

Intellect and Will in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* and in Thomas Aquinas

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The Will in *Fides et Ratio*: A Stowaway¹

The Question

ATTENDING AT LENGTH to the question of faith and reason and allowing the question of the will to remain unthematized is like embarking upon a perilous sea passage with the helmsman attempting to hide as a stowaway. Indeed, only by identifying the stowaway as the helmsman, that is, by explicitly thematizing the will's relationship to faith and reason, can we circumvent the frequently committed fallacy of treating faith and reason as fundamentally extrinsic to each other or, worse, as fundamentally opposed—perpetually engaged in negotiation between sometimes peaceful and sometimes warring encampments. As we can learn from Thomas Aquinas and as we will discuss below in some detail, attending to the question of the will avoids this problematic move because the will, as one distinct power of the soul, moves all its other powers, first among them, reason, to their respective operations. Furthermore, according to Thomas Aquinas, the will plays a central, albeit complex, role in the act of faith in which reason is to some degree commanded by the will to

¹ The encyclical is cited according to the new translation as offered in *Restoring Faith in Reason: A New Translation of the Encyclical Letter Faith and Reason of Pope John Paul II together with a commentary and discussion*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (London: SCM Press, 2002). For a more critical engagement of the encyclical, and especially its original English and German translations, cf. chapter 11 in my book *Bound to Be Free: Evangelical Catholic Engagements in Ecclesiology, Ethics, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

assent to the truth of faith.² Hence, it is to be expected that, similar to complex force fields, faith and reason interact and overlap in complex ways as a function of the will's central, if not constitutive, role in their respective operations. But this is not all. It is also the case that faith, as assenting reason, reasons in order to explore the reasons of faith: *fidei ratio*. And reason in its own comprehensive reaching toward truth constantly anticipates—in a kind of faith, that is, in a primordial intellectual trust in the intelligibility of being—an antecedent meaningful coherence of reality that is already presupposed in any process of inquiry: *rationis fides*. Moreover, as an inherently teleological activity, rational inquiry needs to anticipate the existence of the goal for which it aims (this goal being not a particular object but an insight in which the inquiry's investigative motion comes to rest).³ This primordial intellectual trust in the intelligibility of reality is the basis on which *Fides et Ratio* is able as well as entitled to encourage a “restoring [of] faith in reason.”⁴

The *rationis fides*, of course, differs fundamentally from the *fides* that ultimately is the gift of the Spirit. Hence, *fides*, in its strict theological sense, must be categorically distinguished from *rationis fides*. For *fides* is the active reception of an inexhaustible yet concrete personal truth, a reception in

² ST I, q. 111, a. 1, ad 1: “[N]on quasi convictus ratione, sed quasi imperatus a voluntate.” (Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the *Summa theologiae* in English are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica* [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948]. The Latin original offered in the footnotes is taken from Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, 3rd ed. [Turin: Edizioni San Paolo, 1999], which offers an improved version of the Leonine edition.) Yet this is only the tip of the iceberg. Aquinas nuances this teaching by developing the notions of an affective cognition (*cognitio per connaturalitatem*) that is moved by an inner instinct (*instinctus interior*). Cf. ST II–II, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3 and II–II, q. 45, a.2. Cf., in detail, Max Seckler, *Instinkt und Glaubenswille* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1961).

³ Cf. on this dynamic the pathbreaking work by Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). Polanyi offers a condensed and accessible account in his “Faith and Reason,” *Communio* 28 (2001): 860–74.

⁴ To quote the felicitous title of the new translation of the encyclical (with commentary and discussion) edited by Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, cited above. For a profound metaphysical meditation (in the form of an intense interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics of *esse*) that demonstrates why this trust is a genuine ontological enactment of the intellect itself and therefore the deepest enactment of the *anima intellectiva*, cf. Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus: Das Wagnis der Seinsfrage*, with an introduction by Martin Bieler, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1998), esp. 289–320.

and through which eternal life inchoately begins in the believer.⁵ *Fidei ratio* signifies faith's intellectual exploration (*fides quaerens intellectum*) of this received truth, an exploration that draws upon concepts forged by a reason that enacts its own faith (*rationis fides*) in the prolepsis of the unity of truth.⁶

The Will as the Unthematized Other of Reason

It is safe to say that as long as the will remains unthematized, reason, our faith in reason, and reason's own faith (*rationis fides*) remain largely untroubled. But as soon as we attend to the will, questions—about the will's "incurvature"⁷ from human sin and its effect upon reason—emerge with irresistible force. The reason is this: The very fact that *rationis fides* must anticipate the unity of truth that is the telos of any ordered inquiry entails the tacit assumption of the will itself being properly ordered and therefore able to guide appropriately the process of reasoning. Yet what allows us to assume that *sub conditione peccati*, under the condition of sin, the will is properly ordered? Hence, the *rationis fides* might very well operate on an assumption that transcends its capacity of anticipation and for which it might be unable to offer an account: the quality of the willing that moves the process of reasoning. Thus attending to the dynamic of the *rationis fides* unavoidably raises the specter of the will and the role of the will in reason's epistemic and discursive operations.

How does this problem affect *Fides et Ratio* as it presses for and encourages a "philosophia naturae vere metaphysicae"⁸ (§83) that does justice to

⁵ ST II–II, q. 4, a. 1: "[W]e can say that 'faith is a habitus of soul (habitus mentis) through which eternal life begins in us by causing our intellect to adhere to invisible realities.'" Cited from Jean Pierre Torrell, OP, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 324f.

⁶ My reading of the "coniunctio" in §48.

⁷ On Aquinas's complex doctrine of sin, cf. Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin. Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1967), 468–516. Two aspects of sin are of interest here: "aversio a Deo" in the case of mortal sin (ST I–II, q. 72, a. 5; q. 73, a. 1, ad 2; q. 77, a. 8) and "inordinatus actus" (ST I–II, q. 71, a. 1, ad 3; q. 71, a. 6, ad 3 and ad 4). In ST I–II, q. 109, a. 7, Thomas states: "Natural good is corrupted, inasmuch as man's nature is disordered by man's will not being subject to God's; and this order being overthrown, the consequence is that the whole nature of sinful man remains disordered."

⁸ In this instance the new translation does not convince me. It renders the above "a truly metaphysical philosophy of nature." But the whole section discusses metaphysics and not "physics," that is, a philosophy of nature proper. Hence, the passage should be rendered, as in the original translation, "a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range."

the ultimate unity of truth? On the one hand, reason's implicit faith (*rationis fides*), by anticipating a teleologically structured order of reality as a function of reason's own analytic, synthetic, and intentional processes of inquiry, itself invites the rigorous pursuit of metaphysics. Yet on the other hand, precisely the same implicit faith of reason is constrained—bound to respond to the way things are “out there,” and bound by the human condition itself and therefore the ways in which reason is shaped not only by humanity's practical needs but even more so by humanity's concrete existence under the condition of sin. We arrive, then, at the pressing question: How do reason and will interrelate in *Fides et Ratio*?

The Hidden Will

We find the dynamic of *rationis fides* and the specter of will most clearly entailed in the encyclical's central mandate: “Fidei parrhesia respondere debet rationis audacia,” which can be rendered “The boldness of reason ought to match the freedom of faith” (§48). How so? If the boldness of reason ought to match the freedom of faith, we must suppose that the “boldness of reason” emerges from rectitude of mind and not from reason possibly misdirected by a will that, *sub conditione peccati*, is turned in upon itself. Otherwise, the boldness of reason could as well lead—and de facto did lead—to the hubris of a totalitarian grasp of reality exercised by a reason bent into a purely instrumental rationality or inflated into a quasi-absolute faculty, falsely assuming speculative self-transparency. In short, while the boldness of reason clearly seems to presuppose rectitude of mind, the question remains what precisely the will's role is in relationship to rectitude of mind and, even more so, how the will's incurvature *sub conditione peccati* might affect the boldness of reason precisely insofar as it depends on its discursive operation. Moreover, the encyclical's central mandate implies a dynamic relationship between *fidei ratio* and *rationis fides*, since the freedom of the former presupposes the rectitude of the latter, while the latter's rectitude and subsequent proper boldness presuppose the implicit horizon of the former. Yet again, what is the role of the will in this mutual dynamic implication?

According to *Fides et Ratio*, created reason has the autonomy and freedom to investigate the mystery of human life. Yet as soon as this reason encounters the ultimate truth, it is obliged to open itself to transcendence and in that be truly liberated. Yet we might ask, liberated from what? *Fides et Ratio* would answer, from reductively immanentist limitations of the mind and constrictions of a technocratic logic.⁹ But are those purely

⁹ Cf. §§85–91.

accidental deteriorations of reason's activity? Or could they possibly be the result of reason and will interacting in problematic ways? In other words, the question again arises of how the will affects reason and, more specifically, rational inquiry. This Augustinian question is by no means an attack on reason or its capacities but rather a questioning of what looks like the tacit, albeit central, assumption that, *sub conditione peccati*, reason being moved by a curved will should as such still be capable of sustaining a tradition of inquiry that would lead into a truthful metaphysical investigation of the human mystery. Furthermore, if, as the encyclical emphasizes, reason's *autonomia* and *libertas* are in need of a liberation that is nothing less than fundamental, what is the point of asking for a "philosophia naturae vere metaphysicae" (§83)? Would this metaphysics itself not need to presuppose the will's rectification? Would it not need to be enfolded in the antecedent reality of prevenient grace?

The Will's Incurvature and the Wisdom of the Cross

It might seem that we carry too much of an Augustinian concern into the heart of the encyclical. Yet, on the contrary, the encyclical itself addresses this concern with theological boldness by drawing upon the Apostle Paul's theology of the cross—albeit without making the will an explicit theme. In the way St. Augustine read and received Paul's theology, the cross stands for the ultimate and most radical questioning of any wisdom humans can muster. Simultaneously, the cross stands for the ultimate and most radical establishment of wisdom received in faith. And the reception of this wisdom entails the rectification of the will now being salutarily absorbed by its ultimate good, that is, conformed to God's will. The rectification of the will constitutes the rectitude of mind on the basis of which reason can confidently develop again its genuine and original metaphysical range of inquiry. But how does this look in detail in *Fides et Ratio*—and is this the way it works in *Fides et Ratio*?

According to *Fides et Ratio*, in Romans 1 Paul makes "plain a philosophical argument in popular language" (§22). For *Fides et Ratio*, the upshot of Rom 1:20 is that "[i]n philosophical terms, it can justifiably be said that in this important Pauline text the metaphysical capacity of humanity is affirmed" (§22). However, is this alleged metaphysical capacity not fundamentally undercut, or at least severely incapacitated, by the will's incurvature? According to *Fides et Ratio*, in an act of disobedience "in . . . full and absolute freedom," human beings opposed themselves to God. At this very instant, the will should have become explicitly thematic, since "preferring in full and absolute freedom to oppose" is, if it is anything at all, an operation of the will. Asserting itself "in its full and

absolute freedom,” the will’s act of disobedience undercuts reason’s original capacity *ad conditorem Deum revertendi*, “of returning to God the Creator” (§22). The blindness of pride led the first human beings *ut se supremos esse crederent*, to believe themselves to be “supreme and in control.” The (willful?) grasp for supremacy inflicts such wounds on reason (*atque rationi humanae vulnera intulerunt*) that “reason became more and more a prisoner to itself” (§22). Despite the obvious importance of the will for disobedience and pride, *Fides et Ratio*, in this crucial reflection on the *conditio peccati*, does not discuss the will and the loss of its integrity in relationship to reason’s original capacity to know the truth.

Yet *Fides et Ratio* clearly emphasizes that only the coming of Christ redeems reason from its weakness and liberates it from its self-imprisonment. Christ achieves this liberation of reason’s self-imprisonment by being wisdom incarnate. Thus faith in him reopens participation in divine wisdom. And by implication, I would argue, it is only in the context of this participation in Christ, the Wisdom, that the original metaphysical range of reason in *statu integritatis* is restored.

The Wisdom of Philosophari in Maria

As I see it, the key to the unresolved problem of the will in *Fides et Ratio* is wisdom. Wisdom holds a place of such prominence in the encyclical that clearly the encouragement to reason authentically can pertain only to redeemed, or liberated, reason—not to reason *sub conditione peccati*. Let us remember that, according to *Fides et Ratio*, the *telos* of all human life is deification, the participation in the life of the triune God (§7). The ultimate freedom that human freedom can receive is to be liberated in faith in order to participate in divine freedom by receiving the new *telos* of God’s life.

It is thus by no means accidental that *Fides et Ratio* ends with a short meditation on *philosophari in Maria*, the “seat of wisdom” (§108). To repeat here an earlier point: For *Fides et Ratio*, wisdom, personified in the Logos, is identical with the ultimate good, the life of the triune God. Insofar as wisdom becomes a human attribute, it is completely directed to and inchoately embraced by this ultimate good. The will that is drawn to this good can lose itself in that embrace. Thus transformed, the will finds itself again as freedom received. Hence, true freedom stands for liberation from *incurvature*, in which the will asserts its own *libido dominandi* (the self-assertion of the subject and the subjugation of the world, be it by way of modern metaphysics or technology).

To sum up: In pressing the genuine autonomy of philosophical inquiry, *Fides et Ratio* simultaneously represses the question of the will’s

effect on the epistemic and discursive operation of reason. Restoring “faith in reason” seems to come at the price of avoiding questions such as, *How, post lapsum*, does the will’s *libido dominandi* affect reason such that reason’s grasp of reality unavoidably ends in a knowledge that is nothing else than an extension of power? *Fides et Ratio* is clearly aware of the deeply reductionist tendencies that certain strands of post-Nietzschean thinking involve, strands that can arguably be identified as voluntarist. I think it is right in light of these tendencies that *Fides et Ratio* reemphasizes reason’s fundamental epistemic capacities and, by implication, its epistemic primacy over against the will. Furthermore, I regard it as crucial that the encyclical encourages a renewal of a philosophy of being.¹⁰ However, it strikes me as detrimental to the encyclical’s fundamental mandate—“fidei parrhesia respondere debet rationis audacia” (the boldness of reason ought to match the freedom of faith)—to omit an explicit reflection of the will’s relationship to reason. Only when the relationship between reason and will is clarified can two questions successfully be addressed: first, why and how, *sub conditione peccati*, “reason became more and more a prisoner to itself” (§22) and, second, in what way (namely, by “naturalizing” the *conditio peccati*) the distinctively voluntarist philosophies of modernity constitute such a profound problem. In short, restoring “faith in reason” can succeed only when we squarely attend to reason’s other, the will. While omitting to do so itself, *Fides et Ratio* at least points in the direction from which decisive help for this task is to come. For *Fides et Ratio* identifies Thomas Aquinas as the paradigmatic point of orientation for how faith and reason, theology and philosophy, should rightly interrelate. It is indeed Thomas Aquinas who offers an account of the will’s relationship to reason that not only fills the encyclical’s lacuna but also opens fruitful horizons for fulfilling the encyclical’s central mandate, precisely by rigorously engaging the question of the will.

Intellect and Will in Aquinas: Back to the Way Forward¹¹

Up to this point, following the practice of *Fides et Ratio*, I have used “reason” rather generically. Now it is time to introduce the crucial distinction

¹⁰ For rightly emphasizing this point, cf. John F.X. Knasas, “*Fides et Ratio* and the Twentieth Century Thomistic Revival,” *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 400–408.

¹¹ In the following part of the chapter I am drawing heavily on my essay “The Directedness of Reasoning and the Metaphysics of Creation,” in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, ed. Paul Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (New York/London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 160–93.

between “intellect” and “reason(ing).” In this I follow Thomas Aquinas, for whom “intellect” and “reason” are fundamentally the same faculty. Yet each stands for a particular and fundamentally different aspect of this faculty, insofar as “reason(ing)” denotes the discursive movement of the intellect. That is, “reason” carries the active connotation of the verbal form “to reason.” The one implication of this internal differentiation that matters most in the following is that the faculty of the will has a larger and, *sub conditione peccati*, much more problematic effect on the discursive movement of reason(ing) than on the most basic intellective act of apprehending intelligible truth. I also follow Aquinas in regarding speculative and practical reason(ing) as particular aspects of the same faculty.¹²

The Human Being—Made in God’s Image

Before plunging into the deep waters of Aquinas’s account of the complex interaction between intellect and will, we need to acknowledge the warning that a noted Aquinas scholar recently expressed: “No one can do justice to Aquinas’ theory of the will in a few pages. It is rich, complicated, and controversial, and a thorough treatment of it would require a book-length study.”¹³ Moreover, it is important to realize that in his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas places his inquiry into the nature of the human being squarely into an explicitly *theological* horizon. He does so by drawing upon Augustine’s imago-doctrine, which he received by way of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. Yet this dependence upon Augustine is not simply a matter of the history of ideas. It is, rather, a matter of substance. Aquinas’s anthropology represents nothing less than a philosophically argued yet theologically motivated and driven line of reasoning about the human being as created in the image of God. If it indeed obtains that the human being is created in God’s image, this quality must constitute the first formal principle of any subsequent claims about human nature. Aquinas locates this first formal principle in the form of the human, that is, the soul. He does so by distinguishing between, on the one hand, the end (*terminus*) of God’s act of creation and, on the other, perfection of this image through grace and the light of glory, that is, the gratuitous gift of

¹² Cf. especially his *ST* I, q. 79, aa. 8–11.

¹³ Eleonore Stump, “Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” in *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy*, ed. Michael D. Beatty (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 266. I am indebted to Stump’s concise summary of Aquinas’s complex teaching. Since her warning was uttered, at least one such book has been written: Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

communion with the triune God.¹⁴ In short, Aquinas's anthropology is governed by a multilayered, complex structure: the human created in the image of God yet deeply wounded by the reality of sin and gratuitously directed toward restoration and perfection of the image, which reaches its completion only as human beings find themselves in personal communion with God, a communion gratuitously granted by the triune God through the Spirit in Christ and enacted as a communion of knowing and loving.¹⁵

Intellect and Will

In order accurately to appreciate Aquinas's analysis of the intricate interrelationship between intellect and will, we need to distinguish between his earlier, intellectualist leaning, up to the completion of *Summa theologiae* I, and a later, more voluntarist leaning that comes to the fore with the inception of *Summa theologiae* I–II and especially in *De malo* 6.¹⁶ We need to gain first a solid appreciation of the earlier, intellectualist emphasis¹⁷ in order to appreciate the nature of the specific shift to the later, nuanced voluntarism.

¹⁴ Cf. D. Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 153–235, esp. 168f.

¹⁵ *ST I*, q. 93, especially aa. 5 and 8; but cf. *ST I*, q. 45, a. 7 and q. 43, a. 3. The subsequent 114 questions of the *Prima secundae* and 189 questions of the *Secunda secundae* need to be read as an interpretation of this dynamic *imago Dei* or, better, as an investigation of all those aspects through which the human being already is the image of God and still—gratuitously—is to be restored and perfected in that image. Cf. Otto Hermann Pesch, *Die Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1967), 401ff. and Yves Congar, “Le sens de l'économie salutaire dans la ‘théologie’ de S. Thomas d'Aquin (Somme théologique),” in *Festgabe Joseph Lortz*, vol. 2, ed. Erwin Iserloh and Peter Manns (Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm, 1958), 73–122, at 105.

¹⁶ Rather than a radical change of mind, I want to interpret this shift as a change of emphasis and as a final clarification of the will as a power of the soul that is fully independent from the intellect. My account of Aquinas's later, more voluntarist emphasis depends on Otto H. Pesch's detailed study “Philosophie und Theologie der Freiheit bei Thomas von Aquin in quaest. Disp. 6 *De malo*,” *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1962): 1–25. I find convincing Pesch's chronological arguments that suggest that *De malo* was written shortly after *ST I–II*, qq. 1–21 (i.e., between 1270 and 1272, during Aquinas's second stay in Paris) and thus represents the latest state of Aquinas's reflections on the relationship between intellect and will. On the particular historical cause for Aquinas's change of emphasis, cf. Pesch, 4f.

¹⁷ For the sake of economy, I will draw exclusively upon *Summa theologiae* I in order to establish Aquinas's earlier account in its most accomplished and concise form.

Aquinas understands intellect and will as two distinct yet mutually interrelated powers of the soul, the intellect naturally and of necessity adhering to the first principles¹⁸ and the will adhering to the universal good as its proper object.¹⁹ Thus perceived in abstraction from the concrete enactment of these two potencies, that is, simply according to their proper nature, Aquinas regards the will as the striving that emerges from the intellect's power of cognition. The movement of the will is the inclination toward something. Yet being a property inherent to the intellect's potency, the will is an essentially intellectual capacity and therefore an inclination to a good that is recognized as such. Thus the will inheres in the intellect as that unique ground that moves it toward the good that the intellect has perceived as such.

Despite the clear distinction between intellect and will insofar as they are considered in principle, there obtains an intricate interrelationship between the two, which Aquinas discusses first under the question "Whether the Will is a Higher Power Than the Intellect?"²⁰ The upshot of Aquinas's complex analysis in this article is that both powers include one another in accordance with their proper natures. For this reason the will itself can be the proper object of the intellect's inquiry.²¹ Moreover, for the same reason, the will moves the intellect—but only in one particular way. On the one hand, Aquinas draws upon the distinction between the intellect's inherent relationship to the first principles and the will's orientation toward the universal good, and on the other hand, upon their particular interrelationship in the interplay of all the powers of the soul. This distinction allows for the following relationship: "But if we consider the will as regards the common nature of its object, which is good, and

¹⁸ *Prima intelligibilia principia*. These principles are the first concepts formed by the intellect when a human being comes into contact with the sensible.

¹⁹ *ST I*, q. 82, a. 1.

²⁰ *ST I*, q. 82, a. 3.

²¹ *ST I*, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1: "If, however, we take the intellect as regards the common nature of its object and the will as a determinative power, then again the intellect is higher and nobler than the will, because under the notion of being and truth is contained both the will itself, and its act, and its object. Wherefore the intellect understands the will, and its act, and its object, just as it understands other species of things, as stone or wood, which are contained in the common notion of being and truth." If, supposedly, the will were superior or prior to the intellect, an investigation of the will would be a futile enterprise, since in this case the will would be both the agent and the object of the investigation, the result of which consequently would be only a play of forces contingent upon the will's particular whims. Interestingly, these "whims," by sleight of hand, assume a certain intellectual capacity of the will itself, yet a capacity clearly in service of desires that have no intellectual ground but rather form a pre-intellectual vortex of forces.

the intellect as a thing and a special power, then the intellect itself, and its act, and its object, which is truth, each of which is some species of good, are contained under the common notion of good. And in this way, the will is higher than the intellect, and can move it.”²² Thus insofar as the intellect’s act and its object—that is, truth—are subsumed under the common notion of good, both of them fall under the common nature of the will’s object—that is, that toward which the will is unfailingly bent: the good. In other words, because the will moves all faculties of the soul to their proper end, the will moves the operation of the intellect²³ to its proper end. And so Aquinas concludes his reflection upon the interrelationship between intellect and will with the following summary: “From this we can easily understand why these powers include one another in their acts, because the intellect understands that the will wills and the will wills the intellect to understand. In the same way, good is contained in truth, inasmuch as it is an understood truth, and truth in good, inasmuch as it is a desired good.”²⁴ In short, the will moves the intellect as an efficient cause, while the intellect moves the will as a final cause; that is, the will wills the intellect to understand, and therefore the will itself can be a proper object of the intellect’s inquiry, while the intellect’s understanding offers the will those goods toward which it inclines itself.

As stated above, we can observe a remarkable shift in emphasis between Aquinas’s teaching in *Summa theologiae* I, which reflects and systematizes

²² ST I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1.

²³ Following Aristotle’s *De anima*, Aquinas distinguishes between the capacity of abstraction, that is, the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*) that abstracts from sense experience of particular things to form (confused) ideas, and the capacity of understanding, that is, the possible intellect (*intellectus possibilis*) that receives those ideas and develops them via the process of discursive reasoning into concepts. Underlying the agent intellect and the possible intellect is a more fundamental receptive act of the intellect that earlier Aristotelian commentators called *nous pathetikos*. Aquinas gestures to this primal intellectual act of undergoing or suffering reality in *De malo* 3, a. 4, where he refers to the intellect as “cuius actus consistit in recipiendo ab exteriori: unde dicitur quod intelligere est pati quoddam.” For detailed accounts of Aquinas’s complex way of relating active and possible intellect, cf. Robert E. Brennan, OP, *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophic Analysis of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), especially ch. 6, and most recently, Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch. 10.

²⁴ ST I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1. “Ex his ergo apparet ratio quare hae potentiae suis actibus invicem se includunt: quia intellectus intelligit voluntatem velle, et voluntas vult intellectum intelligere. Et simili ratione bonum continetur sub vero, in quantum est quoddam verum intellectum; et verum continetur sub bono, in quantum est quoddam bonum desideratum” (q. 82, a. 4, ad 1).

his earlier thought, and his later work in *Summa theologiae* I–II and especially in *De malo* 6. Instead of moving the will, as a final cause, the intellect's operation is reduced to that of a formal cause, that is, to the role of presenting the object to the will and thereby offering a specification of the will's act.²⁵ In other words, the intellect as the will's formal cause does not suffice anymore to activate the will. Rather, lest the origin of the will's movement be thought to rest solely in the will itself—the will thus becoming its own prime mover, which would entail denying the will to be part and parcel of creation—God must be understood as the first mover of the will.²⁶ This change of emphasis, however, does not at all affect the intellect's distinct and proper mode of operation. Rather, now the will's unique character as completely independent of the intellect's operation comes into much sharper relief. Hence, while most emphatically not being its own first cause, the will is the proximate cause of its own motion: "The will when moved by God contributes something, since the will itself acts even though God moves it. And so the will's movement, although from an external source as the first source, is nevertheless not coerced."²⁷

Intellect and Will Affected by Sin

How are intellect and will now affected by sin? Aquinas approaches this question with a fundamental Augustinian commitment, quoting in the *sed contra* of *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 74, a. 1 St. Augustine's statement that "it is by the will that we sin, and live righteously."²⁸ On the basis of his previous discussion of the nature of will and intellect as powers of the soul, Aquinas identifies the will, being the principle of voluntary acts, as the principle of sins.²⁹ This fundamental insight gains crucial importance as

²⁵ *ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 1.

²⁶ Cf. *ST* I–II, q. 10, a. 4 and *The De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 463 (*De malo* 6). On the once hotly debated question of the "praemotio physica," cf. the concise discussion in Gallus M. Manser, OP, *Das Wesen des Thomismus*, 3rd enlarged ed. (Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 1949), 603–25.

²⁷ *De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*, 461 (*De malo* 6).

²⁸ "Voluntas est qua peccatur, et recte vivitur" (*Retractationes* I.9; PL 32, 596).

²⁹ "Et ideo sequitur quod peccatum sit in voluntate sicut in subiecto" (*ST* I–II, q. 74, a. 1). Already in *ST* I, q. 17, a. 2 ("Whether Falsity Exists in Things") Aquinas establishes the will as the principle of sin: "In things that depend on God, falseness cannot be found, in so far as they are compared with the divine intellect; since whatever takes place in things proceeds from the ordinance of that intellect, unless perhaps in the case of voluntary agents only, who have it in their power to withdraw themselves from what is ordained; wherein consists the evil of sin. Thus sins themselves are called untruths and lies in the Scriptures."

Aquinas turns to original sin and asks “Whether Original Sin Infects the Will before the Other Powers?”³⁰ In full consequence of his Augustinian position, he claims that original sin regards first of all the will. Recall Aquinas’s earlier claim that the will moves the intellect as its efficient cause and his later claim that the intellect does not move the will, that is, as its final cause, but rather operates merely as its formal cause, presenting the object to the will. Both claims now bear surprising fruit in the specification of original sin. Consider Aquinas’s remarks in *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 83, a. 3, ad 3: “The intellect precedes the will, in one way, by proposing its object to it. In another way, the will precedes the intellect, in the order of motion to act, which motion pertains to sin.”³¹ Here it is very important to remember Aquinas’s earlier distinction between external acts (falling under the category of *poiesis*, making) and internal acts (falling under the category of *praxis*, doing), that is, desire and knowledge.³² The one internal act we are most interested in here is the act of the speculative intellect (*iudicium speculativum*), or, in its Aristotelian rendition, *theoria*.³³ However, Aquinas does not ask explicitly how *theoria* might be affected by the will’s sinfully misdirecting the intellect. Rather, because of the particular thrust of *Summa theologiae* I–II, where the intellectual and volitional movement of humans is perfected by grace and led toward their gratuitous ultimate end, Aquinas focuses on a particular class of internal moral acts, namely, those “acts which do not pass into external matter, but remain in the agent, e.g. to desire and to know: and such are all moral acts, whether virtuous or sinful.”³⁴ Does this mean that *theoria*, the act of knowing that is directed to that which is solely and properly the intellect’s object, can never be affected by the will and therefore by sin? In short, are we, according to Aquinas, at least epistemologically free from the effects of original sin? One of the strengths of Aquinas’s way of relating intellect and will is his ability to account for how the intellect’s proper capacity has not been destroyed by human sin. The intellect is able to come to knowledge and judge properly (yet not inerrantly) in highly complex and nontrivial ways.

When we turn to Aquinas’s discussion of the vice of curiosity (indeed, a very Augustinian theme), we will realize that Aquinas allows for *theoria*,

³⁰ ST I–II, q. 83, a. 3.

³¹ “[I]ntellectus quoddam modo praecedat voluntatem, inquantum proponit ei suum obiectum. Alio vero modo voluntas praecedat intellectum, secundum ordinem motionis ad actum: quae quidem motio pertinet ad peccatum.”

³² ST I–II, q. 74, a. 1.

³³ On Aristotle’s *bios theoretikos*, cf. Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: ‘Phronesis’ and ‘Techne’ in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 237–44.

³⁴ ST I–II, q. 74, a. 1.

while not being cognitively defective, to be nevertheless deeply affected by a will sinfully bent away from the ultimate good. Aquinas's late and quite restrained voluntarism, still checked by a robust intellectualism, allows for a nuanced account of the will's effect upon reason's discursive operations—without falling into the trap of voluntarist skepticism.

*The Virtue of Studiousness and the Vice of Curiosity:
Paradigmatic Test-Case for the Relationship
between Intellect and Will*

We find Aquinas's treatment of the vice of curiosity in the *Secunda secundae* of his *Summa theologiae*, an excursus as detailed as it is fascinating on the treatises on the virtues, the vices, and the gifts, beatitudes, and fruits of the Holy Spirit that are discussed in the *Prima secundae*. Curiosity and the respective virtue of studiousness pertain to the cardinal virtue of temperance, that is, the moral excellence that rightly restrains and channels the bodily and intellectual passions that sustain but also endanger human flourishing.³⁵ In slightly more technical language, Aquinas would regard studiousness as “a subordinate virtue annexed to a principal virtue,” that is, temperance, and “to be comprised under modesty,” a virtue that in turn is “annexed to temperance as its principal.”³⁶

Studiousness

Because it provides the crucial backdrop for fully appreciating the deeply problematic nature of curiosity, we will attend first to Aquinas's discussion of the virtue of studiousness. After establishing that the appropriate matter of studiousness is knowledge, Aquinas turns to the question “Whether Studiousness Is a Part of Temperance?”³⁷ In a striking way, a quote from Augustine in the *sed contra* contrasts the three arguments that deny the question and, more importantly, anticipates Aquinas's telling answer: “We are forbidden to be curious: and this is a great gift that temperance bestows.”³⁸ Now curiosity is prevented by moderate studiousness. Therefore studiousness is a part of temperance.” Precisely because the human being is not just a body but a body informed by a soul—and, as we saw above, a soul that is created in the image of God—the human naturally desires what is appropriate to his soul: *cognoscere aliquid*, to know some-

³⁵ “[I]t belongs to temperance to moderate the movement of the appetite, lest it tend excessively to that which is desired naturally” (*ST* II–II, q. 166, a. 2).

³⁶ *ST* II–II, q. 166, a. 2; *ST* II–II, q. 160, a. 1.

³⁷ *ST* II–II, q. 166, a. 2.

³⁸ “Curiosi esse prohibemur: quod magnae temperantiae munus est” (*De Moribus Ecclesiae*, cap. 21: PL 32, 1327).

thing.³⁹ And unsurprisingly, “[t]he moderation of this desire pertains to the virtue of studiousness.” The real and exciting complexity of this seemingly straightforward position only emerges in Aquinas’s responses to the objections, two responses in which the problematic of reasoning’s directness is immediately and dramatically relevant.

One of the objections raises the problem that knowledge has no connection with the moral virtues of which temperance and therefore also modesty and studiousness are a part. This is because they root in the appetitive part of the soul, that is, in the will. Knowledge, consequently, seems to pertain only to the intellectual virtues (prudence and its subordinate virtues), which arise from the soul’s cognitive part, that is, the intellect. In his response, by implicit reference to *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 9, a. 1, Aquinas first restates the way in which the will directs the intellect: “The act of a cognitive power is commanded by the appetitive power, which moves all the powers.” This fundamental insight into the way the will moves all the powers of the soul to their appropriate ends, as discussed above, allows Aquinas to make a critical differentiation. It is the differentiation between the twofold good with respect to knowledge. There is, first, the one that is connected with the act of knowledge itself: “[A]nd this good pertains to the intellectual virtues, and consists in man having a true estimate about each thing.” There is, second, the one that belongs to the act of the appetitive power, that is, the will. This good “consists in man’s appetite being directed aright in applying the cognitive power in this or that way to this or that thing.”⁴⁰ Being able to form the appetite aright in order that this power of the will might rightly apply the cognitive power is what makes studiousness a virtue in the first place. To turn Aquinas’s point around: Only because the will indeed does have a specific effect on the intellect does a particular moral virtue pertain to the cognitive power.

Let us turn to the other pertinent objection. Studiousness cannot be a subordinate virtue of temperance, because the former does not resemble the latter in the mode of its operation. While temperance is a kind of restraint that opposes the vice of excess, studiousness seems to be first of all the application of the mind to something that opposes the vice of neglect. Aquinas again responds with a distinction, now between contrary inclinations. He prepares this distinction by drawing upon Aristotle’s teaching that in order to be virtuous, one must avoid all that to which

³⁹ It should come as no surprise when Aquinas quotes in this very instance the familiar opening line from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: “All human beings naturally desire knowledge.”

⁴⁰ *ST* II–II, q. 166, a. 2, ad 2.

one is most naturally inclined. The virtue of studiousness has two seemingly contrary aspects because of the contrary inclination the human being displays regarding knowledge: "For on the part of the soul, he is inclined to desire knowledge of things; and so it behooves him to exercise a praiseworthy restraint on this desire, lest he seek knowledge immoderately: whereas on the part of the bodily nature, man is inclined to avoid the trouble of seeking knowledge."⁴¹ Consequently, as it pertains to the first inclination, studiousness constitutes a kind of restraint, but insofar as it pertains to the second inclination, "this virtue derives its praise from a certain keenness of interest in seeking knowledge of things; and from this it takes its name." Thus studiousness restrains, channels, directs, and applies the cognitive power in a concentrated, sustained, and keenly interested way to the arduous task of gaining knowledge that is appropriate as well as profound.

Curiosity

With the virtue of studiousness as necessary backdrop, we are now able finally to turn to the vice of curiosity. How does Aquinas treat the vice of curiosity, and how might the intellect's speculative power, *theoria*, be affected by it? In *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 167, a. 1, Aquinas goes right to the core of the matter by asking "Whether Curiosity Can Be About Intellective Knowledge?" First, he reports three objections, a not untypical assemblage of some of the ways strict intellectualists would want to defend the intellect's supremacy from any incursions from the side of the will. Yet again, Aquinas's choice of the *sed contra*, this time not from Augustine but from Jerome, is quite a foreboding of the kind of response that is about to come: "'Is it not evident that a man who day and night wrestles with the dialectic art, the student of natural science whose gaze pierces the heavens, walks in vanity of understanding and darkness of mind?' Now vanity of understanding and darkness of mind are sinful. Therefore curiosity about intellective sciences may be sinful."⁴²

Fully consistent with what he has previously established, Aquinas maintains that while knowledge as such is always good, the desire for and study in pursuit of knowledge of the truth may be right or wrong. First, acquiring a particular knowledge may be accidentally linked to evil. Second, the appetite and study that is directed at the knowledge of truth may itself be inordinate. This can be the case in four ways: First, in turn-

⁴¹ *ST* II–II, q. 166, a. 2, ad 3.

⁴² "Nonne vobis videtur in vanitate sensus et obscuritate mentis ingredi qui diebus ac noctibus in dialectica arte torquetur, qui physicus perscrutator oculos trans caelum levat?" (*In Ephes.*, Lib. II, super IV17; PL 26, 536).

ing from one's primary obligation to a less useful occupation (as the pastor who, instead of persistently studying the Scriptures and continuing to develop the linguistic and conceptual tools necessary for this task, turns to other, more "interesting" intellectual pursuits like computer programs, Web sites with ready-to-go sermons, etc.). Second, in seeking knowledge from persons by whom it is illicit to be taught (as the medical student who wants to study the human response to extreme cold with a Nazi physician who gained his knowledge by systematically freezing concentration camp inmates to death). Since I will dwell longer on the third way, I will immediately move to the fourth: in studying "to know the truth above the capacity of [one's] own intelligence, since by so doing men easily fall into error." Because, as already pointed out above, for Aquinas, reasoning is the discursive activity of the intellect, and because any extended and complex argument about the truth of something that transcends epistemic obviousness (this is a chair, this is a pencil) easily brings the uninstructed person to the limit of his/her own intellectual possibilities, error becomes increasingly likely, and instruction prior to the informed engagement of one's discursive powers in complex inquiries and their discursive disciplines, increasingly necessary. Curiosity in these matters can only amount to dangerous dabbling, while studiousness implies the modesty to acknowledge the necessity of prior instruction.

Finally, we turn to the way most pertinent to our purposes in which the appetite to know can itself be inordinate: in desiring "to know the truth about creatures, without referring [one's] knowledge to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God."⁴³ Here we finally have Aquinas identifying an inherently restricted—and in this precise sense, misdirected—act of the speculative intellect, or *theoria*. A knowledge of creatures that is not directed to its dutiful end, namely, the knowledge of God, is a distorted, sinful knowledge not because it is faulty in and of itself (that is, there need not be any cognitive defect in this knowledge). Rather, this knowledge becomes distorted, sinful knowledge by its lack of reference to and reverence for the One who grants being in the first place. Knowing "the truth about creatures" unquestionably refers to *theoria*, the speculative act of the intellect directed to everything that is not God or one of God's operations—in short, the full scope of the *ens inquantum ens*. It is Aquinas's response in the *ad primum* that offers additional warrant for this assumption: "Hence there may be sin in the knowledge of certain truths, in so far as the desire of such knowledge is not directed in due manner to the knowledge

⁴³ "Tertio, quando homo appetit cognoscere veritatem circa creaturas non referendo ad debitum finem, scilicet ad cognitionem Dei."

of the sovereign truth, wherein supreme happiness consists.”⁴⁴ What a sweeping anticipatory indictment of the whole range of modern immanentism, be it in philosophy, natural science, or the so-called humanities!

Thus Aquinas assumes also *theoria* to be affected by sin in that the intellect in its concrete operation is moved in a way that restricts or distracts it from considering its ultimate subject matter, the supreme good, and in this sense misdirects it without necessarily causing a cognitive defect in what is known. Aquinas’s nuanced and epistemically restrained voluntarism undercuts the kind of voluntarist skepticism that would arise from the assumption that the will rules unaccountably and irresistibly over reason. The intellect obviously always comes to know things (*res*) in ways appropriate to their nature.

Knowing, Reasoning, and the Will

It is here that Aquinas’s subtle distinction between intellect and reason—and hence between knowing and reasoning—to which I alluded earlier does some surprisingly helpful work. It allows us to gain a clearer grasp of the way reasoning, that is, the intellect’s discursive activity, can be profoundly misdirected while the intellect’s epistemic capacity per se remains largely unaffected.⁴⁵ The latter is actually the very presupposition necessary for reasoning to be misdirected in the first place: Even while being discursively misguided, the intellect always continues to perceive some truth, since this is precisely what allows it to remain in error and not in a state of undifferentiated delusion. Therefore, “the intellect cannot be false in its knowledge of simple essences; but is either true, or it understands nothing at all.”⁴⁶ Hence, it is not in the primal intellective act but

⁴⁴ “Et ideo potest esse vitium in cognitione aliquorum verorum, secundum quod talis appetitus non debito modo ordinatur ad cognitionem summae veritatis, in qua consistit summa felicitas.”

⁴⁵ Cf. *ST I*, q. 17, a. 3 (“Whether Falsity Is in the Intellect?”): “Now as the sense is directly informed by the likeness of its proper object, so is the intellect by the likeness of the essence of a thing. Hence the intellect is not deceived about the essence of a thing, as neither the sense about its proper object. But in affirming and denying, the intellect may be deceived, by attributing to the thing of which it understands the essence, something which is not consequent upon it, or is opposed to it. For the intellect is in the same position as regards judging of such things, as sense is as to judging of common, or accidental, sensible objects. There is, however, this difference, as before mentioned regarding truth (Q. 16, A. 2), that falsity can exist in the intellect not only because the knowledge of the intellect is false, but because the intellect is conscious of that knowledge, as it is conscious of truth; whereas in sense falsity does not exist as known, as stated above (A. 2).” [Emphasis added.]

⁴⁶ *ST I*, q. 17, a. 3.

in the discursive process of reasoning, of linking intellectual judgments in one or another way into complex arguments and theories, that the will, and hence the agent, comes into play.

It is useful to remember at this point Aquinas's insight that similar to the intellect, the will is moved in two ways: first, so far as concerns the exercise of its act and, second, so far as concerns what seems to be—or indeed is—a particular good, that is, “the specification of the act, derived from the object.”⁴⁷ While the will is not able to influence the intellect's basic operation, it is quite able to will that the intellect not continue thinking about something particular and to direct the intellect instead to consider something else. This accounts for the easy distractibility of reasoning in practical as well as theoretical matters.⁴⁸

Instead of considering complex large-scale examples of misdirected reasoning from the history of science, such as “Aryan physics” (opposing Einstein's theory of relativity), or from dialectical-materialist sociology, economy, and history (acknowledged core disciplines of all the bygone

⁴⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 10, a. 2. Eleonore Stump rightly points out that according to Aquinas, “if the will is presented by the intellect with an object which can be considered good under some descriptions and not good under others, then the will is not necessarily moved by that object either. . . . It is open to the will not to will that object by willing that the intellect not think about it” (“Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” 268; cf. *ST I*, q. 82, a. 2).

⁴⁸ Aquinas offers a complex discussion of this matter in *ST I-II*, q. 17 (“Of the Acts Commanded by the Will”), in which he applies and extends the intricate feedback system between intellect and will. Command is an act of reason, yet the very fact that reason moves by commanding is due to the power of the will: “Consequently it follows that command is an act of the reason, presupposing an act of the will, in virtue of which the reason, by its command, moves (the power) to the execution of the act” (*ST I-II*, q. 17, a. 1). However, the aspect most pertinent to our concern is found in article 6 (“Whether the Act of the Reason Is Commanded?”), where Aquinas distinguishes between the exercise of the act (which is always commanded “as when one is told to be attentive, and to use one's reason”) and the object of the exercise of reason. Here we encounter the crucial distinction between the uncommanded aspect and the aspect that is open to command: “One is the act whereby it apprehends the truth about something. This act is not in our power: because it happens in virtue of a natural or supernatural light. Consequently in this respect, the act of the reason is not in our power, and cannot be commanded. The other act of the reason is that whereby it assents to what it apprehends. If, therefore, that which the reason apprehends is such that it naturally assents thereto, e.g., the first principles, it is not in our power to assent or dissent to the like. . . . But some things which are apprehended do not convince the intellect to such an extent as not to leave it free to assent or dissent, or at least suspend its assent or dissent, on account of some cause or other; and in such things assent or dissent is in our power, and is subject to our command” (*ST I-II*, q. 17, a. 6). Cf. also *De malo* 3, a. 3.

Communist regimes), consider the simple case suggested by Eleonore Stump and applicable by family resemblance:

Suppose that Anna has just won some money in a contest and that she plans to use the money to buy a frilly pink canopy bed for her daughter, something she has been coveting but unable to afford. As she sits reading a magazine, she comes across an advertisement urging readers to give money to support children in third-world countries and showing a picture of a ragged, emaciated child. Anna no sooner glances at the ad than she turns the page. Why does she do so? The answer to the question will, of course, involve the will's issuing commands which result in Anna's turning the page; *but underlying these commands is something like the will's directive to the intellect not to think about the ad and the needy children it describes*. The will makes this directive in virtue of a hasty calculation on the part of the intellect that looking at the ad is not good. . . . Informing or influencing this calculation will be Anna's coveting of the frilly pink canopy bed for her daughter, a passion in Aquinas' sense. Perhaps without the influence of that coveting Anna's calculation about the ad might have been different.⁴⁹

Aquinas's analysis of the vice of curiosity makes it plain why Stump's example, while pertaining to a matter of practical reasoning, can easily be applied to the act of speculative reasoning as well.⁵⁰

Curiosity's Horizon of Discovery (Metaphysics of Creation) and its Cure (Grace)

If it is the case that curiosity is the vice that affects *theoria* by restricting and distracting the intellect and by misdirecting the discursive process of reasoning, we need now to ask, What constitutes the horizon from which the vice of curiosity can be identified in the first place? And how can a redirected gaze of *theoria* be suggested at all? Aquinas's third argument in *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 167, a. 1, and especially his response to the first objection, implies that this horizon is nothing less than a theologically

⁴⁹ Eleonore Stump, "Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," 269. [Emphasis added.]

⁵⁰ Cf. Aquinas's discussion of "Whether Falsity Is in the Intellect?" in *ST* I, q. 17, a. 3 and the concise summary he offers in *De malo* 3, a. 3 of the ways the intellect and the will are moved and are not moved. Here again "regarding the intellect, things necessarily linked to naturally known first principles necessarily move the intellect. . . . But the intellect is not compelled to assent to conclusions if they be not necessarily linked to naturally known first principles, as is the case with contingent and probable things. Likewise, neither does the intellect necessarily assent to necessary things necessarily linked to first principles before it knows there is such a necessary connection" (*De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*, 245, 247).

motivated and informed metaphysics of creation. How so? Let us recall both passages. First, the pursuit of knowledge may be wrong “when a man desires to know the truth about creatures, without referring his knowledge to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God. Hence Augustine says that ‘in studying creatures, we must not be moved by empty and perishable curiosity; but we should ever mount towards immortal and abiding things.’”⁵¹ Second, since the sovereign good of humanity consists in the knowledge of the sovereign truth, Aquinas avers, “there may be sin in the knowledge of certain truths, in so far as the desire of such knowledge is not directed in due manner to the knowledge of the sovereign truth, wherein supreme happiness consists.”⁵²

What happens in both cases is that in order to specify curiosity as an intellectual vice, as sinfully misdirected reasoning, Aquinas consistently presumes what Robert Sokolowski calls “the Christian distinction” between the Creator and everything (*ta panta*).⁵³ However, it is precisely this distinction that constitutes the defining mark of the metaphysics of creation over against any other form of metaphysics.

To put it in the form of a thesis: A metaphysics of creation is the necessary horizon (a) to understand why curiosity is a vice and (b) to direct the intellect’s gaze to its proper object, the ultimate truth. Yet what do I mean by a *theologically* motivated and informed metaphysics of creation? What differentiates it from other versions of metaphysics, especially an Aristotelian metaphysics, as the science of being as being (*ens inquantum est ens*)? To put it in terms that are possibly too condensed: While a metaphysics of being presupposes the ontological difference between being and beings, a metaphysics of creation admits its dependence “from above” by presuming a second, and ultimately more fundamental, difference. It is the difference between *esse commune/esse ipsum*—an absolute abundant *actus essendi* that is open to both participation (creation) and subsistence (God) and, while abstracting from both, is to be found in both—and *ipsum esse subsistens*, that is, God.⁵⁴ Hence, while remaining implicit in the

⁵¹ ST II–II, q. 167, a. 1.

⁵² ST II–II, q. 167, a. 1, ad 1.

⁵³ Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 32f.

⁵⁴ For a short and accessible account, cf. Josef Stallmach, “Der actus essendi und die Frage nach dem Sinn von ‘Sein,’” in *Actus omnium actuum: Festschrift für Heinrich Beck zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Erwin Schadel (Frankfurt: Lang, 1989), 47–58. On Aquinas’s crucial definition of the *esse ipsum* as “simplex et completum sed non subsistens,” cf. the profound commentary in Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus*: “Allein, das ipsum esse ist ‘nichts’ zwischen Gott und dem Geschaffenen; denn Gott hebt alles Dritte als Mittleres—was nicht heißt: als ‘reine Vermittlung’!”—

metaphysics of *esse*, the dependence upon *sacra doctrina* and its normative distinction between the Creator and everything else becomes explicit in the metaphysics of creation.

Yet why does the metaphysics of creation antecedently depend upon the metaphysics of *esse*? Precisely because it allows for the only conceptual expression of the “dare *esse*,” of the gift of creation, the metaphysics of *esse* is open to being elevated and assumed by the second difference into the metaphysics of creation.⁵⁵ Because the metaphysics of creation is an extension of *sacra doctrina* into the metaphysics of being, that is, an expression of *fides quaerens intellectum* that reads the world (*ta panta*) as God’s creation all the way down, this move makes the metaphysics of creation vulnerable, dependent upon the conceptual and substantive veracity of the specific metaphysics of being—that is, the metaphysics of *esse*—that it assumes.

A theologically informed metaphysics of creation is constituted by the *second, onto-theological, difference* because the first, or ontological, difference is dramatically insufficient for understanding the world as *creatio ex nihilo* and, moreover, fundamentally incapable of establishing the horizon that enables us to appreciate the true nature of curiosity in the first place. Rather, only the onto-theological difference between *esse ipsum* and *ipsum esse subsistens*, in which *esse* itself is analogically conceived, fulfills the theological requirement to understand the world as creation.⁵⁶

A metaphysics of creation (a) is able analogically to consider and interrelate all of reality, all of what is, thereby reflecting the intelligible unity in the difference of creation; (b) is inherently directed to and participationally dependent upon divine transcendence because of the centrality of the second difference; and (c) is therefore able intellectually to present to the will the ultimate object of desire, its due end. However, *sub conditione peccati*, the intellect cannot reform or redirect the will so that the good of the second difference becomes the will’s definitive end of desire.

zwischen sich und den Geschöpfen auf; ‘non potest aliquid esse medium inter creatum et increatum’ [*De Veritate* 8.17]. Das Andere zum subsistierenden Sein selbst ist ‘Nichts’. Dieses ‘Nichts’ ist die Differenz des Geschaffenen zu Gott” (15).

⁵⁵ For an extraordinary account of the openness of the metaphysics of *esse* for the metaphysics of creation, cf. Heinrich Beck, *Der Akt-Charakter des Seins* (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1965) and Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus*.

⁵⁶ Aquinas draws upon both Aristotle and Plato in his metaphysics of creation, yet in the form of a superior synthesis that is made possible by the antecedent assumption of the intellect’s due end as also desired by a rectified will, namely, the supreme truth and good. It is precisely the second difference that accounts for why the supreme truth and good do not need to become operative (as knowledge *simpliciter*) in the process of intellectual inquiry.

Thus the metaphysics of creation begs the question of the will's primal mover and especially its renewal or healing through grace, so that, as the intellect is being informed by faith, the will may be informed by charity. In short, a genuine metaphysics of creation always begs Christology and can achieve its purpose ultimately only "after Christ."

Hence, following Thomas Aquinas's way of squarely facing the reality of the will in its relationship to the intellect yields at least two crucial insights that give rise to a fruitful further development of *Fides et Ratio*'s central mandate, "Fidei parrhesia respondere debet rationis audacia," that is, "The boldness of reason ought to match the freedom of faith" (§48). First, according to Aquinas, reasoning as the discursive operation of the intellect implies the activity of the will in directing reason's discursive operation in this or in that way. The encyclical's use of "reason," however, begs this implication, which, in turn, profoundly qualifies the relationship between, as *Fides et Ratio* puts it in its opening line, the "two wings by which the human spirit is raised up toward the contemplation of truth." Second, only after the will's rectification can reason's discursive operation genuinely and lastingly open itself for the transcendent truth that can be received only—short of the *visio beatifica*—in faith. NEV

