ab eo.”
that practical knowledge “extends” to some kind of action. However, Mair, however, joins the scholastics who disagree with Scotus and believe that, while the intellect cannot “extend” itself immediately, it can do so through the mediation of the command of the will. Thus, if the intellect dictates that something is worthy of speculation, then the will commands the intellect to speculate, and the intellect does so.

This is the basic understanding of a practice that we ought to have in mind when Mair declares that theology is a practical discipline. His emphasis on the fact that theology shows us how and in what way God should be loved suggests that theology might govern many different practices, all of which, in different circumstances and situations, are instances of correct love. Put another way, Mair's focus is not merely on the fact that the will should love God (which is an elicited act of the will, or an act which has the will as its sole efficient cause), but on the question of what that love should look like, or what its proper expression should be. Thus, theology has a lot to say about those acts that are commanded by the will but executed by other powers.

Yet theology traditionally contains many propositions that are not immediately directive of a concrete action. What is more, Mair's commentary on the Sentences contains many questions and answers that never formally direct concrete behavior. The question, therefore, is how these more speculative propositions (for example, “God is three and one”) are to be included within a theological system.

The possibility that an act of the intellect—an act such as faith—can be classified as a practice creates an interesting problem for the place of

64 See Duns Scotus, Ordinatio, vol. 1, liber 1, prol., pars 5, qu. 1–2, no. 232, p. 157: "Respondeo: licet speculatio sit quaedam operatio et ita praxis, extendingo nomen, tamen ut praxis dicitur sola operatio ad quam intellectus potest extendi, nulla intellectio est praxis; et hoc modo accipitur praxis quando ad praxim dicitur cognitio practica extendi."

65 See Mair, In 1 Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 15rb: "Intellectus extensive fit practicus, non infert quod nullus actus intellectus sit practicus, nam licet intellectus non extendatur immediate ad suam operationem, tamen extenditur mediante imperio voluntatis, nam cum dictat intellectus speculandum esse, voluntas imperat intellectui ut speculetur." For other fourteenth-century precedents, see Petrus Aureoli, Scriptum super primum Sententiarum, vol. 1, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, n.y., 1952), prooem., sect. 3, art. 2, no. 58, p. 235; William of Ockham, Scriptum in liberum primum Sententiarum, prol., qu. 10, p. 281; and Gregory of Rimini, Lectura, vol. 1, liber 1, prol., qu. 5, art. 1, p. 151.

66 It is important to note that the assent of faith under discussion here is an intellectual act and can therefore be seen as distinct from the commanded act of faith, that is, the certitude or unhesitancy of the assent, which inheres in the will. See R. Neil Wood, "John Mair: the Human Dimension of Faith," The Innes Review 48 (1997): 125–43, at 136. See also
speculative or non-directing practices. If assent can be a kind of practice, then it is possible that the assent to a given proposition, such as “God is three and one,” can be a kind of end in and of itself, a kind of intellectual practice that the instructing propositions of theology aim to direct. On the other hand, it is possible that theoretical or speculative propositions carry within them consequences for praxis. Thus, that “God is three and one” may have important ramifications for how someone worships, prays, or generally addresses himself to God. Mair does not rule out the former, but is clearly focused on the latter: the practical consequences of speculative propositions.

Following closely a division made in the prologue of Gregory of Rimini, Mair states that there are two classes of speculative propositions: those that are “remotely virtually directive,” and those that are “proximate to formally directive propositions,” but nonetheless still virtually directive. By “proximately virtually directive,” he simply means that it only takes one further step to deduce a “formally directive” proposition. A “formally directive” proposition is one that explicitly declares what should be done. By “remotely virtually directive,” he means a proposition that carries eventual consequences for action, but requires many deductions to get there.


67 This certainly seems like a plausible reading of Auriol’s description of theology’s practical nature. He writes that the theological habit does not properly elicit an act, but directs a separate intellectual act belonging to a separate habit, namely, belief: “Sed habitus theologicus non habet proprie actum quem elicit, immo actum quem dirigat, qui est credere…” (Petrus Aureoli, Scriptum, vol. 1, proem., sect. 3, art. 3, no. 84, p. 244).

68 This is an orientation clearly visible in Scotus’s description of theology as a practical habit; see Richard Cross, Duns Scotus (New York/Oxford, 1999), 9: “Scotus, however, provides a further argument to show that theology is not at all theoretical. He reasons that every item in the science of theology is, or can be, action-directing, because the more we know about theology, the more we might be disposed to love God. And Scotus proposes a distinctive description of a merely practical science that theology thus described would satisfy: ‘Every science that deals with theoretical items in no greater detail than is necessary for praxis is practical and not theoretical. Theology on Scotus’s account will necessarily satisfy this description, since any putatively theoretical item that theology covers increases, or can increase, our disposition to love God.’


70 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 14rb: “Duobus autem modis contingit notitiam esse praxis directivam, nam quaedam notitia est formaliter secundum se immediate praxis directiva, quaedam tamen virtualiter, vel continet virtualiter et de propinquo vel remote notitiam directivam praxis.”
Mair holds a view of scientific habits indebted to Ockham\textsuperscript{71} and adopted by Gregory of Rimini.\textsuperscript{72} The view is basically that what we think of as an intellectual habit (scientific or otherwise) is a composite of several partial habits. Each habit is constituted by the particular conclusion drawn from a given syllogism. Thus, there are many parts to theology, some of which are purely speculative (syllogisms that result in “virtually directive” propositions), and some of which are purely practical (syllogisms that result in “formally directive” propositions). Mair affirms all of this,\textsuperscript{73} but the real question is: what unites this diverse collection of conclusions, and what is the primary purpose of this unity? According to Mair, taken together, the core (\textit{potissima pars}) of theology is practical, and it is right to name something according to its chief aspect.\textsuperscript{74} He goes on to list several authorities—biblical, classical, and patristic—to support his claim that the principal aim of theology is practical, and that the purely speculative aspects of theology should be seen as contributing to this broader goal.\textsuperscript{75}

This, then, is the general structure of Mair’s theological system: Theology is practical. It aims to do more than just tell us that God is the most lovable thing; metaphysics and natural reason can already do this. Instead, it attempts to tell us what metaphysics cannot accomplish. It tells us how and in what way God

\textsuperscript{71} Armand Maurer once said that Ockham “was the first, to my knowledge, to speak of a science as an arranged ensemble of written propositions. . . . In this respect, as in so many others, he was truly the initiator of the \textit{via moderna}” (Maurer, “Ockham’s Conception of the Unity of Science,” Mediaeval Studies 20 (1958): 98–112, at 112). See also William of Ockham, \textit{Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum}, liber i, prol., qu. 12, p. 337: “Ideo aliter dico ad quaestionem quod theologia non est una notitia vel scientia, sed habet vel continet plures notitias realiter distinctas quarum aliquae sunt practicae simpliciter et aliquae speculativae.”

\textsuperscript{72} See Gregory of Rimini, \textit{Lectura}, vol. 1, liber 1, prol., qu. 5, art. 4, p. 180: “Prima est loquendo de theologia secundum quod est unus habitus unius tantum veritatis theologicae.”

\textsuperscript{73} See Mair, \textit{In i Sent.} (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 14vb: “Secunda conclusio, extendendo terminum scientia, vel petendo de quocumque assensu, et capiendo theologiam pro simplici actu vel habitu, aliqua theologia est speculativa, et aliqua est practica. Patet quia aliquius theologiae actus non est aliquius praxis formaliter directivus aliquius vero actus est praxis formaliter directivus, igitur aliqua est speculativa et aliqua practica. Consequentia tenet ex terminis. Exempulum primi, ut Thobias habuit canem, Deus est Christus. Secundi, ut theologia huius Deus est venerandus, diligendus; proximus est diligendus propter Deum.”

\textsuperscript{74} See Mair, \textit{In i Sent.} (1519), prol., qu. 6, fol. 14vb: “Tertia conclusio. Collective capiendo theologiam quae includit habitus speculativos et practicos, ipsa est practica. Patet, quia potissima pars theologiae est directiva praxis, sed iustum est totum a potiori parte denominari . . . .”

\textsuperscript{75} See Mair, \textit{In i Sent.}, 1519, prol., qu. 6, fol. 14vb, for arguments from Matthew, Romans, 1 Timothy, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Aristotle, and Avicenna.
should be loved; or better, theology teaches us what it means to love God. In practice, this works itself out in a hierarchically ordered system of speculative propositions more or less remotely related to propositions that are formally directive of some action, an action that is a concrete extension and expression of the will’s love of God. Mair’s *Sentences* commentary, therefore, is a collection and defense of these hierarchically ordered propositions.

The potential complication to this system is the lingering possibility that the love of God could entail a purely speculative act as a practice that is commanded by the will. This possibility would turn the present description of Mair’s theological system on its head. Given the fact that this speculative act of the intellect would be both a practice and a kind of speculation, one begins to wonder if the distinction between practice and theory can be useful at this level. This, at least, seems to be the kind of response Mair gives when he turns his attention briefly to what the love of God looks like in beatitude and writes: “the divine love of God in heaven is also an act of the contemplative life.” In beatitude, at least, the distinction between practical and speculative, love and contemplation, appears to lose its value, since *in patria*, *praxis* and *theoria* coincide.

5.2 *Beatific Enjoyment*

A quick glance at some fifteenth-century *Sentences* commentaries shows that interest in the Augustinian topic of enjoyment and use was still very much alive at the dawn of Luther’s Reformation. The topic also finds ample treatment in early sixteenth-century *Sentences* commentaries, such as Gabriel Biel’s *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum* (first edited on the basis of Wendelin Steinbach’s meticulous examination of Biel’s manuscripts printed in Tübingen in 1501, six years after Biel’s death), and Mair’s commentary on Book 1. Given Mair’s reputation on the continent as a high-quality writer,

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76 Mair, *In i Sent. (1519)*, prol., qu. 6, fol. 15ra: “Ad aliud negatur assumptum, quia dilectio divina in patria est etiam actus vitae contemplativae.”

77 There seems to be some precedent for this position—consider Rimini’s claim that the theology of the blessed can no longer be called practical because the love of God proper to beatitude is fundamentally different from the love of God directed by the theology of the wayfarer. See Gregory of Rimini, *Lectura*, vol. 1, prol., qu. 5, art. 4, p. 185 and Jeffrey C. Witt, “Between Faith and Knowledge” (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 2012), 208.


teacher, and scholar, it can be historically instructive and rewarding to revisit Mair’s contribution to the topic of enjoyment and use, and determine the extent of Mair’s originality. Mair’s treatment of beatific enjoyment contains eight questions and extends roughly over ten folio pages in Bade’s 1519 edition, the first redaction of Book I. The number of questions in Bade’s 1530 printing, the second redaction of Book I, has almost tripled: twenty-one questions spanning over seventeen folio pages. We focus here on the first redaction of Mair’s treatment of enjoyment in Bade’s 1519 printing, setting aside for another study a substantial comparative analysis of the two redactions and an examination of the possible evolution of Mair’s views. The list of questions in Bade’s 1519 printing follows a more or less typical division of the material of the first distinction found in many fourteenth- and fifteenth-century commentaries on Book I—a division which begins with a preliminary account of the terms fruitio and usus; proceeds with an examination of a number of questions pertaining to the relation between enjoyment and use, enjoyment and cognition, enjoyment and pleasure; and ends with a discussion of the enjoyment of the Trinity and the freedom of beatific enjoyment. More precisely, Mair deals with the following questions:

Qu. 1: “Whether every act of the will is an act of enjoyment or an act of use.”
Qu. 2: “Whether we can love the means and the end through one and the same act.”
Qu. 3: “Whether there can be many acts in the will.”
Qu. 4: “Whether any act of the will is an act of cognition.”
Qu. 5: “Whether one ought to enjoy only God and use only the creature.”
Qu. 6: “On the cause of love (dilectio) and pleasure (delectatio), and how they relate to each other.”

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81 Given Broadie’s assessment of Mair’s Sentences commentary, according to which “[w]hen Mair moves from formal logic to philosophical theology he takes his logic with him” (A History of Scottish Philosophy [Edinburgh, 2009], 53), it is worthwhile examining whether Mair applied novel logical tools in his discussion of traditional issues and questions pertaining to the topic of beatific enjoyment.
Qu. 7: “Whether one can love or cognize one person without loving or cognizing another.”
Qu. 8: “Whether the will is a free cause with respect to its own acts.”

Almost all of these eight questions are afforded substantial treatments of one to one and a half folio pages. The longest treatment is devoted to the last question, which occupies two and a half folio pages.

Mair offers familiar definitions of enjoyment and use. Broadly speaking, the term “enjoyment” applies to any attraction-based act of the appetitive faculty, for instance, pleasure or love caused by the apprehension of a pleasant thing. More strictly, however, “enjoyment” refers to the free love of the will whereby the will tends toward something for the sake of the thing and not for the sake of another. One should also distinguish, Mair explains, between loving something for its own sake both as an ultimate end and as worthy of love above all things, and loving something for its own sake without such additional determinations. Most properly understood, then, the term “enjoyment” stands for the act whereby the will loves something for its own sake both as an ultimate end and as worthy of love above all things. The term “use,” on the other hand, refers in an extended sense to what we normally do when we employ a faculty or a thing as an instrument; for instance, we use eyes in order to see, or a pen in order to write. Strictly speaking, use is an act of the will whereby the will actually or habitually tends toward something for the sake of another. Lastly, one should distinguish between orderly and disorderly enjoyment as well as between orderly and disorderly use.83 As if to reinforce the impression that his definitions of the terms “enjoyment” and “use” comply with the theological convention, Mair states that he will not take into consideration “Lorenzo Valla's canine refutation” of the meaning of those terms.84 Mair apparently refers to the Christian Epicureanism defended by Valla's protagonist Antonio da Rho in the third book of Valla's De voluptate (1431), later revised and published under the title De vero falsoque bono (1433).85 As is well known, Valla

83 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), dist. 1, qu. 1, fol. 17va–b.
84 Ibid., fol. 17vb: “Non respiciendum est ad repugnationem caninam Laurentii Valensis de terminis his, scilicet, uti et frui, quilibet enim scientia habet suos terminos peculiares, theologi autem sic terminis utuntur.”
argued that the moral virtues encompassed in the Stoic category of *honestas* are only a means to true pleasure. This view is at odds with Mair’s characterization of the virtues as worthy of pursuit both for their own sake and for the sake of the ultimate end.86

The interesting element in Mair’s terminological synopsis is the claim that a negative volition (*nolle*) can also be classified as an act of enjoyment or an act of use. Hatred of sin for the sake of God, for instance, can be considered an act of use insofar as it embodies a *propter aliud* relation. Hatred, however, is a negative act, a *nolle*.87 Similarly, a negative act can be an act of enjoyment. An instance of a negative type of enjoyment is to want for God not to be evil, or to want for a father not to be the son.88

According to Mair, acts of enjoyment or use are always complex. They are complex acts of volition because they presuppose a complex judgment on the part of the intellect. There is also a third act of the will, which is neither enjoyment nor use. Mair characterizes this third act as a kind of basic inclination or propensity of the will with respect to an object. This inclination or propensity involves an intellectual act of simple apprehension of a real or apparent good. An act of enjoyment or use, by comparison, involves the additional feature of willing for a good to happen to the object, or for an evil not to befall the object.89

Mair’s remarks on the second question (“whether we can love the means and the end through one and the same act”) represent a notable application of the model of simple intellectual apprehension of a propositional *complexum* to volitions. According to Mair, the will is capable of simultaneously loving God as the highest good for God’s own sake, and loving a person—say, Socrates—for the sake of God. This is so, Mair says, because the human will can operate the very same way the intellect does when the intellect assents or dissents to

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86 See Mair, *In I Sent.* (1319), dist. 1, qu. 1, fol. 17va: “Aliquid enim est diligibile propter se tantum, ut felicitas; secundo propter se et propter aliud, ut bonum delectabile et bonum honestum et virtutes; aliquid enim est diligendum propter aliud tantum, ut potio amara propter sanitatem.”

87 See ibid., concl. 1*, fol. 17vb.

88 See ibid., concl. 2*, fol. 17vb.

89 See ibid., concl. 3*, fol. 17vb. Note how in this passage Mair distinguishes between sensual and intellectual love, on the one hand, and intellectual love based on simple apprehension and intellectual love based on composition and division, on the other. The source of these divisions, which Mair does not reveal, is in fact Adam Wodeham. See Henricus Totting de Oyta, *Adam goddam super quattuor libros sententiarum* (Paris, 1532), liber 1, dist. 1, qu. 11, art. 1, fol. 37ra.
a propositional *complexum* without at the same time assenting or dissenting separately to the parts of the *complexum*—that is, the subject and predicate terms and the verbal copula.\(^{90}\)

In the third question of the first distinction, Mair argues further that the faculty of the will can also have two different volitions simultaneously. If we are capable of experiencing the simultaneous occurrence of (a) an intuitive cognition and its corresponding affirmative or negative judgment, (b) a direct and a reflexive act, (c) a sensitive and an intellectual cognition, or (d) two distinct intuitive cognitions, it follows that nothing prevents the will from having two acts—such as enjoyment and use—simultaneously.\(^{91}\) One might object, however, that if the will can have two acts simultaneously, then it can also have three acts, and if three, then four, and so on *ad infinitum*.\(^{92}\) Mair points out in response that the soul’s capacity is limited, and that the faculty of the will becomes less and less capable of having multiple acts simultaneously the more acts it actually has.\(^{93}\)

Mair’s treatment of the question of whether enjoyment is cognition is particularly intriguing. After reporting the common view (*opinio communis*) according to which no volition is cognition (*notitia*), Mair examines the position of Adam Wodeham, for whom appetitive acts such as volitions and emotions can be described as cognitions. Wodeham’s account, which has been called a “compositional cognition theory of volition,” maintains that an appetitive act, such as enjoyment or use, requires cognition (intuitive or abstractive) as a partial cause for its occurrence. The cognition then becomes part of the structure of the appetitive act in the form of an evaluation.\(^{94}\) Remarkably, Mair does not side with Wodeham; rather, he states that “one should not rashly abandon the accepted opinion, especially if the arguments for this [Wodeham’s]
opinion are of little weight.”95 Furthermore, Mair points out that in Book X of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine plainly maintains the exact opposite and “labors at length to show that we cannot love the unknown.”96 Presumably, if volitions have a cognitive character, then the familiar Augustinian thesis would be false because, in the absence of any prior or concurrent intellectual act of cognition, we will nevertheless be capable of loving something unknown. Mair thus endorses the established opinion, although he does say that it is possible to love the unknown, and even have a beatific enjoyment without seeing or cognizing God, *de potentia Dei absoluta*.97

After presenting and assessing multiple objections to Wodeham’s theory, Mair raises the pertinent question regarding the precise nature of the causal relationship between the intellect and the will. Mair introduces the view—mistakenly attributed in the margin of the text to Alexander of Hales but traditionally associated with Henry of Ghent—according to which cognition is a necessary, but by no means a sufficient condition, with respect to volition. In Henry’s terms, an intellectual act of cognition is a *causa sine qua non* of an act of the will. The total cause of volition, on Henry’s account, is the will. The intellect has no causal efficacy whatsoever with respect to volitions. Mair rejects Henry’s account in favor of Duns Scotus’s model of partial concurrent causality of the intellect and the will.98 For Scotus, the intellect and the will presuppose one another and are, so to speak, hitched together. In essence, the intellect and the will operate in tandem. According to Mair, the will cannot be the total cause of volition. If it were, then we could desire or love the unknown, which is contrary to our experience. An act of cognition is neither the effect of volition, on the one hand, nor a formal, final, material cause or a necessary

95 Mair, *In 1 Sent.* (1519), dist. 1, qu. 4, fol. 20vb: “... non temere est abeundum ab opinione communi, praeassertum cum ratione pro hac opinione modici sint momenti.”

96 Ibid., fol. 20vb: “Et expresse est beatus Augustinus in oppositum, ubi x *De Trinitate* laborat ad longum ostendere quod non possimus amare incognita. Sufficiebat enim dicere quod dilectio est cognitio essentialiter, et illam probare si volitionem vel nolitionem existimas set notitiam. Teneam ergo nullum actum voluntatis esse notitiam.” In the second redaction of Book 1, Mair devotes an entire question to whether the will can move, or “extend itself,” toward the unknown; see Mair, *In 1 Sent.* (1530), dist. 1, qu. 12, fols. 19ra–20ra.

97 See Mair, *In 1 Sent.* (1519), dist. 1, qu. 4, fols. 20vb–21ra.

disposition with respect to volition, on the other. In other words, the efficacy of the will alone suffices to produce willing, but without a “what,” the willing would be blind. In actuality, an act of volition is always accompanied by an act of cognition, since, as Mair points out, cognition is a partially concurring cause of volition. Thus, in Alexander Broadie’s words, although considered separately through “an act of philosophical analysis,” cognitive and volitional acts are naturally inseparable because willing anything at all requires content, that is to say, something that is willed.

Mair’s treatment of the fifth question of the first distinction (“whether one ought to enjoy only God and use only the creature”) defends conclusions that were fairly standard and widely accepted by earlier scholastics, namely, that it is not licit to enjoy a creature, that it is not licit to use God, but that it is licit to use something other than God, that is, a creature. Nevertheless, in a move reminiscent of Scotus, Mair argues that, logically speaking (de potentia logica), the

See Mair, *In I Sent.* (1519), dist. 1, qu. 4, fol. 21ra: “Sed ponitur hec conclusio opposita: Cognitio partialiter concurrit ad actum voluntatis. Probatur: Si voluntas esset totalis causa volitioinis, sequeretur quod voluntas naturaliter possit velle incognitum. Consequens est contra experientiam et contra Augustinum tertio *De libero arbitrio*, cap. 53 et 54, et consequens est falsum, ergo et antecedens; et probo consequentiam, quia cognitio non est effectus volitionis, nec causa formalis, finalis, nec materialis, nec necessaria dispositio illius causae, cum voluntas ex se sit sufficiens ad susci piandam volitionem, et per consequens est sufficiens ad producendum volitionem.”

This is consonant with Mair’s doctrine that “…in the absence of any act by the intellect, the will does not produce any part of the assent of faith” (Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy*, 67). See also Wood, “John Mair: the Human Dimension of Faith,” 130–1: “An assent of faith is not simply the result of an act of the intellect nor is it the result of an act of will. It is not the former because a pre-condition for a virtuous act is that the action is voluntary. It is not only the product of will because then the will could prompt one to assent to something unknown, which is absurd. The virtue of faith is achieved by the proper balancing of these two extremes. One extreme could be characterized as ‘blind faith’ because it does not have sufficient knowledge to make faith reasonable. The other extreme would be to think that faith can be the result of an act of intellect alone.” More precisely, an act of faith is the result of the intellect conceding the conclusion of a topical argument, which is a probable reason and serves as a motive, and a positive movement of the will called *pia affectio* (see ibid., 132–3). To appreciate the problematic character of Mair’s claim that the assent of faith depends on a probable reason and a pious affection of the will, where the difference between hesitant and unhesitant assent can be accounted for only in terms of the movement of the will, see Broadie, *In the Shadow of Scotus*, 90–2.

See Broadie, *In the Shadow of Scotus*, 87. Although Broadie’s point is about the assent of faith in particular, the point can be taken to apply generally to all instances where something is willed.
will can enjoy any given worldly thing. As long as the intellect reveals something to the will under the aspect of the good, regardless of whether it is a real or apparent good, the will can enjoy and love that good. Since the good is the general object of the will, and since “good” and “being” are convertible terms, anything which falls within the scope of being falls consequently within the scope of the good. Therefore, the will can enjoy anything at all as long as it is conceived of as a good of some sort.  

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Closer to the end of the treatment of the fifth question, Mair mentions the view of Durand of Saint-Pourçain, who maintained that the beatific vision of God, but not God as such, is the adequate object of beatific enjoyment. Durand’s view had become the target of criticism in many fourteenth-century Sentences commentaries, 103 and so it is not surprising to see Mair report and criticize this view as well.  

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In the sixth question of the first distinction, Mair inquires into the cause of love and pleasure, and the relation between love and pleasure. He argues that an act of love or pleasure is not immediately caused by the object. It is rather the case, he claims, that an appetitive act, such as love or pleasure, is caused simultaneously by the will itself and an accompanying cognition.  

105 With respect to the relation between love and pleasure, on the other hand, Mair tentatively proposes (conclusio probabilis) that every pleasure is an act of the will and, as a result, a form of love, a conclusion which Mair attributes correctly to Peter Auriol.  

106 On the basis of the principle of parsimony, Mair states

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102 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), dist. 1, qu. 5, fols. 21vb–22ra.
104 See Mair, In i Sent. (1519), dist. 1, qu. 5, fols. 22vb–23ra.
105 See ibid., qu. 6, fol. 23ra–b.
that it is unnecessary to talk about pleasure and displeasure as volitional passions really distinct from the acts of the will. In thus rejecting any distinction between passions and acts in the will, Mair distances himself from William of Ockham and sides with Peter Auriol. One wonders, in this context, why Mair was so dismissive of Lorenzo Valla’s Christian Epicureanism, given the fact that Mair endorses the thesis that beatific enjoyment and the love of God in heaven are in essence inseparable from pleasure. A Christian Epicurean like Valla would maintain that the end and motivation of the life of the Christian believer is the subjective experience of pleasure associated with the vision of God. Mair, on the other hand, seems to believe that the Christian believer’s end and motivation are to see and experience God as God, a vision and experience that could not in actuality be obtained without the accompanying delight. One ought to love and enjoy God for God’s sake, but in actually doing so, one is also immensely and intensely pleased insofar as the love and enjoyment already include pleasure. In essence, then, for Mair love or enjoyment is its own reward.

In response to the question as to whether one can love or cognize one divine person without loving or cognizing another, Mair proposes three conclusions. The first states that one can love the Father without loving the Son. Surprisingly, the second conclusion states the exact opposite of the first, namely, that no one can love the Father unless he loves the Son. The third conclusion declares that even if it is possible to separate the worship owed to one divine person from that owed to the others, it is nevertheless illicit to worship one divine person without worshipping the others. How does Mair reconcile the apparent contradiction between the first two conclusions? He resorts to the following appellation rule: “Terms which stand for interior acts of the soul, whether of the intellect or of the will, cause the ensuing terms to appellate their proper rationes.” “It is on account of this [rule],” Mair says, “that Aristotle rejects the following inference: ‘I know Choriscus; Choriscus

107 See Mair, In 1 Sent. (1519), dist. 1, qu. 6, fol. 23va: “Rursus, omnia possunt salvari non ponendo istas passiones realiter distinctas ab actibus voluntatis et intellectus. Sed res non sunt multiplicandae gratis; ergo incassum ponuntur passiones distinctae ab actibus voluntatis.”

108 The ultimate end, according to Valla, is the very act of loving (amatio), which is identical with pleasure, beatitude, happiness, and charity. In addition, one ought simply to love God, not love God on account of Himself. The proper interpretation of Scripture is the one which places the emphasis on love itself as an end, rather than on loving God for God’s own sake, as if love could ever be a means to a further end. See Trinkaus, In Our Image and Likeness, vol. 1, 138.

109 See Mair, In 1 Sent. (1519), dist. 1, qu. 7, fol. 24rb.
is the one coming; therefore, I know the one coming.” Since the predicate term—“the one coming”—signifies its proper concept, that is, the concept of man in general, in line with the appellation rule, the inference from “I know Choriscus” to “I know the one coming” is unwarranted since the proposition “I know the one coming” is false unless I also know who the one coming is. If, accordingly, we apply the same appellation rule to the proposition “I am acquainted with the Father,” we should say that the term “Father” within the predicate term “acquainted with the Father” (habeam notitiam patris) signifies its proper concept, that is, ‘Father.’ One can, therefore, legitimately say that it is possible to be acquainted with the Father without being acquainted with the Son. However, if we were to switch from a term that signifies its proper *ratio* to a term that does not, we could easily arrive at the opposite conclusion, namely, that no one can be familiar with the Father without being familiar with the Son. Mair exemplifies the switch from a term that signifies its proper *ratio* to a term that does not by means of the following immediate inference: “Sortes loves the Father; therefore, the Father he loves.” According to Mair, the term “Father” signifies its proper concept, ‘Father,’ in the premise but not in the conclusion. In the conclusion, “Father” signifies more than just ‘Father.’ It also signifies the divine essence. Thus, since the divine essence is the Son, it follows that one loves the Son.

As pointed out earlier, the final question regarding the freedom of the will is the most extensively discussed of all eight questions. This is not unusual, given the immense interest of both scholastic and humanist authors in the philosophical and theological problems surrounding the Christian belief in the possibility of free will and moral responsibility. Mair articulates three conclusions: (1) the will is the immediate cause with respect to its own elicited acts; (2) the will can veto any given act under the conditions of the present life (*in via*); and (3) the will cannot be coerced. Mair’s defense of the first conclusion rests on a familiar claim in the medieval scholastic free-will debate, namely, that if the power of the will is capable of causing the movement of

110 See ibid., qu. 6, fol. 24rb.


112 See Mair, *In i Sent.* (1549), dist. 1, qu. 6, fol. 24rb–va.

113 See ibid., qu. 8, fol. 25ra: “Pono conclusiones. Prima est: voluntas est causa immediata respectu actuum elicitorum a se. Secunda conclusio: voluntas potest cessare ab omni actu suo dum est in via. Tertia conclusio: voluntas non potest cogi.”
subordinate powers by means of its own distinctive act, then the will must also be capable of causing its own act. “On the supposition that an individual walks freely toward the church,” says Mair, “then the will is not the immediate cause of the walking but causes it by means of its own act in such a way that if the volition is efficacious with respect to the present, the motive potency is sufficient, the bodily organs are intact, and there is no external impediment, then the walking ensues naturally and immediately.”

If it is true that the will is the immediate cause of its own acts, then the second conclusion follows, namely, that the will is also capable of mastering its own acts by either eliciting an act of *velle* or *nolle*, on the one hand, or by vetoing or suspending any given act of *velle* or *nolle*, on the other. The will, Mair professes, is “the queen in the soul’s kingdom,” and, as if to illustrate the will’s radical indeterminacy, Mair states that the will is both capable of choosing one of two equally appealing alternatives for no reason whatsoever, or of choosing against the better judgment of the intellect. It is quite remarkable to see the well-known Buridan’s ass example—used by scholastics as a means of showcasing the concept of the will’s “liberty of indifference”—being deployed in this context against Mair’s defense of the radical freedom of the will. According to Mair’s imaginary opponent, numerous experiments with animals confirm the belief that indeterminacy is just as much a feature of the behavior of animals as of humans. Positioned midway between two equally appealing pieces of meat, a dog would behave differently every time. It would follow, therefore, that the freedom of the will is not, after all, a characteristic peculiar to human beings. Mair responds to the objection by pointing out that the behavior of

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114 Ibid., fol. 25ra–b: “…supposito quod aliquis libere ambulet ad ecclesiam, tunc voluntas non est causa immediata illius ambulationis, sed causat eam mediante suo actu volendi, ita quod si volitio est efficax pro presenti, et sit potentia motiva sufficiens, et organa apta et nullum obviet impedimentum extrinsecum naturaliter sequitur ambulatio.”
115 See ibid., fol. 25rb.
117 See Mair, *In i Sent.* (1519), dist. 1, qu. 8, fol. 25rb: “Sed dices: hae rationes non conclusunt, ut patet de innumeris experientiis brutorum. Si ponatur duo frusta carnis equalia equaliter distantia a cane, ad unum accedit et non ad aliud. Similiter, canis nunc tarde inedit nunc celeriter, nunc ex ista parte itineris nunc ex alia, irundo in eodem aere nunc ascendit nunc descendit. Et in presentia baculi cattus non accedit ad cibum, quo remoto celeriter ad illum devorandum progressit, cum non amplius timore afficiatur. Ergo si ex
animals only seems indeterminate. Different behavior outcomes in similar circumstances are due either to internal factors, such as qualitative differences in the animal's apprehensions of the food sources, or to external factors, such as the influence of the celestial bodies (to which animals are subject more than humans on account of the corporeal nature of their souls), or the impact of the First Cause. With respect to the opponent's canine experiment, Mair retorts that if a dog finds itself at the center of a perfectly round circumference of equally appealing bread pieces, the dog would remain motionless because having realized that it cannot go for two diametrically opposed pieces simultaneously, the dog will also realize that it has an equally good reason to go for either piece.\textsuperscript{118} Theoretically, the dog would remain motionless. In practice, however, the dog's behavior is always influenced by internal and/or external factors and the dog moves toward one piece or another.\textsuperscript{119}

If the will is essentially a free power, then although it is possible to restrict or diminish the will's freedom, it is nevertheless absolutely impossible to eliminate the will's deeper freedom, that is to say, freedom from coercion, unless one radically alters the nature of the will and, by implication, the nature of the soul. Freedom, Mair explains, is a property inseparable from the will. It would be a conceptual mistake to think of the "will" without at the same time thinking of "freedom." Since the will is numerically identical with the rational soul, one can speak of the soul as being free from sin, being free from pain and suffering, or as having freedom of indifference or as having freedom with respect to opposites. One can speak of the soul as being deprived of some or all of these forms of freedom. One cannot, however, speak of the soul as being deprived of freedom from coercion. If God could deprive the soul of this kind of freedom, then God could also create an un-free soul, which, given what a rational soul is, is by definition impossible.\textsuperscript{120}

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experientiis probes libertatem voluntatis in hominibus rationis capacibus, debebis pari ratione ex similibus admittere in brutis."
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\textsuperscript{118} Note that Mair concurs with Aristotle that animals cannot make choices because choice requires the ability freely to accept one thing while rejecting another, an ability that animals lack. See Broadie, \textit{A History of Scottish Philosophy}, 59.

\textsuperscript{119} See Mair, \textit{In i Sent.} (1519), dist. 1, qu. 8, fol. 25va: "Istae experientiae brutorum non impediunt, fortassis enim est inequalis apprehensio, et corpora coelestia plus dominii habent in brutis, quorum animae sunt pure extensae quam in hominibus, forte est impulsus primae causae ad hunc effectum et non ad illud. Si canis sit in centro panum circumferentialiter distantium, non potest simul adire duo objecta, et equalis ratio utriusque adeundum, prima causa eum ad hunc effectum movet, vel aliquid aliud extrinsecum vel intrinsecum potius ad hoc objectum quam ad illud."

\textsuperscript{120} See ibid., fol. 26rb.
It appears, nonetheless, that the human will can be coerced in exceptional circumstances, for example, in the circumstances of the beatific vision. How can the blessed in heaven still be free if they cannot suspend or veto their act of loving God? Mair notes that two alternative models have been proposed in scholastic debates concerning the freedom of the blessed. The first model, which is inspired by Anselm of Canterbury’s account of freedom in *De casu diaboli*, rests upon the idea that the created will does nothing of its own in loving God but receives the beatific volition directly from God. The second model is founded upon the idea of the concurrent causality of the divine will with respect to the created will. The exercise of this concurrent causality can either be understood on account of the direct influence of God’s will, or on account of God’s will influencing the created will by means of an intermediate secondary cause. Mair himself proposes a third model of concurrent causality. According to this model, the will of the blessed contributes only partially to the causation and continuation of the love of God. The very structure of beatific love thus involves two separate yet simultaneously operating causes—the created will and the divine will. One can, accordingly, describe the beatific act of loving God as a free act on account of the partial involvement of the will, and as a necessary act (non纯然 spontaneus) on account of God’s partial involvement. One might object to Mair’s account of the causal structure of beatific love that the same kind of causal structure also applies to the love of the wayfarer, and if the causal structure of the beatific act is the same as that of the non-beatific one, then both acts are equally free acts. Mair agrees that the two acts display the same causal structures insofar as both involve the partial concurrent causality of the created and divine wills. He denies, however, that God causes the two acts in the same way. Suppose, Mair says, that both Socrates and Plato want to climb the summit of Mount

121 For a recent systematic engagement with the main scholastic theories of the state of the will in heaven, see Simon Francis Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven? Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude* (London/New York, 2003).

122 See Mair, *In i Sent.* (1519), dist. 1, qu. 8, fol. 27ra–b.


124 See ibid., fol. 27rb: “Sed forte dices: actus voluntatis productus ab hoc viatore est simpliciter liber, actus beatificus voluntatis productur ab eiusdem causis, scilicet, a Deo et voluntate; ergo si unus est liber, et alius liber erit.”
Olympus but that neither of them can do so without God’s assistance. God is prepared to assist both Socrates and Plato. God is thus ready to assist Socrates to climb to the summit, providing that Socrates wants to do so, and if Socrates wants, which is all that is required on his part (quod in se est), then God makes it happen. In the case of Plato, however, God is also ready to prevent Plato from wanting the opposite, namely, not to climb to the summit, by removing any obstacle to Plato’s desire to climb to the summit. But Plato is also someone who is already disposed to climb to the summit of his own accord (ultro se). Plato knows that God could compel him to want to climb to the summit, but Plato wants to climb to the summit anyway. This analogy is intended by Mair to help us understand the subtle difference in the character of God’s involvement in one’s meritorious volitions in this life and in the next.125

In conclusion, what can be said in response to our initial query regarding the originality of Mair’s contribution to the impressive tradition of medieval scholastic commentaries on Peter Lombard’s Sentences? The final answer to this question will have to await a deeper and more comprehensive examination of Mair’s entire Sentences commentary. However, our closer look at Mair’s treatments of theology as a practical discipline in the prologue and of beatific enjoyment in distinction 1 of Book 1 can help us draw at least some tentative conclusions. In his account of theology as a scientific discipline, Mair stresses the practical dimension of the theological endeavor by teaching the student that the ultimate objective of the study of theology is to learn how to love God. Although there are few new questions and problems in Mair’s treatments, Mair is genuinely interested in previously unexplored conceptual possibilities and argumentative pathways. This is clearly visible in Mair’s discussion of enjoyment; for example, in the claim that the will can have a negative act of enjoyment, or in the attempt to tone down the paradoxical claim that one both can and cannot love the Father without loving the Son by means of special semantic rules. Mair’s quip targeted at Lorenzo Valla’s Christian Epicureanism might be taken as evidence of his uncompromising stance with respect to the

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125 See ibid., fol. 27rb: “Nego consequentiam, quia illi actus non producuntur ab eisdem causis eodem modo concausantibus, alter enim Deus causat in productione unus actus quam alterius. Detur analogia: sint duo, Sortes, videlicet, et Plato, quorum neuter potest conscendere verticem montis Olympi sine ope Dei. Deus est paratus coagere Sorti, si ascenderetur velit, et facere quod in se est ad ascendendum et non aliter. Iuvat similiter Platonem conscendere, paratus tamen ubi Plato nolit conscendere removere omne prohibens et facere eum conscendere. Plato tamen est talis quod ulterior se ad conscendendum disponit. Sic in proposito sit Sortes viator, Plato beatus, qui conformat suam voluntatem voluntati divinae in productione sui actus; scit tamen quod si coagere nolit ad suum actum Deus eum ad hoc necessaret. Et sic in beato servatur aliqua ratio libertatis.”
value and authority of the scholastic tradition. One should be careful, however, to draw any hasty conclusions regarding his allegiance to schools of thought. Undeniably, the encyclopedic character of Mair’s familiarity with scholastic sources, ideas, positions, and argumentative strategies, as well as Mair’s mastery of the dialectical style of exposition typical of commentaries on the Sentences establish Mair firmly as a noteworthy representative of the scholastic tradition. Nonetheless, Mair’s allegiance to scholasticism should not be at all surprising, given the fact that he taught theology at the University of Paris, an institution known long after his lifetime as being the stronghold of scholasticism.

6 Mair’s Commentary in Context

Peter Lombard’s Sentences were commented on consistently throughout the medieval period since Alexander of Hales and Richard Fishacre introduced the work into the theological curriculum of Paris and Oxford respectively. Throughout the centuries, several aspects of these commentaries changed. First, the structure of these commentaries developed as theologians in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries began to omit individual distinctions or to treat two or more distinctions together. Furthermore, beginning in the third decade of the fourteenth century, Oxford theologians started omitting the distinctions completely, instead structuring their commentaries around

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126 Mair has in fact been described as a transitional figure in the history of Western thought, neither “an uncompromising Scholastic die-hard” nor a full-fledged humanist (Colin M. MacDonald, “John Major and Humanism,” Scottish Historical Review 13 [1915/16]: 149–58, at 151).


129 This development is best observed in the critical editions of John Duns Scotus’s Ordinatio and William of Ockham’s Scriptum.
several questions.130 Once introduced, the question-based commentaries were influential at both Oxford and Paris, although they never completely eclipsed the choice of certain commentators to follow a traditional distinction-based format. Additionally, the question-based commentary became highly structured in the second half of the fourteenth century, as is evident in the Parisian commentaries by Peter of Candia, Peter d’Ailly, and Peter Gracilis.131

It is not necessary or possible to sketch here the development of Sentences commentaries between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It is worth noting, however, that in many respects John Mair’s commentary on the Sentences is almost without peer in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. First, the structure of his commentary is somewhat unique when compared to other substantial commentaries in the second half of the fifteenth century. As discussed above, Mair’s commentary treats almost every single distinction of all four books of the Sentences. Secondly, unlike his predecessors—who accepted as normative the practice of commenting on the Lombard—John Mair was acutely aware that the practice of commenting on the Sentences was being called into question, and that a broadly scholastic mode of theological discourse was under attack. The following discussion will briefly highlight the unique character of these two aspects of Mair’s commentary on the Sentences.

6.1 The Structure and Extent of Mair’s Commentary

The extant commentaries on the Sentences from the early sixteenth century are often shorter than John Mair’s massive work. Of the several examples that could be compared with Mair, the present discussion will focus on the works of Gabriel Biel and Jacques Almain. Biel’s commentary on the Sentences is an interesting point of comparison with Mair’s, given the fact that Biel’s work is one of the few commentaries published between 1400 and 1500 that are available in a modern critical edition, and that it rivals Mair’s for being


a comprehensive commentary, treating all four books and the majority of the distinctions. Further, Jacques Almain’s works deserve special comment because Almain was a student of Mair’s at Paris and shared his teacher’s interest in fourteenth-century philosophical theology.

Gabriel Biel (ca. 1420/25–1495), who studied at Heidelberg, Erfurt, and Cologne, was a Tübingen theologian and member of the Brethren of the Common Life. The first two books of his commentary on Peter Lombard—the *Collectorium in quattuor libros Sententiarum*—are essentially a comprehensive engagement with William of Ockham’s commentary on the *Sentences* (also dialoguing with other members of the *via moderna*, such as Gregory of Rimini and Peter of Ailly). In size and thoroughness, Biel’s commentary is indeed a worthy rival of Mair’s. Like Mair, Biel attempts to remain faithful to the number and order of distinctions. Thus, Biel’s commentary covers all 48 distinctions of Book i, all 44 distinctions of Book ii, and all 40 distinctions of Book iii. With the exception of Book iv, which treats only 22 of the 50 distinctions, Biel’s commentary is remarkably comprehensive. On the other hand, Biel’s treatment of many of the distinctions is limited to a single question, such that 104 of the original 182 distinctions, or 57%, are dealt with in a single question. Another difference is that, unlike Mair, Biel rarely has a distinction containing over 10 questions, with the exceptions of the prologue (12 questions), dist. 2 (11 questions), dist. 3 (10 questions) of Book i, and dist. 15 (17 questions) of Book iv.

Mair’s commentary differs from Biel’s in some other ways as well. Perhaps most significantly, Mair is familiar with the critique of scholasticism that emerged during the second half of the fifteenth century. This topic is briefly introduced in the following sub-section, but here it is important to note that, historically, Mair attempts to address the humanist challenge to scholastic methodology. Furthermore, Mair is increasingly aware of the theological changes that were taking place in Germany, Switzerland, and France. He explicitly mentions Luther, and has a sense of the theological shifts that are taking place as a result of the Protestant Reformation. In these ways, Mair’s commentary is somewhat unique by contrast to that of Gabriel Biel and other late medieval authors. Mair lived during a period of social, intellectual, and cultural upheaval, and his commentary warrants much more comprehensive study as a way of achieving a balanced understanding of the complexity of

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132 Biel’s use of sources in Books iii and iv is quite distinct, as he relies on numerous members of the *via antiqua* (such as Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas). See Rosemann, *Great Medieval Book*, 166–70, and John L. Farthing, *Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel* (Durham, n.c./London, 1988).
sixteenth-century university culture, in particular, and European thought, in general.

Jacques (or, also, James) Almain is another contemporary of John Mair’s who is worth some consideration. Almain (ca. 1480–1515) was a student of Mair’s, studying the arts and theology at the University of Paris during the first two decades of the sixteenth century. More precisely, Almain studied theology under John Mair between 1508 and 1512, when Almain received his licence in theology. Given his close association with Mair, his commentaries on the Sentences present an illuminating counterpart to Mair’s own work. Almain’s untimely death in 1515 means that most of his works were published posthumously; this is the case with two of his three commentaries on the Lombard’s Sentences. The first commentary is entitled, Dictata super sententias Holcot, which was published in the Opuscula cum additionibus David Cranston in Paris in 1512. This work was subsequently republished both in subsequent editions of the Opuscula, and independently in 1526. The work, which, as the title indicates, is a lectura secundum alium, is relatively brief, treating only four questions. The edition published in 1526 occupies only thirty folios.

Almain’s second commentary on the Sentences, published in 1516, focuses on Book III. The work, which is Almain’s only commentary on the Sentences that is not a lectura secundum alium, is relatively complete in treating distinctions 1–33 of Book III. The commentary breaks off after distinction 33, and it is not clear why he did not treat the remaining seven distinctions. The edition published by Granjon in 1516 extends to 157 folios.

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134 Interestingly, several of the works published posthumously were edited by John Mair. See Farge, Biographical Register, 16.


136 According to Farge, the Opuscula were printed at least two more times in the early sixteenth century; see Farge, Biographical Register, 17. The work was published independently as Dictata clarissimi et acutissimi doctoris Theologi Magistri Iacobi Almain Senonensis super sententias Magistri Roberti Holcot, apprime utilia (Paris: Claude Chevallon, 1526).

137 Acutissimi divinorum archanorum scrutatoris Magistri Iacobi Almain In tertium Sententiarum utilis editio, ed. N. Maillard (Paris: J. Granjon, 1516). Farge notes that this work was reprinted in 1527 and 1537, although we have not been able to confirm the existence of these two editions. See Farge, Biographical Register, 17.
Almain's third commentary on the *Sentences* is grounded in Duns Scotus's treatment of Book IV of the *Sentences*. This final work, like the commentary on Book III, is a more substantial work than Almain's initial commentary based on the theology of Robert Holcot.

Unlike the commentaries by Gabriel Biel or John Mair, Jacques Almain's three commentaries are all relatively limited in size and scope. Almain's interest seemed to be in lecturing on the *Sentences* in dialogue with the great scholastic authors of the fourteenth century, Holcot and Scotus, in particular. This is not so different from Gabriel Biel, who in the first two books of the *Collectorum* followed closely both the structure and content of Ockham's commentary. Thus, when compared with Biel's and Almain's commentaries, John Mair's commentary appears quite exceptional. What stands out is not only the thoroughness with which Mair treats almost every distinction of all four books of the *Sentences*, but the balance of his engagement with fourteenth-century theological authorities. Nevertheless, despite their differences, the one thing that Biel, Almain, and Mair share in common is the profound respect for the work of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century authors.

### 6.2 Humanist Criticism

In the short introduction that he wrote to the 1530 edition of his commentary on the first book of the *Sentences*, John Mair demonstrates a profound awareness of the changes that were occurring within the study of theology at the time. In the introduction to what would be his last published commentary on the *Sentences*, Mair provides a brief outline of his own engagement with the Lombard. First, Mair tells his reader that when he began writing on the

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139 See MacDonald, “John Major and Humanism,” 149–58. Unfortunately, there has been little research into Mair’s knowledge and use of humanist methods, sources, and critiques of scholasticism.


Sentences two decades before, he engaged extensively with the liberal arts. His reason for this approach, he explains, is that this was the customary mode of discourse among the theologians at the time—Hic enim fere mos scribendi tunc theologis erat—an approach that was concerned primarily with interpreting Aristotle. After his work on Book i of the Sentences, Mair writes that he began lecturing on Book iv, when many listeners rushed to hear him. The students, Mair says, were not interested in the speculative discussions that dominated Book i, preferring instead the more practical issues discussed in Book iv. He also states that when he lectured on his countryman, Duns Scotus, or on William of Ockham or Gregory of Rimini, his listeners abandoned the lecture even as it began. Interestingly, Mair notes that this shift occurred around 1518, when the new “heresy” of Martin Luther threatened the Catholic faith. This shift distracted the Parisian students from studying the masters of the Sentences, and instead they turned their attention to the study of the Bible. These remarks, written around 1530, summarize briefly a radical shift that took place in theology during the first three decades of the sixteenth century. Mair’s commentary—one of the last great works of systematic scholastic philosophical theology prior to the era of “second scholasticism”—was written during exactly this period of radical transformation.

During the fifteenth century, Lorenzo Valla (1406–57), Rudolph Agricola (1443–85), and numerous other humanist scholars launched a substantive critique of the scholastic method. In Mair’s lifetime, this critique was most poignantly felt at Paris through the publication of Erasmus’s Praise of Folly (Stultitiae laus) in 1511 and Juan Luis Vives’s In pseudodialecticos in 1520. Mair was familiar with these works and the humanist criticism of scholastic methodology they defended. In his first redaction of the commentary on Book i, published in 1510, Mair presents a playful dialogue between David Cranston († 1512) and Gavin Douglas († 1522) on the relationship between theology and philosophy, incorporating many of the humanist critiques of the scholastic method (voiced by Douglas) into his dialogue. What is perhaps telling about

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Accessit praeterea a duodecim (si rite recordor) annis fidei catholicae nova et detestanda calamitas, Martini Luteri, et qui ab eo os ponendi in caelum temeritatis ansam accep- runt, excranda haeresis, ad quam confutandam, omnes theologiae studioi Luteciae ad sacras sese literas, neglectis Sententiarum definitionibus, accinxerunt, ita ut nostra Academia Sorbonica obtutum mentis omnem ad materias cuilibet captu faciles fixerit, positionesque Sorbonicas ingeniosis animis dignas, in materias maiorum ordinariarum (ut vulgato more loquar) commutarint.”

141 See Mair, In i Sent. (1510). No foliation is present for the dialogue between Cranston and Douglas, but see the folio immediately preceding folio 1. For a discussion of this dialogue, see Broadie, A History of Scottish Philosophy, 54–5. For an edition of the Latin text with an
this dialogue is that Mair never definitively responds to Douglas’s humanist critiques. In this respect, his commentary is a unique witness to the changing academic world of the sixteenth century: he was a man who was born two years before Desiderius Erasmus and who completed his theological education eleven years before Luther composed his 95 theses in Wittenberg; he was 44 years of age when Erasmus published *In Praise of Folly* and 53 when Vives published *In pseudodialecticos*. Mair thus appropriated the tools and vocabulary of late medieval scholasticism, but was also being gradually exposed to the impact of humanist learning. Mair’s commentary, in effect, stands witness to the disorienting context of the times, amply illustrating Mair’s status as a transitional figure in the history of Western philosophical theology: Mair is a theologian who identified very strongly with the great tradition of Latin scholasticism, realized that times were changing, but did not fully embrace or share the spirit of novelty.

In the end, Mair’s commentary is a fascinating lens through which one can observe both the reception of late medieval thought in the early sixteenth century, and the struggle of a scholastically trained theologian to assimilate the ideals of humanist methodology. This fact alone warrants that much greater attention be given to Mair’s commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard than it has received so far.

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