

# CURRICULUM VITAE

March 2022

Simon Maria Kopf

Born on April 28, 1989

Nationality: Austria

---

AOS Science & Theology, Providence & Divine Action, Fundamental Theology

AOC Natural Philosophy, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion

---

## CURRENT POSITIONS

---

2022- **Associate Professor of Fundamental Theology**  
ITI Catholic University, Austria

2020-23 **Visiting Research Fellow**  
King's College London

## EDUCATION

---

2015-2019 **University of Oxford**  
Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) in Science and Religion

2014-2015 **University of Edinburgh**  
Master of Science (MSc) in Science and Religion

2009-2015 **University of Innsbruck**  
Bachelor of Philosophy (B.phil.) in Philosophy

2009-2014 **University of Innsbruck**  
Magister Theologiae (Mag.theol.) in Catholic Theology

## PUBLICATIONS

---

### MONOGRAPHS

Forthcoming 2023 **Reframing Providence: New Perspectives from Aquinas on the Divine Action Debate.** Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The divine action debate is a controversy about the essential characteristics and possibility of God's action in the world that sparked in the late 1950s. Within this debate it has become a commonplace that action terms are key to conceiving God's providence. The aim of the debate, at least in recent years, has been to defend a form of divine action that goes beyond creation and conservation and is hence part of the doctrine of providence, that is, God's care and guidance of the created and sustained world. In fact, the controversy presupposes two principles: (i) divine action is best modelled on human action, wherefore the philosophy of action and action terms have gained theological significance; and (ii) providence is conceptualised in terms of divine action, if only implicitly at times. On this common view, which I shall call 'actionistic', then, providence is, at its core, a specific form of action.

The challenge for the 'actionistic' approach is to find room for God to act in nature, which appears to be fully accounted for by natural causes – like a block of cheese without holes, the world seems to lack space for anything but natural causation. Yet this search for metaphysical space is, I shall argue, a questionable import from the philosophy of human action. Just as human (libertarian) free action presupposes causal indeterminism – the thesis that some events are not fully determined by antecedent causes –, so, too, divine action in the world is said to presuppose causal indeterminism. Metaphorically speaking, the idea is that all one needs is a change of cheese, from a block of cheese without holes to one with lots of holes. Accordingly, the openness of the causal nexus has become the condition of possibility of divine action in the world, and the theological debate has turned into a scientific controversy about determinism, where science is the arbiter of divine action.

This monograph offers a new approach to conceiving divine action and providence. In contrast to the 'actionistic' model, I challenge the assumption that the concept of action best conceptualises divine providence, and propose human providence, or foresight, as an alternative. To this end, the book explores Thomas Aquinas' understanding of providence, which is modelled on prudence rather than action. Prudence is the virtue of ordering means to ends, with providence, or foresight, being an integral part anticipating the future, wherefore the resulting doctrine of divine providence is essentially about God's ordering of creatures to their ends. Metaphorically speaking, providence is then not so much about a guide intervening and redirecting the course of events on a day-to-day basis. Rather, it concerns the wise planning and ordering of the ones cared-for to appropriate ends.

### EDITED VOLUMES

2021 **Divine and Human Providence: Philosophical, Psychological and Theological Approaches.** Edited with Ignacio Silva  
Routledge Science and Religion Series  
London: Routledge, 2021.

Spanish translation:  
**La Providencia Humana Y Divina: Aproximaciones desde la filosofía, la psicología y la teología.** Edited with Ignacio Silva  
Rosario: Ediciones Logos, 2021.

ARTICLES (peer-reviewed)

- 2022                   **„Theological Sophistry“? Does the Notion of Creation Need Revision?**  
*Theology and Science* (forthcoming)
- 2021                   **Vorsehung bei Gott und Mensch: Ein Vorschlag zur aktuellen  
Debatte über Gottes Vorsehung und Handeln**  
[Providence in God and Man: A Proposal for the Contemporary Debate  
on God’s Providence and Action]  
*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Philosophie* 143:2 (2021): 184-211  
DOI: 10.35070/ztp.v143i2.3636
- 2019                   **A Problem for Dialogue: Can World-Views be Rational?**  
*New Blackfriars* 100:1087 (2019): 284-298  
DOI: 10.1111/nbfr.12328
- 2017                   **Karl Rahner on Science and Theology**  
*Philosophy and Theology* 29:2 (2017): 313-339  
DOI: 10.5840/philtheol201781482

BOOK CHAPTERS

- 2021                   **Teleology, Providence, and Powers.** In *Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics  
and the Theology of Nature*, 383-402. Edited by William Simpson,  
Robert Koons, and James Orr. London: Routledge, 2021.
- Providence in the *Summa Halensis*: Between Authority and  
Innovation.** In *The Legacy of Early Franciscan Thought*, 89-110.  
Edited by Lydia Schumacher. Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-  
Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und  
Philosophie, 67. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.
- Introduction** (with Ignacio Silva)  
In *Divine and Human Providence: Philosophical, Psychological and  
Theological Approaches*, 1-13. Edited by Ignacio Silva and Simon Maria  
Kopf. London: Routledge, 2021.
- Introducción** (with Ignacio Silva). In *La providencia humana y divina  
aproximaciones desde la filosofía, la psicología y la teología*, 9-31.  
Edited by Ignacio Silva and Simon Maria Kopf. Rosario: Ediciones  
Logos, 2021.
- 2020                   **A Guide to Citing the *Summa Halensis*** (with Lydia Schumacher)  
In *The Summa Halensis: Sources and Context*, ix-x. Edited by Lydia  
Schumacher. Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes zur  
Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie, 65.  
Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020.

Reprinted in *The Summa Halensis: Doctrines and Debates*, ix-x.  
Edited by Lydia Schumacher. Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-  
Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und  
Philosophie, 66. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020.

Reprinted in *The Legacy of Early Franciscan Thought*, xi-xii.  
Edited by Lydia Schumacher. Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-  
Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und  
Philosophie, 67. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

## PREVIOUS POSITIONS

---

### *Academic*

- 2021-2022      **Principal Investigator**  
“A Virtue-Based Approach to Providence: Bridging the Analytic/  
Continental Divide in the Central-European Divine Action Debate”  
*Humboldt University of Berlin*
- 2019-2022      **Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy**  
*International Theological Institute, Austria*
- 2018-2020      **Research Fellow**  
Templeton Project “Human and Divine Providence”; PI: Dr Ignacio Silva  
*Universidad Austral*
- 2017-2019      **Research Assistant**  
ERC Project “Authority and Innovation in Early Franciscan Thought (c.  
1220-45)”, PI: Dr Lydia Schumacher  
*King’s College London*

### *Ecclesial*

- 2021-2022      **Zukunftswerkstatt Innsbruck**, Diocese Innsbruck, Austria (part-time)
- 2019-2021      **School and University Chaplain**, Catholic Church Vorarlberg, Austria  
(1<sup>st</sup> year full-time, then part-time)

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

---

- 2019-              **ITI Catholic University** (formerly International Theological Institute)  
“The One God I: Existence and Attributes of God”, 6 ECTS (2019)  
“Natural Philosophy II: Motion and Order”, 6 ECTS (2020)  
“The One God I: Existence and Attributes of God”, 6 ECTS (2020)

“Metaphysics II”, 6 ECTS (2020)  
“Natural Philosophy II: Motion and Order”, 6 ECTS (2021)  
“The One God I: Existence and Attributes of God”, 6 ECTS (2021)  
“Metaphysics II”, 6 ECTS (2021)  
“Natural Philosophy II: Motion and Order”, 6 ECTS (2022)  
“Ethics and Politics II: Modern Moral and Political Theory”, 6 ECTS (2022)  
“Anthropology I: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives on the Human Person”, 6 ECTS (2022)

2017

**University of Oxford**

*Graduate Teaching Training Scheme*; mentor: Dr Darren Sarisky  
Revision class for Dogmatics FHS paper 5 “God, Christ, and Salvation”

## CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ORGANISATION \_\_\_\_\_

2021

**Divine Action Workshop**

*Workshop* (online due to Covid-19), November 19, 2021  
Keynote speakers: Harm Goris, Mariusz Tabaczek, Johannes Grössl  
Humboldt University of Berlin

**Vorsehung und Handeln Gottes aus Analytischer und Kontinentaler Perspektive: Versuch eines Brückenschlags in der deutschen Debatte**

[Providence and Divine Action from an Analytic and Continental Perspective: Bridging the Gap in the German Debate]  
*Conference* (online due to Covid-19), October 22-23, 2021  
Speakers: Klaus von Stosch, Barbara Hallensleben, Thomas Schärftl-Trendel, Georg Essen, Georg Gasser, Sarah Rosenhauer, Oliver Wintzek, Reinhold Bernhardt, Simon Maria Kopf, Johannes Grössl, Christine Büchner, Bruno Niederbacher  
Humboldt University of Berlin

## LECTURES, TALKS, AND PRESENTATIONS \_\_\_\_\_

2021

**Providence and Divine Action: On Conceptualising the Doctrine of Providence**

*Conference* “La provvidenza di Dio e il destino dell’uomo: Prospettive della filosofia analitica e continentale”, November 11-12, 2021  
Convegno dell’Associazione Italiana di Filosofia della Religione (AIFR)  
Fondazione Centro studi filosofici di Gallarate  
Gregorian University, Rome

- Menschliche Vorsehung als Teil der Tugend der Klugheit:  
Eine Analogie für die göttliche Vorsehung?**  
*Conference* (online due to Covid-19): “Vorsehung und Handeln Gottes aus Analytischer und Kontinentaler Perspektive: Versuch eines Brückenschlags in der deutschen Debatte“, October 22-23, 2021  
Humboldt University of Berlin
- 2020 **Providence in the *Summa Halensis*: Between Authority and Innovation**  
*Conference* (online due to Covid-19): “13th Century English Franciscan Thought”, July 24/31 & August 7/14, 2020, King’s College London, UK  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4I9MA11YPMQ>
- The Goal-Directedness of Evolution:  
Thomistic Perspectives on a Controversial Question**  
*Aquinas Seminar*, Hilary Term 2020: “Evolution and Human Origin: Theological and Philosophical Reflections”, January 30, 2020  
The Aquinas Institute, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford  
<https://soundcloud.com/aquinasinstitute/the-goal-directedness-of-evolution-dr-simon-kopf>
- 2019 **Two Ways of Approaching Providence: Foresight and Action**  
*Colin Gunton Day 2019*, May 8, 2019, King’s College London
- 2018 ***Communion and Stewardship (2004): On Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Compatibility of Providence and Contingency in Evolution***  
*Thursday Lecture*, October 4, 2018  
International Theological Institute, Trumau
- God’s Involvement in Creaturely Action: Physical Premotion, Aristotelian Premotion, or a Dimension of Creation-Conservation?**  
*Aquinas Seminar*, Hilary Term 2018: “God and the Metaphysics of Human Action”, February 2, 2018  
The Aquinas Institute, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXpEh0nkL30>
- The Will of God: On the Relevance of the Changing Role of the Divine Will in Thomas Aquinas’ Doctrine of Providence**  
*ERC Early Career Workshop*: “Medieval Intellectual History”, May 3, 2018, All Souls College, University of Oxford
- 2016 **Can Natural Causation also be Special Divine Action?  
The Role of Appetites in the Realisation of Providential Ends**  
*AAR Symposium*: “Special Divine Action”, November 18, 2016  
San Antonio, Texas
- Divine Action and Natural Teleology:  
Thomas Aquinas and the Contemporary Debate**  
*Summer School*: “The Challenge of Natural Teleology”, June 29, 2016  
University of Groningen

## CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

---

- 2022                    **SET Summer Session 2022**  
*Seminar*, May 21-27, 2022  
SET Foundations, San Diego, USA
- 2021                    **Divine Action Workshop**  
*Workshop* (online due to Covid-19), November 19, 2021  
Humboldt University of Berlin  
Reply to Harm Goris
- La provvidenza di Dio e il destino dell'uomo: Prospettive della  
filosofia analitica e continentale**  
*AIFR Conference*, November 11-12, 2021  
Gregorian University, Italy
- Thomistic Evolution Workshop**  
*Workshop*, October 15-16, 2021  
Aquinas Institute, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford, UK
- Vorsehung und Handeln Gottes aus Analytischer und Kontinentaler  
Perspektive: Versuch eines Brückenschlags in der deutschen Debatte**  
*Conference* (online due to Covid-19), October 22-23, 2021  
Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany
- 2020                    **13th Century English Franciscan Thought**  
*Conference* (online due to Covid-19), July 24/31 & August 7/14, 2020  
King's College London, UK
- 2019                    **Knowledge and Science in the Middle Ages**  
*Workshop*, April 12, 2019  
Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, Germany
- 2018                    **Human and Divine Providence**  
*International Symposium*, September 17-19, 2018  
Austral University, Pilar, Argentina
- The *Summa Halensis*: Doctrines and Debates**  
*Conference*, April 13-15, 2018  
All Souls College, Oxford, UK
- Medieval Intellectual History**  
*ERC Early Career Workshop*, March 22-23, 2018  
All Souls College, Oxford, UK
- 2017                    **Theology between Information and Language**  
*FORE/Las Casas One Day Expert Seminar*, November 2, 2017  
Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, UK

**Religion, Society, and the Science of Life**

*Conference*, July 19-22, 2017, Ian Ramsey Centre and International Society for Science and Religion, St Anne's College, Oxford, UK

**Aquinas on Metaphysics**

*7<sup>th</sup> Annual Philosophy Workshop*, June 29 - July 2, 2017

The Thomistic Institute, Washington, DC, Newburgh, New York, US

2016

**The Theology of Evolution: Convergent, Contingent or Directed?**

*Day Conference*, December 13, 2016

School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, UK

**Special Divine Action**

*2016 AAR Symposium*, November 17-18, 2016

Ian Ramsey Centre, San Antonio, Texas, US

**Aquinas and the Philosophy of Nature**

*The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Thomistic Seminar*, August 7-13, 2016

The Witherspoon Institute, Princeton, New Jersey, US

**Early Modern Laws of Nature: Secular or Divine**

*Workshop*, July 7, 2016

Ian Ramsey Centre, University of Oxford, UK

**The Challenge of Natural Teleology: Final Causes from Aristotle to Darwin**

*Summer School*, June 28 - July 1, 2016

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Groningen, Netherlands

**De Bono et Ente: Metaethics: Semantics and Ontology of the Good in Thomas Aquinas**

*42<sup>th</sup> International Study Week*, June 2-8, 2016, CHERTA – Center of Research and Advanced Studies in Thomas Aquinas, Rome, Italy

2015

**The Uniformity of Nature: Natural Laws, Natural Powers, or Divine Action**

*Day Conference*, May 5, 2015

School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, UK

2013

**John Henry Kardinal Newman in der Glaubensgeschichte**

*Conference*, October 3-5, 2013, Internationale Deutsche Newman-Gesellschaft, Schwaz, Tyrol, Austria

**The Ontological Commitments of Dispositionalism**

*Conference*, July 31 - August 2, 2013, Department of Christian Philosophy, University of Innsbruck, Austria

## DISSERTATIONS

---

- 2019            **Divine Providence and Natural Contingency:  
New Perspectives from Aquinas on the Divine Action Debate**  
*DPhil thesis (University of Oxford, 358 pages); pass with no corrections*  
Supervisors: Dr Ignacio Silva, Dr Andrew Pinsent  
Committee members: Prof Alister McGrath, Prof Bruno Niederbacher SJ
- 2015            **How does Karl Rahner conceive of the Relationship between  
Theology and the Sciences?**  
*MSc thesis (University of Edinburgh, 40 pages); with distinction*  
Supervisor: Dr Lydia Schumacher
- 2015            **Zum Prinzip „Impossibile est desiderium naturale esse inane“:  
Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Walter Brugger**  
*B.phil. thesis (University of Innsbruck, 40 pages)*  
Supervisor: Prof Edmund Runggaldier SJ
- 2014            **Menschenrecht ohne moralische Begründung? Eine Orientierung**  
*B.phil. thesis (University of Innsbruck, 35 pages)*  
Supervisor: Prof Bruno Niederbacher SJ
- 2014            **Zur Rationalität „theistischer“ Weltanschauungen angesichts der  
Erfahrung der Absurdität: Eine philosophisch-theologische  
Auseinandersetzung mit Albert Camus und dem Absurden**  
*Mag.theol. thesis (University of Innsbruck, 175 pages)*  
Supervisor: Prof Roman Siebenrock

## GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

---

- 2021-2022       **Templeton Subgrant “A Virtue-Based Approach to Providence:  
Bridging the Analytic/Continental Divide in the Central-European  
Divine Action Debate”**, as part of the scheme “New Horizons for  
Science and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe”  
15k, Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, Templeton Foundation  
10k, Zentralinstitut für Katholische Theologie, Humboldt University of Berlin
- 2018            **Denyer and Johnson Fund**  
Additional funding for on-course students, University of Oxford
- 2015-2018       **Higher Studies Trust Funded Studentship Linked to the Idreos  
Professorship of Science and Religion**  
Three-year fully-funded studentship, University of Oxford

2016-2018	<b>Travel Grants</b> Faculty of Theology and Religion, Blackfriars Hall, and the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford
2014-2015	<b>School of Divinity Scholarship</b> University of Edinburgh
2013-2014	<b>Scholarship for Academic Excellence</b> University of Innsbruck
2012-2013	
2011-2012	
2010-2011	

## REFEREES

---

**Dr Ignacio Silva** (Supervisor)  
*Associate Professor of Theology and Science*  
Instituto de Filosofía  
Universidad Austral  
iasilva@austral.edu.ar

**Dr Andrew Pinsent** (Supervisor)  
*Research Director*  
Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion  
University of Oxford  
andrew.pinsent@theology.ox.ac.uk

**Professor Alister McGrath** (Internal DPhil Examiner)  
*Andreos Idreos Professor of Science and Religion*  
Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion  
University of Oxford  
alister.mcgrath@theology.ox.ac.uk

**Dr Bruno Niederbacher SJ** (External DPhil Examiner)  
*Associate Professor of Philosophy*  
Institut für Christliche Philosophie  
Universität Innsbruck  
bruno.niederbacher@uibk.ac.at

**Dr Lydia Schumacher**  
*Reader in Historical and Philosophical Theology*  
Department of Theology and Religious Studies  
King's College London  
lydia.schumacher@kcl.ac.uk