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Spreading the Faith to American Indians: Alfonso de Castro's Call for Amerindian Education in the Context of the Second Scholastic

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Abstract

Historical scholarship on the sixteenth-century neo-scholastic debate about American Indians generally centers on the thought of Francisco de Vitoria. Focusing on Alfonso de Castro's short treatise *Utrum indigenae* (1543), this paper challenges both an exclusive concentration on Vitoria as well as the received contention that the thought of the School of Salamanca rendered a single, unified view of Amerindians. In *Utrum indigenae*, Castro argued that American Indians should be instructed in liberal arts and theology thus constructing a strikingly different image of the peoples of the New World as compared to accounts by Vitoria or Francisco Suárez. While the historian Martin Nesvig has recently proposed an Erasmian humanist contextualization of Castro's treatise, I argue that the image of American Indians presented in *Utrum indigenae* testifies to an alternative, novel way of writing about American Indians from *within* the framework of the School of Salamanca which has so far remained unnoticed.

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Introduction

Francisco de Vitoria (1485-1546)¹ was one of the most prominent and influential intellectuals of sixteenth-century Spain. His famous lecture on the American Indians *De indis* (1539)² is a crucial text in the history of Western political thought which has been a commonplace for interpretations by scholars from a diverse range of disciplines.³ However, it is pivotal to note that Vitoria's thought does not stand in isolation. Quite the contrary, it is at the heart of a particular intellectual milieu of sixteenth-century Spanish university theologians who shared a common enterprise. The work of the theologians who belonged to this framework, which is known as the 'School of Salamanca' or 'Second Scholastic,' essentially centered on the revaluation of questions initially raised in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* (hence their name Thomists).⁴ One of the major

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¹ Pagden, Anthony and Jeremy Lawrance. "Principal Events in Vitoria's Life." *Vitoria: Political Writings*. Ed. and trans. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance. Cambridge 1991, xxix.

There is no agreement among scholars about Vitoria's birth date. For further information about this controversy see Plans, Juan Belda. *La escuela de Salamanca y la renovación de la teología en el siglo XVI*. Madrid 2000, 317.

² Francisco de Vitoria. *On the American Indians (De indis)*. In: *Vitoria: Political Writings*. Ed. and trans. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance. Cambridge 1991, 231-292.

³ The abundance of scholarly discussions of Vitoria is immense and includes accounts by scholars as contested as Carl Schmitt (see Carl Schmitt. *Land und Meer: Eine Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtung*. 4th ed. Stuttgart 2001, 72).

⁴ Brett, Annabel S. *Liberty, Right and Nature: Individual Rights in Later Scholastic Thought*. Cambridge 1997, 1.

contemporary political debates in which they engaged was what Vitoria called the ‘affair of the Indies,’⁵ the question about the rights and the just treatment of American Indians, who had become known to the Spaniards in the course of their colonizing ventures overseas.

While Vitoria’s contribution to this debate is well-known, accounts by other members of the School of Salamanca are today mostly forgotten and have therefore remained largely unexamined. In this vein, the thought of the Franciscan theologian Alfonso de Castro (1495-1558)⁶ is particularly intriguing. Only a few years after Vitoria had delivered his *De indis* at the University of Salamanca, Castro wrote a treatise entitled *Utrum indigenae* (1543)⁷, the central argument of which is that American Indians should be instructed in liberal arts and theology. Castro is a much lesser known theologian of the School of Salamanca, and since none of his works were ever translated into a modern European language he is a largely unknown thinker today.⁸ Only recently has Castro’s treatise been translated into English and there is no sustained study available on *Utrum indigenae* that places Castro’s thought on American Indians in the context of the School of Salamanca. Using the contextualist approach to intellectual history, I wish to tackle this lacuna. A close examination of the rich set of common sources, on which the Spanish scholastic theologians drew, and of their creative re-workings of these (con)texts is indispensable if we wish to ultimately understand⁹ in what ways Castro’s treatise provides a novel facet in the neo-scholastic discourse and the conception of Amerindian humanity.

The first section of this paper provides an introduction to the methodology, the set of tools, and the kinds of questions that are crucial to the intellectual framework of the School of Salamanca, particularly in view of the debate about American Indians. Moreover, this section equally serves to briefly introduce the work of Alfonso de Castro. In a second step, an indispensable digression brings us to a consideration of Vitoria’s *De indis* and

⁵ Pagden, Anthony and Jeremy Lawrance. “Introduction.” *Vitoria: Political Writings*. Ed. and trans. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance. Cambridge 1991, xvi.

⁶ Plans 2000, 7.

⁷ Alfonso de Castro. *On whether the Indians Should Be Instructed in Liberal Arts and Sacred Theology* [= *Utrum indigenae*]. In: *Forgotten Franciscans: Writings from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy*. Ed. and trans. Martin Austin Nesvig. University Park 2011, 26-50.

⁸ Nesvig, Martin Austin. “Introduction.” *Forgotten Franciscans: Writings from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy*. Ed. and trans. Martin Austin Nesvig. University Park 2011, 7.

⁹ The notion of ‘understanding,’ to which I am referring, is indebted to the work of Quentin Skinner. See Skinner, Quentin. “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas.” *History and Theory* 8.1 (1969): 3-53.

Francisco Suárez' (1548-1617)¹⁰ *De fide* (1583; 1621)¹¹ in order to illustrate that throughout the sixteenth century, Spanish scholastic theologians prominently discussed the question of spreading the faith to non-apostate infidels¹² such as the American Indians with a particular focus on the lawful means for conversions. Yet, upon turning to *Utrum indigenae* (1543) in the subsequent section, we shall see that Castro did not follow the established pattern and his treatise is in important ways beyond the lines of thought that are usually associated with the School of Salamanca. Arguing for the theological education of American Indians, Castro not only adopted an alternative approach to the question of spreading the faith, but he equally rendered a strikingly different image of the humanity of the peoples of the New World that opens new vistas in terms of the diversity of the neo-scholastic discussion of American Indians.

1 The School of Salamanca and Alfonso de Castro

The beginning of the School of Salamanca is undisputedly associated with Francisco de Vitoria and his election as *cátedra de Prima*, the prime chair of theology, at Salamanca.¹³ Vitoria had been introduced to the writings of Thomas Aquinas during his studies at Paris,¹⁴ and when he became professor at Salamanca, he made Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* "the principal textbook in theology and also inaugurated a Thomistic revival in theology and philosophy at Salamanca."¹⁵ Yet, it must be stressed that in general, the *Summa theologiae*

¹⁰ Hill, Benjamin. "Introduction." *The Philosophy of Francisco Suárez*. Ed. Benjamin Hill and Henrik Lagerlund. Oxford 2012, 13.

¹¹ *De fide* was first delivered in a series of lectures by Suárez in 1583 and posthumously published by one of his disciples in 1621.

Francisco Suárez. *De fide*. In: *A Work on the Three Theological Virtues Faith, Hope and Charity* (= *Selections from Three Works of Francisco Suárez, S. J.*, vol. 2). Prepared by Gwladys L. Williams, Ammi Brown, and John Waldron. Oxford 1944, 737-795.

¹² The terms 'infidel' and 'unbeliever' designate any non-Christians and thus clearly reflect a Christian perspective. Nevertheless, since the Spanish Thomists used these expressions as technical terms (e.g. in distinguishing apostate unbelievers from non-apostate unbelievers), I will render the original vocabulary for the sake of accessibility and understanding.

¹³ See Doyle, John P. "Hispanic Scholastic Philosophy." *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*. Ed. James Hankins. Cambridge 2007, 250. See Brett 1997, 1. See Pagden, Anthony. *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*. Rev. ed. Cambridge 1986, 60. See Plans 2000, 157. See Specht, Rainer. "Die Spanische Spätscholastik im Kontext ihrer Zeit." *Die Ordnung der Praxis: Neue Studien zur Spanischen Spätscholastik*. Ed. Frank Grunert and Kurt Seelmann. Tübingen 2001, 10.

¹⁴ Pagden 1986, 61.

¹⁵ Doyle 2007, 250.

had long been introduced in various schools of the Dominican Order, and that which was new at Paris and later inaugurated at Salamanca by Vitoria was a particular focus on Aquinas's questions on justice and right.¹⁶ These are featured in what is commonly referred to as the *secunda secundae* (IIaIIae), the second part of the second part of Aquinas's *Summa*, and in writing commentaries on these questions, the Spanish Thomists were deeply engaged "with the *political* side of moral theology."¹⁷ Commentaries on this section of *Summa* were one of the major genres of texts the Spanish scholastic theologians produced. Yet, they not only inherited the thought of Aquinas himself but, equally importantly, his contexts: Aquinas's writings were most obviously informed by Aristotle's *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but he also extensively drew on Roman law, Scripture and the texts of the Church Fathers.¹⁸

"From Aquinas," as Annabel Brett asserts, the Spanish Thomists "inherited the idea of natural law as a way to gain a critical understanding of contemporary political reality through being able causally to account for the legitimacy of human political arrangements."¹⁹ In other words, natural law provided a framework that allowed the Spanish theologians to address juridical questions about human political communities without relying on revelation. Aquinas identified four inter-related types of laws, of which natural law was one.²⁰ First, there was eternal law, "the rational pattern of the government of the universe"²¹ as it exists in the mind of God, who is above everything else. From this followed natural law, which is a section of the eternal law that is specifically geared towards

¹⁶ Brett 1997, 125.

¹⁷ Ibid., emphasis mine.

¹⁸ Dyson, Robert W. "Introduction." In: *Aquinas: Political Writings*. Ed. and trans. Robert W. Dyson. Cambridge 2002, xxi-xxiii.

¹⁹ Brett, Annabel S. "Scholastic Political Thought and the Modern Concept of the State." *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Ed. Annabel S. Brett and James Tully with Holly Hamilton-Bleakley. Cambridge 2006, 144.

²⁰ These four types are eternal law, natural law, human law, and divine law. The first two are explained in the text below. Human laws are "specific inferences made by practical reasoning from natural law" (Dyson 2002, xxxiii), they are made by human beings but must not contradict natural law. Divine law, for Aquinas, directly follows from eternal law and is not accessible through reason alone. It "is the law of revelation, made accessible to us through the teaching of scripture and the Church" (Dyson 2002, xxxiii).

Crucially, while Aquinas clearly differentiated between eternal and divine law, for Vitoria these two were essentially the same. As Pagden and Lawrance underline, for Vitoria – as well as his fellow Spanish Thomists – the principal law that "embraced all others was the *divine or eternal law*" (Pagden and Lawrance 1991, xiv, emphasis mine).

²¹ Dyson 2002, xxxii.

human beings, all of which are subject to natural law. Robert Dyson emphasizes that natural law

is not the mere instinct to survive and breed. It is prescriptive; it tells us what we ought to do. The natural law tells us to do good and avoid evil. [...] It is 'natural' [...] in the sense that we are by nature creatures to whom its prescriptions are rationally obvious. We do not have to learn about them or have them legislated for us: to all human beings, pagans included, they simply 'stand to reason.'²²

Natural law in Aquinas's conception is naturally and exclusively available to human beings. It is a set of prescriptions to which we have access by means of our rational capacity, a law that God 'implanted' in the minds of men.²³ This notion of natural law became pivotal to the thought of the School of Salamanca and, Anthony Pagden insists, all neo-scholastic theologians set out "to provide an exegesis of the law of nature."²⁴ For our consideration of Amerindian humanity it is crucial to note that according to the Spanish Thomists natural law was equally available to Christians and pagans alike. To assert that natural law was *implanted* in the minds of all human beings "had the effect of liberating the humanity of man from any Christological base,"²⁵ and in turn, suggested that to be human did not depend on being Christian. The crucial result was that the medieval conception of an *orbis christianus* came to be replaced by a *communitas totius orbis* by Vitoria and his disciples.²⁶

Moreover, it is pivotal to note that the Spanish scholastics not only drew on the idea of natural law but also of natural subjective rights,²⁷ rights that were conceived under the heading of the term *dominium*²⁸ and the ultimate conclusion of which was that the "activity of all irrational nature [was excluded] from the universe of the juridical."²⁹ On the one hand, thus, the question that mattered most to the Spanish Thomists in view of the debate about American Indians was whether these peoples were sufficiently rational to govern

²² Ibid., xxxii-iii.

²³ The metaphor of an 'implanted' or 'imprinted' natural law was deployed by various members of the School of Salamanca, e.g. by Molina and Suárez, and is also used by Skinner. See Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Vol. 2. Cambridge 1978, 148 and 151.

²⁴ Pagden 1986, 61.

²⁵ Pagden 1986, 63.

²⁶ Plans 2000, 381.

²⁷ Brett 2006, 144.

²⁸ The notion of *dominium* shall be briefly introduced in section 2.

²⁹ Brett 1997, 129.

themselves or if “these barbarians are slaves by nature,”³⁰ as Vitoria famously asked – and only ambivalently refuted – in *De indis*.³¹ Perhaps less obviously, but all the more important for the argument of this essay, to raise the question of Amerindian rationality was equally an inquiry into their very capacity of becoming Christianized.

The neo-scholastic theologians not only based their treatment of natural law on Aquinas but enlarged his juridical vocabulary by also drawing on “later medieval conceptions of rights as belonging to the individual” and thereby they generated a juridical framework with which they could address “the competing claims of states, subjects, and non-subjects in a rapidly-changing world.”³² In this respect, natural law was not simply a prescriptive body of the laws of humanity but, most crucially, it was an idiom with which “the boundaries of political space were *fundamentally* contested.”³³

While the impact of Aquinas’s notion of natural law, the medieval heritage of natural rights, as well as the Aristotelian influence on the writings of the School of Salamanca are of primary importance and have been prominently featured in scholarly discussions, the theological context plays a somewhat minor role in historiographical accounts of the Second Scholastic. By theological context I mean the fact that the Spanish scholastics were not solely interested in addressing questions of natural rights without referring to the teachings of the Christian faith but they were equally and “inevitably influenced by an underlying Christian attitude”³⁴ whose promotion in the New World they eagerly approved.

This Christian attitude, however, is not to be identified with a support of papal claims to temporal power. Alexander IV’s bulls of donation of 1493 which granted the Spanish crown the right to conquer and to enslave the peoples of the Caribbean, were fiercely rejected by Spanish scholastic theologians, who refuted the papacy’s claims both to

³⁰ Vitoria, *De indis*, 1.1., 239.

³¹ For an excellent account of Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery in connection with the neo-scholastic debate about American Indians, with a particular focus on Vitoria’s *De indis*, see Pagden 1986, chapters 3 and 4.

³² Brett, Annabel S. *Changes of State: Nature and the Limits of the City in Early Modern Natural Law*. Princeton 2011, 11-12.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3, emphasis mine.

³⁴ Tierney, Brian. *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law, 1150-1625*. Atlanta 1997, 287.

temporal and spiritual authority over the peoples in the New World.³⁵ Nevertheless, Scripture provided a crucial context for the Second Scholastic as the Spanish theologians firmly believed that all human beings were made in the image of God, which “attributed a unique value to individual persons as children of God.”³⁶ This is closely related to the idea that only human beings have true *dominium*, and we shall return to the implications of this.

The Spanish Thomists insisted that it was necessary and just to preach the Gospel to unbelievers such as the American Indians, while, at the same time, this did not entail any kind of a priori authority over Amerindians. Still, they firmly believed that the non-apostate infidels of the New World should be instructed in the Christian faith and therefore enquired into the possibilities of preaching the Gospel to American Indians without violating their politico-legal authority. After all, the neo-scholastic theologians were convinced of the truth and the necessity of the Gospel, and as we will see shortly, this prompted Castro to even go as far as to promote the idea that American Indians should obtain thorough theological instruction.

Alfonso de Castro was born in the Spanish city of Zamora in 1495 and, after he had entered the Franciscan order, went on to study theology and philosophy at the University of Alcalá de Henares.³⁷ In the 1530s, he permanently moved to Salamanca where he obtained a further degree in theology.³⁸ It is uncertain whether, after that, Castro held a professorship in theology at the University of Salamanca, or if he instead taught at the *Convent de San Francisco* in the same city.³⁹ Yet, even Martin Austin Nesvig, who agrees

³⁵ Hafner, Felix and Adrian Loretan and Christoph Spenlé. “Naturrecht und Menschenrecht: Der Beitrag der Spanischen Spätscholastik zur Entwicklung der Menschenrechte.” *Die Ordnung der Praxis: Neue Studien zur Spanischen Spätscholastik*. Ed. Frank Grunert and Kurt Seelmann. Tübingen 2001, 141; Pagden 1986, 29-30. See section 2 for further elaboration on the Thomist insistence that all rights were grounded on God’s law, not God’s grace.

³⁶ Tierney 1997, 287.

³⁷ Maihold, Harald. “Castro, Alfonso de”. *Lexikon zur Geschichte der Hexenverfolgung* (= historicum.net). Ed. Gudrun Gersmann, Katrin Moeller, and Jürgen-Michael Schmidt. <https://www.historicum.net/no_cache/persistent/artikel/9933/>. 2013. Accessed on 23 July 2015.

See also Nesvig 2011, “Introduction,” 7; and Müller, Daniela. “Ketzerei und Ketzerbestrafung im Werk des Alfonso de Castro.” *Die Ordnung der Praxis: Neue Studien zur Spanischen Spätscholastik*. Ed. Frank Grunert and Kurtz Seelmann. Tübingen 2001, 334.

³⁸ Maihold 2013, n.p.

³⁹ Maihold and Müller assert that Castro was professor of theology at the University of Salamanca (Maihold 2013, n.p.; Müller 2001, 334), and the same is argued by Sandra Harding (see Harding, Sandra Berke. “Neoscholasticism and the Rule of God’s Law: The Thought of the Castilian Theologian Alfonso Castro.” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 15.1 [1988]: 82).

with the latter proposition, underlines the crucial fact that Castro was “in close association with Francisco de Vitoria.”⁴⁰ Along with Vitoria and his Dominican disciples, Castro helped establish the revival of Spanish Thomism and was the ‘Franciscan exception’ among the early members of the School of Salamanca.⁴¹

Like all theologians of the Second Scholastic, Castro was a harsh opponent of the teachings of the Lutherans and eagerly defended the Catholic faith against their ‘heretical’ views of the Church and political society. Both his role as royal advisor of the Spanish kings Charles I (who was simultaneously the Roman emperor Charles V) and Philipp II as well as his theoretical, theological works testify to his dedication to preserving the ‘true faith.’⁴² Even though Castro is a mostly forgotten thinker today, his writings were widely read and quoted by contemporaries.⁴³ In 1534, his first important work *Adversus omnes haereses*, an encyclopedic collection of more than 400 heretical arguments, was published and established Castro’s reputation as an advocate of the teachings of the Catholic Church and a fierce adversary of the Lutherans.⁴⁴ His debut work “went through twenty editions between 1543 and 1568, making it the all-time most-printed inquisitional treatise.”⁴⁵ Thereafter, his occupation with heresy remained but assumed a more extensive scale and in his two main works⁴⁶ Castro came to formulate a theory of subjective penal law, which took its cue from the teachings of Aquinas. “The actual significance of Castro’s thought,” Harald Maihold argues, “lies first and foremost in his re-appropriation and development of Thomas Aquinas’s theory of penal theology.”⁴⁷

Among the broader questions on justice and right of Aquinas’s thought, Castro became increasingly interested in the particular context of penal theology. In this sense,

In contrast, Olachea Labayen and Nesvig, following the former, maintain that Castro instead taught at the Franciscan House (Nesvig 2011, “Introduction,” 8; Juan B. Olachea Labayen. “Opinion de los teólogos españoles sobre dar estudios mayores a los Indios.” *Anuario de estudios americanos* 15 [1958]: 116).

⁴⁰ Nesvig, Martin Austin. “The ‘Indian Question’ and the Case of Tlatelolco.” *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*. Ed. Martin Austin Nesvig. Albuquerque 2006, 63.

⁴¹ Maihold 2013, n.p.

Maihold, Harald. *Strafe für fremde Schuld? Die Systematisierung des Strafbegriffs in der Spanischen Spätscholastik und Naturrechtslehre*. Köln 2005, 39-40.

⁴² Maihold 2013, n.p.

⁴³ Müller 2001, 333.

⁴⁴ Maihold 2013, n.p.

⁴⁵ Nesvig 2011, “Introduction,” 8.

⁴⁶ *De potestate legis poenalis* (1550) and *De iusta haereticorum punitione* (1547). See Maihold 2005, 181.

⁴⁷ Maihold 2013, n.p., my translation.

Maihold had previously made a similar argument in his essay “Systematiker der Häresien: Erinnerung an Alphonso de Castro.” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung* 87.1 (2001): 528.

Castro shared a central concern which characterized the work of all early members of the School of Salamanca: the preservation of the orthodoxy of the faith and, in consequence, of the neo-scholastic vision of political society. Hence, Castro's thought in general is most aptly characterized as a truly "*thomistisch-spätscholastische Lehre*,"⁴⁸ and this applies just as much to his treatise on American Indians. In contrast to his considerable influence on the intellectual landscape of sixteenth-century Spain, it is astonishing that Castro is scarcely recalled today. One likely reason for this is that his works were never translated from Latin.⁴⁹ However, a further explanation may be that, unlike other neo-scholastic theologians, Castro used very few direct quotations in his theoretical treatises.⁵⁰ In consequence, he is certainly less easily and less obviously identifiable as an 'heir' and commentator of the teachings of Aquinas. While it would be too daring to offer a final assessment on the causalities, it is a fact that relatively little scholarship has been published on Castro.

Castro not only engaged in issues that were deeply juridical but he also defended the view that theology was the only framework that provided an approach to the most fundamental questions concerning human life: "It is not the canonist's task to pass judgment on heresy and the faith, but the theologian's, to whom divine law is entrusted. Canonists must judge according to canon law."⁵¹ This passage of Castro's first work *Adversus omnes haereses* came to be re-stated by Vitoria, who defended the province of theology in a strikingly similar fashion in *De indis*. The "affairs" of American Indians, Vitoria argued, "cannot be judged by human statutes (*leges humanae*), but only by divine ones, in which jurists alone are not sufficiently versed to form an opinion of their own."⁵² Both Castro and Vitoria insisted that divine law was the only possible framework under which general and fundamental questions could be addressed, and they argued that human law – in Castro's case, canon law – was not adequate to judge the subject matter. This defense of theology via divine law clearly illustrates that Castro was steeped in the broader theological discourse of the School of Salamanca.

⁴⁸ Maihold 2005, 186.

⁴⁹ Nesvig 2011, "Introduction," 7.

⁵⁰ Maihold 2005, 202.

⁵¹ *Adversus omnes haereses libri quatuordecim*. Cologne 1549, Book I, 19B, my translation.

⁵² Vitoria, *De indis*, intro., 238.

In his short treatise *Utrum indigenae novi orbis instruendi sint mysteriis theologicis et artibus liberalibus*⁵³ Castro argued, as the title-giving question implies, that American Indians should be educated in theology and the liberal arts. In so doing, he examined a particular question in the wider neo-scholastic debate about spreading the faith to American Indians. The treatise was written in 1543, only a few years after Vitoria's *De indis* (1539) and was received with much consent among Castro's colleagues at Salamanca. Francisco de Vitoria openly endorsed *Utrum indigenae* by stating that "all these things" advocated by Castro "appear to me to be excellently, piously, and religiously stated."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Castro's treatise is strikingly absent from any scholarly discussion of the Spanish Thomist discourse on American Indians. Among Castro's lesser known oeuvre, *Utrum indigenae* is indeed an unknown work today.

Martin Austin Nesvig, who prepared the English translation of *Utrum indigenae*, is the only scholar who has recently offered an intellectual contextualization of the treatise. In this respect, Nesvig has laid the groundwork to situate Castro's discussion "within a much broader debate about the Indians that had its most famous and best-known debater in Francisco de Vitoria."⁵⁵ But at the same time, he forcefully argues that Castro's argument is to be closely associated with the concerns of Franciscan missionaries in the New World who were "[i]nspired by Erasmian and utopian humanism."⁵⁶ However, if we place *Utrum indigenae* in the context of the sixteenth-century Spanish scholastic discussion about American Indians, it will become clear that the underlying view that is advocated in the treatise is undisputedly neo-scholastic, and stands very much in opposition to the ideas promoted by 'Erasmian humanists.' Castro's discussion *does* provide a new facet in the Spanish scholastic discourse on American Indians. But in contrast to Nesvig's suggested Erasmian contextualization, I argue that the image of American Indians Castro presented in *Utrum indigenae* testifies to an alternative, novel

⁵³ I am using the recent English translation by Nesvig (2011), but choose to refer to the treatise by shortening its original Latin title, thus: Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, page number. (The Latin title is given in the transcription of the treatise by Olaechea Labayen: Alfonso de Castro. *Utrum indigenae novi orbis instruendi sint in mysteriis theologicis et artibus liberalibus*. In: Juan B. Olaechea Labayen. "Opinion de los teólogos españoles sobre dar estudios mayores a los Indios." *Anuario de estudios americanos* 15 [1958]: 113-200; 175-197.)

⁵⁴ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 48.

⁵⁵ Nesvig, Martin Austin. "The Inquisitional Theorist in Defence of Indian Education." *Forgotten Franciscans: Writings from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy*. Ed. and trans. Martin Austin Nesvig. University Park 2011, 17-25.

⁵⁶ Nesvig 2006, 77.

way of writing about American Indians from *within* the framework of the School of Salamanca, and this has so far remained unnoticed.

2 Spreading the Christian Faith: Vitoria and Suárez on the Lawful Means for Conversion

Before we turn to a close analysis of Castro's treatise, let us first consider how the question of spreading the Christian faith to American Indians was discussed by other members of the School of Salamanca. Drawing on Vitoria's *De indis* and, moreover, on the much later *De fide*⁵⁷ by Francisco Suárez, I wish to emphasize that throughout the sixteenth century, the theologians of the Second Scholastic predominantly dealt with this question in addressing the lawful means that could be used in order to spread the Christian faith to the peoples in the New World.

In *De indis*, Vitoria famously discussed the rights and the political status of American Indians. As the numerous reports from the New World suggested, Amerindians seemed to behave very much opposed to that which was held to be 'natural' in the sense that it was in accordance with natural law. "A man who, regularly and with no sense of being at fault, acted against nature, could make no unassailable claim to being fully human,"⁵⁸ as Pagden points out. Yet, apart from his straightforwardly political discussion of American Indians in relation to Aristotle's theory of natural slavery,⁵⁹ Vitoria at the very beginning of his *relectio* also raised a further crucial question: "whether it is lawful to baptize the children of unbelievers against the wishes of their parents?"⁶⁰ Given that the Spanish colonizing venture had been inextricably linked to and to some extent justified by the right to spread the Gospel, this question seemed a naturally pressing one for Vitoria in the immediate context of the 'affair of the Indies.' But in fact, as a consideration of Suárez's *De fide* shows, it remained with the neo-scholastic theologians throughout the sixteenth century, up to the time when "the main questions raised by the

⁵⁷ I am using the English translation by Williams et al. (1944), but choose to refer to the treatise by its original Latin title, thus: Suárez, *De fide*, disputation, section.subsection, page number.

⁵⁸ Pagden 1986, 84.

⁵⁹ See footnote 31.

⁶⁰ Vitoria, *De indis*, 233.

evangelization of the American Indians were pretty much settled for Catholic theologians.”⁶¹

Francisco Suárez’s originally delivered *De fide* as part of a series of lectures on Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* at the *Collegium Romanum* as early as 1583.⁶² In his later years as professor at the Portuguese University of Coimbra, Suárez eventually returned to his lecture on faith and revised it for his teaching in 1613. While both the 1583 version and the 1613 text had hitherto only existed as manuscripts, *De fide* along with other writings by Suárez was posthumously published in 1621.⁶³ In view of the current discussion about the lawful means of preaching the faith, the most crucial part of *De fide* is disputation 18, in which Suárez provides his view “on the means which may be used for the conversion and coercion of unbelievers who are not apostates,”⁶⁴ as the disputation’s title reveals. It is no coincidence that Suárez, at the end of the sixteenth and in the early seventeenth century, raised an issue that was strikingly similar to the question Vitoria had posed at the beginning of *De indis*. The neo-scholastic engagement with the implications of preaching the Gospel to non-apostate infidels like American Indians reflects a particular context that became crucial for neo-scholastic engagements in the discussion about American Indians. In fact, both Vitoria’s *De indis* and Suárez’s *De fide* took their cue from a problem that was featured in Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*. In question 10.8 of the *secunda secundae*, Aquinas had explicitly addressed the question of whether unbelievers should “be coerced into the faith.”⁶⁵ From this originally Thomist point of departure both Vitoria and Suárez set out to inquire into the *rights* Christians had to preach the faith to non-apostate unbelievers and, moreover, the *means* they might use in so doing.

⁶¹ Doyle, John P. “Francisco Suárez: On Preaching the Gospel to People Like the American Indians.” *Fordham Interantional Law Journal* 15.4 (1992): 879-951.

⁶² Hill 2012, 16-17. Shields, Christopher and Daniel Schwartz. “Francisco Suárez.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Fall 2014 Edition. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/suarez/>>. Accessed on 23 July 2015.

⁶³ For a detailed account of the complex publication history of *De fide* and comments on the different editions of his lecture on faith. See Dolye 1992, 885.

⁶⁴ Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 739.

⁶⁵ Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, 10.8. In: *Aquinas: Political Writings*. Ed. and trans. Robert W. Dyson. Cambridge 2002, 267. Dyson’s is my preferred translation of the *Summa*, but he only translated a selection of passages. Therefore, I shall also use the translation by Alfred J. Freddoso where necessary. For the sake of clarification, I will always indicate whose translation I am citing. (See Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae. New English Translation of St. Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae* [Summa theologia]. Trans. Alfred J. Freddoso. <<http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC.htm>>. 23 December 2014. Accessed on 23 July 2015.)

The framing passage by which the discussion about preaching the Christian faith was introduced by Vitoria and Suárez was a reference to Mark 16:15: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”⁶⁶ Vitoria and Suárez took this biblical appeal as the basis from which they concluded that “Christians have the right to preach and announce the Gospel in the lands of the barbarians.”⁶⁷ While both named several aspects in order to underline their argumentation, the most fundamental one was their insistence that if the Church did not have this general right, all ‘unbelievers’ would remain “in a state beyond any salvation.”⁶⁸ Suárez conceded that while this right did not directly follow from natural law, it was nevertheless “entirely in harmony therewith” and the right to preach was therefore “(as it were) connatural with every man.”⁶⁹ In the first instance, hence, both Vitoria and Suárez established that it was inherently just to spread the Christian faith to unbelievers.

The question that was perhaps most central to Vitoria’s and Suárez’s accounts was whether American Indians and non-apostate unbelievers in general could be forced to believe, and this was of course an explicit reference to the respective passage in the *Summa* that we have encountered above. The two Spanish Thomists followed Aquinas in arguing that non-apostate infidels “may not be coerced to embrace the faith.”⁷⁰ Or, as Vitoria put it, to accept Christianity “merely out of servile fear would be sacrilege.”⁷¹ The basis for this authentically neo-scholastic reasoning rested on Vitoria’s path-breaking and highly influential argument that human beings, by means of their rational faculty, not only had access to natural law but that they equally had *dominium*.⁷² In a complex re-negotiation of the concept, which had its sources in Roman and medieval law and was also deployed by Aquinas, Vitoria combined the sense of *dominium* in which it was understood

⁶⁶ Mark 16:15. In: *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. Cambridge Edition: 1769. *King James Bible Online*, 2015. <<http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>>. Accessed on 23 July 2015.

⁶⁷ Vitoria, *De indis*, 3.2, 284.

See also Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 1.1, 740-41.

⁶⁸ Vitoria, *ibid*.

See also Suárez, *ibid*.

⁶⁹ Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 1.3, 742.

⁷⁰ Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 3.4, 760. Interestingly, Suárez, in stating this point, not only referred to Aquinas, but quoted a veritable army of authorities amongst which also Vitoria and Alfonso de Castro were featured. While we might expect a quotation of Vitoria’s, the reference to Castro’s *De iusta haereticorum punitione* is perhaps surprising – but it once more reminds us that he was a well-known contemporary theologian, whose views we can readily characterize as neo-scholastic. See Suárez, *ibid*.: “So St. Thomas teaches [...] as do also [...] Alfonso de Castro (*De iusta Haereticorum Punitione*, Bk. II, chap. iv), Vitoria, at length (Relect. *De Indis*, Sect. II, no. 15) [...]”

⁷¹ Vitoria, *De indis*, 2.4, 272.

⁷² Vitoria, *De indis*, 1.2, 242.

by the latter as freedom over one's actions with the sense of *dominium* as right of ownership as derived from the legal tradition.⁷³ In short, Vitoria had thus established the foundation for the view that human beings were by their nature owners of their actions and, hence, they inherently possessed this right.⁷⁴

This conception stood in harsh opposition to the Lutheran claim that human beings, due to their fallen nature, did *not* naturally have access to any kind of justice and that any rights therefore depended on God's grace.⁷⁵ However, exactly because the Spanish Thomists conceived *dominium* as natural right that was exclusively grounded in the reasoning of natural law, they refused the view that sin or unbelief could have any effect on a human being's true *dominium*. Consequently, they rejected the idea that the papal bulls granted to the Catholic Monarchs could be used as a justification of Spanish *dominium* in the New World. As Vitoria stated in *De indis*, the Pope did not have any authority over America and hence neither had any right over American Indians "because the pope has no such dominion."⁷⁶ Suárez followed him in arguing that "the power to preach is not formally a power of jurisdiction" and instead, he went on, "the efficacy of [this] power resides, not in any coercive virtue, but in the efficacy of the word."⁷⁷ The distinction was between a power in a figurative sense and a power in the sense that it was a right (*dominium*). As true *dominium* was exclusively grounded in 'God's law', any *dominium* the Spaniards *could* have in the New World necessarily had to be exclusively demonstrable with recourse to natural law. Thus, Vitoria and Suárez were expressing the quintessentially neo-Thomist position that the Pope did not have any authority over America, and their denial that one could compel unbelievers to the Christian faith testifies to their insistence that matters concerning the faith had to be clearly separated from arguments that depended on revelation.

While this digression does not seek to offer a fully comprehensive account of Vitoria's and Suárez's discussions of preaching the Christian faith to American Indians,⁷⁸

⁷³ The individual steps of Vitoria's re-interpretation of Aquinas's definition of *dominium* are highly complex and beyond the scope of this paper. For an excellent overview see Brett 1997, 126-131; and Brett 2011, 90-93.

⁷⁴ See also Tierney 1997, 268: "So, for Vitoria, freedom and self-mastery and inherent human right were all interconnected."

⁷⁵ Pagden and Lawrance 1991, "Introduction," xvi.

⁷⁶ Vitoria, *De indis*, 2.2, 263.

⁷⁷ Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 2.7, 754.

⁷⁸ Admittedly, Suárez did not explicitly refer to American Indians in the 1621 version of *De fide*, and he scarcely referred to them in the earlier versions of the treatise (Doyle 1992, 881). Nevertheless, I agree with Doyle that while "the position Suárez took was general and made almost no mention of the American

I hope to have shown that the characteristically neo-scholastic approach to the subject was thoroughly embedded in the discourse of natural law and natural rights. In the first place, Vitoria and Suárez engaged with the rights of the Church and the rights of Spaniards according to natural law, and they consistently separated the law of revelation from the all-encompassing tenets of natural law, which could be deduced from reason alone and from which all subsequent laws depended.⁷⁹ By setting the initial discussion of the legal means for evangelization in the contexts of rights *qua* human beings – not *qua* Christians – this paved a direct road to engaging the essentials of natural law and, hence, to a discussion of fundamental questions of justice and right that were independent of the Christian faith. The discussion of spreading the faith therefore ultimately resulted in a discussion of *politics* in the sense that it was about a universal human society that was regulated by natural law.

On the one hand, we might therefore conclude that Vitoria and Suárez were less concerned with American Indians themselves than with the rights of Spaniards *over* these so-called ‘non-apostate infidels.’ However, Vitoria and Suárez did render a particular image of Amerindians – one that was essentially characterized by deviance and difference: American Indians, in many ways, did not act in accordance with natural reason and were therefore conceived as inferior human beings, who needed to be ‘enlightened’ by the Spanish “ambassadors of Christendom.”⁸⁰ According to Suárez, they were not only ignorant of the Christian faith but they equally lacked what he called “human faith.”⁸¹ Thus, despite his denial of the forcible conversion of American Indians, Suárez emphasized “their *errors* and their *rites*”⁸² thus clearly promoting an underlying image of Amerindian inferiority. In Vitoria’s case, this is most obviously reflected in his use of the word ‘barbarian,’ a ubiquitous term he almost exclusively used when referring to American Indians in *De indis*. In ancient Greece, during Aristotle’s times, the term

Indians, its application to them is unmistakable” (Ibid.). Apart from drawing on Vitoria’s *De indis* throughout, Suárez explicitly referred to the bulls Alexander IV donated to the Catholic Monarchs (see *De fide*, disp. 18, 1.7, 746) and this, as Doyle explains, “brings them [i.e., American Indians] and the New World clearly within the purview of the question here [i.e., disputation 18] in the *De Fide*” (Doyle 1992, 918). The same is argued in Noreña, Carlos G. “Francisco Suárez on Democracy and International Law.” *Hispanic Philosophy in the Age of Discovery*. Ed. Kevin White. Washington, D.C. 1997, 258.

⁷⁹ See Pagden and Lawrance 1991, “Introduction,” xv.

⁸⁰ Vitoria, *De indis*, 3.1, 283. Importantly, however, both Vitoria and Suárez refrained from readily excluding American Indians from the realm of the human and, despite ambiguities, granted them the (natural) rights provided to rational beings under natural law.

⁸¹ Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 4.1, 768.

⁸² Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 4.3, 769, emphasis mine.

barbaros was a designation of cultural or mental inferiority and meant to indicate a human being's lack of speech or, rather, *logos*.⁸³ Even though by the sixteenth century, the barbarians were no longer those who lived "outside the Greek family of man,"⁸⁴ but primarily all non-Christian peoples whose way of life clashed with Christian social norms, the core meaning of the concept remained the same. Both in the ancient Greek as well as in the early modern Spanish Thomist discourse the barbarian was constructed as "a specific cultural type who could be characterized in terms of a number of antitheses to the supposed features of civil society."⁸⁵

Despite their denial of forcible conversion both Suárez and Vitoria remained highly ambiguous in their evaluations of Amerindians, whom they in fact conceived as border-cases of the human. As we turn to the next section, we shall see that Alfonso de Castro not only tackled the question of spreading the Gospel to American Indians in a decidedly different way but that he simultaneously rendered an image of American Indians that contrasted strikingly with what we have encountered so far.

3 Spreading the Christian Faith: Castro on Amerindian Education and Intellect

Alfonso de Castro's *Utrum indigenae* starts out by raising the question

whether the men of the New World, who are commonly called Indians, who have left the devil for Christ and received baptism and sworn to this, should be instructed in what are called the liberal arts and taught sacred theology and whether all the mysteries of our faith should be revealed to them. [...] among the many issues of dispute brought forth for consideration, we consider this question in particular.⁸⁶

Right at the outset of his treatise, Castro situated himself in the debate about American Indians and explained that he aimed at answering one particular question, which in fact

⁸³ In the originally Aristotelian sense, *logos* was not merely the ability to speak Greek, but it testified to a human being's use of reason, as it was the medium through which reason could be expressed in social interaction. Thus, as Anthony Pagden argues, "a close association in the Greek mind between intelligible speech and reason made it possible to take the view that those who were devoid of *logos* in one sense might also be devoid of it in another. [...] the Greeks' failure to recognise the *barbaroi* amounted, in effect, to a denial of their humanity" (Pagden 1986, 16).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 20. For a comprehensive account of the development of the notion of the barbarian from antiquity to the sixteenth century, see Pagden 1986, 15-26.

⁸⁶ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 26.

consisted of three individual parts: first, should Amerindians be educated in liberal arts; secondly, should they be educated in theology; and finally, how extensively should they be instructed in matters of the faith. The connection between these individual parts might not appear to be readily obvious, but before going into greater detail, let us note that Castro listed three potential objections against these propositions. A first argument was that “the men in those regions are by their nature unstable and faithless.”⁸⁷ Moreover, in reference to the Gospel according to Matthew, it could be claimed that to reveal the mysteries of the Christian faith to American Indians was the same as to throw “pearls before swine [...] given the obscenity of their vices.”⁸⁸ At last, Castro went on, it could be argued from the Old Testament that certain truths “must be kept secret from the populace.”⁸⁹ Like the contents of the Ark of the Covenant,⁹⁰ the Bible had to be hidden from ordinary people.

In the main part of *Utrum indigenae* which followed after this brief exposition, Castro digressed from the initially posed questions. Starting out with the very same passage that also stood at the center of Vitoria’s and Suárez’s discussion of preaching, he endorsed the assertion that the Gospel should be preached “to every creature”⁹¹ in view of their salvation. Yet, from there onwards Castro’s discussion took a different path in that he continued elaborating on the subsequent verse of Mark: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”⁹². From this he concluded that, according to the order of words in this verse, belief had to precede baptism and, accordingly, those who were baptized had to be treated as faithful Christians.⁹³ If we now recall the beginning of the treatise, the crucial difference between Castro’s approach to the subject of spreading the faith and that of Vitoria and Suárez becomes apparent. While Vitoria and Suárez discussed the lawful possibilities of preaching under the assumption that American Indians were non-apostate

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 27. See Matthew 7:6, *King James Bible Online*: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

⁸⁹ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 27.

⁹⁰ “The Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred religious symbol of the Hebrew people and believed to represent the Presence of God. It was in the form of a wooden rectangular box, overlaid with gold inside and out. According to the traditional accounts the Israelites carried the Ark from the time of the Exodus into the land of Canaan” (“Ark.” *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 3rd. ed. Ed. Elizabeth Anne Livingstone. Oxford 2013. <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-391>>. Accessed on 23 July 2015).

⁹¹ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 27. See Mark 16:15, *King James Bible Online*.

⁹² Mark 16:16, *King James Bible Online*.

⁹³ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 28-29.

infidels, Castro's starting point presupposed that Amerindians were already Christians. Or, to put it differently, Castro discussion of Amerindian education was specifically and exclusively related to those American Indians who had already been converted. We shall return to this point.

In terms of theological education, Castro differentiated between ordinary preaching and scholarly instruction arguing that the former needed to be geared towards the "great majority of the audience [who] is composed of foolish and ignorant men."⁹⁴ Importantly, however, this argument was general and did not specifically relate to American Indians, so that he finally concluded that among the "recently converted Indians" there were "those to whom God endowed a sharp intellect"⁹⁵ and these were undoubtedly eligible to be trained in the most holy mysteries of the Christian faith. Castro underlined the legitimacy of this argument by comparing the situation of the Church in the New World to the "earliest times of the Church" when, likewise, "the new Christians were instructed according to the capacity of each individual."⁹⁶ The role of liberal arts, in this whole context, was of course nothing other than to pave the way for theological study itself, and Castro here endorsed the patristic maxim that "arts, as ancillaries, serve theology as their queen and mistress."⁹⁷ In this sense, Castro implicitly deployed a neo-scholastic argument that we have encountered previously: the theologian alone was able to genuinely address the most fundamental questions of human existence.

In the end, Castro finally returned to the three initial objections and denied all of them by turning the arguments against themselves. Crucially, Castro again relied on the fact that, in the context of his discussion, American Indians had already been baptized. To the first he replied that if they were too inconstant to receive education, "then for the same fear they should not have been baptized."⁹⁸ Moreover, it could not be claimed that theological education equaled to throw 'pearls before swine,' because "after having received holy baptism" they had to be seen as "heirs" of the Christian faith.⁹⁹ And in his answer to the final objection that certain mysteries of the faith should be kept secret, Castro clearly distinguished between the Old and the New Testament insisting that "all

⁹⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 36-37.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 47.

the most secret mysteries of the New Law are revealed.”¹⁰⁰ Refuting all objections, Castro in the end whole-heartedly advocated the theological education of American Indians.

Castro’s call for Amerindian education provides a novel facet of the sixteenth-century debate about the humanity of American Indians in that it is primarily centered on the subject of theological education. At first sight, it might therefore seem that Castro’s treatise is to be set first and foremost in the context of the Franciscan mission in the New World. After all, Castro explicitly addressed questions regarding the method and the scope of preaching – concerns that were central to the missionaries in the New World. In the 1530s, Franciscan friars founded a school for Amerindian education in Tlatelolco, a Mexica city in the Northern part of today’s Mexico City.¹⁰¹ This college at Tlatelolco was “an idealistic school of linguistic study of Nahuatl and Indian culture, where Indians [...] studied classical Latin, Spanish grammar, and Catholic theology [...]”¹⁰²

For Martin Austin Nesvig, whose translation of Castro’s treatise appeared in a small volume alongside two other works by sixteenth-century Franciscans,¹⁰³ it is therefore beyond all doubt that the theological school in the New World was the immediate socio-political context of Castro’s treatise: “While he never mentions Tlatelolco by name, it is *clear* that he has it in mind when discussing the issue of Indian education.”¹⁰⁴ On the one hand, and given that there is hardly any scholarship on *Utrum indigenae*, it is laudable that Nesvig, apart from translating the treatise, is also the first scholar whose work seeks to offer a much needed intellectual contextualization of Castro’s text. However, Nesvig’s argumentation is misleading. In conflating Tlatelolco with the actual text of *Utrum indigenae*, he finally concludes that Castro’s treatise is informed by Erasmian strands of thought. Yet, there is not a single allusion to Tlatelolco in Castro’s work and if we place *Utrum indigenae* in its appropriate historical context, it will become clear that Nesvig mistakenly claims that the treatise resonates the “Erasmian and utopian humanism”¹⁰⁵ of the Tlatelolco project.

Interestingly enough, Nesvig is fully aware of Castro’s ties to Salamanca and he clearly acknowledges the fact that *Utrum indigenae* is a contribution to the debate about

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰¹ Nesvig 2006, 76.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See Nesvig, Martin Austin (ed.). *Forgotten Franciscans: Writings from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy*. University Park 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Nesvig 2011, “Introduction,” 22, emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁵ Nesvig 2006, 77.

the humanity of American Indians.¹⁰⁶ He explicitly relates Castro to the Second Scholastic by stating that Castro “was a friend of [...] Francisco de Vitoria”¹⁰⁷ and, in addition, he draws attention to the importance of Vitoria’s endorsement of *Utrum indigenae*.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, however, Nesvig implicitly and explicitly removes Castro’s thought from the immediate context of the Second Scholastic in order to eventually argue that Castro belonged to a “group of friars immersed in Christian humanism,”¹⁰⁹ as the impression of a reviewer of Nesvig’s illustrates.

Erasmus, the most well-known and influential representative of this framework, argued that language studies served “as gateways to an understanding of Scripture” and insisted on the need to “return to the classical and biblical sources.”¹¹⁰ Franciscan missionaries in the New World indeed shared the linguistic concerns of biblical humanists and soon “began to learn indigenous languages and produce indigenous language books,”¹¹¹ as Nesvig explains. He concedes that his primary aim is to relate Castro’s treatise to “the missionary project in Mexico and to the broader ideological trends in the Franciscan order,” and in the subsequent sentence he reminds us that “[f]or example, Erasmus became deeply influential among Franciscans” at that time.¹¹²

The missionary project in Tlatelolco is characterized by Nesvig as “inspired by humanist views of Church reform – a return to basic sources like the bible and early Church fathers instead of medieval theologians”¹¹³ and Castro, in Nesvig’s view, was “a defender of the Tlatelolco project,”¹¹⁴ or, as he argues elsewhere, even “*its greatest philosophical defender*.”¹¹⁵ In this sense, Nesvig not only claims that there is a certain co-occurrence between Castro’s intellectual and theoretical engagement with the subject of Amerindian education in theology and the Franciscan mission at Tlatelolco, but he explicitly argues that Castro defended *this* project. Although Nesvig does not further

¹⁰⁶ Nesvig 2011, “Inquisitional Theorist,” 20.

¹⁰⁷ Nesvig 2011, “Introduction,” 9.

¹⁰⁸ See above at page 11.

¹⁰⁹ Morales, Francisco. “Rev. of *Forgotten Franciscans: Works from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy* by Martin Austin Nesvig.” *The Americas* 69.3 (2013): 430.

¹¹⁰ Rummel, Erika. “Introduction: Scholasticism and Biblical Humanism in Early Modern Europe.” *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*. Ed. Erika Rummel. Leiden 2008, 1-2.

¹¹¹ Nesvig 2011, “Introduction,” 4.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁴ Nesvig 2011, “Inquisitional Theorist,” 22.

¹¹⁵ Nesvig 2006, 79-80, emphasis mine.

discuss the implications of what this actually means, the result is clearly that Castro's treatise is brought into a close relationship with Tlatelolco and Erasmian humanism.¹¹⁶

While the Franciscan college in Tlatelolco might indeed have been an impetus for Castro to provide his own views concerning the theological instruction of Amerindians, it is not sufficient to maintain that Castro therefore shared the views of the Franciscan missionaries. Despite the fact that Nesvig speaks of intellectual traditions and strands, he ultimately does not properly contextualize Castro's thought. The question of whether *Utrum indigenae* actually corresponds to the 'broader ideological trends' of the Franciscans is not tackled by Nesvig – he simply maps the Erasmianism of the Tlatelolco project onto Castro's treatise. In contrast to Nesvig's forceful attempt to relate *Utrum indigenae* to "the much broader concern among the Spanish clergy [...] in Mexico"¹¹⁷ I propose to contextualize the treatise within the intellectual world of sixteenth-century Spain. After all, Castro was not a missionary and, like his Dominican colleagues at Salamanca, he never left Europe.¹¹⁸

Those sixteenth-century scholars who followed the views set forth by Erasmus in particular and whom we can thus grasp under the heading of 'Erasmian,' 'biblical,' or 'Christian humanism' argued that a true reading of the Bible was not only primarily a philological task, but they equally insisted that the Bible itself was more important than the consultation of exegetic commentaries by theologians.¹¹⁹ Importantly, I do not wish to construct a dichotomy between (neo-)scholastic learning and humanism in general, that is, the *studia humanitatis*, a specific scholarly curriculum that had its origins in Renaissance Italy and which essentially "centered around the study of grammar, rhetoric, history and moral philosophy."¹²⁰ After all, Castro studied at the University of Alcalá de Henares, a center for humanist studies at that time, and was very probably familiar both with the *studia humanitatis* in general as well as with Erasmian thought.¹²¹ Moreover, the

¹¹⁶ Nesvig relates *Utrum indigenae* to Tlatelolco and to the framework of biblical humanism in all his writings on Castro. E.g. see Nesvig 2006, 76-81; see Nesvig 2011, "Introduction," 4-7; see Nesvig 2011, "Inquisitional Theorist," 22.

¹¹⁷ Nesvig 2006, 64.

¹¹⁸ Nesvig 2011, "Introduction," 9.

¹¹⁹ Rummel 2008, 2-3.

¹²⁰ Skinner 1978, vol. 1, xxiv. Note that Skinner's interpretation of the notion of *studia humanitatis* is indebted on the work of Paul Oskar Kristeller, who coined the term. An accessible edition of Kristeller's writings is: Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*. Ed. Michael Mooney. New York 1979. See especially Kristeller's essay "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," at pp. 85-105.

¹²¹ Skinner 1978, vol. 1, 211.

same equally holds for Francisco de Vitoria, who had become well-versed both in classical literature and in classical moral philosophy in his early career at the University of Paris.¹²² Therefore, the theologians of the School of Salamanca and, given his prominence, particularly Vitoria have often been described as providing a kind of fusion between Thomism and biblical humanism.¹²³ Yet, while both Vitoria and Castro had been introduced to the humanist program, the theologians of the Second Scholastic soon developed fierce resistance to Erasmus and his followers.¹²⁴ Crucially, however, this was not so much a question regarding the *studia humanitatis* as such, but it was primarily the Erasmian humanist view of the Church and politics with which the neo-scholastic theologians were at odds.

In the context of their struggle against Luther's views of Church reform in the early 1520s, the members of the School of Salamanca became increasingly hostile towards biblical humanists and "came to regard humanist textual scholarship on the Bible as the slippery slope which had led to Protestant heresy."¹²⁵ According to the neo-scholastic theologians, their preference of the biblical source text over commentaries provided the basis for Luther's doctrine of *sola scriptura*, that is, the emphasis on Scripture alone and the ensuing rejection of the tradition and authority of the Catholic Church.¹²⁶ In addition, Erasmus and his followers shared further concerns that the Spanish scholastic theologians associated with Luther: the insistence on a new, 'purified' translation of the Bible and the idea that the laity should receive religious education.¹²⁷ Already as early as 1527 – more than a decade before Vitoria lectured on *De indis* and 15 years before Castro wrote his *Utrum indigenae* – the polemic between Spanish Thomists and Erasmus had reached its peak. At a conference in Valladolid, Erasmus's works were investigated in view of their orthodoxy and out of all participants, it was in particular "the Salamanca group of representatives" that was "passionately anti-Erasmian."¹²⁸ Of course, the neo-scholastic equation of Erasmianism and Lutheranism was in many ways reductionist and did not

¹²² Pagden and Lawrance, "Introduction," xiv.

¹²³ Interestingly, this view is expressed in the *Cambridge History of Political Thought*: See Burns, J. H. "Scholasticism: Survival and Revival." *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*. Ed. J. H. Burns. Cambridge 1991, 154. See also Plans 2000, 322.

¹²⁴ Skinner 1978, vol. 2, 141.

¹²⁵ Pagden and Lawrance, "Introduction," xiv.

¹²⁶ Rummel 2008, 4; Skinner 1978, vol. 2, 138 and 145.

¹²⁷ Skinner 1978, vol. 2, 141.

¹²⁸ Coroleu, Alejandro. "Anti-Erasmianism in Spain." *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*. Ed. Erika Rummel. Leiden 2008, 86. Coroleu also shows that it was not only the Dominicans but also the Franciscan who opposed Erasmus' ideas (85).

fully do justice to actual doctrinal differences between Luther and Erasmus, but it clearly testifies to the fact that by the mid-1520s, the members of the School of Salamanca had openly rejected the views of Erasmus because, in their opinion, they were too dangerously associated with the reformative calls of Luther.

If we now turn to Castro's treatise, it will become clear that the label 'biblical humanist' is an entirely misleading characterization of the politico-ecclesiastical views advocated in *Utrum indigenae*. Castro indeed argued that the Christian faith should be preached to *all* American Indians. In so doing, however, he explicitly stated that for common people "it is sufficient that one is prepared to believe what the *Church* preaches."¹²⁹ He explained that one "may still obtain eternal life" even without any knowledge of the "more difficult and secret mysteries."¹³⁰ Hence, on the one hand Castro asserted that the primary reason for preaching the faith to American Indians was salvation, and in order to be saved it was sufficient to believe and to be baptized, as the Gospel of Mark suggested. In contrast, there were more secret mysteries of the faith and these "must not be revealed to the Indians in ordinary preaching."¹³¹ Such mysteries, Castro went on, "have been *deduced by sacred doctors of the Church* from the contents of Holy Scripture"¹³² and only the most intelligent people are eligible to receive theological instruction in this all-encompassing sense.

In view of the preceding discussion about Erasmian humanism and Lutheranism, it is striking that the kind of theological education Castro proposed in *Utrum indigenae* clearly resonated an authentically neo-Thomist view of the Church. According to Castro, the laity was not eligible to receive biblical education – their access to the Scripture was only indirect via preaching, and they were solely instructed insofar as necessary for eternal life. The "scholastic doctor,"¹³³ in contrast, engaged with the most holy mysteries. Crucially, Castro explained, these mysteries were not merely the teachings contained in the Bible itself, but what 'sacred doctors' had deduced from it. Castro thus explicitly emphasized the importance of summaries and commentaries on the Bible and, at the same time, the role of the Catholic Church who had approved of these teachings. This view of the Church advocated by Castro not only stood in opposition to the Lutheran

¹²⁹ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 28, emphasis mine.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 29.

¹³¹ Ibid., 31.

¹³² Ibid., 29, emphasis mine.

¹³³ Ibid., 31.

contentions of *sola scriptura* and the consequent idea of the *congregation fidelium*,¹³⁴ but it was equally contrary to the views of Erasmus, who favored the biblical education of the laity and privileged the Bible over summaries and commentaries. Moreover, Castro at no point in his treatise implied that the Bible might be translated. For Castro biblical instruction of American Indians meant “to create theological doctors from their own people”¹³⁵ in the traditionally scholastic sense, and through the preceding study of liberal arts Latin proficiency was simply assumed.

Thus, Castro’s opposition to ‘heretical’ claims such as the idea of biblical translation, which he explicitly refuted in his later works on heresy,¹³⁶ was already present in *Utrum indigenae*. The European situation testified to the ‘danger’ of a vernacular Bible, and Erasmus’s revised translation of the New Testament was a thorn in the side of *all* members of the Second Scholastic as it provided “the basis for [Luther’s] criticism of orthodox Catholic teaching on scripture.”¹³⁷ Again, I wish to stress that Erasmus did not seek to readily associate himself with the Lutheran movement, but by 1527 the members of the School of Salamanca had openly repudiated the views of both.

This context is crucial with regard to Nesvig’s thesis that *Utrum indigenae* made Castro the foremost defender of the Tlatelolco project. The most influential Franciscan missionary at the college of Tlatelolco was Bernardino de Sahagún, who was dedicated to the study of Nahuatl language and was strongly in favor of indigenous translations of the Bible.¹³⁸ Therefore, while I do not contest Nesvig’s claim that the missionary practice at Tlatelolco was inspired by Erasmian humanist views, it is highly doubtful whether Tlatelolco itself can be said to be a context for *Utrum indigenae* at all. Of course, it was a site of education and theological instruction for American Indians. But Castro’s stance in *Utrum indigenae* was so decidedly neo-Thomist that it is erroneous to associate his treatise either with the views of Franciscan missionaries in the New World or with those set forth by Erasmus. In this vein, Nesvig’s emphasis on the fact that “Castro was never

¹³⁴ The Lutheran insistence that the Church was a *congregatio fidelium*, a congregation of believers, followed from the insistence that everybody should have access to the Bible, which alone was the true teaching of the Church. In consequence, the nexus of *sola scriptura* and the *congregatio fidelium* came with a “refection of all ecclesiastical hierarchies and [a] denial of the law making powers of the Pope” (Skinner 1978, vol. 2, 138).

¹³⁵ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 36.

¹³⁶ Nesvig 2011, “Inquisitional Theorist,” 19.

¹³⁷ Jardine, Lisa. “Introduction.” In: *Erasmus: The Education of a Christian Prince*. Ed. Lisa Jardine. Cambridge 1997, xv.

¹³⁸ Nesvig 2006, 75.

himself attacked as suspiciously Erasmian or humanist”¹³⁹ is not only self-evident but indeed a misleading statement, because it reinforces the alleged connection between Castro and Erasmus.

Instead, Castro’s treatise was firmly embedded in the neo-scholastic debate about American Indians. As we have seen, the overarching question with which Vitoria and Suárez engaged in their discussions about spreading the Christian faith in the New World can be traced to a particular passage in the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa*, in which Aquinas discussed whether unbelievers could be forcibly evangelized.¹⁴⁰ While Castro’s discussion did not directly touch upon this point and, instead, focused on the theological education of unbelievers, it can nevertheless *equally* be contextualized in terms of Aquinas’s discussion of unbelievers in the *Summa*.¹⁴¹ Castro introduced his distinction between ordinary preaching and scholarly education in theology on the grounds of the following assertion: “One must consider the condition of the audience, and the words of the preacher must be tempered according to the variety of the audience.”¹⁴² This insistence was a direct allusion to Aquinas’s argument that “one must consider whether those who are listening to a disputation are instructed and firm in the Faith, or whether they are untutored and faltering in their faith (*simplices et in fide titubantes*).”¹⁴³ Castro clearly inherited this distinction between preaching to an audience of *simplices* and disputation with those who were instructed in the faith from Aquinas. While, in developing his argument, he went well beyond the scope of Aquinas’s original question, the respective passage in the *Summa* was undeniably the crucial reference point from which he took his cue. In short, both Castro’s scholarly method as well as the theologico-political views expressed in his treatise show that *Utrum indigenae* is a truly neo-scholastic text about American Indians.

¹³⁹ Nesvig 2011, “Inquisitional Theorist,” 24.

¹⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, 10.8, trans. Dyson, 267-69.

¹⁴¹ That is, question 10 of the *secunda secundae*.

¹⁴² Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 30.

¹⁴³ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, 10.7, trans. Freddoso, 75.

It is astonishing that Nesvig does recognize that Castro “comments extensively on this section of Aquinas” (Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 30n21) and, nevertheless, does not draw any conclusions from it.

Conclusion: American Indians and the Continuum of Humanity

Vitoria's and Suárez's discussions of the subject of preaching were essentially grounded in the language of natural rights. Although both highlighted the moral inferiority of Amerindians on the grounds of their 'barbarous customs,' Vitoria and Suárez emphasized that it was nevertheless legitimate and indeed necessary to preach the Gospel to American Indians. Since these peoples of the New World were clearly in possession of certain rights, they could, however, not be forcibly converted. Both Vitoria and Suárez stressed the fact that the Church itself did not have any authority over non-apostate infidels and hence the entire discussion was ultimately grounded in the discourse of natural law and, therefore, independent of the Christian faith.

In contrast, Castro's advocacy of the theological education of Amerindians departed from a starting point that contrasted markedly with that of Vitoria and Suárez. In the first place, Castro conceived American Indians *qua* Christians and he thereby set his discussion of Amerindians in a decidedly different categorical framework: the question was neither whether non-apostate infidels could be converted nor was it a discussion of the 'pre-Christian' status of American Indians under natural law. Instead, he inquired into the *capabilities* of *American Indians* to become representatives of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Castro's 'Christianization of American Indians' was a premise that led the discussion in a significantly different direction and opened up a way of conceiving Amerindian humanity that was characterized by inclusion and equality instead of marginalization and ambiguity.

Let us reconsider the very beginning of *Utrum indigenae*: "I have been asked whether the men of the New World, who are commonly called Indians, who have left the devil for Christ and received baptism and sworn to this, should be instructed [...]"¹⁴⁴ From the text itself it cannot be clearly determined whether Castro believed that *all* American Indians had now been Christianized or if he just meant to say that the entire argument of *Utrum indigenae* was exclusively geared towards *those* American Indians who had been converted.¹⁴⁵ Even if the latter was the case, Castro's vantage point had major implications. In contrast to Vitoria and Suárez, he did not portray American Indians as

¹⁴⁴ Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, 26.

¹⁴⁵ The Latin text does not help to disambiguate either: "Questium est a me an Novi Orbis homines, quos vulgus indios appellat, qui a demone ad Christum transierunt et baptismate suscepto in illius verba iurarunt, liceat in artibus [...]" (Castro, *Utrum indigenae*, in: Olachea Labayen 1958, 175).

unbelievers, whose actions perpetually violated natural law. For Castro, these people were not only equal to the Spaniards in terms of their natural rights, but in a much more extensive sense: they were now members of the Catholic Church. Conversion itself entailed a sudden conceptual shift, so that the baptized American Indians “*immediately sit and are counted among the first Christians.*”¹⁴⁶ As a result, Castro’s image of American Indians was one of Christianized American Indians that was characterized in terms of similarities not only between the Christians of the early Church and American Indians, but in essence this also established a close relationship between American Indians and Spaniards, both of whom were principally conceived as Christians and, in this sense, as fully equal human beings.

Even though Castro’s argument about theological instruction essentially depended on the assertion that American Indians were Christians, Castro nevertheless also deployed arguments about their humanity that were clearly independent of their faith. In order to illustrate this point, let us once more turn to Castro’s distinction between ordinary preaching and scholarly instruction. Castro claimed that the former only comprised that which was necessary for salvation because “the great majority of the audience is composed of foolish and ignorant men,” and one therefore had to “address the mental abilities of the many.”¹⁴⁷ Conversely, thorough education in theology was reserved for those Amerindians who had “a sharp intellect and who understand very difficult concepts.”¹⁴⁸ In addition, the study of theology presupposed an educational background in liberal arts, so that those who received scholarly instruction were “not, in general as ignorant and misinformed.”¹⁴⁹ Castro justified the distinction between common preaching and all-encompassing theological instruction exclusively in view of the dichotomy between the learned and the ignorant, which coincided with the dichotomy between the intelligent and the ‘foolish’ respectively. In so doing, Castro deployed an argument about the Catholic view of the Church: on the one hand, there was the laity and, on the other hand, the clergy. Crucially, however, this same passage also had major implications for Castro’s conception of Amerindian humanity. In fact, he argued that Amerindian society encompassed a whole continuum of human beings ranging from the ‘foolish and ignorant’ to those with a particularly outstanding intellect. In contrast to

¹⁴⁶ *Utrum indigenae*, 40, emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Vitoria and Suárez, Castro was far from conceiving *all* American Indians as peripheral cases of the human. Of course, there were among American Indians those whom Castro called ‘foolish,’ but at the same time there were *also* American Indians who were naturally of superior intelligence.

In the end, I agree with Nesvig at least in one respect: in *Utrum indigenae*, Alfonso de Castro indeed “emerged as the most vigorous defender of Indian intellectual ability”¹⁵⁰ of the School of Salamanca. Even though Castro’s discussion so centrally relied on the Christianity of American Indians, his claims about their relative intelligence were clearly independent of the Christian faith. In order to develop his argument about the theological education of American Indians, Castro of course had to presuppose the fact that they were Christians. However, he also had to deploy fundamental claims about the intellectual abilities of American Indians – after all, only very intelligent people were eligible for theological instruction. While both these premises were equally important, they equally both existed in their own right and did not mutually imply each other.

In midst of a time, in which the humanity of American Indians was fundamentally challenged, as the contemporary debate about their rights and authority so clearly illustrates, Castro’s exceptional approach to the ‘affair of the Indies’ led to an exceptional view of their humanity. Both Vitoria and Suárez ambiguously conceived of Amerindians as border-cases of the human, as savage people who regularly committed “idolatry or similar rites”¹⁵¹ and other “nefarious custom[s].”¹⁵² Conversely, Castro did not construct the essential *difference* and marginalization of American Indians but, quite the contrary, his call for their theological education rendered a *differentiated* account of their relative intelligence that leaves us with the ultimate conclusion that, for Castro, the diversity of human beings within Amerindian society reflected nothing other than the broad category of the human as such.

¹⁵⁰ Nesvig 2006, 80.

¹⁵¹ Vitoria, *De indis*, 3.5, 288.

¹⁵² Suárez, *De fide*, disp. 18, 4.4, 770.

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