

THE LOVE OF TRUTH
& THE TRUTH OF LOVE:
RETRIEVING SAINTS AUGUSTINE
& THOMAS AQUINAS ON
THE RELATIONSHIP OF
UNDERSTANDING & LOVE

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**THE LOVE OF TRUTH & THE TRUTH OF LOVE:
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Johannine literature explains the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth and our relationship with God in terms of *logos* and *agape*: the *Logos* is *Theos* (Jn 1) and *Theos* is *Agape* (1Jn 4). The goal of this dissertation is to relate these two, understanding and love, to develop a master analogy for the revelation of God to human beings. This is elaborated through close reading and commentary on classic texts by two Doctors of the Church, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, in an attempt to reconcile voluntarist and intellectualist approaches to the question of God by showing how the act of understanding is analogous with the act of love.

Augustine would integrate his understanding of Scripture and philosophy into his theory of the inner word (*verbum mentis*) as the image of the Triune God. This consummate theological achievement is also a meta-analysis of personal communication by a master of the art of rhetoric, defined as “the good man, skilled in speaking” (*vir bonus, dicendi peritus*) by Cato the Elder in Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*. The Bishop of Hippo affirms the words of a wise person as the ideal of communication, as perfected in the life of the Christian evangelist. A systematic exegesis of Augustine’s personal, rhetorical, and theological synthesis, the first part of this dissertation is a study of several key texts to explore how the Doctor of Grace relates love with understanding, the words of Scripture with those of the philosophers.

Thomas Aquinas develops Augustine’s insights in the theological system of his *Summa theologiae*, expanding the theory of the inner word into a theoretical synthesis uniting reason and

faith, *scientia* and *sapientia*, which the Doctor of Grace was not able to achieve. The second part of the dissertation analyzes and complements the reading of Augustine in the first part by testing it in dialogue with Aquinas' treatment of the same themes—understanding and love—in the First and Second Parts of the *Summa* as representative of his mature thought.

The study of these two figures is intended as an attempt to apply Lonergan's *Method in Theology*. By developing the relationship between knowing the truth and loving it, this project expands upon his efforts to sublate the linguistic phenomenology of Heidegger's hermeneutic revolution within a theological system. Lonergan formulates his own hermeneutic as four levels of knowing: experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding. Having his insight on the centrality of love late in life, however, he would leave his interpreters with the question of how to integrate knowing with loving. The exigencies of publishing *Method* would also mean leaving the problem of communication as a challenge for his successors. This dissertation seeks to propose a solution with the retrieval of Augustine's hermeneutic of *caritas* as a model for communicating Christian self-appropriation through a phenomenology of how we realize the *logos*.

We understand the meaning of a whole by recognizing the order in which all its parts fit together. In this way, judgment operates *analogically* as a determination of the fittingness of a logical proportion. And so, as *Logos*, God is the order into which all things fit together, revealed to us as a complementary pattern, which is expressed through analogy. In the Catholic tradition, this pattern of grace is consummated by receiving bread and wine sacramentally, and recognizing in them the essence of our relationship with God as well as one another, as we realize this loving relationship as the form of all our acts.

For *Rabbouni*

&

In Loving Memory of

Reverend Michael Joseph Scanlon, O.S.A.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations	xii
Introduction Standing in the <i>Stanza della Segnatura</i>	1
Chapter One <i>Analogia Caritatis</i> : Augustine on Love.....	9
1. <i>Confessiones</i> : Augustine’s Phenomenology of Love.....	14
1.1. Meaning Love: Realizing the Word.....	18
1.2. Remembering Love: Realizing Oneself in Memory.....	29
1.3. Understanding Love: Realizing the Order of Creation.....	37
2. <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> & <i>Homilies on 1John</i> : Augustine’s Hermeneutics of Love.....	48
2.1. Christian Teaching as Meaning Love.....	51
2.2. <i>Uti & Frui</i> : Ordering Love.....	58
2.3. <i>Homilies on 1John</i> : Communicating the Meaning of <i>Caritas</i>	64
3. <i>De Trinitate</i> : Augustine’s Ontology of Love.....	75
3.1. A Triad in Love: Attempt at an Analogy.....	77
3.2. The Triune <i>A Priori</i> of Love.....	82
Chapter Two <i>Analogia Luminis</i> : Augustine on Understanding.....	89
4. <i>De Trinitate</i> : Augustine’s Ontology of Understanding.....	94
4.1. <i>Verbum Mentis</i> : The Heart of Understanding.....	95
4.2. A Triad in the Mind: The Least Inadequate Analogy.....	103
4.3. The Triune <i>A Priori</i> of Understanding.....	115
5. <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> : Augustine’s Hermeneutics of Understanding.....	124
5.1. <i>Res & Signa</i> : Ordering Understanding.....	125
5.2. Communicating Christian Understanding.....	135
6. <i>Confessiones</i> : Augustine’s Phenomenology of Understanding.....	141
6.1. Meaning Loves: Recognizing the Word.....	142
6.2. Remembering Loves: Recognizing Oneself in Memory.....	150
6.3. Understanding Loves: Recognizing the Order of Creation.....	156
7. <i>De Civitate Dei</i> & <i>Regula</i> : Understanding the Truth + Loving the Good Together.....	164
Chapter Three <i>Intelligere</i> : Thomas Aquinas on the Act of Understanding.....	173
8. <i>Ratio</i> : Natural Reason (I QQ. 76-77, 79, 84-89, 117).....	179
Chapter Four <i>Sapientia</i> : Thomas Aquinas on the Perfection of Understanding.....	227
9. <i>Sacra Doctrina</i> : Teaching Grace (I Q. 1).....	230
10. <i>Fides</i> : Recognizing Grace (II-II QQ. 1-9).....	242
11. <i>Gratia</i> : To Give Itself (I-II QQ. 109-114).....	279
Conclusion The Signature of <i>Communio</i>	315
Sources	322

Acknowledgements

*For about forty years [God] put up with them in the wilderness.*¹

This book marks the culmination of forty years of my wandering, the odyssey of my life up to this point. While writing a dissertation is an especially solitary endeavor, it is also the case that I would never have been able to do it without the love and support of others. Rather than try to retrace the steps of my own journey, it is better to recognize those who have helped me along the way. What I have written in this dissertation is my tribute to them, in keeping with the words of Jesus: “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (Lk 12:48). For there is nothing I have that I have not also received from another.

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¹ Acts 13:18

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Boston College has been the defining challenge of my theological education. It is fitting that the runners in that city's marathon will be passing by the campus tomorrow, recapitulating a story of heartbreak and triumph. When it was run eight years earlier, two brothers planted a pair of bombs near the finish line, killing three and wounding hundreds of others when they went off. My comprehensive exams were scheduled to begin the following week, which were postponed due to the subsequent manhunt and lockdown. Although the disruption to my own life was small, that I owe in part to M. Shawn Copeland, chair of the exam committee, for her encouragement, leadership, and compassion, which did so much to help me get through and thrive in the face of adversity, not only in the midst of that particular challenge, but throughout my time at BC.

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Theology is far more than an academic discipline however—it emerges from and returns to the intimate context of our own personhood and common humanity. My odyssey began when my parents, Robin & Linda Collins, gave me life and then set my feet on the path of knowledge. I do not know what I would have done without my siblings, Jennifer & Joshua, with whom I will always be proud to be stuck in the middle. Though my grandparents, Galen & Josephine, are no with us in this life, they remain my shining exemplars of Catholic faith formed by love. To those who have honored me with the gift of their friendship, I owe more than I can ever possibly repay. At UNH, Jon Barron taught me the Greek alphabet so memorably that it will be forever etched in my mind. I do not know what inspired Luke Perez to come up and introduce himself at our grad student orientation, but I am certainly grateful that he did. My friends from the City of Brotherly Love (Victor Hurdle, Jamel Long, Kevin Williams, and Muddillun MuQuaribu) deserve endless thanks for their support during dark times, inspiring me to see the light through it all. For hosting Thanksgiving dinners, and for pointing out the epistemological significance of when I learned to count past 21, I will always remember Chris Johnston. Special thanks are due Jackson Yeoh for coming along at just the right time to help put me across the finish line. Also, to my niece, Kata Magyar-Ragosta, for going there and back again with me, smelling all the flowers along the way.

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*Joseph Christian Collins
Richmond, B.C.
Easter 2022*

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.

Matthew 5:8

ἄρα γε ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς.

Thus you will know them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:20

Abbreviations

Works by Augustine:

Confessiones (Conf.)

Contra Faustum Manicheum (Contra Faust.)

Contra Julianum (Contra Julian.)

De civitate Dei (civ. Dei)

De diversis questionibus octoginta tribus (div. qu. 83)

De doctrina Christiana (doc. Chr.)

De Genesi ad litteram (Gen. ad litt.)

Regula Sancti Augustini (Reg.)

Retractiones (Retract.)

In epistolam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus (ep. Jo.)

In Johannis evangelium tractatus (Jo. ev. tr.)

De Trinitate (Trin.)

Works by Thomas Aquinas:

Summa theologiae (ST)

Works by Other Authors:

Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia (ATA)

Bauer, Danker, Arendt, & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG)

Introduction: Standing in the *Stanza della Segnatura*

With the sun you rise as the first rays of light grace the Eternal City. You are on a mission. Striding eagerly down jasmine-perfumed streets, you arrive at the gates of the Vatican Museums—first in line! Now you must wait, using the time to read, and prepare yourself for the wonders you are about to behold, praying that partaking of their beauty might thereby enlighten and edify you. At last, the appointed hour arrives, and the gates open. Walking as quickly as you can through the splendid, and as yet uncrowded, halls of civilizational memory, you resist the temptation to give more than a glance to their dazzling treasures as you pass by, fixed on your ultimate destination. The anticipation builds as you traverse room after room in a seemingly endless succession until, finally, you discover what you were seeking: the Raphael Rooms. Among the outstanding achievements of the High Renaissance, an era of exceptional artistic productivity, standing there in the flesh takes your breath away. The master's command of form, color, and light impart to his work an ineffable feeling of realism. Painted at the same time as Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, which towers high above the viewers below, the frescoes of the Raphael Rooms begin nearly at eye level—it is almost as though, if only the viewers were to elevate themselves but a little, they could walk directly into the world of the paintings.

With hushed reverence, you walk into the center of the first of them, the *Stanza della Segnatura*. Originally housing the pope's personal library, each of its walls is frescoed with an allegorical representation of one of the subjects of the collection. Immediately on your right is the *Parnassus*, representing literature, poetry, and music. On the wall opposite you see allegories of the *Cardinal and Theological Virtues*, which represent civil and canon law. But your eyes are quickly drawn to the two largest frescoes, which dominate the space. In front of you stands the first wall in the Raphael Rooms to which the master put his hand, creating the *Disputation of the*

Holy Sacrament as a representation of theology. On the lowest level of this monumental three-tiered composition, you see the Eucharistic host presented for adoration in a monstrance atop an altar, surrounded by eminent theologians deliberating upon and discussing its meaning. Above it, you see the Holy Spirit as a dove, next to putti holding the four Gospels open and aloft. Above the dove is Christ, enthroned in glory, flanked by a cloud of witnesses: the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, prophets, and apostles. Above Christ, on the highest tier, is God the Father, presiding over the entire scene, adored by angels in the golden radiance of the heavenly sphere.

Turning around to view the opposite wall, you behold one of the most recognized icons of the Renaissance, Raphael's vision of philosophy, the *School of Athens*. Like the *Disputation*, it too depicts a dialogue that transcends time. Before you opens a magnificent architectural space, whose painted vaults appear as extensions of the arch supporting the room itself. This temple of the mind houses an assembly featuring distinguished thinkers from across Western intellectual history engaging one another in scholarly discussion. Your gaze is drawn irresistibly to the two figures facing each other at the focal point of the painting. On the left is an elderly man with a flowing white beard, bald and barefoot. He points upward with his right hand, while his left cradles a copy of the *Timaeus*. You recognize the face and gesture as Leonardo da Vinci's, and the image as a representation of Plato. On the right, and slightly ahead, is a man a generation younger, his hair full, with sandals on his feet. His left hand also holds a book, *Ethics*, while his right is held horizontally and extended downward toward the viewer. You are certain this figure can be none other than Plato's most renowned student, Aristotle.

How blessed you are to be alone in this place, even if only for a minute! You thank God for granting you this experience and then, boldly, ask for this moment to last as long as possible—there is so much left to learn and reflect upon. You continue to study the *School of Athens* and

the figures of Plato and Aristotle at its center. Wondering aloud you ask, what could they be talking about? The best clue seems to be their hand gestures. But what do these mean? Given the subject of the fresco, and their place within it, you imagine that they are discussing the ultimate question of philosophy: *How do we encounter reality?* Just as God reaches out to Adam in Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, so Raphael's venerable Plato points determinedly heavenward, reminding you of the idealism of his theory of timeless, universal forms. Your gaze shifts back to Aristotle. It is as if you feel the philosopher extending his arm toward you, eloquently evoking his empiricism, turning to nature—yourself included—in all its particularity, specificity, and concreteness. You stand there by yourself, rapt in silent contemplation of the work of the master, praying for illumination.

Then, you start to hear voices, and realize you are not alone. You turn around, but see no one else in the room. You return to contemplating the *School of Athens*—once more you are interrupted by voices. You turn around again, yet still see no one. Your gaze then shifts to the *Disputation*. Again you hear the voices, this time more clearly, recognizing the language as Latin. Looking to the right of the altar, you identify the figure of Augustine in a bishop's miter and robes. Standing behind Augustine is a bald, stout character in the black and white habit of a Dominican friar—an unmistakable representation of Thomas Aquinas. Examining the figures more closely, you realize that the voices you have been hearing are theirs. You try to listen in on their conversation, and discover that they too are discussing how reality is mediated to us in this life. How fortuitous! Forgetting for a moment your surroundings, you focus all your attention in an attempt to hear what these two figures have to say...

This project represents such an attempt to listen to the voices of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, seeking their help in answering the key question above: *How do we humans encounter*

reality? On this point, our relationship to ultimate reality, philosophy and theology come into contact, as if from opposite ends of a room. These two Doctors of the Church in particular, by doing so much to mediate Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy into Christian theology, make ideal dialogue partners for our investigation. Exploring this question is intended as the starting point in developing a theological system that begins at the threshold of philosophy, and which ultimately extends far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Rather than contemplating frescoes so lifelike it is almost as if you could overhear the figures' conversations, we shall carefully study classic texts written by each figure, first Augustine, then Thomas. The goal is creative retrieval, to learn from these theological masters by apprenticing under them, in order to join their conversation and continue it in our own milieu.

When pursued through Christian theology, the question of our relationship to ultimate reality can also be understood as a quest for the revelation of the infinite mystery we call God: *How is God revealed to human beings?* According to Genesis 1:26-27, what distinguishes humans from the rest of creation is bearing the maker's mark; we are created in the image and likeness of God. *How can human beings bear the image of our Creator?* Fortunately, we are hardly the first to wrestle with these questions. They are the focus of Augustine's *De Trinitate* VIII-XV, which forms the heart of our study of the Bishop of Hippo, the core around which the rest of our project is structured. In that work, one no less monumental than Raphael's frescoes, the Doctor of Grace concludes that the least inadequate way to conceive the image of God in humans is through the integration of the mind's acts of remembering, understanding, and willing. Writing more than eight centuries after Augustine, and profoundly influenced by him, Thomas Aquinas would come to understand our minds as interworking composites of matter and form. While our project draws its overall theme from Augustine, it owes its systematic organization to

Thomas, and will be developed according to his distinctions between will and intellect, nature and grace (Chapters 1-4 respectively). As the Angelic Doctor helpfully explains, the form of any voluntary act is in a sense the end to which it is directed, since it is through the end that the act realizes its form.² This would make understanding truth the end and form of the intellect, with the end and form of the will as loving good. Thus, it is by love and understanding that human beings realize the transcendental in our lives, the beauty of our own true good understood.

The Johannine writings of the New Testament identify the divine with both the *logos* and *agapē*: the word is God and God is love.³ By investigating how love can be like understanding and understanding like love, this project seeks to develop this tradition: to answer the questions above by correlating the *logos* with *agape* in order to formulate a created analogy for the divine. Augustine developed such an analogy with his theory of the “inner word” (*verbum mentis*) as the image of the Triune God: love generates a word inspiring love. This theological insight is also the master rhetorician’s model of personal communication, that of a wise person speaking.⁴ For Augustine, this ideal is perfected in the life of the Christian evangelist: an honest witness to all, proclaiming the good news of God’s love. His writings relate the truth with love in a synthesis that is rhetorical, theological, and ultimately personal. I am my love expressed by my word, a response to God’s Word, through Whom all things come into being by willing participation.

Although Augustine’s words would go on to shape the subsequent Western traditions of theology and philosophy, his own synthesis did not fully integrate reason with faith, grace with nature. This has led to no end of problems.⁵ For theology to reign as queen of the sciences in the

² *ST II-II Q. 4, art. 3*. See discussion in §10 below.

³ The Gospel of John begins by proclaiming the unity of the *logos* and *theos* (1:1-18). The First Epistle of John reaches its climax in 4:7-21 with the declaration that *ho theos agapē estin*, “God is love.”

⁴ In Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, Cato the Elder defines the Roman tradition of rhetoric as *vir bonus, dicendi peritus* (“the good man, skilled in speaking”).

⁵ Augustine was unable fully to transcend the dualism which has persisted in Western thought up to the present. Responsibility for misconceiving of science and faith as in opposition hardly rests with him alone, but neither is he

medieval universities, it was necessary to develop a theological system, expanding Augustine's theory of the inner word into a theoretical synthesis of *fides* and *ratio*. This task would be taken up by Thomas Aquinas in his masterpiece, the *Summa theologiae*, in which he draws upon the Philosopher, Aristotle, to complement the thought of the Theologian, Augustine. Like Raphael, Augustine and Thomas are great artists. If the Doctor of Grace's gift is his ability to use words evocatively to make concrete the things of which he speaks, the Angelic Doctor's is speaking precisely. If Augustine is like a painter, using words to reflect things realistically, Thomas is like a draughtsman, using words exactly, in order to reflect the way things really are. For theologians to attain in their art verisimilitude such as Raphael's, it is necessary to take up both approaches.

Although available to us in the present, these are the achievements of ages past. Learning from them, listening to what they might have to tell us now, requires the work of retrieval. If the scholastics of the High Middle Ages were able to unite reason and faith, that synthesis has long since come apart in the popular imagination. People today seem far more likely to conceive of the universe as impersonal and chaotic than as a harmoniously ordered whole.⁶ Knowing what modern science reveals about the contingency of the material world, how can we then interpret biblical revelation as truly meaningful?⁷ How can we make sense of texts like Genesis, and its claim that human beings are made in the image and likeness of the Creator of the universe? What can it possibly mean for us to say that God is *logos* and *agapē*? Although things have changed,

blameless. This dualism is also reflected in much of Catholic (and Protestant) spirituality and practice, exemplified by Christianity's great difficulty integrating human sexuality with faith, the body with the spirit.

⁶ This shift can be illustrated by two quotes. The first is from Dante (who also appears in Raphael's *Disputation*). As the *Divine Comedy* reaches its close, he confers with great saints, including Thomas Aquinas and John. At its climax, Dante describes his vision of the Triune God: "But already my desire and my will/were being turned like a wheel, all at one speed/by the Love which moves the sun and the other stars" (*Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII, lines 142–145). Just over three centuries after Dante, Pascal would reflect on the picture of the universe emerging from modern science and write, "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me" (*Pensées*).

⁷ Writing about a century after Pascal, Lessing would reflect on the early Christian writings with their faith in the "proof of the spirit and of power" and find an "ugly broad ditch" that he could not cross. Lessing could not see how the "accidental truths of history" could ever prove metaphysical truths of reason, such as the existence of God.

both Augustine and Thomas faced the same challenge in their own times. They too labored to retrieve meaning from the Christian tradition, making it more accessible in order to teach their own contemporaries.

In his 1879 encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, Leo XIII issued just such a call for retrieval of the thought of Thomas Aquinas to address challenges posed by the modern world.⁸ He would charge Catholic thinkers to take up this tradition in order “to augment and perfect the old with the new.” One of the theologians to take up this call was Bernard Lonergan. His *Method in Theology* is the book you have been studying, and carried into the Room of the *Signatura*. Although Lonergan is not the subject of this dissertation he is, in some respects, our guide. His retrieval blazed a post-critical approach into the thought of the Angelic Doctor, which this project aims to expand and develop in turn. Hermeneutics is the key to his *Method*: for Lonergan, knowing is a process of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding through which we interpret reality. To know is personal, the process by which we realize ourselves. Knowing truth is becoming who we truly are, what Lonergan calls self-appropriation, deciding for ourselves what to make of ourselves.

But like his master, Thomas Aquinas, Lonergan would also have to leave his synthesis unfinished, with questions yet to be fully answered. The insight of the centrality of love would come late in his life, leaving his interpreters with the question of how to integrate knowing and loving. The final chapter of *Method* leaves another, closely related challenge for his successors: the problem of communication. This dissertation is intended to explore potential solutions for both questions, drawing upon Lonergan’s hermeneutical method to interpret the tradition which formed his thought, as well as my own. To find an answer for the problem of communication, we should begin by studying the masters, foremost of which, in the Catholic theological tradition, is

⁸ The subtitle makes the point the point of the encyclical clear: “On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy in Catholic Schools in the Spirit (*ad mentem*) of the Angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas.”

Augustine. By retrieving the Doctor of Grace's hermeneutic of *caritas*, this project aims to detail a model for communicating Christian self-appropriation. Studying Augustine can show us how words serve as means for making God's love concrete, across the variation of our experiences.

The crux of this project is thus the word, the *logos*, the medium of the theologians' art. If John 1:1-18 is correct, then reality itself is mediated through the divine Word. Thus, to rephrase the key question of this project: *What is the Logos and how is it revealed to us?* We will first put this question to Augustine and, through a close reading of several of his classic texts, formulate a potential answer. Then, to augment and perfect this answer, we will put the question to Thomas Aquinas, in the process retrieving his attempt in the *Summa* to do the same for the Theologian. Lonergan characterizes the difference in their approaches, "For Augustine our hearts are restless until they rest in God; for Aquinas, not our hearts, but first and most our minds are restless until they rest in seeing him."⁹ The goal of this dissertation is thus to integrate Augustine and Thomas, love and understanding, in order to explore the meaning of God as both *logos* and *agapē*.

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* CWL 2, eds. F.E. Crowe & R.M. Doran (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1997), 100.

1 *Analogia Caritatis: Augustine on Love*

*To love is nothing other than to seek a thing for itself.*¹

Nihil amatum nisi praecognitum—nothing is loved unless it is already known. This maxim, oft cited by Augustine, posits a connection: love does not exist apart from understanding. Applied to the human quest for God, the divine Father in whom we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28), such a relationship represents a charter for the discipline of theology. For if one can love God effectively without having to understand anything, then what need is there for theology? If, however, this aphorism is correct to postulate an interdependence between the two, then the understanding which is the fruit of theological reflection (which also bears its seed) is integral to loving God. In this way, theology is the action of believers seeking to understand in light of the divine Mystery they affirm in faith, hoping that by understanding more it might then be possible to love more thereby. It is in this spirit that Anselm, following Augustine, develops the classic definition of theology as faith seeking understanding—*fides quaerens intellectum*.

These first two chapters are devoted to exploring this interrelationship of understanding and love in the thought of Augustine, focusing on how he develops these themes in four classic texts in particular: *Confessiones*, *De doctrina Christiana*, *Homilies on I John*, and *De Trinitate*. Chapter 1 explores the theme of love in these works following the above order, while Chapter 2 will develop the theme of understanding in these same texts, but in the reverse order.² At the end of Chapter 2, the larger section on Augustine will conclude by applying the proposed synthesis

¹ *Div. qu.* 83 Q. 35.1.

² This forms a chiasm, a literary device not unbeloved by Augustine! Its use will enable us to explore his thought more systematically, first following a trajectory from below upwards representing the *ordo inventionis* (Ch. 1), then from above downwards, the *ordo doctrinae* (Ch. 2). The chiasmic structure aims to put the two in parallel, enabling comparison between the two. The treatment of love in this chapter will be complemented by the exposition of understanding in the next, providing complementary perspectives on the same texts. However, rather than revisit *ep. Jo.* in Ch. 2, the theme of communicating love will be developed further in §7 with *civ. Dei* and *Reg.*

of understanding and love to life in community with others, interpreting select passages from *De civitate Dei*, for a global perspective, and the *Rule of Saint Augustine (Regula)* in the context of intentional communities of Christian believers. Our proposed reading of the Doctor of Grace can be summarized as *amo, ergo cogito, ergo sumus*, to modify the familiar Cartesian formulation.³

Augustine's distinction between things (*res*) and signs (*signa*) provides a theoretical basis for differentiating love from understanding. Order (*ordo*) is what differentiates things from signs; signs are things ordered so as to point to a reality beyond themselves. Thus patterned, signs gain a meaning that transcends the mere fact of their own existence. In the operation of meaning, love and understanding are related in irreducible cooperation.⁴ Understanding pertains to the ordering of signs, and love to the ordering of things themselves. By interpreting our experience of things as ordered, *significant*, intelligible, understanding recognizes meaning. As the impetus of life, love is a movement that unites the desire of the lover with the good of the beloved, the concrete realization of human being in action.⁵ By ordering things in accord with desire, the action of love imbues them with meaning, creating signs which reveal the self of the lover. As the consummate operations of the mind, especially when ordered toward God, the cooperation of understanding and love represents *imago Dei* (Gn 1:26-27), our created participation in the triune life of God through the missions of Word and Gift. Reality itself is mediated to us in the unfolding process

³ "I love, therefore I think, therefore we are." Cf. Antoine Léonard Thomas' summation of Descartes: *dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum*. Dialogue with Descartes lies beyond the scope of this project; the borrowing of the formula is primarily for the sake of clear expression, not disputation, as our two primary dialogue partners preceded him by centuries. However, what follows cannot avoid being a kind of oblique critique of Cartesian subjectivity. For further discussion on the relationship between Augustine and Descartes on this point, and whether the latter represents a genuine development of the former, see §9-10 in Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2012).

⁴ An example from physics, the propagation of electromagnetic radiation as the transverse oscillation of electric and magnetic field waves, provides a helpful illustration of this interrelationship. Although unfamiliar with the discoveries of 20th century physics, the analogy with light resonates deeply with Augustine, as we shall see. Such oscillations are the result of simple harmonic motion.

⁵ This is action in the sense which Maurice Blondel would describe in terms of the movement from the willing will to the willed will (cf. *Conf. VIII*). *Action (1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

of the recognition and realization of meaning. Understanding and love represent our *archē* and *telos*, the horizon in which our uniquely human identity, our personhood, is ultimately specified.⁶

If all things come from the Father, are formed according to the Son, and moved by the Spirit, then the pattern of creation's unfolding in time is a sign of God's eternal act of loving understanding.⁷ Predicated upon and directed toward God as both Truth itself and the ultimate Good of all, our own acts of understanding and love reflect the image of our Creator, thereby enacting the divine likeness, pointing the creation toward its fulfillment in the realization of its *hypostasis*: "that God may be all in all" (1Cor 15:28). As communicated, shared with others, this understanding love fulfills Augustine's definition of sacrament as outward sign of inward grace. Mediated in words about God,⁸ understanding and love function as sacred signs by enacting the meaning to which they point for the true good of all creation. Human being is thus an incarnate sign ordered—in the case of our thinking by the inner word of understanding, and in the case of our acting by virtue—towards the love of God, self, and neighbor.

It is almost impossible to overstate the significance of love for the Doctor of Grace. As such, it offers an expansive point of entry to ascend into his thought. The subject of this chapter, a creative retrieval of Augustine on love, is a sprawling topic—one that could be developed into a massive opus all by itself, and even then it would be unlikely to do it full justice.⁹ This chapter cannot come close to being an exhaustive treatment. The aim throughout this dissertation is on

⁶ Human existence meant here as the dimension of our experience that is specifically human (existential in the Heideggerian sense of *Dasein*). While Augustine makes a clear distinction between human beings and animals, the theoretical framework Thomas Aquinas develops in the *ST* distinguishes between our nature as animals, and the self as specifically human: **this love**.

⁷ Cf. Augustine's interpretation of Wis 11:20 ("you have arranged all things by measure & number & weight") in *Gen. litt.* 4.3.7, which uses the triad of *modus*, *species*, and *ordo* to refer to how God structures creation, as well as to the means by which creatures reflect and point toward their Creator. Well summarized by L. Ayres, "Measure, Number, and Weight," *ATA*, 550-2.

⁸ Words in the inclusive sense Augustine develops in *Conf.* I as referring to all our actions; see §1.1 below.

⁹ And it has, for example Hannah Arendt's 1929 doctoral thesis, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation*. The same can be said for each of the four chapters of the body of this dissertation.

the relationship of love and understanding. These first two chapters seek to hone this aim by interpreting the works of Augustine identified above. In addition to being classics, these texts illustrate the rich diversity of his *oeuvre*.¹⁰ While providing only a rough sketch of Augustine's thought, they show some of its many facets, such as his introspective spirituality in *Confessiones*, his pedagogy of hermeneutics and rhetoric in *De doctrina Christiana*,¹¹ the pastoral exposition of Scripture of his *Homilies on IJohn*, and his synthesis of these approaches and others in pursuit of the consummate goal of theological reflection in *De Trinitate*. In our quest for God, Augustine repeatedly enjoins humility, considering true understanding inseparable from virtue, and warning against *curiositas*, intellectual pursuit without reference to the truth of all things. Ultimately, for the Doctor of Grace, our understanding is a function of who we truly are as persons, including our affective disposition and actions—what, who, and how we love.

Love is fundamentally a relational term for Augustine. He asks: “What is all love? Does it not will to become one with the beloved, and that if it touches, becomes one with it?”¹² Love draws us out of ourselves to another reality. While the beloved can be an impersonal thing, love in its fullest sense is the union of persons. The three distinct forms of personal relationship (with self, others, and God) thus provide the organization for this chapter. Our first relationship is with our own self, which is revealed by introspection. *Confessiones* is the primary text for §1, which

¹⁰ The selection of these particular texts is a recognition and affirmation of their status as classics in the sense developed by David Tracy in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). This selection is far from comprehensive, and not intended to elevate these texts to the exclusion of others. The goal is to develop a plausible and coherent interpretation of the Doctor of Grace's thought on the questions outlined above, not define the authoritative one.

¹¹ Although the title of this work is most frequently translated as “On Christian Doctrine,” the book itself is not at all about Christian doctrine in the sense most commonly used today of authoritatively codified statements specifying the contents of Christian belief. *Doctrina* should not be taken in the passive sense (the only one it has in English) of that which is taught, but in the active sense of teaching. Thus, Edmund Hill renders the title of the work as *Teaching Christianity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 95. While I concur with Hill's translation, my preference is to leave the title untranslated, referring to Augustine's opus as *De doctrina Christiana* in the text of the dissertation, while *Teaching Christianity* will refer to the edition that features Hill's translation.

¹² *De ordine* II.18.48. *Nonne unum vult fieri cum eo quod amat, et si ei contingat, unum cum eo fit?*

will be interpreted as Augustine's first-person phenomenology of love, showing how it forms the heart of his anthropology. The core of who each of us is as human, love is the determination of who we are. Language as the medium of our relationships is the communication of love. The self is transformed into words so it can be shared with others. From this angle, *Confessiones* becomes the story of how the Doctor of Grace realizes the Gift in his own life: as the love of God's Word made manifest by his words offered in praise, giving voice to the Spirit in the chorus of creation.

Confessiones is also the story of how Augustine becomes a Catholic Christian, that is, how he learned to realize his love by identifying with a particular community and its tradition. Intersubjective relationship with other human beings, as particularly manifested in an ecclesial community, is the subject of §2, which explores *De doctrina Christiana* as well as *Homilies on IJohn*, focusing primarily on the question of communicating Christian meaning. How can ministers of the gospel teach others to love God and one another? To answer this question, Augustine develops what Ernest Fortin calls a "hermeneutics of love."¹³ Scripture teaches us the order of love by distinguishing between what we are to use (*uti*), from that which we are to enjoy (*frui*). In *De doctrina Christiana* the Bishop of Hippo contends that *caritas*, along with faith and hope, is the meaning of Scripture as the revelation of God. Forming these theological virtues in one another is the heart of Christian tradition and community. Given the emphasis that Augustine places on biblical interpretation, a study of his *Homilies on IJohn* in §2.3 will complement *De doctrina Christiana* by demonstrating the practical application of this hermeneutics of love in his ministry to communicate his understanding of the meaning of a particular biblical text, one that is itself a paradigmatic discourse on the subject of love.

¹³ Ernest Fortin, *The Birth of Philosophic Christianity*, ed. J. Brian Benestad (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 2.

In one of the great theological declarations of the New Testament, the author of 1John proclaims: “God is love” (4:8,16). For Augustine the converse is also true, love is God.¹⁴ Love is given to us as a sign of ultimate reality, the sacramental Gift. The third and final section of this chapter thus focuses on Augustine’s ontology of love¹⁵ as rooted in the triune relationship of the divine Persons. As his definitive work on the Trinity, the primary text for §3 will be *De Trinitate*. Beginning with God’s love manifest in creation, to which Church and Scripture bear witness, we shall follow Augustine as he is drawn in ascent to the divine interrelatedness of the Trinity. In the Holy Spirit, God’s own Self is poured into our hearts as love (Rom 5:5). By giving of ourselves for the good of all, our love can thus reflect the divine Love that is its ultimate inspiration.

§1 *Confessiones*: Augustine’s Phenomenology of Love

*In your Gift we find rest, and there we enjoy you. Our true place is where we find rest. We are borne toward it by love, and it is your good Spirit who lifts up our sunken nature from the gates of death. In goodness of will is our peace. A body gravitates to its proper place by its own weight. This weight...pulls it to the place proper to it...drawn by their weight, things seek their rightful places. They are not at rest as long as they are disordered, but once brought to order they find their rest. Now, my weight is my love, and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me.*¹⁶

Written from a profoundly intimate first-person perspective, *Confessiones* is perhaps the most relatable of Augustine’s writings for contemporary audiences, making it a fitting point of entry for our study. The work itself (particularly Bks. I-IX) seems readily comprehensible as an autobiography, as Augustine writing about his life. While not entirely mistaken—Augustine does

¹⁴ *Trin.* XV.17.31.

¹⁵ The chapter is thus structured around three branches of philosophy (viz., phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ontology) corresponding with classic Augustinian texts. It is not my intention to shoehorn Augustine into these later categories. Rather, in an attempt at systematic retrieval, my goal is to highlight affinities in the subject matter and methods between Augustine and these fields of inquiry.

¹⁶ *Conf.* XIII.9.10. Unless necessary to emphasize points of particular significance, I will rely throughout on Sr. Maria Boulding’s excellent translation: *The Confessions* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012).

indeed think at great length concerning himself—this interpretation misses the author’s intended focus somewhat.¹⁷ We should instead take the Bishop of Hippo at his word; *Confessiones* is a work of confession: “Confession rises up from the root of the heart...To confess, after all, is to say what you have in your heart,” as the communication of a person’s true self.¹⁸

Throughout the book, Augustine confesses above all his love for God, meditating upon and putting into words praise for the One he has come to recognize as graciously revealed in his own life, and in the lives of all creatures. By articulating such words of confession to his Creator, he signifies the meaning of his life, his vocation, his very self.¹⁹ The Doctor of Grace presents words as central to his development as a human being. Words, and the meanings to which they point, bridge the desire inside ourselves with the world outside, connecting our self with others, mediating the way we understand and relate to everything as persons. Hearing, being called by, learning words—and through them ultimately *the Word*—transforms Augustine, patterning the person he has become, so that the desire of his heart now moves him to use words to call upon and praise God. Ever the rhetorician, he recalls the meaning of his entire life as an attempt to remember the right words and articulate them in order to communicate his desire, to find words that truly fit, uniting his heart with the hearts of his audience. *Confessiones* is the expression of its author’s attempt to find these right words in prayer, words formed and ordered toward God by the *Logos*, the meaning of which is ultimately Meaning itself, the realization of *imago Dei* in the human *cor* of the author in such a way that it reverberates in those of the readers.²⁰

¹⁷ The fatal weakness of interpreting *Conf.* as primarily autobiographical is that it cannot account for Bks. XI–XIII, rendering them at best an extended postscript or appendix, but hardly integral to the overall structure of the work itself.

¹⁸ *Jo. ev. tr.* XXVI.2. This particular quote is from his exposition of Jn 6:41–59.

¹⁹ Throughout *Conf.* (and his post-baptismal works in general) Augustine makes biblical allusions to illustrate his thought through a common frame of reference. Interpreting him entails recognizing those allusions, and also making some of our own. In this case, our interpretation of confession is succinctly illustrated by, e.g., Abraham and Moses’ response to God’s call (Gn 22:1,11; Ex 3:4): “Here I am”—in marked contrast with Adam’s (Gn 3:9–10).

²⁰ Cf. Evagrius Ponticus’ characterization of the theologian as one who prays rightly.

Augustine realizes in *Confessiones* how words have been the vocation of his entire life. In the first six books he describes his attempts to find the right words to work his will, find favor, gain advancement. Discovering Cicero's *Hortensius* in Bk. III leads him to seek words for the sake of truth, and the wisdom to which true words point, above all else. Augustine's career as a rhetorician had been outwardly successful, but inwardly frustrated. He had succeeded in using words to advance into the imperial court—but his desire for truth and meaning eventually burns through all pretense, leading to the realization that his coveted career consists in no small part of telling obsequious lies.²¹ Even after finding true wisdom in Bk. VII, the author still struggles to find the right words in the subsequent six books. This search, however, has been transformed. In Bks. VIII-XIII, the Bishop of Hippo seeks to confess his love for the God who discovered him in the truth (*veritas*). Pursuing this search in his mind, as well as in the words of Scripture, and in the company of his fellow believers, our seeker continues to be transformed by words, ending his *Confessiones* by echoing God's words on the seventh day of creation: confessing the goodness of all God has created. Realizing that he will never be able to find the right words by his own effort, Augustine does not consider the effort a waste, hoping that his lifelong vocation—his prayer in the fullest sense—will rest in the Word, through whom God brings all creatures into being.

The Doctor of Grace comes to realize himself in the act of confessing, finding meaning in communicating God's love. Turning inward and upward, Augustine describes the relationship between Creator and creature in both personal and cosmic terms: the Maker of our universe is also *interior intimo meo*. However, he has not come to this realization alone, but in the company of others. His friend, Alypius, is by his side through the struggle in the garden in Milan. They are baptized together by Ambrose, the spiritual father who planted the seed by opening Augustine's

²¹ *Conf.* VI.6.9. Augustine would commission Paulinus of Milan to write a biography of Ambrose, *Vita Sancti Ambrosii*, which describes Theodosius I's court at the time as one where "everything was for sale."

mind to the truth of Scripture, and his heart to Catholic life. Above all is the relationship with Monica, his mother, who taught her son to cherish the name of Jesus from childhood on, and who will glimpse eternity with him while the two look together out of a window in Ostia.

Confessiones describes how loving relationships are essential to the identity of its author. Though he is confessing himself to God, Augustine also writes his *Confessiones* for the sake of others, many of whom he will never meet in the flesh.²² Like the master rhetorician that he is, the Doctor of Grace is conscious of his audience and the relationship he is trying to build with them. His goal is for those who hear his words to identify with his story and, moved by his example, to join him in confessing. Fearing the readers will instead seek out his faults in order to judge and condemn him, he prays for them to read his words in the spirit of charity.²³ *Confessiones* is an attempt to communicate God to those who read it by Augustine's confession of love for both, a way of giving his own self to form a relationship. He offers his own life to us as a sign showing how, "the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given us" (Rom 5:5).²⁴ This Gift unites our spirit with God, as the Holy Spirit unites the *Logos* with our humanity. Love pulls us to our true place in God where we find rest and peace. This flame of the Spirit sets us afire, raising our hearts to Love itself. The Spirit who has converted his heart finds expression in his confession. It is by sharing God's love that Augustine is united in communion with his fellow creatures, pointing symbolically to and partaking in the Creator of us all.

²² Marion diagrams the structure of *Conf.* as tripartite (*Deus, ego, and alii*); *In the Self's Place*, 43.

²³ *Conf.* thus represents a masterpiece of the hermeneutics of both charity and suspicion. In it, Augustine unmasks the hidden motivations of the will *and* entrusts his inner self to the audience. While suspicion exposes falsehood, he believes that it is only in *caritas* that we can understand the fullness of truth.

²⁴ Lonergan cites this verse throughout *Method* as a thematic link; and it will be likewise in this project.

§1.1 Meaning Love: Realizing the Word

*You pierced my heart with your word, and I fell in love with you.*²⁵

Words are, for Augustine, what the paintbrush is to Raphael. *Confessiones* is the self-portrait of the artist, an author's study of himself in the medium of words and their meaning. Throughout its thirteen books, Augustine depicts the struggle to find the right words to portray his desires and, ultimately, his true self, demonstrating an acute awareness of how language structures human experience. Words drive and direct our consciousness, functioning conatively and cognitively—and no words are as meaningful, or as powerful when realized as, “I love you.” Understanding can steer the will, but intelligence emerges from and returns to the stream of love.

From the outset, Augustine seeks to make his intentions clear, wanting to address himself to his Creator in praise. This desire is the love of his life. God stirs us, so that praise may bring us joy, “because you have made us toward yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”²⁶ At the core of his being, Augustine finds a longing for joy that transcends himself. He interprets this infinite desire of his heart as a sign of the Infinite, a gift that one accepts in the act of praise. By expressing the divine gift in words, he realizes the love, “which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your Preacher.”²⁷ But what does anyone who speaks of an invisible God really say? “O Lord, my God, tell me what you are to me,” he prays, “My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’”²⁸ It is only through this love that Augustine becomes able to speak it. Only through the Holy Spirit can his life truly become united with the Word itself, the *Logos* of God.

²⁵ *Conf.* X.6.8.

²⁶ *Conf.* I.1.1. My translation of *quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te*.

²⁷ *Conf.* I.1.1. Augustine's faith in God is explicitly trinitarian. The relationship of love and understanding points to the Trinity and the relationship of the Word and the Spirit. For discussion, see §§1.3; 3; 4; 6.3.

²⁸ *Conf.* I.5.5.

Addressing himself to God's mercy, Augustine confesses his ignorance and essential poverty. He does not know where he comes from, only that he was welcomed into this life, "by the tender care your mercy provided for me," believing that God, "inspired in those who nurtured me the will to give me what you were giving them, for their love was patterned on your law, and so they wanted to pass on to me the overflowing gift they received from you."²⁹ We are all loved into being. As an infant is brought into life through its parents' begetting and bearing, so human love derives from and is formed by the divine love. This life that we have is not ours by right—it is something given to us, for all good things ultimately come from and are directed toward God.

Augustine believes his first distinctly human word was a smile.³⁰ As he gradually became aware of himself he would, "try to make my wishes known to those who might satisfy them; but I was frustrated in this because my desires were inside me, while other people were outside and could by no effort of understanding enter my mind."³¹ He tries bridging this gap by making signs similar to his wishes, but discovers that by themselves signs cannot communicate the thoughts of his heart. Words communicate by a kind of similitude, *becoming* meaningful by establishing a correspondence between others' minds and our own. Along with mother's milk, the infant drank in her language. By observing his caregivers, Augustine learned by connecting their words with the things to which they pointed, thus recognizing their meaning: "Their intention was clear, for they used bodily gestures, those natural words which are common to all races, such as facial expressions or glances of the eyes or movements of other parts of the body, or a tone of voice that suggested some particular attitude to things they sought and wished to hold on to, or rejected and shunned altogether." In this sense, words are not only syllables spoken or letters written on a

²⁹ *Conf.* I.6.7.

³⁰ Crying from pain is not unique to humans, but the ancients believed that only humans could laugh. Although he does not specify in the text, who but Monica could have told him of this?

³¹ *Conf.* I.6.8.

page—every action a person uses to communicate is a kind of word. And so, Augustine came to understand, “which things these words signified, and by schooling my own mouth to utter them I declared my wishes by using the same signs.” Using words, he was able “to express my needs to the people among whom I lived, and they made their wishes known to me,” as he waded deeper “into the stormy world of human life.”³² Communication is by a shared identification of desire.³³ Signs become meaningful through an accordance of wills. Agreement on the meaning of words makes possible the sharing of desires among persons. The fundamental hermeneutical problem is the communication of meaning from inside one mind to another outside. This gap between the self and others is bridged by agreement on the meaning of signs. By learning the words of those who raised him, Augustine joins in their arrangement, growing out of infancy by entering into a community, the society of human beings.

Now a boy, Augustine is sent to school to learn his letters. But his lessons also included a program for right living, “that I must obey my mentors, so that I might get on in this world and excel in the skills of the tongue, skills which lead to high repute and deceitful riches.” Though he could see no point in them, he was taught to want these things by force. Thus, he started learning to read and write primarily to avoid punishment. This is when he first began to pray: “By calling upon you I untied the knots of my tongue and begged you, in my little-boy way but with no little earnestness, not to let me be beaten at school.”³⁴ Augustine was initiated as a catechumen around this same time: “While I was still a boy I had heard about the eternal life promised to us through the humility of our Lord and God, who stooped even to our pride.”³⁵ However, it appears that his catechesis neither showed him how to understand Scripture, nor provided him much instruction

³² *Conf.* I.8.13. For further discussion of this key passage, see §6.1 below.

³³ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer’s account of hermeneutics as the fusion of horizons: *Horizontverschmelzung*.

³⁴ *Conf.* I.9.14. He compares the spontaneous way he first learned to the compulsion of his schooling in I.14.23.

³⁵ *Conf.* I.11.17.

in Christian teachings.³⁶ Yet from his mother he would learn to love the name of Jesus Christ. The seed of faith was planted, but would not yet germinate—his baptism was to be deferred.

Progressing in his studies from grammar to literature, Augustine learns fall in love with words themselves.³⁷ As a youth, the Doctor of Grace was deeply moved by poetry he read; but he also delighted in the praise he received from others who were moved by his recitations. While those words in themselves were “finely wrought precious vessels,” they held “the wine of error mixed for us in them by teachers who are drunk themselves.” And, as youth are wont, he drank deeply: “I learned these things eagerly and took pleasure in them; and so I was accounted a boy of high promise.”³⁸ Filled with pride and intoxicated by the praise of others, he came to think “that living a good life consisted in winning the favor of those who commended me.”³⁹

In confessing his sins, Augustine shows how they disordered his life. Starting with Bk. II, he tries “to give a coherent account of my disintegrated self,” for when he turned away from God “and pursued a multitude of things, I went to pieces.”⁴⁰ Only loving and being loved delighted an adolescent bent on pleasing himself and winning the favor of others. Fleshly desires, like mud, clouded his heart until he could not distinguish the light of love from the fog of lust. Ambition led Augustine to pursue advanced studies in rhetoric at Carthage,⁴¹ where he came upon a book that would change his life, the *Hortensius*. Meant to study their eloquent style, he is taken instead

³⁶ This deficiency in Christian education seems not to have been anomalous to his childhood parish, something which Augustine as bishop would attempt to address in his *doc. Chr.*; see §2 below.

³⁷ Written words in Latin, that is. As a child, Augustine hated Greek and struggled to learn it, identifying the dislike of his Greek lessons with his dislike of instruction in Latin grammar. However, at the time of writing *Conf.*, his attitude had completely shifted. The mature Augustine considers the lessons in grammar to have been of far greater importance. Echoing the condemnation of poetry in Bk. X of Plato’s *Republic*, he regrets having devoted so much of his studies to what he has come to view as morally dubious pagan literature; *Conf.* I.13.20ff.

³⁸ *Conf.* I.16.26

³⁹ *Conf.* I.19.30.

⁴⁰ *Conf.* II.1.1.

⁴¹ *Conf.* III.3.6. “The prestigious course of studies I was following looked as its goal to the law-courts, in which I was destined to excel and where I would earn a reputation all the higher in the measure that my performance was the more unscrupulous.” His education was training the students to use words as instruments of manipulation.

by its words' "inner spring," won over by the substance of what Cicero was saying. Reading its exhortation to philosophy changed his way of feeling and the character of his prayers, "for under its influence my petitions and desires altered." The praise he had longed for, "suddenly seemed worthless, and with unbelievable intensity my heart burned with longing for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise."⁴² He "was aroused and kindled and set on fire to love and seek and capture and hold fast and strongly cling...to wisdom itself, whatever it might be," devoting his life to seeking the truth for its own sake. Only one thing checked his enthusiasm for philosophy, the absence of the name of Christ, for "my tender little heart had drunk in that name, the name of my Savior and your Son, with my mother's milk, and in my deepest heart I still held on to it."⁴³

Seeking truth, Augustine then turned to Scripture. Compared to Cicero's eloquence, the primitive translation he read seemed unworthy: "My swollen pride recoiled from its style and my intelligence failed to penetrate its inner meaning."⁴⁴ Concluding that the Bible did not contain the wisdom he sought, Augustine turned to the Manichees instead, who spoke with sophistication of Christ, the Holy Spirit, truth, *and* professional advancement through connections within the sect. He would affiliate himself with them for nine years. During which time, "I and others like me were seduced and seducers, deceived ourselves and deceivers of others amid a welter of desires: publicly through the arts reputed 'liberal,' and secretly under the false name of religion."⁴⁵ Yet despite his increasing errors, Augustine's love of the truth remained, "though I taught students who loved worthless things and sought falsehood, in which pursuits I bore them company, I did try to teach them honestly."⁴⁶ His desires were already beginning to diverge.

⁴² *Conf.* III.4.7. Here he began to rise up, in order to return to God. The desire for truth thus kindled would lay the foundation for his decisive transformation (Bks. VII-IX). See §6.1 below for further discussion. Wisdom (*sapientia*) is the key to the relationship between love and understanding for both Augustine and Thomas, as we shall see.

⁴³ *Conf.* III.4.8.

⁴⁴ *Conf.* III.5.9.

⁴⁵ *Conf.* IV.1.1.

⁴⁶ *Conf.* IV.2.2.

His hunger for the truth would eventually lead Augustine to question the Manichees. Comparing their account of the created order with that of the natural philosophers, he thinks the latter seems far more likely. He was told Faustus, a Manichean bishop, can answer his questions. But, when they finally meet, Augustine found the man to be all style and no substance—for he had “learned under your tuition that nothing should be regarded as true because it is eloquently stated, nor false because the words sound clumsy.” Having learned to differentiate the style of words from their inner meaning, he finds Faustus’ to lack the latter: their “content did not seem better to me for being better presented, nor true because skillfully expressed, nor the man wise of soul because he had a handsome face and a graceful turn of speech.”⁴⁷ *Veritas* beckoned still.

However, Augustine will meet another bishop in Bk. V. Appointed rhetorician for the imperial court in Milan, there he meets Ambrose, who welcomed him with fatherly kindness and charitable concern. Having given up on finding truth in the Church, Augustine started listening to Ambrose’s homilies only out of professional curiosity, to assess his eloquence. However, as the words, “which I enjoyed, penetrated my mind, the substance, which I overlooked, seeped in with them, for I could not separate the two. As I opened my heart to appreciate how skillfully he spoke, the recognition that he was speaking the truth crept in at the same time, though only by slow degrees.”⁴⁸ The bishop’s kindness, and the integrity uniting the substance of his words with the man expressing them, opened the skeptic’s heart, then his mind. Ambrose’s sermons brought Augustine joy, especially by presenting the Bible in a new light. He would often cite 2Cor 3:6 as a principle of interpretation: “The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life.”⁴⁹ Ambrose sought to convey the spiritual meaning of Scripture. Augustine’s difficulties stemmed in no small

⁴⁷ *Conf.* V.6.10. Near the end of Bk. IV Augustine, then considering himself a lover of beauty, writes his first book, *On the Beautiful and the Fitting* (*De Pulchra et Apto*)—themes he will develop throughout *Conf.* and beyond.

⁴⁸ *Conf.* V.14.24.

⁴⁹ *Conf.* VI.4.6.

part from reading the Bible literally; Ambrose's teaching thus opened a new, deeper level of meaning which resolved his earlier objections: "Having already heard many parts of the sacred books explained in a reasonable and acceptable way, I came to regard those passages which had previously struck me as absurd, and therefore repelled me, *as profound sacraments*."⁵⁰ Though accessible to all, the profound meaning of Scripture holds mystery in its depth. In plain words and humble modes of speech it is offered to everyone with the authority of being truly from God.

As he was being taught by Ambrose, Augustine was coming to realize the hollowness of his professional ambitions. His prestigious job consisted of telling "plenty of lies with the object of winning favor with the well-informed by my lying," abasing himself more than the drunken beggar he meets on the street.⁵¹ However, a former student turned friend reminded Augustine of how meaningful his own words could be. As a youth, Alypius was sucked into "the whirlpool of Carthaginian immoral amusements...ensnared in the madness of the circuses." In one lecture, Augustine drew a parallel with the circuses, making an aside mocking those enslaved by them. Though not directed at anyone in particular, Alypius "took my illustration to himself, believing that I used it solely on his account; and what another person might have regarded as reason for being angry with me this honest young man regarded rather as a reason for being angry with himself and loving me more ardently." Rather than using words for selfish ends, Augustine transformed a life, "through my agency, but without my knowledge," as he will come to realize, "you made my heart and tongue into burning coals with which to cauterize a promising mind that was wasting away, and heal it."⁵² Alypius taught him that the meaning of words can exceed even the speaker's own intentions. Instead of currying favor, words can make friends for life.

⁵⁰ *Conf.* VI.5.8. My translation in italics of *ad sacramentorum altitudinem referebam*. Augustine comes to see the words and meanings of the text as sacred signs which Ambrose dispenses to the congregation of hearers.

⁵¹ *Conf.* VI.6.9.

⁵² *Conf.* VI.7.12.

Augustine learns to love God as Truth in Bk. VII. Reading “the books of the Platonists” inspires him to enter into “the innermost places of my being,” where he beheld the transcendent light that fills the universe, the light which made him. “Anyone who knows truth knows” this light, “and whoever knows it knows eternity. *Caritas* knows it.” Trembling with love and dread, he hears a voice from on high: “I am the food of the mature; grow then, and you will eat me. You will not change me into yourself; you will be changed into me.” He then asks if truth is nothing because it is not a material thing. The voice responds, “By no means, for I am who am.” Hearing this “as one hears a word in the heart,” the fog of doubt evaporates: “I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that truth exists, truth that is seen and understood through the things that are made.”⁵³ Seeds of faith sprout as Augustine realizes God is the Truth of everything, the wisdom he has been seeking ever since taking up Cicero’s call to philosophy.

Drawn toward divine beauty, Augustine began rising up to love God in truth, but was quickly pulled back down by the weight of his own fleshly desires, with only a loving memory yearning to return. With eagerness he then “seized on the hallowed calligraphy of your Spirit,” especially the writings of Paul discovering, “that every truth I had read in those other books was taught here also, but now inseparably from your gift of grace, so that no one who sees can boast as though what he sees and the very power to see it were not from you.” He realizes God’s gift in the words of Scripture: “So totally is it a matter of grace that the searcher is not only invited to see you, who are ever the same, but healed as well, so that he can possess you.”⁵⁴ By tracing the lineaments of God’s *caritas*, the words of Scripture reveal the way of the Word that mediates the relationship between God and human beings. And the meaning of this Word is God’s loving gift.

⁵³ *Conf.* VII.10.16. This vision and the analogy of God as light (*analogia luminis*) has tremendous significance for our study (and *Conf.* itself) and these themes will be developed in greater detail in this chapter (§1.2), as well as throughout Ch. 2, with further discussion of this passage in §6.1.

⁵⁴ *Conf.* VII.21.27. We will explore how Thomas develops these same themes in Ch. 4 below.

Faith takes root by transformation. Augustine confesses, “Your words were now firmly implanted in my heart of hearts, and I was besieged by you on every side.” Already certain of the reality of God, and longing for “a more steadfast abiding,” his heart needed to be cleansed of its disordered desires.⁵⁵ Wanting worldly things had chained his will with the compulsion of habit. His heart was filled with struggle, pulled between his old, carnal self and the spiritual self that was emerging. Divided against himself, powerless to choose one over the other, he needed help to order his loves. Setting “me down before my face,” God enabled Augustine to see his true self, “how despicable I was, how misshapen and begrimed, filthy and festering.”⁵⁶

With Alypius in the garden next to their house, the conflict within Augustine reached its climax. Torn away in a frenzy, the argument between himself “dredged all my wretchedness up from the secret profundity of my being and heaped it all together before the eyes of my heart.”⁵⁷ Weeping in the intense bitterness of a broken heart, he suddenly hears words sung over and over: “take, read (*tolle lege*).” Believing it “could be nothing other than a divine command to open the Book and read the first passage I chanced upon,” he returned to Alypius.⁵⁸ Grabbing a book of Paul’s Letters, he opened it and, upon reading, “the light of certainty flooded my heart and all dark shades of doubt fled away.”⁵⁹ Picking up where Augustine left off, Alypius read the next verse, which he interprets as referring to himself, and joins in his friend’s decision. Then they go inside to tell Monica the news. Sharing how God had brought about their conversion transforms her grief for his error into triumphant joy to see her son finally stand on the rule of faith.

⁵⁵ *Conf.* VIII.1.1. While Bk. VII presents Platonic thought as a kind of prolegomenon to Scripture, Bk. VIII stands in stark contrast. Augustine’s anthropology here owes much more to Paul (Rom 7:14-25) than Plato.

⁵⁶ *Conf.* VIII.7.16. The divine Truth became the standard by which Augustine could see himself objectively.

⁵⁷ *Conf.* VIII.12.28.

⁵⁸ Augustine was influenced by conversion stories such as that of Antony of Egypt, who walked into a church as Mt 19:21 was being read and interpreted the words as addressed by God to himself; Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 2.

⁵⁹ *Conf.* VIII.12.29. Augustine read from Rom 13:13-14: “Not in dissipation and drunkenness, nor in debauchery and lewdness, nor in arguing and jealousy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh or the gratification of your desires.” Alypius then read Rom 14:1a, “Make room for the person who is weak in faith.”

Augustine will devote the rest of his life to God. Freed from sin, he is now God's slave (*servus*). God's "right hand plumbed the depths of my death, draining the cesspool of corruption in my heart, so that I ceased to will all that I had been wont to will, and now willed what you willed." In the long prayer of *Confessiones*, Augustine only addresses Christ directly at the start of Bk. IX, invoking him as his Redeemer, and asking how he was able, "to bow my neck to your benign yoke and my shoulders to your light burden."⁶⁰ Giving up his career as a rhetorician, he retired to Cassiciacum with his friends and family, where they devoted themselves to studying the scriptures: "With the arrows of *caritas* you had pierced our hearts, and we bore your words within us like a sword penetrating us to the core."⁶¹ In this leisured freedom, Augustine began to write again, devoting his words to a new use, "to sing with every fiber of my being, 'To you my heart tells its love: I have sought your face, O Lord, for your face will I seek.'"⁶² Discovering in the Psalms a remedy against his pride, "How loudly I began to cry out to you...inflamed by them with love for you and fired to recite them to the whole world." Reading Ps 4 aloud, the words he uttered became, "the intimate expression of my mind, as I conversed with myself and addressed myself in your presence," saying the words outwardly and experiencing their truth inwardly, he shouted with joy.⁶³ By identifying himself with the Word, the words of Scripture were becoming Augustine's own, a language to communicate his heart with God and his fellowship.⁶⁴ Following this retreat, the company returns to Milan for Easter, where Augustine, his son Adeodatus, and Alypius are baptized by Ambrose. Joining the congregation in worship, "How copiously I wept at your hymns and canticles, how intensely was I moved by the lovely harmonies of your singing

⁶⁰ *Conf.* IX.1.1. Instructed to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" in Bk. VIII, Augustine here calls upon him by name.

⁶¹ *Conf.* IX.2.3. The imagery of this passage (also X.6.8) is the inspiration for the traditional iconography of the Doctor of Grace: the pierced heart set ablaze.

⁶² *Conf.* IX.3.6.

⁶³ *Conf.* IX.4.8.

⁶⁴ This would be an ongoing process for Augustine, manifest in the writing of *Conf.* itself, in which he employs a seemingly inexhaustible profusion of biblical references to explain, share his life with the reader.

Church! Those voices flooded my ears, and the truth was distilled into my heart until it overflowed in loving devotion.”⁶⁵ Augustine had found the right words at last!

The narrative of *Confessiones* comes to its climax as the Doctor of Grace realizes the ultimate meaning of words in conversation with his mother. Monica, who first taught her son how to speak, is also his archetype of Christian love. Stopped at Ostia on their journey home to Africa, the two were alone together, leaning against a window overlooking a garden, inquiring “between ourselves in the light of present truth, the Truth which is yourself, what the eternal life of the saints would be like.”⁶⁶ They contemplated the difference between “the noise of articulate speech, where a word has a beginning and end,” and “your Word, our Lord, who abides in himself, and grows not old, but renews all things.”⁶⁷ Augustine recalls the vision they shared in verse. Even when every tongue is stilled, all creatures by their very being confesses who their Creator is. They long to hear God’s Word “unmediated, whom we love in all these things, hear him without them, as we now stretch out and in a flash of thought touch that eternal Wisdom who abides above all things.”⁶⁸ The meaning of every creature’s existence, the fullest expression of its true self, is to communicate of the Word that created it, the echo of God’s Love in the *cor* of its being. The two realize that to hear this Word, the meaning of all creation, is life eternal. Mother and son are united in hope of the resurrection, when the joy of the Lord will reverberate throughout a renewed creation and they will be reunited.

Shortly thereafter, Monica will pass from this mortal life. Her last words, to her family gathered around, are a summation of her faith and of her son’s story: “Nothing is far from God. There is no danger that at the end of the world he will not know where to find me and raise me

⁶⁵ *Conf.* IX.6.14.

⁶⁶ *Conf.* IX.10.23. Monica is an example of the holy old woman of whom Aquinas will speak; see Ch. 3, n. 137.

⁶⁷ *Conf.* IX.10.24.

⁶⁸ *Conf.* IX.10.25. The passage deserves to be quoted in full, but the need to economize space precludes doing so.

up.”⁶⁹ She departs this life believing that God is lovingly present to all of us, forever. Closing her eyes, “a huge sadness surged into my heart; the tears welled up,” but a ferocious command from his mind held them back until they dried up, though the struggle was awful. As Augustine would restrain his son from crying, so the mature voice of his heart restrained him, for the “evidence of her virtues and her sincere faith gave us good reason to hold” as certain she had not died altogether.⁷⁰ Love was the common thread that joined mother and son, “for there had been one life, woven out of mine and hers.”⁷¹ The last thing Monica would ask of him was to remember her at the altar of the Lord; for it is there, “to the sacrament of that ransom-price your handmaid made fast her soul with the bonds of faith.”⁷² And so, through his confessions, Augustine asks God to inspire others to remember his parents with loving devotion, that her request might be fulfilled ever more abundantly in the prayers of all those who would learn from their story.

§1.2 Remembering Love: Realizing Oneself in Memory

*Speak to me yourself within my heart in truth, for you alone speak so.*⁷³

Having painted the first 33 years of his life from memory, the artist studies himself in the mirror in Bk. X. As self-portrait, *Confessiones* is a work of analysis, through which Augustine seeks to know himself even as he is known. Realizing his true self, he hopes, will reveal God’s love. By expressing his love of God in words, he tries to hear the Word he loves. This is why he speaks, confessing, “You love the truth because anyone who does truth comes to the light. Truth it is that I want to do, in my heart by confession in your presence, and with my pen before many

⁶⁹ *Conf.* IX.11.28.

⁷⁰ *Conf.* IX.12.29. This last phrase in Latin is *fide non ficta rationibusque certis tenebamus*.

⁷¹ *Conf.* IX.12.30.

⁷² *Conf.* IX.13.37.

⁷³ *Conf.* XII.16.23.

witnesses.”⁷⁴ Augustine’s goal in writing is to depict the truth he loves. The true meaning of his words is the love that stands behind them. Truth as an action is living in the light of God, in which “I lie exposed, exactly as I am.” In this intimate conversation with God, Augustine comes to realize who he is. This confession is not made with bodily words but introspectively, “with the words of my soul and the clamor of my thought.” It shouts, not by making a noise, but by love. His words are informed by this inner dialogue: “I can say nothing right to other people unless you have heard it from me first, nor can you even hear anything of the kind from me which you have not first told me.”⁷⁵ His self is communicated in a confession, its truth realized by *caritas*. Those who love will recognize Augustine: “the charity that makes them good assures them that I am not lying when I confess about myself; that very charity in them believes me.”⁷⁶

Through confession, Augustine lovingly shares himself with God and those united with him in faith. Above all, this is what he knows of himself: “I love you, Lord, with no doubtful mind but with absolute certainty. You pierced my heart with your word, and I fell in love with you,” the world and everything in it, “all these things around me are telling me that I should love you.” But what does it mean to love God: “what am I loving when I love you?” It is to embrace,

a kind of light, a kind of voice, a certain fragrance, a food and an embrace, when I love my God: a light, voice, fragrance, food and embrace for my inmost self, where something limited to no place shines into my mind, where something not snatched away by passing time sings for me, where something no breath blows away yields to me its scent, where there is savor undiminished by famished eating, and where I am clasped in a union from which no satiety can tear me away. This is what I love when I love my God.⁷⁷

The love of God is analogous to the experience of beauty, which is experienced in material things, but ultimately transcends them. Seeking this beauty, Augustine investigates the created

⁷⁴ *Conf.* X.1.1.

⁷⁵ *Conf.* X.2.2. For additional discussion of this passage, see §6.2 below.

⁷⁶ *Conf.* X.3.4. This is the essence of Augustine’s hermeneutic of *caritas*: love is self-authenticating. Someone who loves another becomes able to recognize another in love.

⁷⁷ *Conf.* X.6.8.

realm in order to gain understanding of its Creator. His attentive spirit asks all creatures to tell him of God; they reply with their beauty that, although they are not God, God made them.

Turning the question on himself he asks, “Who are you?” “A man,” he answers:

See, here are the body and soul that make up myself, the one outward and the other within. Through which of these should I seek my God? With my body’s senses I had already sought him from earth to heaven, to the farthest place whither I could send the darting rays of my eyes; but what lay within me was better, and to this all those bodily messengers reported back, for it controlled and judged the replies of sky and earth, and of all the creatures dwelling in them, all those who had proclaimed, “We are not God,” and “He made us.” My inner self recognized them all through the service of the outer. I, who was that inmost self, I, who was mind, knew them though the senses of my body; and so I questioned the vast frame of the world concerning my God, and it answered, I am not he, but he made me.⁷⁸

The outer self is open to the material world through the senses; the inner self, which drives and guides the outer, seeks truth through the mind. The voice of creatures, their beauty, speaks to all, but not all get the message. Only those, “who test the voice heard outwardly against the truth within,” are able to apprehend their meaning. It is through the incarnate Word that this truth is present to us.⁷⁹ As the soul is the life of the body, God is the life of the soul: “your God is to you the life of your life itself.” The One Augustine loves is both the truth present within his mind and the life of his very being. He can formulate no answer to the question of who he himself truly is without ultimately referring to the God who makes him, his Creator.

To seek God is to seek a life of happiness. The universal desire for the *vita beata* is Cicero’s starting point in *Hortensius*. But what is this happy life that everyone seems to want so badly? Augustine believes we could not love the happy life without somehow already possessing it. “In some mysterious way,” we must know happiness, “and hence truly possess it through

⁷⁸ *Conf.* X.6.9. The epistemological significance of this passage will be taken up in detail in Ch. 2.

⁷⁹ *Conf.* X.6.10. At the start of a pivotal Christological meditation (VII.18.24), Augustine confesses his need for “the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who is also God,” who calls to him proclaiming, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6), see §6.1 below. The insight that in Jesus the Truth loves us is at the heart of the author’s transformation.

some kind of cognizance,” since we “should not love it if we had no acquaintance with it.”⁸⁰ We do not experience the *vita beata* through bodily senses. Instead, “This is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in you, about you and because of you.”⁸¹ All who seek happiness want their joy to be true. It follows that the happy life itself, “is joy in the truth; and that means joy in you, who are the Truth.” Since human beings “do not wish to be deceived, they must love truth; and when they love the happy life, which is nothing else but joy in the truth, they are unquestionably loving truth also; but they could not be loving the truth unless there was some knowledge of it in their memories.”⁸² Why, then, are we not happy? Augustine believes it is because we are engrossed with other things which, in reality, make us miserable. This is why truth can engender hatred:

It must be because people love truth in such a way that those who love something else wish to regard what they love as truth and, since they would not want to be deceived, are unwilling to be convinced that are wrong. They are thus led into hatred of truth for the sake of that very thing which they love under the guise of truth. They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate it when it accuses them.⁸³

Our judgments of truth are conditioned by love—we want what we love to be true. If what is loved is not true, some would rather hate the truth than admit their error. We want what we love to make us truly happy, for our happiness to be real and not an illusion. But to love a lie is to hate the truth, and no one wants to believe lies. The descendants of Adam and Eve thus hide in the bushes with them, wanting to see the truth, but not to be seen themselves in its light.

Just as memory is essential to learning and using words, Augustine also believes it is integral to our relationship with God.⁸⁴ For to find God is to remember with delight. Ever since he learned to know God, the Creator has dwelt in Augustine’s memory, and he has found God

⁸⁰ *Conf.* X.20.29. The principle: *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*. For the cognizance of memory, see §6.2 below.

⁸¹ *Conf.* X.22.32.

⁸² *Conf.* X.23.33.

⁸³ *Conf.* X.23.34. Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticus* VI.3 & Terence, *Andria* 68.

⁸⁴ Amidst a plethora of readily-accessible printed and digital words, it is easy for us to forget the importance of memorization to education, literacy, and rhetoric in Augustine’s time. Memory would have been essential to success in his career as a rhetorician, and doubtless would have proved useful in his ministry and writing as well.

nowhere outside it. The most reliable way to seek God is inwardly, by remembering ourselves.

Seeking God outside results in the temptation of concupiscence, to love created things instead of their Creator. We must first hear the Word, in order for our eyes to see the Beauty:

Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong, I, misshapen. You were with me, but I was not with you. They held me back far from you, those things which would have no being were they not in you.⁸⁵

By turning outside, the self disintegrates. Disordered desire estranges the self from God, “anyone who loves something else along with you, but does not love it for your sake, loves you less.” Set in order by the love of God, “the scattered elements of the self are collected and brought back into the unity from which we have slid away into dispersion.” “O Love,” Augustine implores, ever burning, never extinguished, O *Caritas*, my God, set me on fire!” To love God is to want Love itself: “Give what you command, and then command whatever you will.”⁸⁶ He sees the divine Beauty as it patterns his own love, thereby realizing the beauty in himself.

The Bishop of Hippo warns of three vices which undermine true relationship with God. Following 1Jn 2:16, he refers to them as “concupiscence of the flesh and concupiscence of the eyes and worldly pride”: sensuality, curiosity, and self-love.⁸⁷ First, Augustine examines the various ways he is tempted to seek beauty through the senses. Desire for the pleasure of touch leads to lust. Sight is another source of particular temptation for him, as varied shapes and colors impinge upon his eyes through all his waking hours as long as there is light. The queen of colors, light, bathes everything we see in the day; light flows all around, caressing us. Thus stimulated, he finds it difficult not to look—stare at the beautiful things all around. Prior to his conversion,

⁸⁵ *Conf.* X.27.38.

⁸⁶ *Conf.* X.29.40.

⁸⁷ *Conf.* X.30.41. For Augustine’s commentary on the passage itself, see §2.3 below. Self-love is used in the sense of *amour-propre*, ego, putting the self in place of God. These vices represent the opposite of the theological virtues of hope, faith, and *caritas* respectively, by which the human person is ordered toward God.

Augustine fancied himself a lover of beauty. But now, he has learned to see earthly light as a sign of “the Light that is one in itself and unites all who see and love it,” to refer beauty to God:

O my God, for me you are loveliness itself...because the beautiful designs that are born in our minds and find expression through clever hands derive from that Beauty which transcends all minds, the Beauty to which my own mind aspires day and night. Those who create beauty in material things, and those who seek it, draw from that source their power to appreciate beauty, but not the norm for its use. The norm is there, and could they but see it they would need to search no further.⁸⁸

The mind longs for the transcendent Beauty of God, but is easily distracted from a goal so lofty.

The beauty of material things diverts us, because they seem much more accessible. Yet this too offers a way to participate in God. Artists, who make material things beautiful in accord with designs formed in their minds, as well as those who seek and admire such beauty, both partake of God, who is the ultimate source and *modus* of the beauty present to them. The error of sensuality is the belief that experiencing something beautiful makes us beautiful by itself, without reference to the spiritual reality that gives it meaning. Only by loving Beauty itself can we hope to become beautiful ourselves, transformed through the love of God and one another.

Pride is the third great vice Augustine warns against.⁸⁹ He describes it as “the temptation to want veneration and affection from others, and to want them not for the sake of some quality that merits them, but in order to make such admiration itself the cause of my joy.” This self-love covets the praise that belongs to God. His former life of worldly ambition proves pride offers, “no true joy at all, but leads only to a miserable life and shameful ostentation.” He confesses that this tendency is “one of the chief impediments to loving you and revering you with chaste fear,” since it leads us to “abandon our delight in your truth to look for it instead in human flattery.” Love *incurvatus in se* is the most insidious vice of all, corrupting our relationality so as to point

⁸⁸ *Conf.* X.34.53. As immutable, God is the constant standard against which all things are measured.

⁸⁹ The second temptation, *curiositas* (“the concupiscence of the eyes”), is discussed in §6.2 below.

only to ourselves. Having always enjoyed the praise of others, Augustine knows this temptation well. Even as a bishop he still loves being applauded for his homilies, which can then become an occasion for pride. To resist the temptation, he asks God to be his glory: “let us be loved on your account, and let it be your word in us that is honored.”⁹⁰ God enjoins continence, “restraining our love from certain objects,” and justice, “which requires us to bestow it on certain others; and you have willed that our charity should be directed not to you alone but also to our neighbor.”⁹¹ If he is moved, “by the high opinion others hold of me, it should be not for my own sake but so that my neighbor may profit thereby.” Self-love radically threatens our ability to know the truth about ourselves, or anything else. Augustine confesses that he does not know the motives for which he seeks praise. His only recourse is to confide humbly in the Truth: “In this respect I know myself less clearly than I know you. I beg you to reveal myself to me as well, O my God, so that I may confess the wounded condition I diagnose in myself to my brethren, who will pray for me.”⁹²

Everything Augustine has learned he knows through his relationship with the Truth, the incarnate Word, who has always guided his life. Introspection is far from a solitary endeavor for him; he searches the intimate depths of his self for the God who already is *interior intimo meo*, the “abiding Light whom I consulted throughout my search.” This is the relationship that orders all others. Augustine realizes that whenever he thinks about the existence, essence, and value of anything, he is asking questions of God and, “all the while I listened to you teaching me and laying your commands on me.” Recollecting in inward reflection is his constant delight, for “only there are the scattered elements of my being collected.” Beyond the knowledge of things outside, and even of his own inner self, there is a beauty that is ultimately beyond words, “From

⁹⁰ *Conf.* X.36.59.

⁹¹ *Conf.* X.37.61. Augustine seems to credit continence and justice as true virtues, acting as adjuncts to *caritas*.

⁹² *Conf.* X.37.62. To think that one does not require the help of others is a sure symptom of pride.

time to time you lead me into an inward experience quite unlike any other, a sweetness beyond understanding.” Mystical experience in this life is a sign, glimpsed only fleetingly, of its coming transformation: “If ever it is brought to fullness in me my life will not be what it is now,” his self will transcend its present limitations to be united with God.⁹³ To learn truth, therefore, is to be united with it by allowing ourselves to be transformed into its likeness from within.

Understanding unites the self with the truth. This intimate relationship is mediated by the love of the Word. In the person of the Mediator, Jesus Christ, the divine *Logos* comes to us in humility, sharing the form of our humanity to communicate God’s love to us in the language of a human life. Jesus is God’s way of telling us, “I love you.” For our sake the Son gives himself to make us “sons and daughters to you instead of slaves by being born of you to serve us,” reason to hope for healing without which, “We might have despaired, thinking your Word remote from any conjunction with humankind, had not he become flesh and made his dwelling among us.”⁹⁴ In Christ, the love of Truth reveals the pattern of personal relationship, uniting us with God, ourselves, and others. At heart, we are relational beings who exist in communion with others. Our relationships make us who we are. Ultimately, these have their proper order and end in Jesus Christ, “in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”⁹⁵ This authentic interior subjectivity is what makes objective relationality possible.⁹⁶ In the act of remembering Jesus, bread and wine symbolize our partaking in truth by loving together with him and one another. On the cross, Christ proves God’s love for us (Rom 5:8). It is by loving and following him that we are thus freed from the prison of a self that is *incurvatus in se*.

⁹³ *Conf.* X.40.65. See §6.2 below for further discussion of this passage.

⁹⁴ *Conf.* X.43.69. Cf. Jn 1:14. Boulding’s translation of *servis* as “servants” euphemistically dulls the contrast.

⁹⁵ *Conf.* X.43.70. Augustine, following Col 2:3, believes both *sapientia* and *scientia* are united in Christ. However, as we shall see in Ch. 2, he is not able to unite the two theoretically.

⁹⁶ Lonergan, *Method*, 265.

§1.3 Understanding Love: Realizing the Order of Creation

*It is different for people who see creation through your Spirit, for you are seeing it through their eyes. Thus when such people see that these things are good, you are seeing that they are good; whatever created things please them for your sake, it is you who are arousing their delight in these things; and anything that gives us joy through your Spirit gives you joy in us.*⁹⁷

Having rendered the figure, it remains for the artist to paint the setting. By interpreting Gn 1 in Bks. XI-XIII, Augustine places his portrait in the landscape of creation. He concludes *Confessiones* with, “In the beginning...” in order to understand what it means for him to be one of God’s creatures, interpreting the world as created by the same love he has found in the *cor* of his being. The crux of this hermeneutic is love’s ability to recognize the truth, essential both to the way Augustine reads Scripture, and his project in *Confessiones* overall. He trusts that others who love will be able to recognize and believe him. By love they desire to hear and to know him. They understand the meaning of his life by embracing him as we all truly are, beloved creatures of God. Love is *telos* of *Confessiones*: it is “out of love for loving you” that Augustine writes, hoping, “to arouse my own loving devotion toward you, and that of my readers, so that together we may declare, ‘Great is the Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise.’”⁹⁸ His goal is to join with his audience in shared confession of loving devotion to God. As others’ stories helped inspire his own conversion, so Augustine hopes his own can point people toward loving devotion to God.

Rather than telling more of his own story, however, Augustine chooses to relate through the biblical story. Beyond his lifelong desire to communicate himself, the Bishop of Hippo burns with longing to offer his heart and tongue in service to others as a sacrifice to God. But being needy and poor, he has nothing of his own to offer, so he turns to God to provide the right words praying, “Let your scriptures be my chaste delight, let me not be deceived in them nor through

⁹⁷ *Conf.* XIII.31.46.

⁹⁸ *Conf.* XI.1.1. The quote is a great refrain of the psalms, see Ps 48:1; 96:4; 145:3.

them deceive others.” Throughout *Confessiones* he uses the Bible as a language with which to understand and communicate his love. He confides to God, “your voice is joy to me, your voice that rings out above a flood of joys. Give me what I love, for I love indeed, and this love you have given me.”⁹⁹ His interpretation of Scripture, which forms the background of the story he tells, becomes the focus of Bks. XI-XIII. The Doctor of Grace confesses, “Look and see, O my God, whence springs my desire. The unrighteous have told me titillating tales, but they have nothing to do with your law, O Lord; and see, that law is what stirs my longing.” God’s words inspire the love that seeks to understand them. “Father, have regard to me and see and bless my longing,” he prays, “so that the inner meaning of your words may be opened to me as I knock at their door.” The meaning of God’s words is the Word, Jesus Christ himself, “in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And they are what I seek in your books.”¹⁰⁰ By looking to the Word through whom all things were made, among them himself, Augustine hopes to bond with his audience. By searching for truth with the artist, we can come to know him truly.

The Bishop of Hippo seeks to understand what it means for us to be created by God in the Word. All things share a common origin for, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” He desires to know what the author meant by writing those words in Genesis. As future readers of *Confessiones* will have no direct access to him, so he has no direct way of knowing Moses. Instead, he appeals directly to his inspiration, “since I cannot question him, who spoke truthfully because you, O Truth, had filled him, I beg you yourself, O Truth, my God, to pardon my sins, and as you granted that servant of yours the grace to say those things, grant also to me the grace to understand them.”¹⁰¹ Both the words and their interpretation are given to us, as is our

⁹⁹ *Conf.* XI.2.3. Cf. God’s provision of the sacrifice in Gn 22:8-14.

¹⁰⁰ *Conf.* XI.2.4. See Col 2:3, which Augustine also quotes at the end of Bk. X; see §1.2 above, n. 95.

¹⁰¹ *Conf.* XI.3.5. Augustine follows the traditional attribution of authorship of Torah to Moses. If modern biblical scholarship is correct, then its authors/editors are even further removed than he realized, but his point remains.

life itself. Augustine believes the very being of creatures is witness to creation. By the fact that they undergo change and variation, things “cry out that they were made,” proclaiming this with the voice of their visible existence.¹⁰² And so do the words of Scripture knock on the door of his *cor*, as *Doctor Gratiae* confesses, “in this poverty-stricken life of mine my heart is busy about many things concerning them.”¹⁰³ The core of his being integrates the heaven he sees, the earth on which he treads, and the frame of clay he carries—all have been given to him by God in truth.

Thus do the words of Scripture speak to all. The meaning on their surface offers easy access, even to the unlettered, yet Augustine realizes its true profundity: “To look into that depth makes me shudder, but it is the shudder of awe, the trembling of love.”¹⁰⁴ But the surpassing meaningfulness of Scripture poses a hermeneutical challenge. The Doctor of Grace recognizes other interpreters can, in good faith, understand the same passage in ways that differ markedly from his own. So how can we know which interpretation is the truth? His answer is to propose *caritas* as the ultimate rule for understanding Scripture, concluding that “The law is an excellent thing for building us up provided we use it lawfully, because its object is to promote the charity which springs from a pure heart, a good conscience and unfeigned faith, and I know what were the twin precepts on which our Master made the whole law and the prophets depend.” As the intention uniting author and interpreter, *caritas* is the way we can fully recognize the truth:

All of us, his readers, are doing our utmost to search out and understand the writer’s intention, and since we believe him to be truthful, we do not presume to interpret him as making any statement that we either know or suppose to be false. Provided, therefore, that each person tries to ascertain in the holy scriptures the meaning the author intended, what harm is there if a reader holds an opinion which you, the light of all truthful minds, show to be true, even though it is not what was intended by the author, who himself meant something true, but not exactly that?¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *Conf.* XI.4.6. The remainder of Bk. XI is discussed in §6.3 below.

¹⁰³ *Conf.* XII.1.1.

¹⁰⁴ *Conf.* XII.14.17. Cf. Rudolf Otto’s idea of the holy as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, as well as Marion’s concept of the saturated phenomenon.

¹⁰⁵ *Conf.* XII.18.27.

The true meaning of Scripture is revealed to those who love God and one another. The love that inspired the author to write the text is its ultimate meaning. Readers are inspired to discover this meaning, guided by “the light of all truthful minds.” We know the truth because God, the Truth, loves us. Secure in this relationship, Augustine is free to embrace hermeneutical pluralism. There can be many valid points of view which, “are available to people who entertain no doubts about their truth because you have granted them the grace to discern these matters with the inner eye, and they believe unwaveringly that your servant Moses spoke in a truthful spirit.”¹⁰⁶ He desires to be united with “those who feed on your truth in the wide pastures of charity,” and in God “find my delight in company with them. Let us approach the words of your book together, and there seek your will as expressed through the will of your servant, by whose pen you have dispensed your words to us.”¹⁰⁷ The meaning of Scripture is realized by a love that both speaks and listens.

Yet conflicts of interpretation, sometimes bitter, can often arise. Augustine diagnoses the problem as the disordered self-love of pride. Rather than loving the truth, some instead love their own interpretations, “because they are proud, and without having grasped Moses’ idea they are infatuated with their own, not because it is true but because it is theirs.” Otherwise, “they would look with equal favor on a valid opinion held by someone else, just as I am favorably disposed to what they say when they talk good sense, not because the exegesis is theirs but because it is true.” The hermeneutic of charity rests upon an openness to others, and thus to the polyvalence of truth. Love of truth requires giving up any selfish pride of ownership. Once an interpretation is true, “it is no longer their property. If they love it because it is true, then it belongs to me as well

¹⁰⁶ *Conf.* XII.20.29. This passage highlights the hermeneutical distance between Augustine and those of us living in the wake of Spinoza, the Documentary hypothesis, and historical-critical study of the Bible in general. Are moderns able to understand the biblical books as authoritative, or as truthful, as Augustine did? Is it possible to have the kind of security in the truth of Scripture as pre-modern audiences? To begin to give an answer, it does not appear that the truth of traditional ascriptions of authorship is essential to Augustine’s hermeneutic of Scripture in the way that *caritas* is—what truly matters is that the love of both authors and interpreters for God and one another.

¹⁰⁷ *Conf.* XII.23.32.

as to them, because it is a common bounty for all lovers of truth.” Truth is given by God in love as a gift to all: “Truth is not mine, nor his, nor hers, but belongs to all of us whom you call to share it in communion with him, at the same time giving us the terrible warning not to arrogate truth to ourselves as private property, lest we find ourselves deprived of it.” Truth is realized in the community of those who love it. But, on the other hand, someone who “appropriates what you provide for all to enjoy, and claims as his own what belongs to all, is cast out from this commonwealth, cast out to what is truly his own, which is to say from the truth to a lie; for anyone who lies is speaking from what is his own.”¹⁰⁸ The truth cannot be ours alone—it can only be shared in community with others, which is our true commonwealth.

Love is thus the measure of our interpretation of Scripture. The meaning of the Bible is only truly understood when it points us to the love of God and others: “Unless we believe that Moses meant whatever he did mean in his books with an eye to those twin commandments of charity, we shall make the Lord out to be a liar, by attributing to our fellow-servant a purpose which is at odds with the Lord’s teaching.”¹⁰⁹ Although we cannot know with certainty exactly what the biblical authors meant by their words, Augustine believes we can be sure they wrote for the sake of *caritas*. He affirms the rich variety of highly plausible interpretations, asking “let Truth itself engender concord,” and humbly admitting, “if anyone asks me which [meaning] is what Moses, your servant, intended, these writings are no true confession of mine unless I confess to you, ‘I do not know.’” Interpretations leading to *caritas* are valid in the sense that they fulfill the author’s intention. Belief in the authority of Scripture is linked to believing, “that when [Moses] wrote these things he had in mind what you revealed to him to be the best of all meanings in the light of truth, and with respect to the profit it would yield,” that the author wrote

¹⁰⁸ *Conf.* XII.25.34. For further treatment of Augustine’s vision of truth as commonwealth, see §7 below.

¹⁰⁹ *Conf.* XII.25.35.

from love.¹¹⁰ Thus through this author, “the one God carefully tempered his sacred writings to meet the minds of many people, who would see different things in them, and all true.” Though readers come to the text from a variety of perspectives, the transcendence of its meaning enables all who read with love to find the truth. While preferring to discover the meaning intended by the biblical author, Augustine asks, “if I do not succeed in that, I may at least say what your Truth wills to reveal to me through the words of Moses, since it was your Truth who communicated to him also whatever he willed.”¹¹¹ This meaning of Scripture we understand by receiving and communicating it through the love of God and neighbor.

Augustine finishes his *Confessiones* in Bk. XIII by drawing an analogy. As the Word forms creatures from formless matter in creation, in conversion the Word turns creatures toward their Creator. As God created light in the beginning, so in conversion we are transformed by God’s illumination. Love is thus the sacrament *par excellence*: “Into my soul I call you, for you prepare it to be your dwelling by the desire you inspire in it.”¹¹² As the Spirit of God hovers over the waters in creation (Gn 1:2), so it is poured into the hearts of those who believe in Christ by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). Augustine understands the place of the Spirit, “who is supereminent love,” being poised above the waters to represent *caritas* as the “way of loftiest excellence,” with the charity of Christ “exalted above all knowledge.” The waters and the Spirit thus symbolize two loves: the first is “the uncleanness of our own spirit, which like a flood-tide sweeps us down, in love with restless cares; the other is the holiness of your Spirit, which bears us upward in a love for peace beyond all care, that our hearts may be lifted up to you,” our disordered love of created things (*concupiscentia*) as opposed to the formative love of *caritas*.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Conf.* XII.30.41.

¹¹¹ *Conf.* XII.32.43.

¹¹² *Conf.* XIII.1.1.

¹¹³ *Conf.* XIII.7.8. The distinction between ordered and disordered love will be discussed further in §2.2 below.

Augustine's journey in *Confessiones* is an odyssey, a return to where he began, going from restlessness to rest. Throughout, he relates his story as that of the prodigal son—sinfully wandering away in pride then, in humility, repentance—returning to his loving Father's side:

When spirits slide away from you they are stripped of their vesture of light and exposed in their native darkness, and then their unhappy restlessness amply proves to us how noble is each rational creature you have made, for nothing less than yourself can suffice to give it any measure of blessed rest, nor indeed can it be its own satisfaction. For it is you, Lord, who will light up our darkness.¹¹⁴

It is in the Holy Spirit that human beings find true rest, in Whom we enjoy God.¹¹⁵ We are borne there “by love, and it is your good Spirit who lifts our sunken nature.” Augustine describes all things as ordered into their rightful places as if by gravity, drawn by the affinity of their being: “my weight is my love, and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me.” Kindling our love, God's Gift “sets us afire and we are borne upward; we catch its flame and up we go.”¹¹⁶ By this love, we are raised up into becoming light, to find our true level in God.

Thus enlightened by the Spirit, Augustine realizes a trinitarian pattern within himself. He discerns a trinity in being, knowledge, and will: “I am, and I know, and I will. Knowingly and willingly I exist; I know that I am and that I will; I will to be and to know.” His self is formed by the union of these three, “there is one life, one mind and one essence. How inseparable they are in their distinctness! Yet distinction there is.” But this likeness within him is imperfect, since he is subject to change, but “the Godhead exists and is known to itself and is its own all-sufficient joy without variation for ever, Being-Itself in the manifold greatness of its unity.”¹¹⁷ In the flux of his own formation, Augustine detects a sign pointing to its perfection in eternal peace.

¹¹⁴ *Conf.* XIII.8.9.

¹¹⁵ “Enjoy” here is *frui* (*frui* “enjoyment,” as well as *uti*, “use”) will be discussed in detail in §2.2 below.

¹¹⁶ *Conf.* XIII.9.10. Augustine's imagery here draws upon the Platonic Great Chain of Being.

¹¹⁷ *Conf.* XIII.11.12. For Augustine, immutability is the perhaps single most characteristic aspect of God. The distinction between the Creator and creatures is that the latter is subject to change, decay, death—the former is eternal, always fully alive—the need for and subject of our hope respectively. God is the ultimate Constant.

Equipped with this insight, Augustine depicts the story of creation as an allegory for the Holy Spirit's action in the life of the people of God. Light sweeps over the dark sea of sin with the call to repentance. He sees the firmament as a metaphor for Scripture, a vault which stretches overhead like a tent of skin "canopied over us through the ministry of mortal men."¹¹⁸ Only when they pass from the earth can the full meaning of the biblical authors' words be realized, for "the firm authority inherent in your revelation, which they have passed on to us, is by their very death spread more widely over all the world below."¹¹⁹ The meaning of Scripture must transcend its mortal messengers. Preachers pass away, but "your Word abides forever," appearing to us:

Not as he is, but tantalizingly, as though veiled by cloud and mirrored in his heaven...for though we are the beloved of your Son, it has not yet appeared what we shall be. He peeps through the trellis of our flesh, and coaxes us, and enkindles our love until we run after him, allured by his fragrance. "But when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." Our seeing then, Lord, will be the vision of you as you are, but this is not granted to us yet.¹²⁰

The Bishop of Hippo presents Scripture as far more than passing words written down long ago by dead people—it is a means by which God's love, revealed in and through the life of an author, becomes available to an inexhaustible multitude of readers illuminated by the same Gift.

For Augustine, the dry land which emerges from the sea on the third day represents those who thirst for God, who stand out from the bitter sea of selfish wills in conflict. When the Spirit quenches this thirst, "the soil of our souls grows fertile in works of mercy," fructifying "in love of our neighbors."¹²¹ Believers' lives become the soil in which love grows. Thus rooted, as we rise from "active works to the delights of contemplation, we may lay hold on the Word of Life

¹¹⁸ The poetic imagery Augustine uses here is rich with meaning. Tents in his time would have been made from animal skin. Like the sky, the scriptures are open to all and stretch out above us, renowned far and wide. Like a tent, the scriptures afford shelter to those under them. Bibles themselves would have been written on parchment or vellum, i.e., animal skin. Thus, like their human authors, the scriptures are housed in mortal flesh.

¹¹⁹ *Conf.* XIII.15.16.

¹²⁰ *Conf.* XIII.15.18. The quote is from 1Jn 3:2, which will be discussed in §2.3 below.

¹²¹ *Conf.* XIII.17.21.

above, and appear like luminaries for the world, firmly set in the vault that is your scripture,” like the sun, moon, and stars which are created on the fourth day, marking “the distinction between realities of the mind and sensible things as between day and night.” The human person illumined and raised up by God to shine for all to see is thus the phenomenon *par excellence*.¹²²

In creation, human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. By affinity for this world, however, the self disintegrates, bringing us to death’s door. But, in conversion, the soul is revived, the image restored, the likeness renewed. In this re-creation, “Allow yourselves to be reformed by the renewal of your minds, that you may be able to discern what is God’s will, what is good and pleasing to him and perfect.”¹²³ To discern God’s will for ourselves is to be filled by the Spirit. With this love, God perfects who we become. Augustine believes that the command to increase and multiply is realized as new interpreters faithfully magnify the meaning of Scripture by expression. As an example, he considers the “love of God and our neighbor: it is simple in itself, but in what a variety of mysterious ways, in what tongues without number, and in any one tongue through what innumerable modes of speech it is given tangible expression!” Meaning is the nourishment God has appointed for our souls. But only “those who find this food delicious are nourished by it; people whose God is their belly do not enjoy it. As for those who supply the food, it is not what they give that is the fruit, but the intention with which they give.”¹²⁴ The food of the Spirit is joy. Spiritual discernment is our taste for goodness, distinguishing between gift and fruit. The gift is the actual thing given. Fruit refers to “the good, upright will of the giver,” which gives meaning to the gift. What God made in creation is made fruitful by conversion. To be fed by spiritual fruit is to find joy in loving God and one another.

¹²² *Conf.* XIII.18.22. Phenomenology is derived from the Greek *phainō*, which can mean produce light (shine), become visible (appear), or become known (be recognized/revealed). See also Ch. 3, n. 19.

¹²³ *Conf.* XIII.22.32. Augustine is quoting Rom 12:2. See §6.3 below for further discussion of this section.

¹²⁴ *Conf.* XIII.26.39.

An artist realizes his work is complete when he judges it to be very good. The Bishop of Hippo affirms God's judgment (Gn 1:31), confessing that all things God has made are very good, firmly rejecting the Manichaeism of his youth. But how can God, eternally perfect, understand our world, bound by time and decay, as good? This question utterly confounds the categories of classical philosophy.¹²⁵ As creatures we are existentially conditioned by time and change, but those who realize God's love in their lives discover they are pilgrims embarked upon a journey to eternity. Augustine cries out to God for a solution to this hermeneutic dilemma of ours, caught between the immediacy of the material world and the animal nature of our living bodies and the transcendent meaning revealed in the *cor* of our being. This is the reply he receives:

Listen, human creature: what my scripture says, I myself say, but whereas scripture says it in terms of time, my Word is untouched by time, because he subsists with me eternally, equal to myself. What you see through my Spirit, I see, just as what you say through my Spirit, I say. You see these things in terms of time, but I do not see in time, nor when you say these things in temporal fashion do I speak in a way conditioned by time.¹²⁶

Those who see the world through God's Spirit are seeing it as God's eyes, the eyes of being in love. When people see and love the goodness in a thing, they echo God's judgment: "whatever created things please them for your sake, it is you who are arousing their delight in these things; and anything that gives us joy through the Spirit gives you joy in us." When a person sees a thing "as good in such a way that their God views its goodness through that person's eyes," the Creator is thereby "loved in what he has made." The solution to our hermeneutical problem is the meaning that shines forth from the true Word in the Gift itself. Drawing once more upon Paul, Augustine asserts that we would be unable to love God, "were it not through the Spirit he has given us, 'because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit

¹²⁵ It is upon this question that any proposed union between Jerusalem and Athens depends. Is the "God of the philosophers" also the God of the Bible? Is the One known by philosophy also YHWH? Are philosophy & theology two roads leading to the same destination?

¹²⁶ *Conf.* XIII.29.34.

bestowed upon us” (Rom 5:5). It is in the Spirit that we become able to “see that everything is good which in any degree has being, because it derives from him who as being in no degree at all, but is simply He Is (*est est*).”¹²⁷ Filled by the Spirit, by our lives we can realize this grace in all things, seeing and touching them as beloved creatures of God.

In the end, the artist signs his work with love. Our confession of praise is the autograph of the Creator. “Your creation sings praise to you so that we may love you, and we love you so that praise may be offered to you by your creation.”¹²⁸ All creation is a sign of the Maker’s love, for we are loved into being. Since we exist by love, we can know that we are loved by I AM WHO AM. We participate in this love which creates us by loving our Creator in all things. If we want to understand the truth of our existence, we must love. Human beings can see the things that God has made; the existence of material things presses all around us. But, for God, “it is different: they exist because you see them. Moreover when we see that they exist, we see it outside ourselves, but when we see that they are good, we see it by inner vision, whereas you see them as created in no other place than where you saw them as non-existent things you willed to create.” Only by realizing God in our lives through *caritas* can we ever hope to understand things as they truly are. Only by love do we have any access to truth and reality itself: “Let us rather ask of you, seek in you, knock at your door. Only so will we receive, only so find, and only so will the door be opened to us.”¹²⁹ Augustine confesses that he is nothing without God. His existence comes to him as pure gift, drawing him to realize his true self by incarnating the love of the Word—to love in this way is ultimately to will the order of all creation.

¹²⁷ *Conf.* XIII.31.46. Cf. the revelation of the Divine Name to Moses in Ex 3:14 (rendered in Latin as *sum qui sum*), as well as *ipsum esse* in Thomas Aquinas, see Chs. 3 & 4 below.

¹²⁸ *Conf.* XIII.33.48.

¹²⁹ *Conf.* XIII.38.53.

§2 *De Doctrina Christiana & Homilies on 1John: Augustine's Hermeneutics of Love*

*And so we have these three things, for whose sake all knowledge and all prophecy are pressed into service: faith, hope, charity.*¹³⁰

Scripture is as much the subject of Augustine's *Confessiones* as the author's own self. The magnitude and extent of allusions in the text make evident how integral the Bible is to the way the Doctor of Grace understands and presents himself to us. The story he tells illustrates the pivotal role reading the Bible played in his conversions. *Confessiones* shows how intimately his understanding and love of God are linked to his understanding and love of Scripture. Augustine believes reading the biblical text is a means to truth in loving relationship with God. Reading the Bible in this way is a process of personal development through integrity and commitment, a form of intellectual and moral discipline. Although not stated explicitly, *Confessiones* shows the effect of poor catechesis. Augustine was technically a catechumen from a child in Bk. I until baptism at the start of Bk. IX. Throughout his youth he rejected something he barely understood—so would the young man have turned away from his mother's faith if it had been adequately explained?

The difficulties that would scandalize him for years might well have been addressed by a program of Christian education. As he relates in Bk. V, it was not until Augustine encountered Ambrose that anyone showed him how to interpret Scripture in an intelligent way. What might his life have been like if he had a teacher to help open the meaning of the Bible years earlier?¹³¹ Deficiency in the catechesis of his youth left the impressionable Augustine largely defenseless against the temptation and error to which he would succumb. Thus, *Confessiones* can be read as a kind of *Bildungsroman*, telling the story of Augustine's circuitous Christian education.

¹³⁰ *Doc. Chr.* I.33.37.

¹³¹ Until he met Ambrose, Augustine was without a teacher of sufficient intellectual standing to answer his questions. While he was never without Christian love thanks to Monica, mother and son are never able to relate on an intellectual level. Even then, he barely had much chance to talk directly with the Bishop of Milan (*Conf.* VI.3.4).

His odyssey was all the more arduous for the lack of formal instruction. While he had promising encounters with Cicero and the Platonists that help him toward the goal, he would get blown off course by the Manichees and the skeptics. Christian faith would not be presented to him in an intellectually respectable manner until he met Ambrose. This pivotal development would come unintentionally—Augustine started listening to his sermons only to listen to the style of his words, not their meaning. But Ambrose was sowing seeds that would eventually take root, yielding their fruit when Augustine came to him seeking baptism. When he reflects on his journey in *Confessiones*, Augustine has become, like Ambrose, an overseer of the Church. The Bishop of Hippo demonstrates an acute awareness of the Church's need for teachers, showing how theologically-sound education is a vital aspect of Christian formation.

Around the same time he wrote *Confessiones*, Augustine was also working on a program for training Christian teachers, which he would call *De doctrina Christiana*.¹³² By integrating the interpretation of Scripture with philosophy and the art of rhetoric, the Doctor of Grace develops a system for understanding and communicating Christian meaning. In the work, Augustine sets out a hermeneutical pedagogy designed to help others come to transformative insights like the ones he himself had gained. Ultimately, his aim is to find a way to communicate the meaning of the Word of God with others. A program of teaching might spare them from the scandal of error which had ensnared the young Augustine, pointing them instead directly to the love of Christ.

This section shall focus on the hermeneutic of love the Doctor of Grace develops in *De doctrina Christiana* to understand the meaning of Scripture. Augustine bases his method on two distinctions. The first, between signs and things, is ultimately between meaning and existence.

¹³² Although *doc. Chr.* would be completed years after *Conf.*, the general consensus among scholars is that both works originate toward the beginning of his episcopate. As this is not a work of specialized Augustine scholarship, and the point is incidental to the main argument, it is unnecessary to work out a precise literary chronology here. However, it bears noting that Ambrose passed away around this same time (April 397).

Beyond the bare fact of its own existence, meaning is the other reality to which a sign points.¹³³

Second is the distinction between *uti* and *frui*, use and enjoyment. Augustine believes Scripture teaches how we should relate to everything, an order of love, integral to the kind of persons we become. His philosophy of interpretation is thus a hermeneutic of personal formation as well.

De doctrina Christiana is a theoretical work, devising rules for dealing with Scripture. To flesh them out, this section will conclude with a concrete example showing their application to a single biblical text. *Homilies on 1John* represent more than his personal interpretation; delivered in his ecclesiastical role, they are the Bishop of Hippo's attempt to share his reflection on the text with the flock. Given the subject matter, they are an ideal demonstration case for his hermeneutic of *caritas*, for in the meaning of this Epistle, "there is enough that is flavorful for all those whose heart's palate, where God's bread is tasted, is sound, and there is enough that is of note for God's holy Church; in particular, charity is commended. He said many things, and nearly everything was about charity."¹³⁴ In these homilies, Augustine applies his hermeneutical method to interpret and communicate the Johannine theology of *agapē*, teaching what it means to be Christian. By opening the audience to the meaning of the Scripture, our preacher hopes to spark transformative realizations of *caritas* in their own lives, believing that in the interpretation of the Bible—with its meaning *communicated*, shared by all—the celebrant and the congregation can be united with one other and God in love.

¹³³ Augustine does not take up the question of the being of beings as such in *doc. Chr.*, appearing to take the being of things as self-evident or, at least, tangential to his intended focus in the work. His distinction between *res* and *signa* will be developed in §5.1 below.

¹³⁴ *Ep. Jo.* Prologue. The "he" referred to here is the author, whom Augustine believes to be the beloved disciple, John, uncritically following the traditional attribution. Contemporary biblical scholars would not reach a similar conclusion. A pressing question in evaluating Augustine's biblical hermeneutics is whether his pre-critical approach to authorship represents a fundamental defect inevitably leading to other errors. While this dissertation is not on biblical theology as such, any serious attempt to retrieve and study the thought of Augustine (as well as Thomas Aquinas) must address the question of the use of Scripture in theology. Put simply: Does Augustine's belief that the beloved disciple wrote 1John make his theological interpretation of the Epistle's meaning any less valid? Behind this is the larger question of the relationship of historical criticism to the understanding of traditional believers.

§2.1 Christian Teaching as Meaning Love

*And so people supported by faith, hope and charity, and retaining a firm grip on them, have no need of the scriptures except for instructing others.*¹³⁵

Fired in his quest for wisdom from reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, Augustine first studied the Bible...only to be baffled and put off by it. The translation he read did not have the literary elegance of Virgil and Cicero he so admired. By comparison the biblical text seemed unlearned, crude: "My swollen pride recoiled from its style," and thus, "my intelligence failed to penetrate to its inner meaning."¹³⁶ The young man was reading on a superficial level. Unsurprisingly, this method would lead him to some objectionable interpretations. His literal reading of the Hebrew Bible, with its anthropomorphic descriptions of a seemingly vengeful God, and its accounts of immoral behavior—even among God's chosen people—scandalized him so much that he would actually consider the teachings of the Manichees and their convoluted interpretation of the Bible to be more plausible by comparison! Ironically, the formal education he had received up to that point was inhibiting his ability to interpret and understand Scripture; by emphasizing style and neglecting substance, it had rendered him blind to true meaning.

Almost a decade will pass before Augustine would begin to take the Bible seriously again, thanks to Ambrose's sermons. Listening to the Bishop of Milan showed him how the scriptures could be understood in an intellectually respectable way:

This realization was particularly keen when once, and again, and indeed frequently, I heard some difficult passage of the Old Testament explained figuratively; such passages had been death to me because I was taking them literally. As I listened to many such scriptural texts being interpreted in a spiritual sense I confronted my own attitude, or at least that despair which had led me to believe that no resistance whatever could be offered to people who loathed and derided the law and the prophets.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Doc. Chr.* I.39.43.

¹³⁶ *Conf.* III.5.9.

¹³⁷ *Conf.* V.14.24.

From this point on, Scripture will begin to transform Augustine, memorably illustrated by the scene in the garden in Bk. VIII, where reading Rom 13:13-14 changes the trajectory of his life.

This method of spiritual reading and interpretation is the focus of this section.

In *De doctrina Christiana* Augustine develops what Ambrose taught him. The Bishop of Milan emphasized this statement of Paul's: "The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life" (2Cor 3:6). With this teaching, Ambrose "drew aside the veil of mystery and opened to them the spiritual meaning of passages which, if taken literally, would seem to mislead."¹³⁸ *Confessiones* shows how Ambrose considered it his responsibility to teach sound biblical interpretation, a form of pastoral care which would play a decisive role in Augustine's conversion. Without doubt, the Bishop of Hippo would himself have considered providing such guidance to be part of his duties: Christian ministry is about realizing the meaning of Scripture. His Letter 21 reveals that when Augustine was first ordained, he requested a leave of absence to prepare himself for his duties by studying the Bible. Well aware of the harm incorrect understandings of Scripture can cause, his duty as bishop was to ensure that the pastors he oversaw could teach its meaning competently.¹³⁹

For any would-be interpreter, the Bible presents a consummate hermeneutical challenge. Augustine acknowledges there are many difficult passages in which the meaning is obscure, with myriad potentially-valid interpretations. Drawing aside the veil of this mystery is not a clear-cut process of finding and extracting the correct meaning from the text. He cannot simply declare the full meaning of the biblical books to others *ex cathedra*. Rather, his goal is a generalized method, a hermeneutic of Scripture. He explains that his purpose in writing is imparting such rules,

¹³⁸ *Conf.* VI.4.6.

¹³⁹ H.-I. Marrou contends *doc. Chr.* is part of a much more ambitious project: a sketch of a Christian liberal arts education, a forerunner of J.H. Newman's *Idea of a University*. Hill suggests instead that Augustine undertook the work in response to a request from Aurelius, the bishop of Carthage and primate of Africa, to write a handbook for the education of clergy; *Teaching Christianity*, 95-7. While Bks. I-III could be read profitably by an educated lay audience, Bk. IV, with its focus on homiletical rhetoric, seems much more appropriate for training pastors.

for dealing with the scriptures, which I consider can be not inappropriately passed on to students, enabling them to make progress not only by reading others who have opened up the hidden secrets of the divine literature, but also by themselves opening them up to yet others again. I have undertaken to pass these rules on to those who are both willing and well qualified to learn, if our Lord and God does not deny me, as I write, the ideas he usually suggests to me in my reflections on the subject.¹⁴⁰

Students of the scriptures must wrestle with them together. Augustine believes that to read the Bible is to engage in dialogue with others. Human beings must learn about God and themselves with and from one another. The revelation of God does not come to us alone, unmediated.

As precedent, Augustine cites the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10. Though an angel had already appeared to Cornelius, it is Peter who instructs and baptizes the centurion and his household as a sign of respect for human beings as bearers of God's word. Were this not so,

How could the saying be true, "For the temple of God, which is what you are, is holy," if God never gave any answers from his human temple, but only thundered out his revelation from the sky and by means of angels? Then again charity itself, which brings people together with the knot of unity, would have no scope for pouring minds and hearts together, as it were, and blending them with one another, if human beings were never to learn anything from each other.¹⁴¹

The meaning of Scripture is a gift, given through our relationships with one another. Anything true that we discover is not our own private achievement, to which we are entitled by right:

"None of us...should claim our understanding of anything as our very own, except possibly of falsehood." This is because, "everything which is true comes from the one who said, 'I am the truth.' What do we have, after all, that we have not received?"¹⁴² Whatever understanding we gain has been given to us so that we can give it to help others understand. Proper interpretation and teaching of the Bible and its meaning takes place within the context of loving relationships with God and our fellow human beings. And thus, *caritas* is the sacramental *cor* of Scripture.

¹⁴⁰ *Doc. Chr.* Prologue 1.

¹⁴¹ *Doc. Chr.* Prologue 6. The quote is from 1Cor 3:17.

¹⁴² *Doc. Chr.* Prologue 8. Here Augustine is quoting Jn 14:6. Scripture can be said to embody the *Logos* in words.

Augustine identifies what he seeks at the beginning of Bk. I. He targets the “two things which all treatment of the scriptures is aiming at: a way to discover what needs to be understood, and a way to put across to others what has been understood.” Teaching Scripture, “a great and arduous work,” is one he would be rash to undertake relying solely on his own wits. Instead, his hopes of carrying the work through “rest in the one from whom, in my reflections, I have already received many ideas on this matter; and so there need be no fear that he will refrain from giving me the rest, when I begin spending on others what I have already been given.” Rather than being diminished, this gift increases geometrically when shared. Augustine likens this to Jesus’ feeding the thousands with a few loaves of bread: “just as that bread increased in quantity when it was broken, in the same way all the things the Lord has already granted me for setting about this work will be multiplied under his inspiration, when I start passing them on to others.”¹⁴³

The hermeneutic of *De doctrina Christiana* rests upon two key distinctions. The first is between use and enjoyment; the second between things and signs. Augustine devotes most of Bk. I of to the former distinction, moving on to explore the latter in Bk. II.¹⁴⁴ At the end of Bk. I, to conclude his discussion of *uti* and *frui*, the Bishop of Hippo sums up:

So what all that has been said amounts to, while we have been dealing with things, is that “the fulfillment and the end of the law” and of all the divine scriptures “is love”; love of the thing which is to be enjoyed, and of the thing which is able to enjoy that thing together with us, because there is no need for a commandment that we should love ourselves. So in order that we might know how to do this and be able to, the whole ordering of time was arranged by divine providence for our salvation.¹⁴⁵

Love is the rule of interpretation. If you think, “that you have understood the divine scriptures, or any part of them, in such a way that by this understanding you do not build up this twin love of

¹⁴³ *Doc. Chr.* I.1.1.

¹⁴⁴ The distinction between *uti* and *frui* is discussed in the following section (§2.2), while *res* and *signa* will be taken up in Chapter 2 (§5.1), reflecting the progression in which Augustine considers the two.

¹⁴⁵ *Doc. Chr.* I.35.39. Cf. Rom 13:8; 1Tm 1:5. For a masterful exploration of the topic of the love of self, see Oliver O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980).

God and neighbor, then you have not yet understood them.” On the other hand, some mistaken interpretations, which “have not said what the author you have been reading actually meant in the first place,” should be forgiven if in the process “you have made judgments about them that are helpful for building up this love...then your mistake is not pernicious, and you certainly cannot be accused of lying.”¹⁴⁶ Scripture’s true meaning is in the imperative, which thus entails trying to understand both the text and its interpreters in light of the dual command of *caritas*.

Augustine likens interpretation to a journey. Those who make mistaken judgments about the scriptures, but nevertheless intend *caritas*, “are mistaken in the same sort of way as people who go astray off the road, but still proceed by rough paths to the same place as the road was taking them to.” However, those who make a habit of deviating from the path might eventually be “driven to take the wrong direction altogether.”¹⁴⁷ If mistaken interpretations conflict enough with the author’s intended meaning, the temptation to doubt the veracity of the author may arise. Correction is vital, lest we, convinced of the truth of our opinions, become angry with Scripture and begin to doubt the faith. The Bishop of Hippo cautions,

“For we walk by faith, not by sight”; but faith will start tottering if the authority of scripture is undermined; then with faith tottering, charity itself also begins to sicken. Because if you fall from faith, you are bound to fall also from charity; it is impossible, after all, to love what you do not believe exists. On the other hand, if you both believe and love, then by doing good and complying with the requirements of good morals, you ensure that you also hope to come eventually to what you love.¹⁴⁸

Understanding is a function of who we are. Correct interpretation entails virtue, being a righteous person. Following 1Cor 13:13, Augustine believes three virtues are paramount: “we have these three things, for whose sake all knowledge and all prophecy are pressed into service, faith, hope, charity.” Ultimately, those who attain these three, and retain “a firm grip on them, have no need

¹⁴⁶ *Doc. Chr.* I.36.40.

¹⁴⁷ *Doc. Chr.* I.36.41.

¹⁴⁸ *Doc. Chr.* I.37.41. The quote is from 2Cor 5:7.

of the scriptures except for instructing others.” At a time in which literacy was uncommon, Augustine was knew of many who lived exemplary Christian lives without being able to read; but were moved by Scripture, forming “a kind of scaffolding” upon which faith, hope, and charity could be constructed in their lives.¹⁴⁹ Though the way is daunting, we need not worry because, “when you come to realize that ‘the end of the law is love, from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith without pretense,’ you will be able to relate all the understanding of the divine scriptures to these three, and so be able to approach the study of these books without the least anxiety.”¹⁵⁰ The more clearly we can make out our ultimate destination, the less we need to fear losing our way as we struggle toward it in twilight.

Having developed a theoretical framework in the first two books, Augustine sets down practical guidelines for interpreting Scripture in Bk. III, with particular attention to ambiguous signs, which can obscure whether the text should be taken literally or figuratively. He avers that the “one and only method” to employ when anything found in the divine writings: that which

cannot be referred to either to good, honest morals or to the truth of the faith, you must know is said figuratively. Good honest morals belong to loving God and one’s neighbor, the truth of the faith to knowing God and one’s neighbor. As for hope, that lies in everybody’s own conscience, to the extent that you perceive yourself to be making progress in the love of God and neighbor, and in the knowledge of them.¹⁵¹

Understood correctly, Scripture “commands nothing but charity, or love, and censures nothing but cupidity, or greed, and that is the way it gives shape and form to human morals.” It teaches Catholic faith; “it tells the story of things past, foretells things future, points out things present,” for “all these things are of value for nourishing and fortifying charity or love and overcoming and extinguishing cupidity or greed.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Doc. Chr.* I.39.43. One such example is Antony of Egypt. Another, almost certainly, is his mother, Monica.

¹⁵⁰ *Doc. Chr.* I.40.44. Augustine is quoting from 1Tm 1:5.

¹⁵¹ *Doc. Chr.* III.10.14.

¹⁵² *Doc. Chr.* III.10.15.

Ultimately the light of love dispels ambiguity. When dealing with figurative expressions, Augustine urges that interpreters “should take pains to turn over and over in your mind what you read, until your interpretation of it is led right through to the kingdom of charity.”¹⁵³ If, on the other hand, the literal meaning leads to love already, then the expression should not be taken as figurative. The love to which the Bible bears witness is also the ultimate help available to us for interpreting that very witness. *Caritas* is the crucial factor for understanding the meaning of Scripture. To communicate this understanding, Augustine turns to rhetoric in Bk. IV. As is the case with intelligence, he is aware that the gift of eloquence is not uniformly distributed. In his conclusion, the former professor of rhetoric confesses, “for us to be listened to with obedient compliance, whatever the grandeur of the speaker’s utterances, [the speaker’s] manner of life carries more weight.”¹⁵⁴ The substance of meaning far outweighs the style with which it is presented. Even if a pastor is unable to communicate the meaning eloquently or incisively, “let him conduct himself that he not only earns a reward for himself, but also gives an example to others, and so his manner of life can itself be a kind of eloquent sermon.”¹⁵⁵ No pastor can do very wrong who shepherds his flock with charity. At the end of the work, Augustine gives thanks to God that he has been able to set out, “to the best of my poor ability, not what sort of pastor I am myself, lacking many of the necessary qualities as I do, but what sort the pastor should be who is eager to toil away, not only for his own sake but for others, in the teaching of sound, that is Christian, doctrine.”¹⁵⁶ The meaning of Scripture is given to us by God in the form of a human person through *caritas*. The love of this Word, Jesus Christ, is the heart of Christian teaching.

¹⁵³ *Doc. Chr.* III.15.23.

¹⁵⁴ *Doc. Chr.* IV.27.59. As Francis de Sales would say, “He who preaches with love, preaches effectively.”

¹⁵⁵ *Doc. Chr.* IV.28.61. The kind of personal witness which Augustine describes here seems an excellent example of what Lonergan refers to as incarnate meaning: “the meaning of a person, of his way of life, of his words, or of his deeds,” *Method*, 73. For further discussion, see the conclusion of §5.2 below.

¹⁵⁶ *Doc. Chr.* IV.31.64.

§2.2 *Uti & Frui*: Ordering Love

*But living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things; to love things, that is to say, in the right order.*¹⁵⁷

If love is the hermeneutic key to Scripture, then interpretation is an attempt to understand the meaning of love. Augustine devotes most of Bk. I of *De doctrina Christiana* to defining love, identifying two fundamentally distinct forms of relationship: *uti* (use) and *frui* (enjoyment). This hermeneutic is a method for understanding and navigating our relationality. How we understand any given thing is a function of how we relate to it and, ultimately, to everything else. However, not all our relationships are the same. God transcends creatureliness; and therefore, our only true enjoyment can be in loving relationship with our Creator. If we are to relate rightly to anything, our love must be ordered so as to find happiness in God, the unchanging Standard.

It is necessary for us to make distinctions because not all things are the same. In order to consider signs, Augustine must first distinguish between things. There are some things which,

are meant to be enjoyed, others which are meant to be used, yet others which do both the enjoying and the using. Things that are to be enjoyed make us happy; things which are to be used help us on our way to happiness, providing us, so to say, with crutches and props for reaching the things that will make us happy, and enabling us to keep them.¹⁵⁸

The distinction between *uti* and *frui* emerges in connection to happiness. Augustine regards happiness as our ultimate desire, our true love. The difference between use and enjoyment is teleological: we relate to anything as a function of our ultimate goal of happiness. Some things make us happy, and others help us to attain happiness. Human beings are things that are able both to use and enjoy. We are creatures with free will to choose how we relate to other things, including which of them we will love, and how.

¹⁵⁷ *Doc. Chr.* I.27.28.

¹⁵⁸ *Doc. Chr.* I.3.3. See §5.1 below for discussion of the distinction between *res* and *signa*.

Augustine believes our present life is a journey. The human being is a pilgrim, *Homo viator*, on the way to happiness. The enjoyment that we seek, “consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake, while use consists in referring what has come your way to what your love aims at obtaining, provided, that is, it deserves to be loved.” Beginning in the realm of time and matter, human life is an odyssey to our forever home, our *Patria*:

in this mortal life in which we are exiles “away from the Lord”; if we wish to return to our home country, where alone we can be truly happy, we have to use this world, not enjoy it, so that we may behold “the invisible things of God, brought to our knowledge through the things that have been made”; that is, so that we may proceed from temporal and bodily things to grasp those that are eternal and spiritual.¹⁵⁹

Not all stay on course, however. With choice comes the possibility of error; by choosing to enjoy things that are meant to be used, or vice versa, our love becomes disordered, thus impeding our progress toward happiness. If our heart’s compass does not point us to God, we lose our bearings and get thrown off track. Our way home can become “blocked by our love for inferior things,” as the local attraction of concupiscence points us to material things instead of true north.¹⁶⁰

Love moves all people toward what they believe is happiness. But Augustine believes we can only truly enjoy our Creator, the Triune God Who Is: the “one supreme thing, and one which is shared in common by all who enjoy it; if, that is to say, it is a thing, and not the cause of all things; if indeed it is a cause.” He realizes the awkwardness of calling God a “thing,” concluding “it is better just to say that this Trinity is the one God ‘from whom are all things, through whom all things, in whom all things.’”¹⁶¹ Questioning whether even this formulation is adequate, he asks, “Have I said anything, that is worthy of God?” He doubts it: “all I feel I have done is to wish to say something; but if I have said anything, it is not what I wished to say.” Nevertheless,

¹⁵⁹ *Doc. Chr.* I.4.4. The quotes are from 2Cor 5:6 & Rom 1:20 respectively.

¹⁶⁰ *Doc. Chr.* I.3.3.

¹⁶¹ *Doc. Chr.* I.5.5. The quote is from Rom 11:36. Cf. Paul’s speech to the Areopagus (Acts 17:28).

the Doctor of Grace believes his struggle with words is meaningful, “while nothing really worthy of God can be said about him, he has accepted the homage of human voices, and has wished us to rejoice in praising him with our words. That in fact is what is meant by calling him God.”¹⁶² Although people understand different things to be “God,” they ultimately mean the same thing by it: “all agree that God is whatever they put above all other things.”¹⁶³ By calling this reality “God,” we praise it as what we love most, that which makes us happy and fills us with joy. But only something that is eternal and immutable can fully satisfy the infinite longing of our heart.

Human beings are creatures, things who are able to choose how to relate to other things, whether to use or enjoy them.¹⁶⁴ But, being created in the image and likeness of God, should we humans consider ourselves as things to be enjoyed, used, or both? The core of Christian ethics is the Greatest Commandment (Mk 12:28-34). But does this mean that we are to love our neighbor for her own sake? Augustine concludes, other people “are to be loved for the sake of something else, because if a thing is to be loved for its own sake, it means that it constitutes the life of bliss.”¹⁶⁵ Finite and fallen, we cannot find true enjoyment in our selves or others, “but for the sake of the one whom we are to enjoy.” People become “as good as can be,” only “when they aim all their lives long at that unchanging life, and cling to it with all their hearts.” And so, “all your thoughts and your whole life and all your intelligence should be focused on him from whom you have received the very things you devote to him.” All things that occur to us, “as fit to be loved must be whisked along toward that point to which the whole impetus of your love is hastening.” Augustine does not mean, however, that we ought not care about our neighbor in

¹⁶² *Doc. Chr.* I.6.6.

¹⁶³ *Doc. Chr.* I.7.7.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. David Foster Wallace’s declaration his 2005 Commencement Address at Kenyon College: “Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship”; *This Is Water* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009).

¹⁶⁵ *Doc. Chr.* I.22.20.

himself but rather use him for God's sake. Instead, "all who love their neighbors in the right way ought so to deal with them that they too love God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind." To "use" here means to order our relationships with one another toward the ultimate good of all. To love them, "in this way as themselves, they are relating all their love of themselves and of the others to that love of God, which allows no channel to be led off from itself that will diminish its own flow."¹⁶⁶ The distinction he draws is teleological: we should love others as they are in such a way as to direct us all toward sharing our ultimate goal in communion. True love relates all things in the love of God by *utilizing* them for the common good we enjoy together.

Personhood is the property of things capable of intentional relationship, of loving one another. Augustine explains, "Not all things which are to be used are also to be loved, but only those which can be related to God together with ourselves in a kind of social companionship, such as human beings or angels or which being related to ourselves are in need of God's benefits through us, such as our bodies." He distinguishes four kinds of things which we love: "one which is above us, the second which is we ourselves, the third which is on a level with us, the fourth which is beneath us."¹⁶⁷ The love of the second and fourth come to us naturally; no matter how far one falls away from the truth, the love of self and one's body remains. A deformed self-love undermines our ability to love the first and third by seeking greatness to lord over others. Such pride refuses to recognize anything above us: "It is ingrained...in the vitiated spirit to be striving more than anything else for what it claims as if it were its due, but what is in fact due to the one God alone."¹⁶⁸ *Amour-propre*, craving to be loved alone, ultimately leads to hatred for all things,

¹⁶⁶ *Doc. Chr.* I.22.21.

¹⁶⁷ *Doc. Chr.* I.23.22. In this schema, we see the influence of the Platonic analogy of being as a vertical hierarchy.

¹⁶⁸ *Doc. Chr.* I.23.23. "For the error bred in the bone/Of each woman and each man/Craves what it cannot have,/Not universal love/But to be loved alone," W.H. Auden, "September 1, 1939." Cf. the psychoanalytic concept of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5).

including the self. This is a paradox, since no one intentionally hates oneself—but such is the absurdity of sin. While we love by nature, our love can go astray all too easily. Understanding is needed: “what human beings have to be instructed in is precisely the way in which we are to love ourselves so as to benefit from it.”¹⁶⁹ And so, Augustine concludes,

living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things; to love things, that is to say, in the right order, so that you do not love what is not to be loved, or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally.¹⁷⁰

Living rightly means loving things in their right order, by desiring “all of them to love God together with us, and all our helping them or being helped by them is to be referred to that one single end.” But how can we enact the love of God? The Doctor of Grace ponders this question:

So what in comparison ought we, in the fellowship of the love of God, to be doing, seeing that enjoying him means living in bliss, and that from him all those who love him derive both their very existence and their love for him, and that about him it is impossible to fear that anyone who knows him should dislike him, and that it is his will that he should be loved, not to gain anything from it himself, but in order to confer on those who love him an eternal reward, which is in fact himself, the very one they love?¹⁷¹

The answer is that we should love our enemies (Mt 5:44). Believers need not fear them, having faith they cannot deprive us of our true love. Rather, we should be merciful toward those whose hatred is cutting them off from us, others, and the God who loves us all.

By loving those who do not love us back, we realize the way God loves us. Our Creator “takes pity on us, so that we may enjoy him, while we take pity on each other, again so that we may all enjoy him, not one another.”¹⁷² We are to love our enemies for God’s sake, because God loved us while we were enemies (Rom 5:8). Scripture assures us of this by drawing our attention

¹⁶⁹ *Doc. Chr.* I.25.26.

¹⁷⁰ *Doc. Chr.* I.27.28.

¹⁷¹ *Doc. Chr.* I.29.30.

¹⁷² *Doc. Chr.* I.30.33.

to God's love for us again and again. But how can our Creator love us? God cannot enjoy us, because that would mean God is in need of some good that is ours. Instead, the opposite is true: "Every good of ours...is either God himself, or derived from him."¹⁷³ God does not enjoy us, but makes use of us instead. Not, however, "in the same way as we use things; because our making use of things is directed to the end of enjoying God's goodness, while God's making use of us is directed to his goodness. Because he is good, after all, we simply are; and insofar as we are, we are good." Our being is a gift from the One who supremely and primordially Is, and "everything else that is, not only could not be unless it came from him, but also can only be good insofar as it has received its being so from him." God's making use of us is thus, "directed to our benefit and not to his, but only to his goodness," which is ultimately our reward, "that we should enjoy him and that all of us who enjoy him should also enjoy one another in him."¹⁷⁴ God utilizes us to be signs, ordering human beings to communicate the good news of God's love for all creation.

The Doctor of Grace's hermeneutics of love culminates with our enjoying one another in the love that makes us. What he means by this is that, "when you enjoy a human being in God, you are really enjoying God rather than the human being. You will be enjoying the one, after all, in whom you find your bliss, and you will be delighted to have reached the one in whom you now hope, in order to come to him at last." However, Augustine clarifies that it is possible for us to use things with *delectation*, that is, with delight. For, when that which we love is present to us,

delight is also bound to accompany it; but if you pass through this and refer it to that end where you are to remain permanently, you are really using it, and are said by a figure of speech, and not in the proper sense of the word, to enjoy it. If, however, you cling to it and remain fixed in it, placing in it the end of all your joys, then you can be said really and truly to enjoy it. But this should not be done except with that divine Trinity, that is with the supreme and unchangeable good.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ *Doc. Chr.* I.31.34.

¹⁷⁴ *Doc. Chr.* I.32.35.

¹⁷⁵ *Doc. Chr.* I.33.37. Cf. the vision Augustine and Monica share at Ostia in *Conf.* IX; see §1.1 above.

The distinction between *uti* and *frui* is ultimately based on the distinction between creature and Creator. God utilizes us so that all might enjoy perfect happiness. The interpretation of Scripture thus leads us to discover the work of the Triune God in our own lives. Augustine understands Jesus' declaration, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," as referring to the Trinity: "It is along me that you come, at me that you arrive, and in me that you abide," our Lord tells us, for "when you reach him, you also reach the Father, because it is through his equality that the one to whom he is equal can be recognized, with the Holy Spirit binding and so to say gluing us in there, so that we may abide for ever in that supreme and unchangeable good."¹⁷⁶ Developed to understand and share the meaning of Scripture, the hermeneutics of love has ultimately lead us to insights into the nature of reality itself and our relationship to it, i.e. to the threshold of ontology.

§2.3 *Homilies on 1John: Communicating the Meaning of Caritas*

*If we know, we should love, for knowledge apart from charity doesn't save.*¹⁷⁷

As revelation, Scripture is a sacrament of the meaning of God, which must be shared in communion with others—for understanding is realized by communication. Having set out his method in *De doctrina Christiana* I-III, Augustine turns to rhetoric in Bk. IV for ways to share the fruit of interpretation with others. While it is a fascinating treatise on pastoral rhetoric from a master of the art, Bk. IV is abstract and only tangentially related to the subject of love. Instead, this section shall explore Augustine's practical application of his principles of interpretation in the exposition of a biblical text on the subject of love, his *Homilies on 1John*. Preaching would have been one of the Bishop of Hippo's primary pastoral responsibilities. And so, his life comes

¹⁷⁶ *Doc. Chr.* I.34.38. The biblical reference is to Jn 14:6.

¹⁷⁷ *Ep. Jo.* II.8. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, trans. Boniface Ramsay (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008).

full circle. His mind had first been opened to Scripture by listening to Ambrose's sermons, in which the Bishop of Milan unveiled the spiritual meaning of the text. By the time Augustine composes his *Homilies on 1John*, he himself has become a revered bishop, whose job it is to communicate the mysteries of Scripture to all who might come to listen.

These ten homilies, believed to have originally been delivered during and immediately after Easter Week 407, also represent the earliest surviving commentary on the letter.¹⁷⁸ Like the Epistle itself, Augustine's *Homilies on 1John* arise out of a situation of dispute and schism—it is evident the Donatist Controversy is not far from his mind. In his eyes, the Donatists, by rejecting believers they considered tainted by sin, were themselves guilty of an offence against *caritas* that was tearing the Church asunder. And so, 1John would have been a timely choice for exposition. As a succinct statement of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, it is a most appropriate selection for Easter. As an appeal to unity in *caritas*, it also represents a powerful scriptural exhortation for bringing the schism with the Donatists to an end.

Although by no means a complete treatment either of the subject of love or of the Epistle itself,¹⁷⁹ these homilies represent an outstanding example of Augustine's hermeneutics of love in action. In the Prologue, he states his understanding that “nearly everything” in the Epistle, “was about charity.” These homilies are a snapshot of Augustine in his ecclesial prime: having found his voice as a confident and eloquent exponent of the Christian faith and his place as a respected

¹⁷⁸ If this date is correct, it would place *ep. Jo.* 10 years after Augustine wrote *Conf.* and 20 years after his baptism by Ambrose. It would also place the *Homilies* almost 20 years before the composition Bk. IV of *doc. Chr.* As noted above, Augustine undertook *Conf.* and *doc. Chr.* at around the same time. However, he left the latter work unfinished midway through Bk. III, which Hill suggests was possibly because of controversy over his incorporation of the Donatist scholar Tychonius' rules for biblical interpretation into the work. (Was the inclusion of Tychonius a deliberately irenic move by Augustine perhaps?) It appears that Augustine only finished the remainder of *doc. Chr.* towards the very end of his career as he was in the process of writing his *Retractiones*; see *Retract.* II.4 and Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, 95-8. For the possible date and occasion of writing of *ep. Jo.* see the Introduction in Ramsay, *Homilies*, 9-13.

¹⁷⁹ *Ep. Jo.* does not represent a complete commentary on 1John. The Tenth Homily is, unfortunately, incomplete and ends abruptly before Augustine reaches his final conclusion.

elder and teacher of the Word, we have the opportunity to hear him speak with his beloved congregation in Hippo Regius about the book he loves most, the Bible, in order to teach them about love—his delight is almost palpable. Unfortunately, however, this section will not be a complete treatment either, instead focusing on how Augustine understands and develops the central insight of his homilies, the great Johannine *analogia*, God is *agapē* (1Jn 4:8,16).

The *Homilies on 1John* are expository and follow the biblical text verse-by-verse.¹⁸⁰ As stated in the Prologue, the Bishop of Hippo's goal in preaching is so he and his hearers, "may all rejoice together in one charity." Although love is not directly mentioned in the text until 2:5, Augustine wastes little time in getting to the subject, covering almost a fifth of 1John in the First Homily alone. As John states in that verse, "But he who keeps his word, truly in him the love of God has been made perfect."¹⁸¹ Following Jesus, love is perfected in loving even one's enemies, "and to love them to the degree that they may be brothers." That is, "Love your enemies in such a way that you wish them to be brothers; love your enemies in such a way that they are brought into your fellowship."¹⁸² This way of perfect *caritas* is paradigmatically realized by Jesus Christ on the cross, in forgiving the very people who were crucifying him (Lk 23:34). There can be no scandal for Christians to follow this way, "Because he who loves his brother tolerates everything for the sake of unity, because brotherly love exists in the unity of charity."¹⁸³ Desiring union with others, *caritas* forgives offenses, in order to convert enemies into friends.

¹⁸⁰ The homilies divide the text into the following sections: I (1:1-2:11), II (2:12-17), III (2:18-27), IV (2:28-3:8), V (3:9-18), VI (3:19-4:3), VII (4:4-12), VIII (4:13-16), IX (4:17-21), X (5:1-2). The tenth homily ends before any commentary is given on the remainder of the Epistle (5:3-21).

¹⁸¹ Although tradition has attributed authorship of this epistle to the beloved disciple, the text itself is anonymous. While there are strong literary ties between the Gospel of John (on which Augustine tells us in the Prologue he was preaching until his Easter Week excursus on 1Jn) and 1-3Jn, and thus the category of Johannine literature, modern biblical scholarship tends to be agnostic on the question of individual authorship, preferring to focus instead on the Johannine community. For the sake of clarity, and to be consistent with Augustine's own understanding, we will refer to the author of 1Jn as John, while taking no scholarly position on the authorship of the Epistle itself.

¹⁸² *Ep. Jo.* I.9.

¹⁸³ *Ep. Jo.* I.12.

Augustine begins the Second Homily with Christ's resurrection and of the existence of the Father, and then proceeds to *caritas*. Although Donatists acknowledge the first two points, he claims, "They don't commend charity." For if we believe the first two, "then we should love, for knowledge apart from charity doesn't save." If people, "wish to confess and not to love, you are starting to be like the demons" (Mt 8:29). In love, we must both confess and embrace. While the demons are "afraid because of their wickedness," believers "must love the one who forgives your wickedness." Then, the Doctor of Grace introduces a distinction between two loves, "that of the world and that of God," and that one displaces the other. If one loves the world, then "there is no way for the love of God to enter in." Instead, "Let the love of the world withdraw and that of God dwell in us," our heart a field cleared for the tree of charity to take root.¹⁸⁴

Opposed to *caritas* is the love of the world. Augustine contends the latter is characterized in 2:16-17 by a threefold temptation: "the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the ambition of the world." We are not forbidden to love the things God has created, but we "mustn't love them in the expectation of blessedness. Rather, you must favor and praise them in such a way that you love the Creator." Creation is an engagement ring: "A bridegroom gives a pledge for the very purpose that he himself may be loved in his pledge. That is why God gave you all these things, then; love him who made them. There is more that he wants to give you—that is, himself, who made them."¹⁸⁵ He explains the love of the world by analogy with a house: "For all lovers of the world, because they inhabit the world by their love, just as they inhabit heaven whose hearts are above and walk on the earth in their flesh—all lovers of the world, therefore, are referred to as 'the world.'"¹⁸⁶ By resisting these temptations of concupiscence, "you will

¹⁸⁴ *Ep. Jo.* II.8.

¹⁸⁵ *Ep. Jo.* II.11. Augustine also uses this motif in *Conf.* X; see §1.2 & §6.2 for discussion of these three vices.

¹⁸⁶ *Ep. Jo.* II.12.

make a place for charity to enter.” We should lay hold of the love of God, “so that, just as God is eternal, you also may abide in eternity, because a person’s love determines the person’s quality. Do you love the earth? You will be earth. Do you love God? What shall I say? That you will be God?” Unwilling to give an answer on his own authority alone, the Bishop of Hippo quotes from Ps 82:6: “I have said that you are gods and that all of you are sons of the Most High.”¹⁸⁷

Augustine returns to *caritas* in the conclusion of the Third Homily. The Doctor of Grace interprets “the anointing which teaches us all things” in 2:27 as referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which supports believers as the root of a tree enables it to stand and be nourished by the sun without drying up. We should not “think that a person learns anything from a human being.” While we “can offer a suggestion by the sound of our voice,” he says, “if he who teaches isn’t within, our voice is of no avail.” Augustine seeks to reach everyone, but knows any “whom the Holy Spirit doesn’t teach within, depart untaught.” While teaching from others outside is not without value, “He who teaches hearts has his chair in heaven.” Our ultimate teacher is God:

Let him, then, speak to you within, when there are no human beings there, because, even if there is someone at your side, there is no one in your heart. And there should be no one in your heart; Christ should be in your heart; his anointing should be in your heart, so that your heart may not be thirsting in solitude, because it doesn’t have the springs by which it may be refreshed. He who teaches, then, is the inner teacher: Christ teaches; his inbreathing teaches. Where his inbreathing and his anointing don’t exist, words sound without to no avail.¹⁸⁸

Like farmers of the word, teachers such as Augustine may plant or water, but it is God who gives the increase, God’s anointing who teaches the hearers the truth about everything (1Cor 3:6-7).

In the Fourth Homily, Augustine develops the idea of God’s speaking to us within by incorporating the virtues of faith and hope. The salvation promised in faith is, for now, a matter

¹⁸⁷ *Ep. Jo.* II.14. Cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 54: “For the *Logos* of God became man, that we might be made God; and he made himself known through a body, that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father.”

¹⁸⁸ *Ep. Jo.* III.13. Cf. Mt 23:8-9. The illumination of human beings from within by the *Logos* that Augustine describes here is the theme of the next chapter.

of hope; it is not yet, and so our desires seem frustrated in this life. The concupiscence of the world, the love of creatures instead of the Creator, so distorted human understanding that when the Son came in the flesh, we failed to recognize him as God. Those who were wicked could only see the form of a slave, the form of God was imperceptible to them, because it is the pure of heart who shall see God (Mt 5:8). Therefore, the Bishop of Hippo concludes, the “entire life of a good Christian is a holy desire. What you desire, however, you don’t yet see. But by desiring you are made large enough, so that, when there comes what you should see, you may be filled.” We become what we desire: “This is our life—to be exercised through desire.” But if it is God we desire, we are not even able to name properly that which we want. Rather, we must “stretch out to him so that when he comes, he may fill us.”¹⁸⁹ But how can we love a God we have not seen? Augustine answers, “it is in faith that we have both seen and known him.”¹⁹⁰ The truth of God is present to us by faith, making it possible to unite our will to God—to desire God truly, with all our heart, soul, and mind—making our hearts pure in the hope of salvation: “You make yourself pure not of yourself but through him who came to dwell in you.”¹⁹¹ The three theological virtues thus work together to realize God’s grace in our lives (1Cor 13:13).

Caritas is the focus once again in the Fifth Homily, specifically Christ’s commandment to love one another (Jn 13:34). It is by this love, Augustine tells us, “that sins are absolved. If this isn’t maintained, it is both a grave sin and the root of all sins.”¹⁹² The perfection of *caritas* is the willingness to lay down one’s life for others. This love alone, “which distinguishes between the children of God and the children of the devil,” is the ultimate marker identifying the people of God. *Caritas* is the pearl of great price (Mt 13:46), and is worth everything that we have:

¹⁸⁹ *Ep. Jo.* IV.6. It is on this point that Augustine begins *Conf.* in Bk. I. For discussion, see §1.1 & §6.1.

¹⁹⁰ *Ep. Jo.* IV.8. The distinction between faith and sight is key for Augustine; see §4.2 below.

¹⁹¹ *Ep. Jo.* IV.7.

¹⁹² *Ep. Jo.* V.2.

This is the costly pearl, charity, without which nothing whatsoever that you may have is of any benefit to you, but which, if you have it alone, is enough for you. You see it now with faith, then you will see by appearance. For, if we love when we don't see, how shall we embrace when we do see? But where must we practice? In brotherly love. You can tell me, "I haven't seen God." Can you tell me, "I haven't seen a human being?" Love your brother. For, if you love the brother whom you see, you will see God at the same time, because you will see charity itself, and God dwells within it.¹⁹³

Caritas is the *sine qua non* of Augustine's moral theology. The words of our actions reveal who we truly are: "If a person doesn't act rightly with respect to his brothers, he shows what he has in himself... Those who love the world cannot love their brother."¹⁹⁴ Our inner self is revealed by what we do; by acting rightly towards others we realize the presence of true charity.

In the Sixth Homily, Augustine relates how *caritas* begins with deeds, with giving from one's own material abundance to help meet the temporal needs of others. But it is necessary to examine one's conscience in the presence of God to discover whether one's own work "emanates from an innate charity, whether the branches of good works spring from the root of love... that there is a genuine love in us which isn't feigned but sincere, seeking our brother's salvation and expecting no advantage from our brother apart from his salvation."¹⁹⁵ True love calls to itself, as "Charity itself groans, charity itself prays. Against it the one who gave it cannot stop his ears. Be secure; let charity ask, and there are God's ears."¹⁹⁶ By love, the heart reveals God's presence, "If you have found that you have charity, you have the spirit of God in order to understand, for this is something that is absolutely necessary... There can be no love without the Spirit of God."¹⁹⁷ Jesus shows us the spirit of charity in the flesh. God became incarnate in order to give his life for us (Jn 15:13). As Christ comes in *caritas*, failure to enact charity functionally denies

¹⁹³ *Ep. Jo.* V.7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ep. Jo.* V.8-9. Gérard Gilleman magisterially argues that *caritas* holds the same place in the moral theology of Thomas Aquinas in *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*, trans. W.F. Ryan & André Vachon (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959); see Ch. 4 below.

¹⁹⁵ *Ep. Jo.* VI.2,4.

¹⁹⁶ *Ep. Jo.* VI.8. Cf. Rom 5:5; 8:26-27.

¹⁹⁷ *Ep. Jo.* VI.9-10. Augustine understands grace to be the true act of love.

his Incarnation. But the Spirit testifies to this truth: “Jesus has come in the flesh, who says it not with his tongue but by his deeds, who says it not with words but by loving.”¹⁹⁸ Love ultimately perfects language. Just as it is God’s presence to us as Spirit that testifies to God’s presence as incarnate Word, so our words testify to our love. Thus, the way in which we present ourselves to others is our message to them—the meaning that we impart to the relationship that unites us.

The Lord’s Prayer is the starting point for the Seventh Homily. Augustine points out that there can be no forgiveness without charity. For *caritas*, the Word becomes incarnate. It is at this point that the Doctor of Grace comes to the seminal insights of 4:7-8. Love is *from* God and love *is* God. He understands this passage through the doctrine of the Trinity: “For God is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Son is God from God, the Holy Spirit is God from God, and these three are one God, not three gods. If the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and he loves him in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, then love is God, but it is God because it is from God.”¹⁹⁹ If love is from God, through the missions of the Word and Spirit, then we realize the love of God when our actions emerge from the root of *caritas*. And so, Augustine famously declares, “Love, and do what you want (*Dilige, et quod vis fac*),” because he believes any actions which proceed from the inner spring of charity—of giving love—will lead to good.²⁰⁰ Our calling is to love through all that God has made, rather than attempting in vain to make all into ourselves. Not only does true love delight in what is good, but it is also on fire to correct and improve what is lacking or in error, to work to bring God’s creatures to their perfection in love.²⁰¹ Forgiveness demonstrates God’s love for all us creatures by the process of realizing our love for God and all creation.

¹⁹⁸ *Ep. Jo.* VI.13.

¹⁹⁹ *Ep. Jo.* VII.6.

²⁰⁰ *Ep. Jo.* VII.8.

²⁰¹ Augustine is the originator of the distinction between loving the sinner and hating the sin, and employs it often, including at this point in the homily. What we try to make only from our own is, for him, sinful by definition. Another, perhaps more clear way of stating this distinction as Augustine uses it here is that Christians ought to love people for who they are, but to view that which they do without love as unlovely.

Love is far sweeter pronounced in act rather than sound, so Augustine proclaims to start the Eighth Homily. While it is not always possible to talk about love explicitly, “one can always keep what one cannot always speak about,” by praising God with all our actions. Here enter the virtues as a language for realizing the human self. Like an officer ordering his subordinates, so the virtues occupy the commanding seat in our minds: “just as a general does through his army whatever pleases him, so the Lord Jesus Christ, when he begins to dwell in our inner man (that is, in our mind through faith), uses these virtues as his ministers.” God is the Good itself and, as such, is the necessary precondition for our ability to do anything good. On our own, without this guidance, all we are capable of is error. To confess this, “strengthens the heart and provides the foundation of love.”²⁰² Although not as an absolute rule, in his writings Augustine distinguishes between *amor*, fleshly love, and *dilectio*, which tends toward higher things. He uses the analogy of a carpenter working a piece of wood to illustrate how God loves us, though we are sinners. The great artist has fallen in love with a piece of unhewn wood: “Thanks to his craftsmanship he has seen what it will be—not, thanks to his love, what it is. And he has loved what he is going to make of it, not what it is.”²⁰³ Our Creator is such a loving craftsman. Creation is not some distant event, but encompasses the unfolding of each individual life, forming love in the seemingly base, corrupted material of our animal bodies.

At the beginning of the Ninth Homily, Augustine looks toward the end, declaring perfect charity desires the presence of God and the Day of Judgment. To use the nuptial metaphor: “the chaste soul, which desires the bridegroom’s embraces, has now begun to desire Christ’s coming, she becomes a virgin through faith, hope and charity.” The proposal is a summons to perfect

²⁰² *Ep. Jo.* VIII.1-2. Necessary preconditions such as this are *a priori* in the sense that Kant uses the term.

²⁰³ *Ep. Jo.* VIII.10. God is a greater craftsman than Augustine seems to imagine here. Michelangelo considered the form of the sculpture as already present in the marble. His job as artist was to liberate the beauty he saw, realizing something that was there all along, but that only he could see at the beginning of the creative process.

love, “so that we may love our enemies just as he himself also loved them...because, ‘just as he is, so also are we in this world.’”²⁰⁴ We are only able to love because God loves us first: “By his love we were made his friends, but he loved us as enemies so that we would become his friends. He loved us first and bestowed on us the means of loving him.” If sin deforms, making us ugly, *caritas* makes us beautiful, by “loving him who is always beautiful. Beauty grows in you to the extent that love grows, because charity itself is the soul’s beauty.” It is by loving love that we love God and thus become lovely ourselves. While those who do not love are unable to see God, those who love understand that our “entire good is to be freely joined to God,” to be found desirable is to be beautiful in God’s embrace.²⁰⁵

The Tenth Homily, although unfortunately incomplete, represents a fitting conclusion to Augustine’s exposition of 1John. He begins with 5:1, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God,” interpreting it in light of Gal 5:6: “faith’s work is love itself.” Our faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is realized in the spirit of love for one another, for

the sons of God are the body of the only Son of God, and, since he is the head and we are the members, the Son of God is one. Therefore, he who loves the sons of God loves the Son of God, and he who loves the Son of God loves the Father. Nor can anyone love the Father unless he loves the Son, and he who loves the Son also loves the sons of God. Which sons of God? The members of the Son of God. And he himself also becomes a member by loving, and through love he comes to be in the structure of Christ’s body, and there shall be one Christ loving himself. For, when the members love each other, the body loves itself.

Love is ultimately indivisible. The love that unites believers to one another is also the love that unites them to God. The Three are One in the same love. As Augustine describes, “This is how this love is held fast in its entirety: just as it is joined in a single unit, so all those who depend on it make up a single unit, and it is as though fire fuses them.”²⁰⁶ The unitive love of God is the

²⁰⁴ *Ep. Jo.* IX.2-3. Augustine is quoting here from 1Jn 4:17.

²⁰⁵ *Ep. Jo.* IX.9-10. This insight is what Augustine was seeking in the first book he wrote; see §1.1, n. 47.

²⁰⁶ *Ep. Jo.* X.3.

telos of all good works (Rom 13:10). Thus, “Christ is God, and the end of the commandment is charity; that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one. That is where the end is for you; elsewhere he is the way.”²⁰⁷ Love brings all things together, integrating them into one for good.

From his cathedral in Hippo, the Bishop instructs an assembled community through these homilies, teaching that Christian life consists of abiding in the love which God has bestowed upon us, by sharing it with others in order to be united with them. Thus, believers “should love all people, even your enemies, not because they are your brothers, but so that they may become your brothers, so that you may always be aflame with brotherly love... Wherever you love a brother, you love a friend. He is already with you; he has already been joined to you as well in Catholic unity.”²⁰⁸ Loving others is our created participation in divine Love. The way in which the relationships that we form with our sisters and brothers unite us with them by love reveals in us a reflection of the inner life of God, the oneness of the Holy Trinity. Through his preaching, Augustine communicates the Johannine *analogia caritatis*, encouraging his hearers to participate sacramentally in the very love his words, and the words of the biblical author, illustrate. The task of teaching the Word to others demonstrates the significance of Scripture. Augustine realizes that in teaching God’s love he invokes the Trinity, attempting to express in words his understanding of the divine order operating in his life and the lives of the audience. For the Doctor of Grace, love is a lesson learned best through teaching it to others.

²⁰⁷ *Ep. Jo. X.5.*

²⁰⁸ *Ep. Jo. X.7.*

§3 *De Trinitate*: Augustine's Ontology of Love

*Let no one say "I don't know what to love." Let him love his brother, and love that love; after all, he knows the love he loves with better than the brother he loves. There now, he can already have God better known to him than his brother, certainly better known because more present, better known because more inward to him, better known because more sure. Embrace love which is God, and embrace God with love. This is the love which unites all the good angels and all the servants of God in a bond of holiness, conjoins them and us together, and subjoins us to itself. And the more we are cured of the tumor of pride, the fuller we are of love. And if a man is full of love, what is he full of but God?*²⁰⁹

Anyone who has ever tried knows how difficult, how audacious it is to attempt to teach the Trinity to others. It is a commonplace that pastors dread having to preach on Trinity Sunday, even though it comes only once a year! Augustine's readiness to turn to the Trinity in homiletical exposition of Scripture is indicative that the God he worships is the Trinity of Father, Son, Spirit. To have God in his *cor* entails relationship in three dimensions. Far from an esoteric concern, an intellectual curiosity, the Trinity is the center of Augustine's understanding, his spirituality, and ultimately his very being.²¹⁰ The God who is *interior intimo meo* is revealed to him triunely. As we have seen in §2.3 above, the Doctor of Grace is profoundly aware of the Johannine *analogia caritatis*. God is love—and to get at how he understands this love it is necessary for us to reckon with how he attempts to understand God as the Most Holy Trinity. And so, the final section of this chapter will focus on Augustine's most in-depth treatise on the subject, *De Trinitate*. As he makes clear, the work is far from definitive; the Bishop of Hippo knows that he will only ever have a partial understanding of God in this mortal life. Nevertheless, he considers this partial understanding to be the proper object of our intellectual faculties.²¹¹ As we have seen from Bk.

²⁰⁹ *Trin.* VIII.5.12.

²¹⁰ In the Introduction to his translation of *De Trinitate*, Edmund Hill makes a persuasive case that the work proposes, "the quest for, or the exploration of, the Trinity as a complete program for the Christian spiritual life, a program of conversion and renewal and discovery of self in God and God in self"; *The Trinity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 19.

²¹¹ The vices of concupiscence and *curiositas* both represent diversions of our intellect, as well as our love, from the Creator toward creatures. These topics are discussed in §1.2 above and §6.2 below respectively.

VII of *Confessiones* onward, Augustine is influenced by platonic thought. Like Plato, he believes that we should look for truth beyond the material world. For the Doctor of Grace, we should turn not to creatures to find truth, but to the Creator—reality is found in God, not the mutable mortal realm. Our access to truth and reality is mediated by the presence of God. It was by reading “the books of the Platonists” that Augustine was led to conceive of God in terms of *analogia luminis*. Any true knowledge we have is in light of the God who is Truth. As Hill puts it, “*God*, who is truth, and *God*, who is goodness, is the category in terms of which we know anything, and the category or value in terms of which we love anything.”²¹² For Augustine believes understanding and love come together in the triune relationships that constitute the eternal reality of God.

This is the heart of the argument the Doctor of Grace makes in *De Trinitate*. He contends that there is an isomorphism between our understanding and love, the meaning of our inner life, and the triune life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Augustine believes that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God on the basis of Scripture (Gn 1:26-27). And so he hopes that the mystery of his own self can operate as a *camera obscura*, through which an image of the infinitely greater mystery of the Holy Trinity is projected according to a *ratio* proportioning the image and the original, projection and reality.²¹³ The possibility of such an analogical bridge to connect God the Trinity and the *imago Dei* in created human beings forms the subject of *De Trinitate* VIII, on which the whole *opus* pivots, and where our exploration of it shall begin.

This analogical bridge to transcendence Augustine attempts to construct in *De Trinitate* likewise forms the pivot between this chapter and the next. The present section will explore our relationship to God as the Good; while §4 explores our relationship to God as Truth. The Trinity

²¹² Hill, *The Trinity*, 25.

²¹³ Augustine approach in Bks. VIII-XV of *Trin.* has affinities with Plato’s in *The Republic*, in which the virtues of the human person form a microcosm for the ideal government of the *polis*. A *camera obscura* is a small hole or lens through which an image is projected upside-down into a darkened space. For Thomas’ on *ratio*, see §8 below.

is *ipsum bonum*, the Good we love above all things, and the Goodness by which we are able love anything at all. Therefore, the Triune God is the necessary precondition (*a priori*) of our love, the means by which we love, and the ultimate goal toward which our loving is ordered. This section first explores Augustine's attempt to push the *analogia caritatis* to the limit of his understanding (§3.1). The chapter comes to a close in §3.2 by examining how, for the Doctor of Grace, God the Trinity represents the order of *caritas*, the pattern of our created participation in the divine life.

§3.1 A Triad in Love: Attempt at an Analogy

*What then...is this love or charity which the divine scriptures praise and proclaim so much, but love of the good? Now love means someone loving and something loved with love. There you are with three, the lover, what is being loved, and love. And what is love but a kind of life coupling or trying to couple together two things, namely lover and what is being loved?*²¹⁴

From Scripture, Augustine learns that God is love. Fittingly, he begins *De Trinitate* with his interpretation of what the Bible reveals of God's essence. While he believes philosophy can serve to verify the existence of God, it is only through Scripture that we learn God is Trinity—the Creator is revealed in creation through the missions of Word and Gift. Across the pages of the scriptures, the opera of salvation unfolds: the God revealed to Moses on tablets of stone is then revealed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who continues to be revealed in the community of his followers through the Holy Spirit. The Doctor of Grace emphasizes this dramatic character of salvation, trying to make his audience feel the weight of their sins, weep, and repent, then rejoice in the love of the God who forgives them.²¹⁵ Even in a work as theologically sophisticated as *De Trinitate*, Augustine is at his best in telling a powerful story about this mysterious subject. He sees God as a moving target, too active to be captured in a precise, but static definition. Instead,

²¹⁴ *Trin.* VIII.9.13.

²¹⁵ Hill attempts to bring out this dynamic, theatrical aspect of Augustine's theology in his translation of *Trin.*

he strives to convey this dynamic movement by narrating a kind of history, making the drama of salvation come to life.

It seems likely that Augustine intended to organize the overall structure of *De Trinitate* as a chiasm, with Bk. VIII at its crux. Books I-VII follow the *ordo doctrinae*; in them he seeks to explain and defend the Church's teaching on the mystery of the Trinity. The Bishop of Hippo begins by exploring how God has been revealed in Scripture, with a particular emphasis on the missions of the Son and Spirit in Bks. II-IV. Then, in Bks. V-VII he sets out to give a rational account (*reddere rationem*) in support of the *credo*. Hill characterizes this latter section as a discussion of words, that is, the language Augustine is using:

he is not so much talking about the Trinity as talking about how to talk about it. He discusses words like "substance," and "person," and in particular he makes what seems to be an original and most important contribution to the theological terminology of the Trinity by developing the notion of relationship.²¹⁶

As we have seen from §1.1 onwards, Augustine considers the ultimate meaning of a word to be the relationship which it mediates. In *De Trinitate*, he will push human language to its absolute limit by trying to say something meaningful about his relationship to the ultimate Mystery. The farthest that he is able to reach is talking about relationships, first of God to us and, from these, by extrapolation to the relationships within the Godhead itself.²¹⁷ Having done his best to use words to depict the mystery of the Trinity, in Bk. VIII Augustine will shift his focus to the *ordo inventionis*. At the beginning of *De Trinitate* he invites the readers, "let us set out along Charity Street together, making for him of whom it is said, 'Seek his face always.'"²¹⁸ His goal is not only to convey information about God to his audience; he hopes guide them on a journey *modo*

²¹⁶ Hill, *The Trinity*, 24.

²¹⁷ The respective Scholastic terms for these are missions and processions. Scholastic concepts and terminology prove quite useful in interpreting Augustine, as we shall see in our discussion on Thomas Aquinas.

²¹⁸ *Trin.* I.3.5. The quote is from Ps 105:4.

interiore to discover the *imago Dei* revealed in their own lives. And so, from the end of Bk. VIII through Bk. XIV, Augustine tries to find a triad to help us recognize the Trinity analogically.

The first of these created analogies he considers is the trinity of lover, beloved, and the love which joins them together. God is Trinity; God is also Love—it seems to follow that there should be an isomorphic triad in our love. Augustine understands love as an interpersonal reality, not a disposition of an autonomous subject. Love is intersubjectivity itself, a kind of bridge to link subjects together. Love is not static but dynamic, actively joining together, uniting. Hill characterizes Bk. VIII as introducing love as a value in its own right, and that such awareness,

and love of love, is almost sufficient in itself to overcome the whole communications problem. Love is perhaps the all-embracing notion which covers the whole double movement of faith to understanding and antecedent knowledge to faith. In the first place, Augustine introduces his communications problem as a love problem: in order eventually to see God we must love him first; but how can we love what we do not know...In the second place, when he first brings in faith as the obvious solution to this conundrum, he talks about “loving by believing.” In the third place, he suggests in his last chapter that loving is in itself a kind of knowing...Thus we can restate the double movement of the whole work as first a movement *from loving by believing to understanding in loving*, and second a movement “in a more inward fashion” *from knowing by loving to loving by believing* now immeasurably deepened and matured.²¹⁹

In this sense, love is an act which the mind performs, sublating the abstract truth and goodness to which the mind responds in judgments, and setting up the double movement Hill describes.

The quest for *imago Dei* is realized in love. “Thus it is,” Augustine states, “that in this question we are occupied with about the trinity and about knowing God, the only thing we really have to see is what true love is; well in fact, simply what love is,” defining true love (*dilectio*) as “that we should live justly by cleaving to the truth, and so for the love of men by which we wish them to live justly we should despise all mortal things. In that way we will be ready and able even to die for the good of our brethren, as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us by his example.”²²⁰

²¹⁹ Hill, *The Trinity*, 239. Italics mine.

²²⁰ *Trin.* VIII.7.10.

To know God is thus identical with observing the commandment to love God and neighbor. Echoing 1John, when “we love our brother out of love, we love our brother out of God.” He elaborates with a visual metaphor: “Now he sees his brother with ordinary human vision which God cannot be seen by. But if he were to love with spiritual charity the one he sees with human vision, he would see God who is charity with the inner vision which he can be seen by.”²²¹

To give an example, Augustine cites Paul’s description of his ministry in 2Cor 6:2-10. Reading the passage fires him with love for the apostle, realizing its meaning in the great love which characterized Paul life. He believes the passage not because of anything he heard from anyone else, but because “we observe it within ourselves, or rather above ourselves in truth itself.” Drawing upon a Platonic framework, Augustine describes love as a kind of ideal form, “which we perceive always enduring, never changing,” enabling us to love persons, like Paul, whom we have not met in the flesh. By believing that people have lived with such love, we in turn desire to love all the more ardently.²²² Therefore, the Doctor of Grace concludes,

on the one hand love of that form we believe they lived up to makes us love their life, and on the other belief in their life stirs us to a more blazing charity toward that form; with the result that the more brightly burns our love for God, the more surely and serenely we see him, because it is in God that we observe that unchanging form of justice which we judge that a man should live up to.²²³

The *caritas* of which Scripture speaks is this love of the Good, defined as justice. Drawing on this example, Augustine identifies the triad of lover, what is being loved, and the love with which it is loved. Although he has not yet found the object of his search, he now believes he knows where to look—love will thus serve as “a kind of warp on which we can weave what remains to be said” in the theological discourse of *De Trinitate*.²²⁴

²²¹ *Trin.* VIII.8.12.

²²² Cf. René Girard’s insight about the nature of desire as mimetic, wanting to be *like* others.

²²³ *Trin.* VIII.9.13.

²²⁴ *Trin.* VIII.10.14.

It is with this triad in love that Augustine begins Bk. IX. However, he quickly realizes that it is not truly a trinity. In the case of the love of self, the lover and the beloved are identical, collapsing the distinction, since he identifies the mind (*mens*) as the subject of love. Thus, “when the mind loves itself it reveals two things, mind and love. But what does loving itself mean but wanting to be available to itself in order to enjoy itself? And since it wants itself as much as it is, will exactly matches mind here, and love is equal to lover.” He considers love to be a substance, not material, but spiritual, like mind itself. This pair of love and mind, however,

are not two spirits but one spirit, not two beings but one being; and yet they are two somethings, lover and love, or if you like beloved and loved. And these things are called two things relatively to one another. Lover has reference to love, and love to lover; for lover loves with some love, and love is of some lover. Mind and spirit, however, are not said relatively but state being...So then, insofar as they are referred to each other they are two; but insofar as they are stated with reference to self they are spirit and they are both together one spirit, they are each mind and both together one mind.²²⁵

Love and mind are connected intimately, yet distinct ontologically. Love always inheres in a particular subject, naming a relationship between this subject and that which it loves. In human life then, love is not subsistent. On the other hand, influenced by Platonic thought, the Doctor of Grace considers mind and spirit to have subsistent being. Mind subsists in human subjects in a way that love does not—I am identical with my mind, but not necessarily with what I love. However, when the mind loves itself, mind and love are identical in the unity of the subject.

But, for the mind to love itself it must first know itself: *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*. And so, Augustine’s quest for the image of God in the human person moves from love to focus on mind for the remainder of Bk. IX through the end of Bk. XIV. It is not that he considers love to be an altogether inadequate way to describe *imago Dei*. With the exception of the love of self, love is an intersubjective reality. However, to follow the *ordo inventionis*, it is necessary to come

²²⁵ *Trin.* IX.2.2.

to understand the subject prior to attempting to understand intersubjectivity. The decision to shift his focus to mind is in keeping with Augustine's preference for interiority, to seek truth within himself rather than *ad extra*. Love between subjects presupposes *imago Dei* within each subject. Thus, at this point in Augustine's exploration, intrasubjectivity must precede intersubjectivity.

§3.2 The Triune *A Priori* of Love

*So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love...the one meant when we read, "Love is God." So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love. Man has no capacity to love God except from God.*²²⁶

Augustine concentrates on mind in Bks. IX-XIV of *De Trinitate* before returning to love, now with a more developed understanding of the human subject, in the conclusion of the work in Bk. XV. Having investigated the image of God in the human by contemplating a series of mental trinities to discover a serviceable *analogia* for the mystery of the divine Trinity itself, the Doctor of Grace will ultimately settle upon the triad of memory, understanding, and will, which he then corresponds with the Father, Son, and Spirit respectively. His discussion focuses particularly on the trinitarian missions of the latter two Persons, in which Augustine corresponds understanding with the mission of the Son, the Word of God, and love (i.e., the perfection of the will) with the mission of the Holy Spirit, the Gift of God. To culminate our movement from below upwards, this section will explore the latter vector, the Bishop of Hippo's understanding of love as a form of created participation in the divine life, bringing the present chapter to a close, and opening onto the next in order to explore the former vector.

²²⁶ *Trin.* XV.17.31. Augustine is quoting from 1Jn 4:8,16. The part elided consists of additional exegesis of 1Jn 4; see §2.3 above for discussion.

As we have seen throughout the chapter, one of the great questions which engrosses Augustine is intersubjective communication. In *Confessiones* I, he relates that has wrestled with the following problem since infancy: How to make his thoughts and desires, which are inside, understood by others, who are outside, so that they can genuinely respond? That is, what bridge can make possible a connection between the interiority of one subject with the interiority of another who is outside that subject? Interpersonal relationship is perhaps the original analogy for the Trinity, inherent in the language Christians developed to speak about the mystery of God.²²⁷ Throughout the tradition, the preferred terms for the first two Persons of the Trinity are Father and Son. While the Greek *ousia* and *hypostasis* were translated into Latin as *substantia* and *persona*, Augustine realizes all such terms are not apodictic but conventions of language (signs). Though the godhead ultimately transcends human language and thought,²²⁸ in faith he affirms that our relationality is an isomorphism of the relationships by which the Holy Three are One.

Augustine's understanding of love thus centers on the analogical personhood of the Holy Spirit. While it is not especially difficult to conceive of the Father and especially Son as Persons, the personhood of the Spirit represents one of the enduring challenges for trinitarian theology.²²⁹ The Holy Spirit can seem impersonal, difficult for us to conceptualize, relate to—even Augustine seems less than comfortable with the subject. It is telling that he devotes most of his effort in *De*

²²⁷ This tradition of referring to God in relational terms goes back even further, throughout the Hebrew Bible all the way back to the Torah. For example, in the theophany of the burning bush, prior to the revelation of the Divine Name, God first identifies Godself to Moses by declaring, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6).

²²⁸ Augustine posits in *Trin.* V.8.10 that these terms function heuristically, so that those attempting to say something about the divine Trinity may be able to give an answer to the seemingly basic question: "Three what?"

²²⁹ This conceptual difficulty is also illustrated by artists' attempts to represent the Trinity visually. Although there are some notable exceptions (such as the great icon by Rublev), the prevalent image for the Three in Western art has been two men and a dove derived from the accounts of Jesus' baptism in the Gospels. Although the Bible does not describe birds as being created in the image of God, somehow a dove would become our culture's preferred image for the Spirit, even though the Judeo-Christian tradition explicitly rejects using the images of animals to represent the divine. I contend that this is due, not to any idolatrous impiety, but rather to deficient understanding, which inhibits the multiplication of likenesses for the Spirit.

Trinitate to understanding the procession of the Word, deferring his exploration of the procession of the Gift until over halfway through the final book of the work. He begins his discussion of the Spirit with faith. On the basis of Scripture (1Jn 4:13), Augustine believes, “this Holy Spirit is not just the Father’s alone nor the Son’s alone, but the Spirit of them both, and thus he suggests to us the common charity by which the Father and the Son love each other.”²³⁰ Avoiding modalism, the Bishop of Hippo does not simply equate the Spirit with *caritas*. Instead, he asks:

If therefore any of these three can be distinctively named charity, which could it be more suitably be than the Holy Spirit? What is meant is that while in that supremely simple nature substance is not one thing and charity another, but substance is charity and charity is substance, whether in the Father or in the Son or in the Holy Spirit, yet all the same the Holy Spirit is distinctively named charity.²³¹

In a general sense, each of the Three can be said to be *caritas*. However, Augustine considers the Holy Spirit to be most properly called charity. This he believes on the basis of 1Jn 4:13: “In this we know that we abide in him and him in us, because he has given us of his Spirit,” concluding that, “it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love.” It is the mission of the Spirit to communicate God’s presence to us. It is precisely this divine presence as *interior intimo meo* which gives human beings the capacity to fulfill the Greatest Commandment to love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourself. We realize this loving presence by participation when we love God and one other in *caritas*:

So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and through it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God.²³²

²³⁰ *Trin.* XV.17.27.

²³¹ *Trin.* XV.17.29.

²³² *Trin.* XV.18.32. Cf. Rom 5:5.

The third person of the Trinity is thus properly called the Gift of God because it is the Spirit who mediates God's loving self-communication into our heart. Through the indwelling Spirit, God is present to us interiorly, empowering us to be present to ourselves and one another in love.

The Bishop of Hippo proceeds to build a case from Scripture for the fittingness of calling the Third Person of the Trinity the Gift of God. He explains that the Spirit can be both God and gift, since being gift would seem to imply an inferiority to being giver. The Spirit is, "the gift of God insofar as he is given to those he is given to. But in himself he is God even if he is not given to anyone, because he was God, co-eternal with the Father and the Son, even before he was given to anyone. Nor is he less than they because they give and he is given. He is given as God's gift in such a way that as God he also gives himself."²³³ As God, the Holy Spirit is the giver as well as what is given, both the agent and substance of the gift. Drawing once more upon the Johannine *analogia caritatis*, the Doctor of Grace concludes therefore that Scripture proclaims

charity is God, and as it is from God and causes us to abide in God and him in us, and as we know this because he has given us of his Spirit, this Spirit of his is God charity. Again, if there is nothing greater than charity among God's gifts, and if there is no greater gift of God's than the Holy Spirit, what must we conclude but that he is this charity which is called both God and from God? And if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion of them both, what more suitable that he who is the common Spirit of them both should be distinctively called charity?²³⁴

Love itself is personal. In the love of the Triune God there is no split between subject and object. The middle term is no mere copula—the common Spirit which unites Father and Son in *caritas* is equal to each, yet irreducible to only those two. It is by being Three that God can be One in love. The interpersonal communion of Father and Son can truly unite the two only by being personal as well, by being of the same substance. As Augustine declares, "the charity of the

²³³ *Trin.* XV.18.36.

²³⁴ *Trin.* XV.18.37.

Father in his inexpressibly simple nature is nothing but his very nature and substance...And thus 'the Son of his charity' signifies none other than the one who is born of his substance." What the personhood of the Holy Spirit means is that love is an inherent quality of ultimate reality—it is inherent in the nature of being for it to be given and received relationally.

From considering the immanent Trinity from which the Holy Spirit processes, Augustine returns to the *missio* of the Spirit and the *imago Dei* in us. The Spirit is also most fittingly called the Will of God for, "What else after all is charity but the will?"²³⁵ This association with *voluntas* ties back into the mental trinity of memory, understanding, and will. He declares, "Anyone who has a lively intuition of these three (as divinely established in the nature of his mind) and of how great a thing it is that his mind has that by which even the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired—it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love—has thereby found the image of that supreme trinity."²³⁶ The memory, sight, and love of this trinity is nothing less than the ultimate meaning and goal of our lives, the Alpha and the Omega. Here is the purpose for which God the Trinity creates us.

Yet this image of God in our mind, compelled by mutability and deformed by sin, is more unlike the Trinity than like.²³⁷ Although this created image is the best we can attain in the present life, the reality of God always transcends it. While human beings remember, understand, and love, we ourselves are neither memory, nor understanding, nor love themselves—only God is. The mental trinity consists of a person who *has* memory, understanding, and love; the Trinity *is* Memory, Understanding, and Love united in three Persons. The Triune God is thus love herself, but not love alone; love is intimately linked with memory and understanding. Augustine explains

²³⁵ *Trin.* XV.20.38.

²³⁶ *Trin.* XV.20.39.

²³⁷ Augustine thus anticipates by eight centuries the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council on the inadequacy of analogies for expressing the divine mystery.

that human love, “proceeding from knowledge and joining memory and understanding together, as being itself common to parent and offspring (which is why it cannot be itself regarded as either parent or offspring) has in this image some likeness, though a vastly unequal one, to the Holy Spirit.” In awe, he finds it “marvelously inexpressible and...inexpressibly marvelous,” that the created “image of the trinity is one person and that supreme trinity is three persons, that trinity of three persons should still be more inseparable than this trinity of one. In the nature of divinity...that triad is what this nature is, and is unchangeable and always equal within itself.”²³⁸ At the present time, our memory, understanding, and will are all subject to change and disorder. Some may understand more than they love, while others may love more than they understand.²³⁹ For now we must rely on faith, seeing by the mirror that is our mind; but ultimately, we shall see God with our whole being face to face (1Cor 13:12)—the created trinity shall meet its Triune Creator, in whose presence it has always been, on whose being its existence always depends.

This leaves us with one final question, which will serve as the segue into Chapter Two: What differentiates Word from Spirit, the two missions of the Trinity, understanding and love? Augustine first asks this question near the beginning of *De Trinitate*: “But why then, since both the Son is from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, are they not both called sons, both begotten? Why is the one alone the only-begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit neither a son nor begotten—he would of course be a son if he were begotten?”²⁴⁰ Having put the question off until the very end of his investigations, the Doctor of Grace is still not able to formulate an answer. But, in faith, he knows that it will be revealed to him when he beholds God at the last. Still, Augustine’s frustration is evident as he writes:

²³⁸ *Trin.* XV.23.43.

²³⁹ I would like to suggest a parallel with Mt 25:31-46. Neither the sheep nor the goats understood their identities and actions until revealed to them in the ultimate Judgment.

²⁴⁰ *Trin.* II.3.5.

But here I have been acutely conscious of the enormous difficulty of the effort to perceive this, and I have no doubt that my careful and intelligent readers will be equally conscious of it. So great has this difficulty been, that every time I wanted to bring out some comparative illustration of this point in that created reality which we are...I found that no adequate expression followed whatever understanding I came to; and I was only too well aware that my attempt even to understand involved more effort than result.²⁴¹

The best that Augustine can manage is to contend that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.²⁴² Since Scripture and Christian teaching affirm that God is Three, since the missions of the Son and Spirit are clearly presented to him as distinct, he is willing to infer based on faith that their processions within the Trinity must be distinct as well, although Augustine is unable to formulate how this can be so. Regardless, the two are equal Persons. Even though the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, there is no temporal interval in God in which the Son was but the Spirit was not; their procession is eternal, timeless. The Doctor of Grace thus reaches a singularity, the point where the maxim with which the chapter began, *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*, starts to break down. In the immanent relationships of the Trinity, which compose ultimate reality itself, Understanding and Love proceed together in perfect harmony. Although he accedes logical priority to the *Logos*, its union with the Gift is so close that Augustine, despite all of his theological acumen and diligent study, has no words to distinguish the Understanding of God from the Love by which it finds expression.

²⁴¹ *Trin.* XV.23.45.

²⁴² This is the infamous *Filioque* which has been cited as a theological stumbling block in relations between the Western and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christ's followers. While I do not intend to take this issue up directly, I would only emphasize that Augustine is most unlikely to have wanted his speculative reflections on the Holy Mystery to be the cause of such ecumenical division.

2 *Analogia Luminis: Augustine on Understanding*

*Now the mind cannot love itself unless it also knows itself. How can it love what it does not know?...How can the mind know another mind if it does not know itself?*¹

As our love relates to God as Good itself, so understanding relates to God as Truth itself. In the account Augustine gives of his process of transformation in *Confessiones*, a key moment came when he read Cicero's *Hortensius*, and his "heart burned with longing for the immortality that wisdom (*sapientiae*) seemed to promise."² This dialogue kindled in him the love of wisdom that the Greeks call philosophy. Cicero contends that a life dedicated to philosophy is ultimately the life of true happiness. But this encomium comes with a caveat: Cicero warns his audience of those who would mislead them by using the banner of philosophy to camouflage error. Reading the *Hortensius* set the young Augustine, "on fire to love and seek and capture and hold fast and strongly cling not to this or that school, but to wisdom itself, whatever it might be."³ It is this dedication to *sapientia*—his passionate devotion to seek and live out the truth always—which will ultimately lead Augustine out of the error of the Manichees and, through conversion, bring him into the communion of faith to worship God as a Catholic Christian.

In *Confessiones* VII, Augustine recounts how he came to apprehend the truth of Christian teaching. With the books of the Platonists as a catalyst, he has a vision of an incommutable light transcending his mind and filling the universe, and concludes, "Anyone who knows truth knows [this light], and whoever knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. O eternal Truth, true Love, and beloved Eternity, you are my God, and for you I sigh day and night." Then Augustine asks, "Is truth then a nothing, simply because it is not spread through space either finite or infinite?" And

¹ *Trin.* IX.3.3.

² *Conf.* III.4.7. In Greek, philosophy is a compound of *philia* (the love of friendship) and *sophia* (wisdom). Augustine understands it as a relational term, identifying as a "wisdom-lover" in *Trin.* XIV.1.2; see §4.3 below.

³ *Conf.* III.4.8.

he hears a reply, as if cried out from afar, “By no means, for I am who am,” which he receives, “as one hears a word in the heart, and no possibility of doubt remained to me; I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that truth exists, truth that is seen and understood through the things that are made.”⁴ Not a material thing itself, this *veritas* is the reality mediated by creation.

As he progresses, Augustine comes to a fuller understanding of the quarry in his quest for wisdom. All his searching after the truth is ultimately a sign, manifesting his creaturely desire for communion with the Creator; for God is Truth itself, and truth exists because “I AM WHO AM” (Ex 3:14). Truth can be understood through what is made (viz., creation), since what is made is made via the truth itself. All that is real is so because it comes from Truth. So Augustine praises his Creator: all creatures “owe their being to you and that all of them are by you defined, but in a particular sense, not as though contained in a place, but because you hold all things in your Truth as though in your hand; and all of them are true insofar as they exist.”⁵ Trying to ascend to God through his mind, he starts in the realm of material things, proceeds “to the soul which perceives them through the body, and from there to that inner power of the soul to which the body’s senses report external impressions.” He continues upward, arriving at “the power of discursive reason, to which the data of our senses are referred for judgment,” and realizing, “above my changeable mind soared the real, unchangeable truth, which is eternal,” as human reason is subject to change (i.e., mutable), the tyranny of habit, and “swarms of noisy phantasms.” By reaching out, beyond all of these, Augustine was able fleetingly to glimpse the eternal Truth of THAT WHICH IS, but did not yet have the strength to abide there. Though forced to return to where he began, he would nevertheless carry this vision with him in *memoria*.⁶

⁴ *Conf.* VII.10.16. The Bishop of Hippo is alluding here to Rom 1:20.

⁵ *Conf.* VII.15.21.

⁶ *Conf.* VII.17.23. Augustine’s theme of the mind’s ascending the levels of being to the ultimate, God, is strongly reminiscent of the ascent of the mind to the One in the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

When he writes *Confessiones*, the Bishop of Hippo has come to believe the only way we can enjoy God is to abide in the truth by embracing “the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who also is God.” But in the narrative, he has not yet realized this embrace, though Christ was calling out, proclaiming “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). As Augustine would come to understand, “the Word became flesh so that your Wisdom, through whom you created all things, might become for us the milk adapted to our infancy.” In this way, “Your Word, the eternal Truth who towers above the higher spheres of your creation, raises up to himself those creatures who bow before him; but in these lower regions he has built himself a humble dwelling from our clay, and used it to cast down from their pretentious selves those who not bow before him, and make a bridge to bring them to himself.”⁷ And so, the Doctor of Grace concludes that the goal of his quest for understanding is the *Logos* in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the preceding chapter, we began to explore Augustine’s thought with an account of his understanding of love, charting an upward movement from material things and this mortal life to eternal truth following the *ordo inventionis*. Given love’s outstanding significance for the Doctor of Grace, it is only fitting we begin there. However, doing so has begged the question, presuming to a certain extent the meaning of understanding itself. It is to the question of understanding that we now turn by considering the same texts according to the *ordo doctrinae*, moving downward from the revelation of the Word, through hermeneutics, to a phenomenology of creatureliness in order to discover what Augustine teaches is the meaning of understanding.⁸ In personal terms, how is our true self, the love we are, related to the act of understanding? Regarding the specific focus of our project, what differentiates the way one understands love from the act of love itself?

⁷ *Conf.* VII.18.24.

⁸ Consider Lonergan’s three questions: What is one doing when one is knowing? (cognitive theory); Why is doing that knowing? (epistemology); What does one know when one does that? (metaphysics); Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, eds. William Ryan & Bernard Tyrell (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 203.

As a concrete example, consider what it means to understand his *Confessiones* in itself. Clearly the book does not consist of the author or his love *simpliciter*. Rather, employing the *res-signa* distinction, it is a collection of things, words, which are ordered to act as signs, blazing the trail of the author's love. To understand the intended meaning of *Confessiones* is to recognize in its words an invitation to join in praise for the God who loves us all into being. According to the Doctor of Grace, our understanding ultimately takes the form of the recognition of how we are all related to one another in God. In this way, the Creator illuminates our minds. For in our acts of understanding, the Truth itself loves—gives itself—to enlighten us from within.

Chapter One represents a movement from below upwards; this chapter will complete the chiasm by moving from above downwards. We continue to explore the missions of the Word and the Spirit of God in *De Trinitate*, turning to the former in §4, and the *analogia mentis* Augustine develops in the second half of the work as the least inadequate way of understanding *imago Dei* in human beings. From his triad of memory, understanding, and will, this section will focus on understanding as its *crux*. The generation of the *verbum mentis* (“inner word”), which forms the key to the Doctor of Grace's treatment of understanding, is the subject of §4.1. He develops this process of understanding that he uncovers into an analogy for the eternal generation of the Son, the Word of God, which we will consider in §4.2. Our study of *De Trinitate* concludes with §4.3, showing how this *Logos* represents the *a priori* of understanding itself.

As his attempt to understand the infinite mystery of God to the limits of his ability, *De Trinitate* represents Augustine at his most daring. The basis for this attempt is also the source of his confidence to undertake it: his faith in Scripture as a truthful witness which authoritatively reveals God to us. Faithful interpretation of biblical texts enables believers to understand on a level which might otherwise transcend their abilities. The hermeneutic process of learning by

interpretation is integral to our understanding. For example, interpreting 1John teaches believers how God is love, as we saw in §2.3 above. The object of §5 is thus to determine how, according to Augustine's hermeneutics of understanding in *De doctrina Christiana*, we can come to learn such a lesson. First, in §5.1, is his distinction between things themselves (*res*) and signs (*signa*), which are things ordered as carriers of meaning. Then, §5.2 considers the art of communicating meaning, of teaching others so as to show them a new way to understand both things and signs.

The body of this chapter will end where the previous one began, with *Confessiones*, the Doctor of Grace's intimate reflection upon his life in prayer to understand its ultimate meaning. But *Confessiones* is not so much autobiography as it is *autologography*—the focus of its thirteen books is on *logos* rather than *bios*, the meaning of the author's life as being expressed in words. Augustine discovers this meaning in the work as a quest to understand *what it is* he loves. This account of understanding as existential, a fundamental dimension of who we are as human, is the subject of §6. This understanding takes place with the word generated in the mind (§6.1). It is in his memory that he discovers our understanding to be a form of recognition, which we explore in §6.2.⁹ Our study of *Confessiones* concludes in §6.3, with how the Bishop of Hippo understands our world as created, recognizing us as loved by God into being *loveable*. Thus, understanding functions personally, contextualized by the network of relationships and desires that order our lives, and culminating with the love of all for all as its ultimate fulfillment.¹⁰

One criticism leveled at Augustine is that he focuses on the salvation of the individual to the detriment of communal life and the common good.¹¹ To test this critique, the conclusion of our study of the Doctor of Grace will take the form of a case study on life in community (§7),

⁹ Though beyond the scope of this project to discuss, the resonance with Platonic *anamnesis* should be noted.

¹⁰ Michael Polanyi serves as a philosophical inspiration for our study of understanding throughout this chapter; *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958).

¹¹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

integrating insights from the preceding sections to interpret two other works, the *Regula* and *De civitate Dei*, in which Augustine describes the ultimate form of community as a commonwealth of loving truth. Expanding upon this idea via potential application, we will briefly consider the question of meaning and justice as raised by Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

There is, however, another critique of the Bishop of Hippo that emerges in the course of our study. From Scripture, Augustine holds through faith that wisdom (*sapientia*) and knowledge (*scientia*) are united in God, but he is unable to integrate these two theoretically. Is the scientific investigation of the created universe part of our worship of its Creator? Although he believes the two are compatible, Augustine's thought cannot account for how this is so. While he will draw upon science occasionally, the Doctor of Grace does not appear to consider such knowledge as essential for, or having validity independent of, Christian teaching. Thomas Aquinas will take up this unresolved problem in his *Summa theologiae*, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters.

§4 *De Trinitate*: Augustine's Ontology of Understanding

So then, can we even ask whether the Holy Spirit proceeded already from the Father when the Son was born, or whether he had not yet done so, and only once the Son had been born did he proceed from them both, seeing that there is no such thing as time in that sphere? We were able to ask this kind of question where we found that will proceeds first in time from the human mind to look for something which when found might be called offspring; and when this was already brought forth or begotten, that earlier will was perfected by resting in it as in its end, and so what had begun as a questioning appetite ended as an enjoying love which now proceeded from both, that is from the begetting mind and the begotten notion, as from parent and offspring.¹²

This chapter begins where the last one ended: *De Trinitate*. This section explores how Augustine understands both the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, and the *verbum mentis* of human understanding as the crux of the image of God in us. The subsections are intended to

¹² *Trin.* XV.23.47.

reconstruct the complex argument that Augustine makes in Bks. VIII-XV. In §4.1 we begin with the insight around which he will develop his understanding of the human mind: the generation of the inner word. The triad in the mind the Doctor of Grace seeks to discover forms the subject of §4.2, which he interprets as the least inadequate created analogy for the Trinity, the *imago Dei*. Having considered a triad in love as an analogy for the Triune God, Augustine turns in Bk. IX to the ability which distinguishes human beings from all other creatures: reason. He characterizes the working of our mind as an interoperation of memory, understanding, and will. Exploring this triad then becomes his focus in *De Trinitate* through Bk. XIV. Finally, the Doctor of Grace tries to leverage this analogy to gain insight into the mystery of the Trinity, the reality reflected in the image. The section concludes with the culmination of the quest Augustine began as a youth, with what he has been able to learn about the nature of truth (*veritas*) itself. And so, §4.3 explores his attempt to grasp eternal Truth, the *Logos* of God, the ground and goal of our existential desire to understand—to know truth in the depths of our being, illuminating the *cor* of each human self in a way that is *interior intimo meo*.

§4.1 *Verbum Mentis*: The Heart of Understanding

*Thus it is that in eternal truth according to which all temporal things were made we observe with the eye of the mind the form according to which we are and according to which we do anything with true and right reason, either in ourselves or in bodies. And by this form we conceive true knowledge of things, which we have with us as a kind of word that we beget by uttering inwardly, and that does not depart from us when it is born.*¹³

As with all Scripture, Augustine believes Gn 1:26-27 to be divinely revealed. He takes these verses to be true authoritatively: human beings bear our Maker's mark—God's own image and likeness. Although he is hardly an optimist about humanity, the Doctor of Grace nevertheless

¹³ *Trin.* IX.7.12.

believes that we carry the *imago Dei*, despite our being compromised by sin.¹⁴ His first instinct is to seek this image in our ability to love. While Augustine’s explorations in *De Trinitate* devote relatively little space to love directly, this is not because he considers the question unimportant. The goal of his investigation is rather to discover the clearest possible analogy for the Trinity.

In Bk. IX Augustine shifts his study away from the analogy of love, which he considers to be more complex, and thus difficult to understand with precision. In its fullest expression, love is intersubjective—and the more subjects, the more variables are involved. Instead, he chooses to focus his search on the individual subject, since *imago Dei* exists in every single human being.¹⁵ Augustine seeks a triad in the mental operation of the integrated subject, “Just as you have two somethings, mind and its knowledge (*notitia*),¹⁶ when it knows itself. The mind therefore and its love and knowledge are three somethings, and these three are one thing, and when they are complete they are equal.” The mind performs two operations, to love and to know; all three are distinct, yet of the same substance. With three unknowns, the edifice of mystery would appear to be impenetrable. However, Augustine believes that knowledge, specifically knowledge of self, provides an opening: “when mind knows itself it does not excel itself with its knowledge, since it is knowing and it is being known. So when it knows its whole self and nothing else together with

¹⁴ Augustine considering most people consigned to the *massa damnata*, even seeing sin in the actions of infants (*Conf. I*), demonstrates his deep ambivalence about human nature. The Doctor of Grace is clearly not a believer in the inherent goodness of humanity. One of the crucial questions in interpreting the Bishop of Hippo’s anthropology is how and to what extent are human beings corrupted originally by sin. This question sits on one of the fault lines between various Christian understandings of the human person. On the one hand, Augustine clearly rejects Pelagius’ optimism about human goodness. However, does he go as far the later Calvinist understanding of humans as totally depraved on account of sin? Reformed theologian Karl Barth, emphasizing the absolute otherness of God, denies the possibility of any potentially meaningful *analogia entis* linking Creator and creature. Augustine’s firm belief that the image of God endures even in fallen humans suggests that an *analogia*, even if limited and distorted, nonetheless is a possibility—he does not go so far as to equate human nature, though fallible, with sin.

¹⁵ As the chapter progresses, and especially in §7, we will see that Augustine is no individualist. Intersubjectivity in community is tremendously important to his understanding of who we are. The thinking subject that he describes in *Trin.* should not be conflated with the later Cartesian *ego*.

¹⁶ In *Trin.* Augustine uses three different words (*notitia*, *cognitio*, and *scientia*) all of which can be translated into English as “knowledge.” To help distinguish these terms, the Latin will be highlighted at key points in the text. The distinct meanings of these three words will be discussed below in the chapters on Thomas Aquinas.

itself, its knowledge exactly matches itself because its knowledge does not belong to another nature when it knows itself.”¹⁷ In this action of recognizing one’s true self, both the mind and its understanding of what it is become one and the same.

From this point through the end of Bk. XIV, the primary focus of *De Trinitate* is mind. Augustine seeks to discover in a mental triad a psychological analogy for the Trinity. Mediating between the mind and God is truth. The human mind is mutable; it and all the creatures it knows are subject to change. However, influenced by Platonic thought, Augustine believes *veritas* itself “stands fast in unchangeable eternity.” And so, he does not attempt an empirical investigation to “assemble a specific or generic knowledge of the human mind by seeing many minds with our bodily eyes.” Instead, he will seek to “gaze upon the inviolable truth from which we define as perfectly as we can, not what kind of thing any particular man’s mind is, but what kind of a thing by everlasting ideas it ought to be.”¹⁸ The question for Augustine is not one of being or essence, but action—instead of seeking to know what the mind is in itself, he wants to understand what the mind does in the light of eternal truth. The Doctor of Grace is more interested in the actual functioning of the human *psyche* than the question of its abstract nature, for to investigate the former also incorporates the dimension of morality.¹⁹

Augustine seeks the act proper to the mind’s encounter with truth, which he will come to identify with the act of judgment, for it is by making judgments that the *mens* perceives *veritas*. The body’s senses absorb the images of bodily things, which are then transferred to the memory, where these images are presented to the mind for judgment. Although such judgments are made within the self, Augustine has the “inescapable conviction” that we make these, “by altogether

¹⁷ *Trin.* IX.4.4.

¹⁸ *Trin.* IX.6.9.

¹⁹ Hill, *The Trinity*, 258.

different rules which abide unchangeably above our minds.” Subjective judgments are not the means by which we determine truth. Instead, when they function properly, judgments act as the medium by which the truth illuminates us: “The judgment of truth is shining vigorously from above, and it is firmly supported by the wholly unbiased rules of its own proper law, and even if it is somewhat veiled by a kind of cloud of bodily images, still it is not entangled and confused by them.”²⁰ By the senses and in memory, images are present to the mind, judgment recognizes which are true, not on the basis of the image or itself, but by the light of truth which transcends them both, the form of which the rational mind perceives as if by a kind of inner vision.

This recognition of the truth of a thing forms what Augustine describes as a kind of word in the mind, the *verbum mentis*. This mental word transcends ordinary language, which attempts to give it expression, and is formed when the mind judges something to be true. These judgments are made, “according to that form of truth, and we perceive that by insight of the rational mind.” Intelligence recognizes *rationes*, relationships of proportion, by a kind of aesthetic judgment of the images present to the mind by sense or memory, grasping in those images “the inexpressibly beautiful art of such shapes, existing above the apex of the mind.”²¹ This brings us to the passage with which this section begins. For Augustine, the Creator of all things is the Truth of all things, the form according to which “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). It is through judgment that the rational mind can observe this form by insight, conceiving true knowledge of things as a kind of word the mind speaks inwardly to itself. It is this inner word that the words of language are attempts to express as also, in a way, are all of our voluntary actions.

The *verbum mentis* is the offspring of head and heart, intellect and desire. The Doctor of Grace explains, this inner word is “conceived in love of either the creature or the creator, that is

²⁰ *Trin.* IX.6.10.

²¹ *Trin.* IX.6.11. Here is the culmination of his insights from *De Pulchra et Apto*; see §1.1, n. 47 above.

of changeable nature or unchangeable truth; which means either in covetousness or in charity.”

This decision of love determines how we relate to each thing presented to our mind, according to the distinction between use and enjoyment.²² How we understand something regulates how we love it. Relating to a thing in order to enjoy it solely for its own sake (and ours) is concupiscence. *Caritas*, on the other hand, understands that thing as a fellow creature beloved by God—that we should love for God’s sake. By such judgments, the mind chooses to move either upward to God by *caritas*, or downward irrationally to nonhuman materiality by covetousness, thus giving birth to an inner word when, “on thinking over it we like it either for sinning or for doing good.” This *ratio* of love thus forms the middle term in a syllogism which joins “together our word and the mind it is begotten from, and binds itself in with them as a third element in a non-bodily embrace, without any confusion.”²³ This triad is the essence of what it is to understand.

To describe the process of the generation of the *verbum mentis*, Augustine uses the natal metaphor, making a distinction between the conceived word and the born word. These two words “are the same thing when the will rests in the act itself of knowing, which happens in the love of spiritual things.”²⁴ But, in the understanding and love of material things, “the word is conceived by wanting and born by getting.” The temporal gap between wanting and getting is painful, like the labor of childbirth: “it is unsatisfying simply to know and want, so the soul is in a burning fever of need until it gets hold of them and so to say brings them forth.” That which the intellect brings to light, love desires to bring forth, enact, realize. The Bishop of Hippo applies this insight to interpret Mt 12:37, where our mouth signifies “not this visible one but the inner invisible one of the thoughts and the heart,” and the word that comes out of it signifies, “all our good deeds or

²² This distinction between *uti* & *frui* is explored in §2.2 above.

²³ *Trin.* IX.7.13.

²⁴ A person who loves justice perfectly is already just, even if there is no occasion to translate justice into action externally. As spiritual reality, justice is still present, even if the temporal occasion to act upon it might not yet be.

sins.”²⁵ The word we bring forth becomes the basis on which we will be judged, whether we will be justified by the true love of *caritas*, or condemned by our disordered love of *concupiscentia*.

We love our understanding of a thing, regardless of whether we love the thing in itself. Everything that we know “is called a word impressed on the consciousness, as long as it can be produced from the memory and described, even when we dislike it; but in the sense we are now using, that is called a word which we like when it is conceived in the mind.” This word signifies our judgment. Even if we dislike a particular thing, we approve of our judgment of it—we like to dislike said thing. Every judgment is thus a form of affirmation. No judgment can truly be our own if we do not approve of it. The Doctor of Grace cites 1Cor 12:3 as an example of words formed by this inner word of judgment: “Nobody says, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit.” Someone may say these same words without affirming their meaning by an inner word, in which case Jesus’ warning in Mt 7:21 applies.²⁶ This kind of *verbum mentis* Augustine calls “knowledge with love,” for “when the mind knows and loves itself, its word is joined to it with love. And since it loves knowledge and knows love, the word is in the love and the love in the word and both in the lover and the utterer.”²⁷ This formation of the inner word is therefore the middle term that joins the desire to understand with the love of truth.

This union requires an isomorphism between the positive knowledge of quality (*species*) and the thing which is known. Augustine posits, “the consciousness has some kind of likeness to the positive quality known, either when it takes pleasure in it or when it is displeased with the lack of it.” Thus, “insofar as we know God we are like him,” though not to the point of equality, “since we never know him as much as he himself is,” as the nature of mind as creature renders it

²⁵ *Trin.* IX.9.14.

²⁶ Near the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

²⁷ *Trin.* IX.10.15.

inferior to the Creator. This is analogous to the way that “a kind of likeness” of material things present through bodily senses “occurs in our consciousness which is their image in the memory,” that Augustine considers to be a higher form of reality than the bodies in themselves. In this way, “when we know God we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and a kind of likeness to God.” However, in a relationship of equality, such as “when the mind knows and approves itself, this knowledge is its word in such a way that it matches it exactly and is equal to it and identical.” While any understanding “has a likeness to the thing it knows, that is to the thing it is the knowledge of,” the understanding “by which the knowing mind is known has a perfect and equal likeness.” Judgment is a recognition that an image in the mind is like the thing present to the senses, which is expressed by an inner word. Understanding functions by uniting the image in our mind with our judgment of reality by recognizing a relationship of proportion (*ratio*) between them. As the Doctor of Grace explains, the reason that our understanding takes the form of “both image and word is that it is expressed from the mind when it is made equal to it by knowing it; and what is begotten is equal to the begetter.”²⁸ Thus, our mind knows itself by recognizing its likeness in what is made present to it, like looking at a mirror and understanding that what you see is a reflection of how you truly look, as the Father is revealed in the begetting of his Son, the True Word.

Augustine applies this analysis of the mind to his quest for a created image of the Holy Trinity by inquiring about love. Is love similarly begotten by the mind? After all, if the cause of the mind’s “notion of itself is that it is knowable, then equally it is the cause of its love of itself because it is lovable.” How then is the Spirit not also begotten, also Word? Augustine attempts to

²⁸ *Trin.* IX.10.16.

find an answer this question by investigating what he believes is the image of God in our mind.

Summarizing his findings, the Doctor of Grace holds that every single thing we know

co-generates in us knowledge of itself; for knowledge issues from both, from the knower and the thing known. So when mind knows itself it is the sole parent of its knowledge, being itself the thing known and the knower. It was however knowable to itself even before it knew itself. Therefore as it gets to know itself it begets a knowledge of itself that totally matches itself, since it does not know itself less than it is, nor is its knowledge different in being from itself, not only because it is doing the knowing but also because what it is knowing is itself, as we have said before.²⁹

The mind's inner word begets the perfect *ratio* of knower and known, "the knowledge of itself by which it knows itself." Augustine describes this knowledge as "a kind of finding out what is said to be brought forth or brought to light, which is often preceded by an inquisitiveness that is going to rest in that end." In this way, that which is brought to light by understanding is brought forth by begetting the likeness of a form in the expression of a word.

We are left with the question of what motivates this process. Augustine believes that "parturition by the mind is preceded by a kind of appetite which prompts us to inquire and find out about what we want to know." The human mind thus has an insatiable will to understand.³⁰ However, this appetite cannot be identical with the knowledge that it conceives and brings forth, as hunger cannot be sustenance. Instead, the "same appetite with which one longs open-mouthed to know a thing becomes love of the thing known when it holds and embraces the acceptable offspring, that is knowledge, and joins it to its begetter."³¹ Love provides both the impulse that drives the process of understanding, and the union that brings it to satisfied completion. For the love that desires to hear is also the audience that listens to the inner word of *veritas*.

²⁹ *Trin.* IX.12.18.

³⁰ What Augustine here calls inquisitiveness resonates with Lonergan's pure and unrestricted desire to know.

³¹ *Trin.* IX.12.18.

§4.2 A Triad in the Mind: The Least Inadequate Analogy

*The human soul is never anything but rational and intellectual. And therefore if it is with reference to its capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God that it was made to the image of God, it follows that from the moment this great and wonderful nature begins to be, this image is always there, whether it is so worn away as to be almost nothing, or faint and distorted, or clear and beautiful.*³²

By the end of *De Trinitate* IX, Augustine has sketched out a triad of mind, the word that it says to itself, and the love uniting them. As the three are all of one substance, he believes they represent a created image of the Holy Trinity. But this sketch needs to be filled in, for too many questions remain unanswered. Foremost among these: how are understanding and love related to each other; how are they differentiated? How does the mind desire to understand itself and love this understanding? To find answers, the Doctor of Grace explores the relationship of the mind to itself. If, as he hypothesizes, the image of God is revealed in us by the operations of the mind, it is necessary to understand this process as precisely as possible. And so, Augustine develops the exhortation carved above the entrance to the temple of Apollo at Delphi (“Know thyself,” *gnōthi seauton*) into an *analogia mentis* in which philosophical reflection is informed by the divine life. To this end, he devotes the remainder of the body of *De Trinitate*, before attempting to complete his synthesis in the conclusion. This section thus explores Augustine’s philosophy of mind as an interworking composition of memory, understanding, and will in Bks. X-XIV, with the following section devoted to drawing out theological implications.

To begin Bk. X, Augustine reiterates the maxim with which we began in the first chapter: *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*. What causes the love of the studious; what drives people with a desire to learn new things? Such inquisitiveness, he argues, is not a love of the unknown, but the love of something known in part. He uses the example of an unknown sign, like someone hearing

³² *Trin.* XIV.2.6.

the sound of a recognizable but obscure word, whetting her appetite to learn its meaning. The more “the thing is known without being fully known, the more does the intelligence desire to know what remains.” Recognizing a sign, her mind “wants to know it completely; and no sign is completely known unless it is known what things it is the sign of.” Her *amor studentium* loves in unknown signs that which she “knows and sees by insight in the very sense of things (*rationibus rerum*) how beautiful the discipline is that contains knowledge of all signs; and how useful the skill is by which a human society communicates perceptions between its members.” Augustine identifies this love’s object as, “the lovely and useful form which the soul discerns and knows and loves, and anyone inquiring about the meaning of any words he does not know is studiously trying to perfect it in himself as far as he can.” In this way, understanding and love are mutually conditioning. In the mind, the “loveliness of such knowledge is now perceived in thought, and the thing so known is loved.”³³ To know the beauty of language is to love it by studiously trying to understand the meaning of the words present to our consciousness in order to commit them to memory. The love of what we know drives our desire to understand further, since we cannot love that which is unknown to us. For each other, understanding and love are ultimately *sine qua non*.

This brings us back to the mind’s relationship to itself. Augustine asks, “What is it...that the mind loves when it ardently seeks to know itself while still unknown to itself?” The problem is this: when the mind “seeks to know itself, it already knows itself seeking. So it already knows itself. It follows then that it simply cannot not know itself, since by the very fact of knowing itself not knowing, it knows itself.” In apparent paradox, the mind would not seek to know itself if it did not already know itself not knowing. Present to itself, “the mind seeking what mind is knows that it is seeking itself,” and thus, “it knows itself to be mind.” Therefore, “if it knows

³³ *Trin.* X.1.2.

about itself that it is mind and that the whole of it is mind, it knows the whole of itself.” What, then, is the meaning of the Delphic exhortation, “Know thyself”? Augustine contends the mind, “should think about itself and live according to its nature, that is, it should want to be placed according to its nature, under him it should be subject to and over all that it should be in control of; under him it should be ruled by, over all that it ought to rule.”³⁴ For the mind to know itself, it must know and love rightly. Understanding has a moral dimension, as do all relationships.

It is here that sin enters into Augustine’s account of the mind. The disordered desire of concupiscence estranges the mind from itself. For our mind, “sees certain inner beauties in that more excellent nature which is God; but instead of staying still and enjoying them as it ought to, it wants to claim them for itself, and rather than be like him by his gift it wants to be what he is by its own right.” Since understanding and love are mutually conditioning, “such is the force of love that when the mind has been thinking about things with love for a long time and has got stuck to them with the glue of care, it drags them along with itself even when it returns after a fashion to thinking about itself.” The distinction between use and enjoyment guides our whole understanding, because it is aligned with the fundamental distinction of the self between inside and outside.³⁵ When the mind falls in love with bodily things outside through the senses of the flesh, it desires to “bring these bodies themselves back inside with it into the region...of its non-bodily nature; so it wraps up their images and clutches them to itself, images made in itself and out of itself.” The mind desires to be united to that which it loves. Such union, however, requires connaturality, which the mind does not share with material things. They are present to the mind only as images, and “it gives something of its own substance to their formation.” But the mind, “also keeps something apart of its own substance by which it can freely make judgments on the

³⁴ *Trin.* X.5.7.

³⁵ For the distinction between *uti-frui*, see §2.2 above; between inside and outside the self, refer to §1.1 above.

specific bearing of such images; and this is more truly mind, that is rational intelligence which is kept free to judge with.”³⁶ The likenesses of bodies are impressed on the minds of all animals. What distinguishes the human mind from both material things and the minds of animals is this capacity for the inner word of judgment. Recognizing these distinctions is essential for the mind to understand what it or anything else truly is—failing to recognize this leads to error, viz. sin.

According to Augustine, the mind becomes alienated from itself by loving the images of material things it has formed so much that it comes to think of itself as one of them.³⁷ And so, the mind “gets conformed to them in a certain fashion, not by being what they are but by thinking it is—not of course that it thinks itself to be an image but simply to be that of which it has the image by it.”³⁸ Ironically, the mind comes to see itself as some kind of a body, in order to think of itself as real.³⁹ Augustine shows how this is backwards. According to him, “the mind looks for things that are being looked for by the eyes or any other sense of the body (since it is the mind which directs the sense of the flesh); and it is the mind that finds what is being looked for when the sense comes upon it.” It is precisely because the mind is not a body that it can mediate our relationship to reality. Thus, “when the mind comes on other things that it has to know by itself and not through the intermediary of any bodily sense, it finds them either in a higher substance, that is in God, or in other parts of the soul, as when it makes a judgment about the images of bodies; it finds them within, impressed by bodies on the soul.”⁴⁰

Mind is connatural with truth. Rather than seeking truth outside itself in material bodies, Augustine believes the *mens* must look inward instead. At its inner level, the mind “comes out of

³⁶ *Trin.* X.5.7.

³⁷ In this way, the mind resembles Pygmalion who, according to myth, fell in love with one of his own creations.

³⁸ *Trin.* X.6.8.

³⁹ This is similar to Augustine’s inability as a young man to understand God to be real without being a body of some kind. However, he would come to realize in *Conf.* VII that God and truth are both real without being material; see §1.1 above & 6.1 below.

⁴⁰ *Trin.* X.7.10.

itself in a kind of way that puts out feelings of love toward those images, which are like traces of its many interests,” imprinted on the memory. The Doctor of Grace enjoins, “Let the mind then recognize itself and not go looking for itself as if it were absent.” By differentiating itself from the images that it holds, the mind can recognize its presence to itself and see, “that there never was a time when it did not love itself, when it did not know itself.”⁴¹ Therefore, “when the mind is told ‘Know thyself,’ it knows itself the very moment it understands what ‘thyself’ is.”⁴² Mind knows its true self not in the way that it knows material things, but by the very act of knowing itself, as understanding is the mind’s union with truth, not looking at some kind of body.

What the mind knows indubitably about itself is that it is, that it lives, that it understands. Augustine maintains, “Nobody surely doubts...that he lives and remembers and understands and wills and thinks and knows and judges,” as the operations of the mind are *a priori* for being able to doubt at all.⁴³ Rather than looking outside to find what it is, “when the mind knows itself, it knows its substance.” As present to itself, the mind is what it does, of this we can only be certain. Thus, Augustine believes the Delphic injunction comes to this: the mind “should be certain that it is that alone which alone it is certain that it is.” To know thyself means being certain of who you truly are; this is the foundation of our mind’s knowledge of all things. What the mind is, namely, its operations, it knows “in itself, and it does not form images of them as though it had touched them with the senses outside itself, as it touches bodily things,” as they are what it itself is.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Trin.* X.8.11. This insight of Augustine’s—consciousness as the loving presence of the mind to itself—will be developed in Chs. 3 & 4 by characterizing human being as this love. Cf. Martin Heidegger’s use of the term *Dasein* (“being-there”) in his *Being and Time*.

⁴² *Trin.* X.9.12.

⁴³ *Trin.* X.9.14. As Augustine recounts in *Conf.* V.10.19, after his disenchantment with the Manichees and under the influence of Cicero, he started following the school of the Academics, skeptics who doubted the possibility of any certain knowledge. Upon his conversion, however, he wasted no time in refuting their ideas, writing *Contra Academicos* in the interlude prior to his baptism. In *civ. Dei* XI.26, Augustine makes a similar anti-skeptical argument (*Si fallor, sum*, “If I am mistaken, I am”), which is often compared with Descartes; Hill, *The Trinity*, 299, n. 26. See §1.1, n. 3 above and §7 below.

⁴⁴ *Trin.* X.9.16. On this point, Augustine seems to anticipate Lonergan’s maxim that, “Objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.”

Augustine draws upon the mind's acts to illuminate the image of God in human beings, believing them to afford the least inadequate created analogy for the Holy Trinity. Recalling how Roman educators would assess the promise of young students, he identifies three mental acts that define the character of human consciousness: memory, understanding, and will. Although three things, they "are not three lives but one life, nor three minds but one mind...not three substances but one substance." When the mind becomes present to itself, this triad operates together as one: "whatever understandable things I remember and will I also understand in consequence." *Doctor gratiae* summarizes, "they are each and all and wholly contained by each...these three are one, one life, one mind, one being."⁴⁵ And so, as Augustine draws Bk. X to a close, he will revise the mental trinity he sketched at the end of Bk. IX, refining *mens*, *notitia*, and *amor* into *memoria sui*, *intelligentia sui*, and *voluntas sui*.⁴⁶

But the Bishop of Hippo is not yet ready to compare the image he has been drawing with the divine reality. He will devote Bks. XI-XIII to refining his depiction of the *imago Dei* further, being careful to distinguish it from other triads in the mind. Beginning with the material world of sensible objects, Augustine moves inward and upward in the remainder of *De Trinitate* toward That Which Is, recapitulating the ascent he embarked upon in *Confessiones* VII.⁴⁷ He begins this movement by identifying a non-material analogy for the mental trinity: "just as the inner man is endowed with understanding, so is the outer man with sensation."⁴⁸ Augustine believes that the cognitive functioning of the human mind as directed toward sensible objects, though not strictly

⁴⁵ *Trin.* X.11.18.

⁴⁶ The most obvious difference between the two triads (mind/knowledge/love & memory of itself/understanding of itself/will of itself) is the substitution of will for love. However, Augustine's turn toward purely mental acts in the second triad, rather than a devaluation, is an affirmation of the priority of love. He focuses on the mind because he considers it to be an easier example, centered in an individual subject, whereas love requires a higher integration that involves multiple subjects—an even more complicated problem.

⁴⁷ *Conf.* VII.17.23; see §1.1 above and §6.1 below for discussion.

⁴⁸ For this distinction, Augustine cites Paul (2Cor 4:16). He considers v. 18 to be axiomatic: "we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

belonging to the image of God, shares a likeness with it. However, the Doctor of Grace identifies this function with our fallen state, deducing from what he considers to be,

the very logic of our condition, according to which we have become mortal and carnal, it is easier and almost more familiar to deal with visible than with intelligible things, even though the former are outside and the latter inside us, the former sensed with the senses of the body and the latter understood with the mind, while we conscious selves are not perceptible by the senses, not bodies that is, but only intelligible, because we are life.⁴⁹

According to the Bishop of Hippo, the mind's cognitive reliance on the senses is connected to its moral enslavement to them. He concludes that in this present mortal life, apart from salvation, our understanding of the material world is tainted by sin.⁵⁰ But nevertheless, Augustine considers these triads of the outer person worth investigating, because he believes they bear a resemblance to the inner image, helping to make the *imago Dei* more legible to our distorted gaze.

The first triad in the outer mind Augustine considers in Bk. XI is in the act of seeing an external object. He distinguishes between the visibility of the body that is seen, the actual sight in which its form is impressed on the mind by sense, and the conscious intention that joins the two according to what is proper to each—that is, their *properties*, their natures. In the triad of seeing, the three each have different natures, highlighting by contrast the unity of nature in both the Holy Trinity, as well as its image in the *mens*. Nevertheless, the act of seeing does require a kind of unity by joining the three parts together, integrating them according to their proper relationship.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Trin.* XI.1.1. Here Augustine's theory of knowledge intersects with his doctrine of original sin, which taints us with concupiscence, disordering both our ability to will and to understand rightly. This is the reason that he is unable to integrate *scientia* with *sapientia*. In the central debate on the nature of reality illustrated by the *School of Athens*, Augustine follows Plato, discounting knowledge of the material world (science) as a path to truth, seeking it not in things seen as beneath us, but in pure Ideas/Forms that are above this world. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, Aquinas will seek to integrate the Theologian with Aristotle, scientific knowledge with the worship of the divine.

⁵⁰ Polanyi criticizes Augustine harshly on this point, claiming that by denying the legitimacy of natural scientific knowledge, he “destroyed interest in science all over Europe for a thousand years,” *Personal Knowledge*, 141. There is truth behind the hyperbole. In his focus on Gn 1:26-27, Augustine will overlook Gn 2:19 altogether in *Trin*. This inability to reconcile natural science and divine revelation continues to alienate and impoverish both theology and science up to the present day—although responsibility for this state of affairs extends *well* beyond Augustine.

⁵¹ In Augustine's defense, note the detailed description of optical experiments he conducted to test his hypothesis. He neither denies the value of science, nor grasp its full significance. Nor is his skepticism unmerited. The good of knowing that $E = mc^2$ should be tempered with understanding of what human beings can do with such knowledge.

Moving inwardly, Augustine discovers another triad, this one in the act of remembering or recollecting. In this instance, the mind's object is no longer information present to it by sense, but by memory. The form of the object remembered is perceived by the attention of the "mind's eye" (*acies animi*) when the two are integrated by the will into a kind of "thinking vision" (*visio cogitantis*). This triad, though still pertaining to the outer person, is now of one substance. The Doctor of Grace adverts that the distinction between memory and conscious attention rests on an act of judgment, which we make "when we realize that what remains in the memory even while we are think of something else is one thing, and quite another is what is produced when we actually recall, that is go back to the memory and there find this same look or image."⁵²

Incorporating our will into the act of imagination gives it a moral dimension. Augustine believes there is no harm in images themselves, but rather how we choose to direct our intention and attention, since it is by these that we shape our minds. He concludes we should "direct the greater part of our will" toward "dwelling amid higher and more inward things," and "that part of it which is applied to bodies outside or to their images inside" should "refer whatever it fixes on in them to the better and truer life." The alternative, dwelling on what he regards as lower and outside, is to reject the Apostle's injunction not to be "conformed to this age," but to the higher reality of God.⁵³ Augustine believes that by loving the bodies we see such that we desire to be united with them, our minds will become alienated from themselves and God. Yet these triads that form the outer person are still creatures, bearing vestiges of their Creator, toward Whom they are able to be directed. The Doctor of Grace brings Bk. XI to a close by citing one of his favorite verses of Scripture, Wis 11:20, and concluding that our sense imagination can be so

⁵² *Trin.* XI.1.6.

⁵³ *Trin.* XI.4.8. The reference is to Rom 12:2, an excellent summation of Augustine's positive argument here. *Scientia* is not meaningful in itself unless it can be ordered toward what is good, acceptable, and perfect, i.e., to the wisdom that enables us to discern the will of God, viz., the dual commandment of *caritas* for God and neighbor.

directed toward truth by using it to recognize in material things another, immaterial triad, namely measure, number, and weight.⁵⁴

In Bk. XII, Augustine draws upon Scripture to craft a narrative to illustrate the dynamic processes of mind. In this story, *mens* is “the dramatic form of a paradise story in microcosm,” in which the self must decide whether to turn toward God and one another in *caritas*, or back in on itself in pride.⁵⁵ This story also illuminates the distinction Augustine makes between *scientia*, the knowledge of temporal things, and the wisdom (*sapientia*) that contemplates eternal truth. The image of God is our mind’s reflection of the light that is the divine Form. Like a mirror, in order to reflect this light, the mind must be turned toward its source: “man’s true honor is God’s image and likeness in him, but it can only be preserved when facing him (*ad ipsum*) from whom its impression is received.” What determines the orientation of the mirror of the *mens* is love. The Doctor of Grace cautions us, “If you neglect to hold dear in charity the wisdom which always remains the same, and hanker after knowledge through experience of changeable, temporal things, this knowledge blows up instead of building up.”⁵⁶ *Scientia* properly clings to *Veritas*.

However, these scriptural allusions are not meant to oppose knowledge and wisdom to each other. Augustine does not place an interdict around *scientia* like the one on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He considers our sensitive appetite, “very close to the reasoning of knowledge, seeing that it is the function of this knowledge to reason about the bodily things that are perceived by bodily sensation.” *Scientia* informs how we relate to material things: “If it does this well, it does it in order to refer them to the highest good as their end; if badly, in order to

⁵⁴ In Latin, this triad is *modus*, *species*, and *ordo*; see §1.1, n. 7 above. From these, it is possible to sketch out an Augustinian basis for the natural sciences as being devoted to understanding the intelligible relationships (*rationes*) which connect material things by discovering the ways in which they are united with one another.

⁵⁵ Hill, *The Trinity*, 261.

⁵⁶ *Trin.* XII.11.16. This concupiscent “hankering after knowledge” is an allusion to the tree at the center of Gn 3. The distinction between knowledge that blows up vs. builds up is based on Paul in 1Cor 8:1. The history of modern science up to the present suggests that it might not be possible for humans to separate *scientia* from hubristic pride.

enjoy them as goods of a sort it can take its ease in with an illusory happiness.” The question is how knowledge is directed, whether twisted back to its own self-interested enjoyment, or toward utilizing things for the “public and common good which is what unchangeable good is.”⁵⁷ While it is susceptible to going astray, “knowledge too is good within its own proper limits,” if ordered toward the love of that which is eternal.⁵⁸ Indeed, the Doctor of Grace holds that *scientia* plays a necessary role in informing the virtues by which we order our lives rightly.

Augustine concludes Bk. XII by trying to discern the meaning of the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*. He starts by corresponding it to the difference between contemplation and action.⁵⁹ He considers the worship of God to be the highest form of contemplating truth and, “what is the worship of him but the love of him by which we now desire to see him, and believe and hope that we will see him?” The highest form of action this side of eternity, the virtuous life, belongs to *scientia*, which provides the information we need to know what is right. The Doctor of Grace then tries to apply this distinction to the mental triad previously developed, which will test his theory of knowledge to its limits. The key question is this: how can the mind remember the intelligible ideas (*rationes*) that it knows and contemplates? If mind is illuminated by truth, how do we then recognize it? The answer that Plato gives, *anamnesis*, he rejects as contrary to Christian teaching. Instead, Augustine answers that, “the nature of the intellectual mind has been so established by the disposition of its Creator that it is subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees such truths in a kind of non-bodily light that is *sui generis*.”⁶⁰ This light shines for us personally in *memoria*, revealing the truth about God and ourselves by our act

⁵⁷ *Trin.* XII.12.17.

⁵⁸ *Trin.* XII.13.21.

⁵⁹ Augustine believes this is the meaning of Jb 28:28: “Behold piety is wisdom, while to abstain from evil things is knowledge.” Cf. the distinction between the active and the contemplative Thomas Aquinas makes in his account of the Christian life in *ST* II-II QQ. 179-182.

⁶⁰ *Trin.* XII.15.24. Augustine will continue to develop this insight in *Trin*, as we shall see. It is also extensively treated in *Conf.* X; see §1.2 above and §6.2 below.

of remembering it. However, this does not provide an account for how we are able to remember eternal *rationes*, which must be generic, and intelligible to all by definition.⁶¹

Around this point in the work, there is a shift in Augustine's tone and the direction of his argument.⁶² Instead of expanding his inquiry into the philosophy of mind, he starts to tie together the many strands of his exploration together into a theological synthesis. His argument pivots on faith, the subject of *De Trinitate* XIII, which the Doctor of Grace will locate at the interface of *scientia* and *sapientia*. He begins by quoting the paradigmatic expression of the *analogia luminis* in the NT, the Prologue of the Gospel of John. Since the light of God shines upon the darkness of human incomprehension, "faith is needed by which to believe what cannot be seen."⁶³ Unlike the knowledge informed by the senses, faith is "grasped with the knowledge of absolute certitude, and proclaimed by knowledge of self (*conscientia*)...faith itself when we have it is something we see in ourselves, because faith in things absent is itself present, and faith in things outside is itself inside, and faith in things that are not seen is itself seen; yet it occurs in the hearts of men in time," through the hope that, "faith in true things will eventually be transformed into the things themselves."⁶⁴ Therefore, faith is the nexus where consciousness meets conscience, where the knowledge of self informs its realization in action, where matter and time meet eternal truth. In

⁶¹ This appears to be a fatal lacuna in Augustine's philosophy of mind, where his synthesis seems to fall short of providing a unified account of our understanding. He clearly departs from Platonism as a Christian who believes in the meaningfulness of creation in a way no strict Platonist can. Hill, in a magisterial footnote to which I am greatly indebted, proposes Augustine as having "Aristotelian doubts" about the Platonic approach to truth on this point, which would never be developed, largely due to his unfamiliarity with Aristotle; *The Trinity*, 339, n. 64. Here we anticipate Hill's Dominican confrere, Thomas Aquinas. The question is the relationship of the intellectual light in the memory that Augustine describes and Aristotle's agent intellect. Augustine himself does not dialogue with the Philosopher on this point—it would be left for Thomas to mediate between the two, as we shall see in Ch. 3 below. Unfortunately, Augustine does not develop his solution, the *sui generis* intellectual light by which we remember the eternal ratios, further in *Trin*. We will reconsider the question of how the mind is subjoined to intelligible things with help from John Henry Newman and Michael Polanyi; see §5.1, n. 117, 120; and §6, n. 149, 177, & 194 below.

⁶² Scholars believe Augustine began writing *Trin*. around A.D. 400 (only about 3 years after starting *Conf*. and *doc. Chr.*), but would come to a stop in the middle of writing Bk. XII after being rudely interrupted, only to finish it and the remaining 3 books years later, publishing the complete work in 420. Hill, *The Trinity*, 20.

⁶³ *Trin*. XIII.1.2.

⁶⁴ *Trin*. XIII.1.3. Here again Augustine points to, but does not explore, an intellectual light analogous to faith.

this way, the light of faith is the substance of things not seen (Heb 11:1), providing those who believe with a kind of understanding of them, in order to be able to love them.

This light has a common source, but must be appropriated personally. Augustine affirms, “We certainly say very truly that faith has been impressed from one single teaching on the hearts of every single believer who believes the same thing.” Yet he also makes a distinction: “what is believed is one thing, the faith it is believed with is another.” What is believed refers to “things that we say are or have been or will be,” but “faith is in the consciousness of the believer.”⁶⁵ As such, faith is a model of unity in plurality: a common teaching appropriated subjectively creates community with a common understanding and will, as every self learns to trust and love others.

Augustine devotes the body of Bk. XIII to specifying this Christian faith, returning in the conclusion to the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*. It is with the latter that we shall draw this section to a close, and with the former that we shall open the next. He believes that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ Jesus (Col 2:2-3), the Word made flesh in whom the two are united. The ultimate *scientia*, the grace “that man has been joined to God to form one person,” is united with divine *sapientia*, the Word of God. When one holds the words of this *credo* in memory and recollects their meaning, “he is now indeed doing something proper to the inner man,” but does not live according to the trinity of this inner man, “unless he loves what these meanings proclaim, command, and promise.”⁶⁶ The faith that this meaning is true is thus the understanding that enables believers to live according to God’s covenant with us through loving relationship with all things.

⁶⁵ *Trin.* XIII.2.5. Thomas Aquinas will adapt this distinction, referring to *fides quae creditur* (“the faith which is believed”) and *fides qua creditur* (“the faith by which it is believed”); see §10, n. 42 below.

⁶⁶ *Trin.* XIII.20.26.

§4.3 The Triune *A Priori* of Understanding

*Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'*⁶⁷

Augustine's closing argument hinges upon faith, presenting Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, as its form. In keeping with the formula, *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*, he believes faith functions in relationship to the love of God as the Incarnation of the Word precedes the Gift of the Spirit. In Jesus Christ, the fullness of *scientia* and *sapientia*, believers recognize God's love. By such faith, understanding mediates ultimate reality. Augustine believes this *analogia luminis* is the meaning of the Prologue of John's Gospel: the *Logos* is God, in him is the life and light of human beings. It is in and through Jesus Christ that believers understand God as Trinity. While the Johannine *analogia caritatis* explored in the previous chapter comes first existentially, the *analogia luminis* is logically prior. In *De Trinitate* XIII-XV the Doctor of Grace integrates these two analogies as "faith working through charity" (Gal 5:6), in order to show how understanding and love cooperate to reveal the image of the Holy Trinity in the lives of those who believe.

At the heart of the Augustine's anthropology is the belief that all human beings long for both happiness and truth. He cites Cicero's *Hortensius*, which begins from the absolutely certain starting point that all of us desire to be happy.⁶⁸ To be happy is to have everything we want, and to want nothing wrongly. But as the Bishop of Hippo had come to realize in his own life, humans also need faith in order to be happy. As Creator, God is the source of all good things, "especially of those which make a man good and those which make him happy; only from [God] do they

⁶⁷ *Trin.* XIII.19.24. Augustine is quoting from Col 2:3.

⁶⁸ *Trin.* XIII.4.7. As we saw in §1.1 above, Augustine relates in *Conf.* III that reading this dialogue at the age of 19 catalyzed in him the love of wisdom, i.e., philosophy. Cf. the universal skepticism from which Descartes starts.

come into a man and attach themselves to a man.” For Augustine, true happiness is not possible in this present mortal life; the happy life is where everything one loves will be, “and he will not desire anything that is not there. Everything that is there will be good, and the most high God will be the most high good, and will be available for the enjoyment of his lovers, and thus total happiness will be forever assured.”⁶⁹ He concludes, all people “want to be happy; if they want something true (*si verum volunt*), this necessarily means they want to be immortal.”⁷⁰ This desire for happiness is how we humans deny the meaninglessness our mortality appears to portend.

Scientia alone offers no hope in the face of death—faith is needed. Augustine proclaims, “This faith of ours...promises on the strength of divine authority, not of human argument, that the whole man...is going to be immortal, and therefore truly happy.” Christian faith reveals God declaring the meaning of human life in his Word by taking on our mortality. He explains,

For surely if the Son of God by nature became son of man by mercy for the sake of the sons of men (that is the meaning of “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”), how much easier is it to believe that the sons of men by nature can become sons of God by grace and dwell in God; for it is in him alone and thanks to him alone that they can be happy, by sharing in his immortality; it was to persuade us of this that the Son of God came to share in our mortality.⁷¹

Faith hears this Word and understands its promise, recognizing God’s love incarnate in the life of Jesus, culminating in his death on the cross for our sins. Faith recognizes all good things in us as gifts of God. It is only once Jesus is glorified in resurrection that the ultimate Gift, the *caritas* of God, “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5:5), in order that faith might work through love to realize our ultimate hope: salvation in God.

While all will to be happy, not all will be. The Doctor of Grace diagnoses the cause: “not all have the faith which must purify the heart if happiness is to be reached.” Humans “would of

⁶⁹ *Trin.* XIII.7.10.

⁷⁰ *Trin.* XIII.8.11.

⁷¹ *Trin.* XIII.9.12. The reference is to Jn 1:14. Cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 54; see Ch. 4, n. 167 below.

course like to be immortal if they could, but by not believing that they could be they fail so to live that they can be.” Despair of our apparent fate negates the happiness of many. Thus, “faith is necessary if we are to obtain happiness with all the potentialities of human nature, that is both of body and soul.” This Christian faith, “according to its own belief, has been given actual definite content in Christ, who rose in the flesh from the dead to die no more.”⁷² As the information of the Word, faith enlightens believers through both *scientia* and *sapientia*. Augustine closes his argument in Bk. XIII by citing Paul: faith informs the lives of believers (Rom 1:17) and works through love (Gal 5:6). And so, the virtues by which we order our lives “are all to be related to the same faith,” since these can only be true virtues if they refer to truth itself.⁷³

Augustine’s argument reaches its crescendo in Bk. XIV, which opens with the pivot from *scientia* to *sapientia*. God’s wisdom is the Word; and our wisdom is the worship of God. He cites the philosophers’ definition of wisdom as “the knowledge of things human and divine,” adding the distinction made by Paul in 1Cor 12:8 to differentiate the former as *scientia*, and the latter as *sapientia*. Knowledge as given by the Spirit incorporates “anything that breeds, feeds, defends, and strengthens the saving faith which leads to true happiness.” Though its object is eternal truth, Augustine believes that, “faith itself is temporal, and finds a temporal dwelling in the hearts of believers.”⁷⁴ While in our life in the body, “we are walking by faith and not by sight” (1Cor 5:6), he does not find that in the “retaining, contemplating, and loving of this temporal faith,” there is “such a trinity as deserves to be called the image of God,” since “when the human mind sees the faith with which it believes what it does not see, it is not seeing something everlasting.” From his reading of 1Cor 13:12, the Doctor of Grace holds that after this present life what was believed

⁷² *Trin.* XIII.20.25.

⁷³ *Trin.* XIII.20.26. Augustine discusses this distinction between true and apparent virtues in *civ. Dei* XIV.

⁷⁴ *Trin.* XIV.1.3. This definition was commonly cited by Cicero (e.g., *De Officiis* 2.12.5). Aquinas will repeatedly cite this chapter of *Trin.* in his *ST* for Augustine’s distinction between knowledge and wisdom, as we will see below.

shall be seen, as faith is transformed into sight. Though there is a triad in faith, mortal operations will come to an end. The Bishop of Hippo believes, “whatever it is that must be called the image of God, it must be something that will always be,” thus this image cannot be in faith.⁷⁵ And so, it is to the rational or intellectual soul that he turns to find the image of God he has been seeking.

The triad of the mind’s remembering, understanding, and willing of itself, introduced in Bk. X, Augustine believes is yet more inward. As made to the image of God, the human soul has, “the capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God...from the moment this great and wonderful nature begins to be, this image is always there, whether it is so worn away as to be almost nothing, or faint and distorted, or clear and beautiful.”⁷⁶ When the mind shifts its gaze back on itself by thinking about this nature, Augustine locates a trinity,

placing in the memory that from which the gaze of thought is formed, treating the actual conformation as the image that is printed off from it, and finding the thing that joins both together to be love or will. So when the mind views itself by thought, it understands and recognizes itself; thus it begets this understanding and self-recognition.⁷⁷

For concrete examples of what Augustine means by the mind’s understanding and recognition of itself, consider two key moments in the Torah. Having taken the knife to his son, the angel of the Lord cried out, “Abraham, Abraham!” and he replied, “Here I am” (Gn 22:10-11). Looking at the fire burning in a bush, but not consuming it, the angel of the Lord called, “Moses, Moses!” and he said, “Here I am” (Ex 3:2-4). *Imago Dei* is ultimately the self that stands *coram Deo*.⁷⁸

He considers this triad unlike any of the others. The rest produce a kind of trinity when they are learned, “consisting of the look which was knowable even before it was known, and of

⁷⁵ *Trin.* XIV.2.4. While Aquinas corrects Augustine on the distinction between *scientia/sapientia*, he follows this distinction between faith/sight. But can faith in God be a solely temporal phenomenon? Is faith adventitious to love, or integral to it? These questions will be discussed in §§10 & 11 below, where I contend faith is a conformation to the movement of divine *caritas*, our individual iteration of an eternal pattern in the material world of time and space.

⁷⁶ *Trin.* XIV.2.6.

⁷⁷ *Trin.* XIV.2.8.

⁷⁸ *Coram Deo* means “before God.” Beverly Mitchell makes this principle the basis of her cry for justice in *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

the learner's awareness joined to this, which begins when the thing is learnt, and the will as the third element which joins the two together." Another trinity is formed in our consciousness when what is learned is recalled, "one consisting of the images which were impressed on the memory when they were learnt, and of the conformation of thought recalling them with a backward look at them, and of the will...which joins these two together."⁷⁹ The Doctor of Grace considers such knowledge to be adventitious, as coming into the mind from outside itself: "the knowables beget the knowledge, not the knowledge the knowables." Most inwardly—from the moment our mind began to be, "it never stopped remembering itself, never stopped remembering itself, never stopped loving itself." When our mind thinks itself, the inner word this act generates is joined by the will to the memory of self from which it is begotten.⁸⁰ Thus the role of memory differentiates image from non-image. When the mind remembers something present, as it is to itself, *memoria* is "that by which the mind is available to itself, ready to be understood by its thought about itself, and for both to be conjoined by the love of itself."⁸¹

It is not as the knowledge of the self that this trinity in the mind operates as *imago Dei*—but how the mind remembers, understands, and loves its Creator. The *mens* is enlightened in this way not with its own light, but by partaking in the divine light such that God's wisdom forms our own. Our mind can remember its Creator because God is omnipresent; the *mens* itself lives, and moves, and is in God (Acts 17:28). As this image is realized in us, "the man who knows how to love himself loves God." When the mind loves, remembers, and understands God, "it can rightly be commanded to love its neighbor as itself."⁸² This wisdom of *imago Dei* is inherently moral.

⁷⁹ *Trin.* XIV.8.11

⁸⁰ *Trin.* XIV.10.13. Hill notes imprecision in Augustine's language here, as he considers the image to be both always present in consciousness, and realized when the mind actually thinks about itself. Using the Aristotelian distinction between potency and act, he clarifies, "the mind is always the triune image of God potentially, but that this image is only activated by an act of thought," *The Trinity*, 383, n. 26.

⁸¹ *Trin.* XIV.11.14. Augustine's understanding of memory will be explored further in §6.2 below.

⁸² *Trin.* XIV.14.18.

The virtues are written, “in the book of that light which is called truth, from which every just law is copied, and transferred into the heart of the man who does justice...by a kind of impression, rather like the seal which both passes into the wax and does not leave the signet ring.”⁸³ To bear the image of God means we each receive our self as a conscious center of thought and action. In this way, faith is the self’s recognition of this image, and *caritas* our will to carry it.

Sin is the deformation of this image. Rather than turning toward its source, the mind errs by mistaking itself for material things that are beneath it, desiring to be united with them instead. Augustine quotes Paul’s exhortation: rather than choosing to be conformed to the world, let the One who formed your mind reform it into the truth (Rom 12:2; cf. Eph 4:23). Such renewal is a lifelong process of transformation, realized in choosing day by day to live into the image of God and not as a material thing only, thus transferring our love “from temporal things to eternal, from visible to intelligible, from carnal to spiritual,” lessening our greed for the former and binding ourselves with charity to the latter.⁸⁴ Conversion renews our likeness to God, thus our true self.

Augustine brings Bk. XIV to a close by quoting from the end of *Hortensius* on the hope which the love of wisdom offers. “As we ponder night and day, and sharpen the understanding which is the fine point of the mind (*acies mentis*) and take care it does not get blunt, that is to say as we live in philosophy,” Cicero exhorts the readers, “to always keep to their course, that is to reason and to eager inquiry,” for the less they sully themselves with vice and error, “the easier will be their ascent and return to heaven.”⁸⁵ According to the Doctor of Grace, the contemplative wisdom of *sapientia*, which is the worship of our Creator, fulfills Cicero’s vision of philosophy

⁸³ *Trin.* XIV.15.21. This is how the ancient Romans would give their signature. The significance of making one’s *signature* will be developed at the end of §5.2, in §8, n. 142, as well as the Conclusion below.

⁸⁴ *Trin.* XIV.17.23. This process is what I propose Augustine means by conversion. Although it is sealed in the moment of baptism, conversion is a lifelong calling for Christian believers. In *Conf.*, Augustine presents his entire life as an ongoing process of conversion, the story itself rather than any particular moment therein; see §6 below.

⁸⁵ *Trin.* XIV.19.26. Recall the *acies animi* that Augustine describes in Bk. XI; see §4.2 above.

in the *Hortensius* as the love of and inquiry into the truth by perfecting it with a faith given form by *caritas*. Following the Way, the love of truth is fulfilled in our love for God and one another.

The intellectual odyssey of *De Trinitate* comes home in Bk. XV. The Doctor of Grace confesses his work is pedagogical, training readers to know the Creator from the things that are made, culminating with recognizing the *imago Dei* in themselves. It is this image that makes us specifically human, by virtue of our “reason or understanding and in whatever else can be said about the rational or intellectual soul that may belong to what is called mind or consciousness (*animus*).”⁸⁶ This is our horizon, our interface with reality—and beyond is the Truth of God’s uncreated Creativity. In order to make this case, Augustine integrates appeals from Scripture to faith, and from reason to understanding. Being made in the image of God beckons us to seek God’s face always (Ps 105:3), for “you become better and better by looking for so great a good which is both sought in order to be found and found in order to be sought.” To understand the incomprehensible is to rejoice in it evermore: the image “is sought in order to be found all the more delightfully, and it is found in order to be sought all the more avidly.”⁸⁷ And so, at the core of what makes us human is love for a truth that our minds have been ordered so as to find.

Throughout his life, Augustine has stretched himself to the utmost reaching for his God, extending his mind by understanding and love. Following Rom 1:20, he boldly seeks to descry the Trinity by inference from the structure of mind itself. However, this analogy will not hold. While memory, understanding, and will are interrelated functions of our mind, the Holy Persons are not functions of God—each of the Three remembers, understands, loves. Augustine attempts to espy God “through a mirror in an enigma” (1Cor 13:21): “what we have been trying to do is

⁸⁶ *Trin.* XV.1.1.

⁸⁷ *Trin.* XV.2.2. Augustine maintains the purpose of the human mind is to seek and behold the Mystery of God. This is the *cor* of our being he refers to in *Conf.* I.1.1, which is restless until it rests in our Creator (see §1.1 above & §6.1 below). Cf. Aquinas’ insight that the intelligible in act is the intellect itself in act; see §8 below.

somehow to see him by whom we were made by means of this image which we ourselves are, as through a mirror.”⁸⁸ The essential act of this *imago Dei* is the generation of the *verbum mentis*:

when we utter something true, that is when we utter what we know, a word is necessarily born from the knowledge which we hold in the memory, a word which is absolutely the same kind of thing as the knowledge it is born from. It is the thought formed from the thing we know that is the word which we utter in the heart, a word that is neither Greek nor Latin nor any other language; but when it is necessary to convey the knowledge in the language of those we are speaking to, some sign is adopted to signify this word.⁸⁹

Augustine considers this inner word to be our created analogue for the divine Word. In order to be communicated with others, the *verbum mentis* is expressed through signification by words-in-language. The inner word must take some bodily form in order to be present to others by sense. Thus, “just as our word becomes a sound without being changed into sound, so the Word of God became flesh, but it is unthinkable that it should have been changed into flesh.” Meaning itself is incarnationally transformative: “it is by assuming it, not by being consumed into it, that both our word becomes sound and that Word becomes flesh.”⁹⁰

As mirrors are valued for their reflectivity, so words are for their veracity. When a word is true, “that which is in the awareness is also in a word,” and truth is sought, “so that what is in awareness should also be in a word and what is not in awareness should not either be in word.” The truth is when our yes means yes and no means no (Mt 5:37). In this way, *Doctor gratiae* believes, the “likeness of the made image approaches as far as it can to the likeness of the born image, in which God the Son is declared to be substantially like the Father in all respects.” The meaning of *imago Dei* is revealed as the Word enlightens us. As all things are created through the Word (Jn 1:3), so it is the Son who becomes incarnate, that “we might live rightly by his

⁸⁸ *Trin.* XV.8.14.

⁸⁹ *Trin.* XV.9.19.

⁹⁰ *Trin.* XV.11.20. As meaning is the ratio connecting thought and language, so Jesus Christ is the ultimate ratio uniting mortals with the Divine. For the Bishop of Hippo, the paradigmatic sign of this ratio is the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of communion. This concept of the ratio will subsequently be developed by Aquinas in his own philosophy of mind, which is the subject of §8 below.

example; that is, by having no falsehood either in the contemplation or in the operation of our word.”⁹¹ This Word of God is the rational basis of creation—the logic of the universe. What it means for this *Logos* to become human is the enlightenment of our mortal flesh. By revealing ourselves to us as rational and moral creatures, God’s Word shows us the way to live in harmony with all things, moving us to rejoice as we discover our place in Creation, our loving home.

However, Augustine realizes the inadequacy of even this analogy for ultimately seeing God as he is, face to face (1Jn 3:2; 1Cor 13:12). He asks: “in this mirror, in this puzzle, in this likeness of whatever sort, who can express how great the unlikeness is?” For the human mind, there are “two sorts of things that can be known, one the sort that the consciousness perceives through bodily sensation, the other the sort it perceives through itself.”⁹² All things known to our consciousness are gathered in the treasury of memory. From these things is “begotten a true word when we utter what we know,” for then, “the word is most like the thing known, and most its image.” This is because, “the seeing which is thought springs direct from the seeing which is knowledge...a true word from a true thing, having nothing from itself, but everything from that knowledge from which it is born.” Because things are, we can know they are true. This is not the case with God. All things are because their Creator knows them. In God, *scientia* and *sapientia* are identical with each other and the divine substance—to know and to love truth are one and the same. By uttering himself completely and perfectly, the Father begets the Word: “the reason this Word is truly truth is that whatever is in the knowledge of which it was begotten is also in it.” The Father knows by begetting, and the Son by being born, just as Augustine will conclude that, “a word is not true unless it is born of a thing that is known.”⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *Trin.* XV.11.21.

⁹³ *Trin.* XV.14.23. In this account, truth proportions the word in the mind with the thing that is known. God’s Word is therefore the Truth of Divine Love, as God’s Gift is the Love of Divine Truth.

If the *verbum mentis* is the form of understanding, then *veritas* is the integral function of adequation by which the mind judges the faithfulness of an image to the original, analogous to the correspondence of a sign with the thing it signifies. Thus, the Word of God “is in the form of God...simple form and simply equal to him from whom it is and with whom it is wonderfully co-eternal.” While human thought “chops and changes” in time, “when it comes upon something we know and is formed from it, it is our true word.”⁹⁴ To be image is to be enlightened, not to be the Light itself: “the nature that has been made is always less than the one that made it.”⁹⁵ Rather than understanding God, by faith we recognize how God understands what we truly are.

§5 *De Doctrina Christiana*: Augustine’s Hermeneutics of Understanding

*Everything that is true comes from the one who said, ‘I am the truth.’*⁹⁶

Although Augustine’s psychological reflections provide profound insight into the triune nature of God, his exploration in *De Trinitate* begins and ends with Scripture.⁹⁷ For is the Bible that has inspired human beings to understand God as Trinity. As we see throughout his writings, Scripture gives form to what the Doctor of Grace says to us. He views theological reflection as complementary to our interpretation of the Bible. We have seen by now that Scripture is integral to the way Augustine understands everything: God, the world, and himself. Humans can come to know the Word of God—Truth itself—by interpreting the words of Scripture. His entire project is essentially hermeneutical: to understand is to recognize the truth of our interpretation. In this

⁹⁴ *Trin.* XV.14.25. The reference is to Phil 2:6.

⁹⁵ *Trin.* XV.14.26. As Lateran IV would later affirm, all created analogies for God are more unlike than like.

⁹⁶ *Doc. Chr.* Prologue 8. The reference is to Jn 14:6-7, and Jesus’ statement is worth quoting in full: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁹⁷ Since our exploration of *Trin.* has focused on Bks. VIII-XV, its overall structure has been obscured. He begins the work by exploring the scriptures in Bks. I-IV. This forms an *inclusio* with Bks. XII-XV, in which he explicates his insights by the exposition of Scripture.

section, we will therefore expand upon our study of Augustine's hermeneutics by returning to his classic text on the subject, *De doctrina Christiana*.

Having set out Augustine's illuminationist epistemology in §4, we will now explore his development of an illuminationist hermeneutics. How can we be enlightened by interpretation? How can our interpretation be communicated so as to enlighten others? The first question will be the subject of §5.1, which investigates the theoretical basis of Augustine's hermeneutics, namely distinction between things (*res*) and signs (*signa*). Then, §5.2 will address the great rhetorician's answer to the question of communication, drawing upon both *De doctrina Christiana* III-IV, as well as his *Homilies on IJohn* (discussed in detail in §2.3 above) to give a concrete example of the application of these principles for communicating his understanding of God's love.

§5.1 *Res & Signa: Ordering Understanding*

*All teaching is either about things or signs; but things are learned about through signs.*⁹⁸

The theoretical basis for Augustine's hermeneutics is his distinction between *res* (things) and *signa* (signs), which he considers to be fundamental to the operation of our understanding. All things that exist represent reality—to be is to be something real; and to be nothing is not to exist. While a piece of wood, a stone, and an animal are all things, each has the potential to be a sign of Christ as well.⁹⁹ What differentiates signs from mere things is that the former “are things in such a way as also to be signs of other things,” while the latter do not; they simply are. Words, on the other hand, are things which exist only as signs. Augustine defines signs as things “which are used in order to signify something else.” However, he stresses that not everything is a sign.

⁹⁸ *Doc. Chr.* I.2.2

⁹⁹ Augustine cites examples from the Hebrew Bible (Ex 15:23-25; Gn 28:11-19; 22:9-14) which he understands to be signs pointing to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ as described by the Gospels.

What is to be understood about things as such is that they are, “not that they signify something else besides themselves.”¹⁰⁰ What distinguishes signs is their significance—the meaning they bear. As the *signification* of something, meaning correlates things and signs. To understand a sign is to recognize the corresponding thing to which it points. We signal our understanding of a thing with a sign that corresponds to it. Ultimately, meaning forms the order in which all things can be united into a whole. Therefore, understanding represents a mutually-conditioning process by which what is real is learned through signs recognized from our lived experience of reality.

Having introduced this distinction, Augustine devotes most of *De doctrina Christiana* I to an exploration of things on the basis of love,¹⁰¹ before turning to signs in Bk. II. As things, signs convey impressions to the senses. What differentiates a sign is that it also signifies, having the added effect of causing something else, besides itself, to come to mind. Natural signs make something else known objectively, without desire or intention, as smoke signifies fire. Given signs (*signa data*), on the other hand, are those “which living creatures give one another in order to show, as far as they can, their moods and feelings, or to indicate whatever it may be they have sensed or understood. Nor have we any purpose in signifying, that is in giving a sign, other than to bring out and transfer to someone else’s mind what we, the givers of the sign, have in mind ourselves.”¹⁰² It is on these intentionally-given signs that the Doctor of Grace’s study focuses; as bearers of meaning, such signs are our means of interpersonal communication.

While the object of this section is his hermeneutic philosophy, this is distinct from the Bishop of Hippo’s purpose in writing *De doctrina Christiana*. His object is to help his readers to interpret and teach the meaning of the Christian Bible. Rather than a philosophical treatise, the

¹⁰⁰ *Doc. Chr.* I.2.2. Although it sounds simple, this is an important point Augustine will develop in more detail in II.17.27-24.37. As opposed to understanding, superstition takes everything as potentially signifying something else.

¹⁰¹ See above §2.1 on love as hermeneutic key; and §2.2 on the distinction between use and enjoyment.

¹⁰² *Doc. Chr.* II.2.3.

work is more like a manual for ministers of the gospel, training pastors how to be preachers. It is from this pedagogy that we must extrapolate the underlying philosophy. Many of the principles that Augustine sets out specifically for understanding Scripture can be applied more generally, even universally. These rules are the focus of this section. However, to neglect the pastoral and sacramental dimensions would be to misrepresent *De doctrina Christiana*. Thus, our presentation cannot be considered complete until we can explore these aspects in the following section (§5.2).

For ancient Romans the most widely recognized meaning of the word *signum* would have been the standard carried by each military unit, a symbol of the corps and the fighting spirit of its men.¹⁰³ Standards were a matter of life and death; to lose a *signum* represented defeat, and often meant annihilation. At the head of a century next to the *signifer* marched the *cornicen*, the horn blower. This pair served to signal the officers' orders to the unit. Augustine takes such standards as akin to visible words signaling the commander's will to the troops. Tunes played on the *cornu* horn similarly serve to communicate orders as audible signs. The words of language combine these two functions, able to communicate meaning visibly and audibly, such that words are "far and away the principal means used by human beings to signify the thoughts they have in their minds."¹⁰⁴ The capacity the verbal signs of human language have for meaning is nearly infinite. While Augustine can use words to describe military signals, his words can hardly be expressed using standards and horns. Like soldiers though, believers must be attentive to orders, studying the words of Scripture, which serve as authoritative signs revealing the will of our Creator.

¹⁰³ An example of such a standard is the centurial *signum*, a spear shaft decorated with medallions and topped with an open hand signifying the soldiers' oath of loyalty. When carried into battle, each century's *signum* served as a rallying point for the soldiers, as flags would in later times. Standard bearer (*signifer*) was thus a position of great distinction and responsibility. Also entrusted with administering the unit's finances, the *signifer* was a *duplicarius*, entitled to double the basic soldier's wage, as was the *cornicen*.

¹⁰⁴ *Doc. Chr.* II.3.4. Augustine considers most (but not all) of the signs given by human beings as directed to the senses of either hearing or sight. Of these two, he believes the former predominates, that written words are signs of words spoken. This was the standard view in antiquity: the spoken word is ultimately authoritative. However, this no longer seems to be the case in our time, as mass media communication appears to favor the visual.

Although the variety of meanings they can express is limited, the essential virtue of the *signum* and *cornu* in this regard is their clarity, even amidst the chaos of battle. It is the inverse for words: the near-infinite variety of meaning they express can render their meaning ambiguous. Accordingly, Augustine devotes much of *De doctrina Christiana* II & III to the problem of how to clarify ambiguous signs. Though he believes the overall meaning of Scripture is clear,¹⁰⁵ many passages can be obscure, presenting a hermeneutical challenge: How can we understand unclear or unfamiliar signs? To overcome this problem, Augustine teaches interpretation as the process of recognizing the meaning of *signa data*. According to his account in *De doctrina Christiana*, hermeneutics is thus an attempt to identify signs, the things to which they point and, ultimately, to reveal the will of their giver(s).

With words it is possible for us to say one thing while meaning something else, a form of expression known as metaphor. Signs that are metaphorical carry an additional level of meaning, pointing beyond one thing to another. However, as a sign's capacity for meaning increases so too does the potential for misunderstanding. Familiar metaphors can become commonplaces; but if one does not share the frame of reference, such figures of speech are more likely to be baffling. When readers are faced with such hermeneutical difficulties, the Doctor of Grace recommends we investigate them, "partly by a knowledge of languages, partly by a knowledge of things."¹⁰⁶ Linguistic knowledge entails understanding a system of signification, i.e., a lexicon. Those who know that the word *adamah* in Hebrew means "earth" can thus also recognize the metaphorical significance of Adam as the name given to the first human in Genesis. The name functions in this case as the *signum* of the thing. Similarly, much of knowing a language consists of being able to identify the names that it assigns for various things.

¹⁰⁵ Namely the love of God, self, and neighbor; see §2.1 above.

¹⁰⁶ *Doc. Chr.* II.16.23.

Augustine devotes the remainder of Bk. II to signs as pointing to knowledge of things, returning to language in itself in Bk. III. To know that *pomme de terre* means “earth apple” in French is not the same as knowing what a potato actually is. Only those familiar with apples and potatoes are able to recognize the metaphor in the French expression. Such knowledge of things ultimately encompasses the entire field of human culture, which the classical world symbolized with the nine Muses. Refuting that they are the “daughters of Jupiter and Memory,” the Doctor of Grace maintains there is value in these pursuits nevertheless: “we for our part should certainly not allow such heathen superstitions to make us shun all knowledge of music, if we can snatch anything from it that we can use for the understanding of the holy scriptures.” For, “all good and true Christians should understand that truth, wherever they may find it, belongs to their Lord; then, after weighing it up and acknowledging it also in the sacred books, they should repudiate all superstitious fictions.”¹⁰⁷ For Augustine, the goal of studying anything is ultimately to learn the truth of all things in order to live in accordance, turning away from stories to please the self.

Discerning truth from superstition is a primary function of interpretation. In order to do so, the Bishop of Hippo will distinguish two kinds of teaching: one that deals with institutions established by human beings; and the other concerning, “things they have observed as having already occurred, or as having been established by God.”¹⁰⁸ He considers the former to be partly superstitious, and partly not. Since God is Truth, superstition is idolatrous, “the worshipping of creation or any part of creation as God.”¹⁰⁹ We can either see things in the light of truth, or listen to demons in the dark. Superstition interprets things as signs by presumption, “forming a kind of common language with demons.” Observation by itself does not confer meaning, making a thing

¹⁰⁷ *Doc. Chr.* II.18.28. The principal fiction Augustine has in mind is the one Paul names in Rom 1:21-23. Cf. Plato’s critique of poetry in the *Republic*.

¹⁰⁸ *Doc. Chr.* II.19.29.

¹⁰⁹ *Doc. Chr.* II.20.30.

into a sign. Such observations can “signify different things to different people according to their assumptions and ways of thinking.” Demons, whose very essence is to deceive, will “procure for any particular person such things as they see his guesses and cultural conventions have already ensnared him into expecting,” in order to fabricate an illusory agreement. For agreement by itself can establish things as signs, but it cannot alter the nature of the things to which they point.

After deconstructing and discarding fictitious signs, we are left with those which humans establish by mutual agreement among one another. Augustine elaborates, “all those things that people regard as having some significant value, just because it has been agreed among them that they should have such a value, are human institutions.” Even with such agreement, “when people wish to signify something, they look for some kind of likeness, as far as possible, between the signs themselves and the things being signified,” that is, a resemblance.¹¹⁰ While some of these human institutions are fatuous, he sees others as valuable, and even necessary. Conventions such as these, “which contribute to the necessary ordering of life,” the Doctor of Grace considers to be worthy of study by Christians, and of committing to memory.¹¹¹

Augustine considers language to be the foremost of these necessary institutions. Next are the arts and sciences, “those signs which human beings have developed, not by inventing them but by investigating either what has happened in the past or what has been instituted by God,” which he does not regard as purely human inventions. Of these, he focuses on the signs which, “are the province of the mind and its powers of reason.”¹¹² What Augustine means by sign is not a static object, but encompasses an act of pointing. For the purpose of understanding Scripture, “Everything...that we are told about the past by what is called history is of the greatest help to

¹¹⁰ *Doc. Chr.* II.25.38. However, similitude without agreement is insufficient to establish signs as meaningful. This is the problem that the infant Augustine would face in *Conf.* I; see §1.1 above.

¹¹¹ *Doc. Chr.* II.25.40.

¹¹² *Doc. Chr.* II.27.41.

us.”¹¹³ History is a sign of the past which, “faithfully and usefully narrates what has been done.” However, history itself is not a human invention, “because what has been done in the past cannot now be undone; it has to be held in the succession of times, which have been established and are being controlled by God.”¹¹⁴ But narratives can also bring present realities to our attention, as the Doctor of Grace believes is the case for what is known as natural history.

It is crucial to remember that *De doctrina Christiana* is a manual for training ministers to teach the Bible, and not a program of general education. Augustine, despite granting the validity of astronomy cautions that, “unprofitable absorption in it is more of a hinderance than a help, and because it is so closely related to that most baleful error of those who chant the fatuous follies of Fates, the most appropriate and correct thing to do is to ignore it.”¹¹⁵ In his time, the description of scientific astronomy was barely distinguishable from the superstition of astrology. Still, the Bishop of Hippo seems similarly dismissive of other arts and sciences declaring, “only a slight and cursory knowledge of these matters needs to be acquired in the course of this life,” sufficient “for making an intelligent judgment, in case we should altogether fail to see what Scripture is intending to suggest” in any figurative expressions which happen to draw upon them.¹¹⁶

The Doctor of Grace proceeds to consider the disciplines of philosophy, rhetoric, and mathematics, whose signs pertain to the rational mind. He considers philosophy to be especially valuable for interpreting Scripture, believing that valid rules of logic “have not been instituted by human beings, but observed and noted down by them, so that they can either learn or teach them,

¹¹³ *Doc. Chr.* II.28.42.

¹¹⁴ *Doc. Chr.* II.28.44. This section can be read as a rejoinder to Marx’s 11th Thesis on Feuerbach. History is not a thing that we can manipulate to serve our own ends; being conscious of it does not make us masters of the universe.

¹¹⁵ *Doc. Chr.* II.29.46. Augustine’s views here could apply to any kind of materialistic determinism.

¹¹⁶ *Doc. Chr.* II.30.47. This conclusion is uncharacteristically myopic for the author of *Conf.* IX. In his focus on the Bible itself, Augustine is overlooking the broader context of revelation in creation depicted in Ps 19:1-4. Still, he had to be practical in his role as bishop, and would have known it was unrealistic to expect priests to be polymaths. Nevertheless, we see here an effect of his inability to work out a theoretical union between *scientia* and *sapientia*.

because they are inscribed in the permanent and divinely inspired rationality of the universe.”¹¹⁷

To say that X is true is not to make X true, but to point out how X is. Augustine distinguishes between the truth of a statement (*sententia*), which “stands on its own merits,” and the truth of a logical inference (*conexio*), which “stands or falls with the opinion of the person one is dealing with.”¹¹⁸ Uncertain statements joined to true ones by valid logical relationships point to what is true. Falsehood, by contrast, is a defective form of understanding, “the signification of something that is not in fact as it is signified,” pointing people astray from what truly is.¹¹⁹

The next art the Bishop of Hippo considers is his own specialty: rhetorical eloquence. The rules used by philosophy are applied to the understanding of things, the standards of rhetoric to communicating the things thereby understood. He is particularly concerned with sophistry, the meretricious use of rhetoric to present what is false as true, i.e., bullshit. Augustine believes that the gravest error of philosophy is to mistake its rules for finding truth with the truth to which all these signs point. Rhetoric compounds this falsehood by presenting it in an appealing way, as if pointing to the *vita beata*—that such learning is an end in itself, that to be well-educated is to be happy. But the signs of philosophy and rhetoric are far better at describing the truth of something rather than they are at prescribing it. The Doctor of Grace uses the example of trying to teach someone how to walk by describing the movements involved. While a true description, “people find it much easier to walk by doing these things than to notice them when they do them, and to understand when they are told about them.”¹²⁰ Such description can be superfluous, especially when the thing is at hand and present to our experience.

¹¹⁷ *Doc. Chr.* II.32.50. It is in this way that the eternal ratios are present to our mind, see §4.2, n. 61 above.

¹¹⁸ *Doc. Chr.* II.33.51. An example from astronomy: the discovery of Pluto brought it to our attention, not into being. The truth of the statement, “Pluto exists,” stands on the merits of observation. The veracity of the inference, “Pluto is a planet,” stands or falls on the opinion of the community of astronomers.

¹¹⁹ *Doc. Chr.* II.35.53.

¹²⁰ *Doc. Chr.* II.37.55. John Henry Newman will develop this insight of Augustine’s with his account of an illative sense in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870).

Augustine caps his survey of secular forms of human knowing with mathematics. He considers it beyond obvious that the signs of math have, “not been instituted by human beings, but rather discovered and explored,” its immutable rules, “worked out by shrewd and sagacious minds.”¹²¹ His appraisal of the arts and sciences as signs pointing to the reality of all things is, at worst, ambivalent. The Bishop of Hippo cautions against being “someone who loves knowing all these things just so that he can give himself airs among the uneducated, and does not rather go on to inquire why those things are true that he has simply perceived to be true, and why some things are not only true but immutable.” While both material things and the human mind that observes them are mutable, by doing so the latter, “is set between immutable truth above itself and other mutable things beneath itself.”¹²² According to Augustine, our understanding of things ultimately forms a sign pointing to God, from Whom *sapientia* recognizes everything as proceeding. In this way, our learning is perfected in the praise of the Creator, by loving God and all things in God.

The Doctor of Grace concludes Bk. II with his advice for “eager and bright young people who fear God and are seeking the blessed life.” He contends they should not “impetuously and unconcernedly pursue any teachings that can be had outside the church of Christ, as though these could ensure them a happy life.” However, “for the needs of this life, they should not neglect those humanly instituted arts and sciences which are of value for a proper social life.” Except for the fields specifically discussed above, Augustine reckons, “there is nothing among them of any use. In all these matters, one should keep to the maxim, ‘Nothing too much,’ and above all those that pertain to the senses and are involved in space and time.”¹²³ However, students should seek

¹²¹ *Doc. Chr.* II.38.56. This passage is a good example of the resonance between Platonism and mathematics.

¹²² *Doc. Chr.* II.38.57. According to Augustine, human rationality proportions between the immutable (*veritas*) & mutable physicality. Thomas Aquinas will develop this insight extensively, which is the subject of §8 below.

¹²³ *Doc. Chr.* II.39.58. To recap, the fields are history, natural history (including “the experience and theories of the useful arts and crafts”), philosophy, rhetoric, and mathematics. Augustine comes close to grasping the full significance of *scientia* but, as clearly shown here, his interest is practical rather than theoretical.

out philosophers who “happen to have said anything that is true, and agreeable to our faith, the Platonists above all,” unafraid to “claim back for our own use what they have said, as from its unjust possessors,” just as the Israelites liberated gold from the Egyptians. The truths that these thinkers have discovered is like gold, which they did not create themselves, but rather mined “from the ore of divine providence, veins of which are everywhere to be found.” And that which they have instituted for the good of human society, “which we cannot do without in this life, are things that it will be lawful to take over and convert to Christian use.”¹²⁴

Learners should never stop reflecting on a maxim from Paul: “Knowledge puffs up, love builds up” (1Cor 8:1). Only those who are rooted in *caritas* can understand the dimensions of the Lord’s cross together with the company of all the saints, for whom it represents the ultimate *signum*, “encompassing the whole of Christian activity.” Taking up and following **this** standard, the saints’ hearts are purified by “doing good works in Christ and persevering in adhering to him; hoping for heavenly things, not profaning the sacraments.” This purification creates in them “the capacity ‘to know also the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge,’ in which he through whom all things were made is equal to the Father, ‘so that we may be filled with the fullness of God.’”¹²⁵ As shown in §4.2, Augustine believes knowledge (*scientia*) is perfected by wisdom (*sapientia*). And so, in *De doctrina Christiana* he presents the knowledge of things mediated by the use of signs as pointing by the Standard of reality itself—ultimate Meaning—the will of the Giver, the Creator of all things, and Orientation of all true signs. Thus, at its core, Augustine’s hermeneutics is a process by which we recognize the order of truth, in which the reality of things is made known through signs, and signs are known through our experience of things in reality.

¹²⁴ *Doc. Chr.* II.40.60. See Ex 3:22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36. Augustine interprets the ambiguous story as an enacted parable pointing to the principle he describes. On the meaning of use, see §2.2 above.

¹²⁵ *Doc. Chr.* II.41.62. Augustine is quoting from Eph 3:17-19.

§5.2 Communicating Christian Understanding

*In this very literature which they are eager to study, they read that ‘the Lord gives wisdom, and from his face come knowledge and understanding.’ From him indeed it is that they have received their interest and eagerness to study, if it is qualified by loving piety.*¹²⁶

In Augustine’s account, our act of understanding reality is neither static, nor solitary. To learn the truth is to engage in a dynamic, shared process. It is not enough to know what things and signs are and mean, it remains to communicate that understanding with one another, to use signs to mean things. Understanding is inextricably linked with dialogue. Until we can express something in signs, we have not truly understood it.¹²⁷ Communication is the process of making our understanding into a thing that can be shared by means of signs. For humans, communication is inherently incarnational; our ability to generate and receive signs is mediated by living bodies. Thus, meaning is ultimately incarnational. The truest, most effective *signum* any of us have is the form of our lives, our word in the fullest sense. Therefore, the personal integrity that unites deed with thought is essential to realizing the truth in both communication and understanding.

The Doctor of Grace believes our most personal form of communication to be the spoken word. But to grant primacy to speech is also to lament, for we shall never with mortal ears hear the man himself speak. Once spoken, the sound of our words, like us, passes away. However, by using the signs of an alphabet, words are transformed so as to become visible. Though it is most useful for communication, language can also be deformed by the pride of Babel. Greedy wills seeking first place for themselves corrupt language for the sake of their selfish ends to the point of becoming incomprehensible to one other. Acutely aware of this temptation, Augustine strives not to train propagandists for *libido dominandi*, but doctors to apply the medicine of Scripture,

¹²⁶ *Doc. Chr.* III.37.56. The quote is from Prov 2:6.

¹²⁷ The ability to communicate something clearly is a function of how well we have understood that thing. As Albert Einstein said, “You do not really understand something unless you can explain it to your grandmother.”

which “provides treatment for so many diseases of the human will, starting out from language.” Such Christian teaching translates the knowledge of salvation into the languages of all nations, with the goal of sharing the fruit of interpreting Scripture: “the thoughts and will of the authors it was written by, and through them to discover the will of God, which we believe directed what such human writers had to say.”¹²⁸ Like the *cornicen*, it is the job of the teacher to present these orders faithfully by making them audible for all those who have ears to hear.

Christian teaching is a joint venture of Word and Spirit. Augustine sees the Holy Spirit as integral to authentic understanding and communication. To explain what is needed to understand Scripture, he interlaces the gifts of the Spirit with the Beatitudes to show how the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10) by converting us to seek God’s will.¹²⁹ Wisdom is the crowning stage of the process of our spiritual development, of becoming children of God. He highlights knowledge, the “stage that every serious student of the scriptures has to occupy himself,” linking it with those who mourn. Augustine believes the gift of knowledge, “filled with good hope, leads one to bewail oneself, not to vaunt oneself; and in this frame of mind one begs with assiduous prayer for the consolation of divine help, to prevent one from being crushed with despair.”¹³⁰ At the penultimate stage, having cleansed the “eyes with which God can be seen,” the pure of heart are given understanding. Those who live for this world cannot see this light; only those who live for the truth can see its beauty. Those who want to understand, “cannot be diverted from the truth either by any determination to please men, or by a concern to avoid any of those inconveniences that tend to spoil this life.”¹³¹ On this level, concupiscence operates as a

¹²⁸ *Doc. Chr.* II.5.6. In his position as court rhetorician, Augustine would have acted as an imperial propagandist. Although our emphasis has been on his hermeneutic of *caritas*, he is also a master of the hermeneutic of suspicion.

¹²⁹ Derived from Is 11:1-3, the seven gifts of the Spirit are: wisdom (*sapientia*), understanding (*intellectus*), counsel, fortitude, knowledge (*cognitio*), piety, and fear of the Lord. For the Beatitudes, see Mt 5:3-11.

¹³⁰ *Doc. Chr.* II.7.10. Augustine summarizes this knowledge of the scriptures with the commandment to refer all our love of self, and of neighbor, to God as discussed in Bk. I; for discussion, see §2.1 above.

¹³¹ *Doc. Chr.* II.7.11.

form of bias, seeing truth as a means, an expedient to serve our earthly desires. This snare can be overcome only with the Spirit's help, and doing so leads us to delight in the peace of *sapientia*.

We come now to Bk. III on interpreting ambiguous biblical signs. Augustine begins by identifying his hermeneutic objective: "Those who fear God are conscientious about seeking his will in the scriptures."¹³² This book is concerned primarily with clarifying the ambiguities arising from the metaphorical use of language, a concern born out of personal experience. It is fitting the Bishop of Hippo opens the discussion with the maxim he learned from the Bishop of Milan: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2Cor 3:6). Literal interpretation is blind to the meaning of metaphor, incapable of seeing signs as anything besides mere things. Such "wretched slavery of the spirit," renders people "unable to lift up the eyes of the mind above bodily creatures, to drink in the eternal light."¹³³ Here Augustine presents materialism as a literalistic reading of reality, a misguided attempt to resolve all ambiguity by denying the possibility of any meaning beyond physical things in themselves.

The Doctor of Grace connects this slavery of the spirit to idolatry. In concupiscence, human beings shackle themselves to falsehood by choosing to worship created things as gods. The faithful, however, "are commanded to love and worship the one God who made all these things, the idols of which the pagans venerate."¹³⁴ Believers have been "found by Christian liberty to be serving under useful signs...by explaining the signs to which they were subjected, this liberty raised them up to the substantive realities, the things they were signs of, and so set them free."¹³⁵ The freedom Augustine describes consists in exercising our minds in the spiritual

¹³² *Doc. Chr.* III.1.1.

¹³³ *Doc. Chr.* III.5.9. Augustine gives a detailed account of his own struggles making sense of the Bible in *Conf.*; for discussion, see §1.1 above and §6.1 below.

¹³⁴ *Doc. Chr.* III.7.11.

¹³⁵ *Doc. Chr.* III.8.12.

understanding of useful signs. To be “enslaved under signs” is to “practice or venerate some kind of thing which is a significant sign, unaware of what it signifies.” But those who “carry out or venerate useful signs established by God, fully understanding their force and significance,” partake freely in “that reality to which all such things are to be referred.” Through the ministry of such people, “the Holy Spirit has provided us with the help and consolation of the scriptures themselves.” With the signs of the law and prophets it began, but now, “the clearest indication of our freedom has shone upon us in the resurrection of our Lord, we are no longer burdened with the heavy duty of carrying out even those signs whose meaning we now understand.” Instead, “our Lord himself and the discipline of the apostles has handed down to us just a few signs instead of many, and these so easy to perform, and so awesome to understand, and so pure and chaste to celebrate.” When people receive the sacraments of baptism or the Lord’s Supper, “they have been so instructed that they can recognize to what sublime realities they are to be referred, and so they venerate them in a spirit not of carnal slavery, but rather of spiritual freedom.”¹³⁶ By the communication of the signs of God’s love, we are able to realize our liberation in *veritas*.

Augustine proceeds to describe how the freedom of the Spirit enables us to recognize the love of God and neighbor as the true meaning of Scripture, concluding Bk. III by giving various rules for biblical interpretation, before turning to rhetoric in Bk. IV to bring the work to a close, fulfilling the promise he made in I.1.1. At last, the master will divulge his secrets: “the rules of rhetoric which I myself learned and taught in the secular schools.” But Augustine dashes such expectations declaring, “they should not be looked for from me, either in this work or in any other.”¹³⁷ While the Bishop of Hippo will not teach us how to manipulate one another, nor will

¹³⁶ *Doc. Chr.* III.9.13.

¹³⁷ *Doc. Chr.* IV.1.2. Writing near the end of his life, here is Augustine’s blunt assessment of his former career as a secular rhetorician. He admits such rules are useful, but also believes that, with the right disposition and examples, eloquence will come to faithful ministers of the Word through gifts given through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

he allow “that truth should stand there without any weapons in the hands of its defenders against falsehood.”¹³⁸ An “interpreter and teacher of the divine scriptures” is also “the defender of right faith and the hammer of error,” having “the duty of both teaching what is good and unteaching what is bad...in this task of speaking it is his duty to win over the hostile, to stir up the slack, to point out to the ignorant what is at stake and what they ought to be looking for.”¹³⁹ The first task of a teacher is to speak with *sapientia*, which the Doctor of Grace considers to be a function of our progress in understanding the meaning of Scripture. And so, to speak truth eloquently is to communicate this wisdom usefully for others.¹⁴⁰

Our guide holds up Paul and Amos as biblical teachers of eloquent wisdom. Teaching happens when those who desire to learn, “both hear something true and understand what they hear.”¹⁴¹ Augustine defines eloquence in such matters as, “to ensure, not that what was thought repellent should be found to be pleasing, or that something disliked should still be done, but that a point what was obscure or simply missed should be indicated and cleared up.” If they are able to obtain this objective, learners will then be able to “feed enjoyably on truth itself,” for it is “the characteristic trait of good minds and dispositions to love in words what is true, not the words themselves.”¹⁴² He quotes something that an eloquent man once said, “to be eloquent you should speak ‘so as to teach, to delight, to sway,” adding that, “Teaching your audience is a matter of necessity, delighting them a matter of being agreeable, swaying them a matter of victory.” Thus, Augustine concludes, “the necessity of teaching is to be found in the things we are saying, the remaining two in the way we say it.”¹⁴³

¹³⁸ *Doc. Chr.* IV.2.3.

¹³⁹ *Doc. Chr.* IV.4.6.

¹⁴⁰ *Doc. Chr.* IV.5.7. Augustine here quotes Cicero, *De inventione* I.1: “wisdom without eloquence is of little use to society, while eloquence without wisdom is frequently extremely prejudicial to it, never of any use.”

¹⁴¹ *Doc. Chr.* IV.10.25.

¹⁴² *Doc. Chr.* IV.11.26.

¹⁴³ *Doc. Chr.* IV.12.27. The eloquent man in question is, of course, Cicero. The quote is from *Orator* 21.69.

Our words of wisdom emerge only carefully, from prayer. An eloquent speaker, “when he has just and good and holy things to say...is at pains to ensure as far as he can, when he says these things, that his listeners understand them, enjoy them, obey them.” If the speaker is able to do this, Augustine believes, “it is more the piety of prayer than the ready facility of orators that enables him to do so.” Thus, by praying “both for himself and for those he is about to address, let him be a pray-er before being a speaker.”¹⁴⁴ As ecclesiastical examples of such eloquence, the Bishop of Hippo holds up Cyprian, the martyred bishop of Carthage, as well as his own teacher, Ambrose of Milan. Whatever style a speaker uses, “the universal task of eloquence...is to speak in a way that is geared to persuasion.” His aim should include, “that good morals should be loved and bad morals shunned.”¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, what we are aiming at, “when we support with divine testimonies what we say in our teaching but that we should be heard with obedient compliance, is that these testimonies should be believed,” is possible only with the assistance of the One Who inspired them.¹⁴⁶ In communicating this message, whatever the speaker’s utterances, “his manner of life carries more weight.”¹⁴⁷ To teach wisely is thus to say true things which need to be heard. Doing this requires more than just words—it requires personal integrity, the eloquent sermon of the pastor’s own example, which Augustine finally confesses is what he has attempted to give us through what he was written for our instruction. It is in this integration that a Christian preacher becomes an incarnate sign pointing to Truth itself in the person of Jesus Christ, a proclamation made through the medium of the embodied life of an individual human being.

¹⁴⁴ *Doc. Chr.* IV.15.32. He specifies that good and holy things are the only things such a speaker should say. Christian ministers should beware not to stray too far from the message of the gospel.

¹⁴⁵ *Doc. Chr.* IV.25.55.

¹⁴⁶ *Doc. Chr.* IV.26.56.

¹⁴⁷ *Doc. Chr.* IV.27.59. Summarizing what he means by conversion, Lonergan states that, “fidelity to the word engages the whole man,” by integrating of all 4 levels of intentional consciousness; *Method*, 243. Personal integrity is how we incarnate meaning authentically. The realization of meaning is affirmed by our faithfulness—Augustine and Lonergan are in accord here. But while the former attributes the cause of this *ordo doctrinae* of conversion both to Word and Spirit, the latter’s account does not seem to give an explicit place for the Word; see §10, n. 88 below.

§6 *Confessiones*: Augustine's Phenomenology of Understanding

*You love the truth because anyone who does truth comes to the light. Truth it is that I want to do, in my heart by confession in your presence, and with my pen before many witnesses.*¹⁴⁸

The insight with which Augustine concludes his *De doctrina Christiana*, that personal example is integral to true communication, leads us back to where we began our study in Ch. 1: *Confessiones*. In this *opus*, he presents understanding as a personal act: how we understand is a function of who we are.¹⁴⁹ Understanding emerges within the context of our relationships with things, others, our self, and our Creator—all of which are mediated by signs, which are words in the fullest sense. If our understanding is analogous to seeing, then *veritas* is the light that reveals all things to us. How we understand words informs how we act, as true enlightenment entails our living rightly, in recognition of and harmony with the order of all creation. And so, a person's understanding is ultimately revealed in the actualization of their self as a sign given to others—this is the substance of our true confession.

Revisiting §1 in light of the intervening sections, we can now say that words operate as signs communicating desires. Making a sign gives an order for the memory to recognize which, when understood, moves the will accordingly. The interworking of these operations is the *cor* of our being. The Doctor of Grace identifies this concert as the *imago Dei*, whose restless *opera* forms a sign of our ultimate term and rest in God. Our understanding finds its end in the *Logos*, through whom all things have been brought into being. God's Word is Truth itself, the meaning of everything. Incarnation, the realization of God in this mortal life, thus forms the central theme of *Confessiones*. Over the course of its thirteen books, Augustine depicts the origin, pattern, and

¹⁴⁸ *Conf.* X.1.1.

¹⁴⁹ This is the point of contact between Augustine and Polanyi's thesis in *Personal Knowledge*. The interpretation of the former in this section is indebted to the latter's account of knowledge of truth as essentially personal.

goal of his life in order to reveal a sign of God's loving presence, identifying his hunger for true meaning as ultimately fulfilled in the loving understanding of the Word himself.

This section is divided into three subsections. The narrative portion of *Confessiones* (Bks. I-IX) is the subject of §6.1, telling the story of how Augustine came to discover the meaning of his life by learning to recognize the *Logos* being revealed in him. In the pivotal Bk. X, he plumbs the depths of *memoria* to find the root of his understanding in the recognition of *veritas*, as we will see in §6.2. Our study culminates in §6.3 with Bks. XI-XIII: Augustine interpreting Gn 1 in order to locate himself in time and creation. The Doctor of Grace's understanding of the meaning of his life is to bear the image of God, lifting up his words in praise to form an incarnate sign of the Creator's love for all creatures. The true vocation of our *verbum* is thus to reflect the light of God's Word as a beacon signaling others to know and love one another in the Truth.

§6.1 Meaning Loves: Recognizing the Word

*"Is truth then a nothing, simply because it is not spread out through space either finite or infinite?" Then from afar you cried to me, "By no means, for I AM WHO AM." I heard it as one heard a word in the heart, and no possibility of doubt remained to me; I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that truth exists, truth that is seen and understood through the things that are made.*¹⁵⁰

Understanding is the first thing Augustine asks of God in the prayer of his *Confessiones*. Throughout the work, his restless mind seeks out truth in an attempt to express it in words. These words often come together as questions. He is praying to understand what he is doing when he prays, and how he is able to pray. To pray to a God who is unknown appears to beg the question, but for Augustine, faith holds the key: "My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry

¹⁵⁰ *Conf.* VII.10.16.

of your preacher.”¹⁵¹ In calling upon God, faith calls God into himself, and his self into being. The words of a prayer invoke God, but prayer is perfected in hearing God’s word to him. His restless *cor* listens, calling upon God to “open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’”¹⁵² Addressing himself to God’s mercy, Augustine confesses his own essential ignorance. “For what is it I am trying to say,” he asks, “except that I do not know whence I came into this life that is but a dying, or rather, this dying state that leads to life? I do not know where I came from.” What the Doctor of Grace seeks throughout *Confessiones* is the genesis of his self. It is by surveying his life in prayer that he becomes able to recognize how God, “cried the truth aloud to me through all you give me, both within and without.”¹⁵³ This understanding which our narrator seeks is to hear is nothing other than the voice of the Truth itself, that in which he and ultimately all things exist.

Augustine’s survey of his life begins with infancy and how he came to acquire speech. Frustrated by the incommensurability of others, he began to look for signs that would enable him to communicate with them. His young mind “grasped at words with memory.” He studied others, “when people called an object by some name, and while saying the word pointed to that thing, I watched and remembered that they used that sound when they wanted to indicate that thing.” As his memory “built up a collection of words, observing them as they were used in their proper places in different sentences,” he “came to understand which things they signified.”¹⁵⁴ Through observing and remembering, Augustine was able to learn how to use the same signs for himself. Thus, he locates understanding within the context of communication, with words functioning as a medium of exchange, the currency of understanding, with memory its bank.

¹⁵¹ *Conf.* I.1.1.

¹⁵² *Conf.* I.5.5.

¹⁵³ *Conf.* I.6.7.

¹⁵⁴ *Conf.* I.8.13. See §1.1 for further discussion of this passage.

Learning figures prominently in the Doctor of Grace's account of his young life. In contrast with his eagerness grasping at words, he was at first a diffident student. His reflection upon the formal education he received is unsentimental, ambivalent. Rather than being oriented toward truth, Augustine characterizes his schooling: "The program for right living presented to me as a boy was that I must obey my mentors, so that I might get on in this world and excel in the skills of the tongue." For "this end I was sent to school to learn my letters, though I, poor wretch, could see no point in them."¹⁵⁵ Rather than pointing toward *veritas*, this pedagogy had its end in winning games aimed at personal advancement and wealth. Despite being misdirected, his love of words continued to grow. As a youth, Augustine found his early lessons in grammar dull, but fell in love with works of literature such as Virgil's *Aeneid*. When he writes *Confessiones*, however, his evaluation has reversed: "Those early lessons in literacy were unquestionably more profitable because more dependable; by means of them I was gradually being given a power which became mine and still remains with me: the power to read any piece of writing I come across and to write anything I have a mind to myself."¹⁵⁶ No longer limited to pointing at things observed, Augustine now knew how to use written signs to communicate potentially anything.

The problem came not with the words he was being taught, but what they were pointing him toward. Augustine considers words in themselves to be "finely-wrought, precious vessels," carrying meaning as cups carry drink. But the beautiful words he was learning held, "the wine of error mixed for us in them by teachers who are drunk themselves."¹⁵⁷ The meaning of his lessons included an understanding of the way he should act and the kind of person he should be, that he

¹⁵⁵ *Conf.* I.9.14. Augustine presents abuse as a (if not *the*) dominant feature of his schooling, which would not be unusual for his time (or our own). While critiquing the practice, he ultimately considers some degree of discipline, even physical, necessary to a certain extent in order to control the temptation of *curiositas*. We should not assume that *curiositas* is a cognate for curiosity in the sense which Lonergan refers to as our pure and unrestricted desire to know; see discussion in §1.1 above and §6.2 below.

¹⁵⁶ *Conf.* I.13.20.

¹⁵⁷ *Conf.* I.16.26. The striking metaphor Augustine develops here is worth reading in full.

should seek the good life by winning the praise of others, especially his teachers. Augustine sees education as a process of personal formation. To excel at school meant conforming himself to the desires of others—and the penalty for not doing so was severe. Not ordered to the light of truth, the students thus imbibed the darkness of concupiscent desire, though from exquisite cups.

Taught that words were things to be used to get what he wanted, Augustine would pursue advanced schooling in rhetoric. These studies led him to the works of Cicero, “whose language is almost universally admired, though not its inner spring.”¹⁵⁸ Reading the *Hortensius*’ exhortation to philosophy would transform the young man’s life. Instead of using Cicero’s words to hone his verbal style, he sought what they meant. From them, he would learn that wisdom is more than instrumental reason; it is living in the truth for its own sake. Rather than using language to please himself and others, he decided to seek happiness through understanding by devoting himself to seeking *veritas*. And so, he began to learn that, when true, words are signs pointing to eternity.

This dedication to intellectual probity would guide the course of the rest of Augustine’s life. He was driven to understand *veritas* because he believed that which was not true ultimately could not make him happy. This desire for truth led him to read Scripture. However, pride would blind him to its meaning, and he could not understand it as true. It was the promise of truth that led Augustine to become a hearer of the Manichees; and it was when they proved to be incapable of answering his questions that he stopped listening. He would keep trying to home in on the truth, yet continue to err along the way as his disordered desires kept leading him astray.

In a cruel irony, as Augustine realized the goal of his formal education, he would despair of ever finding the truth. However, at this time, he was also discovering new forms of learning. Although he had given up hope of finding truth in Christian teaching, out of professional interest

¹⁵⁸ *Conf.* III.4.7.

the new imperial court rhetorician began attending services at the cathedral to listen to renowned Bishop Ambrose, and study his style. Augustine “hung keenly on his words, but cared little for their content, and indeed despised it,” yet he delighted “in the sweetness of his discourse.”¹⁵⁹ But he was not able to split how from what. As Ambrose’s words, “which I enjoyed, penetrated my mind, the substance, which I overlooked, seeped in with them, for I could not separate the two.” By opening his heart “to appreciate how skillfully he spoke, the recognition that he was speaking the truth crept in at the same time, though only by slow degrees.” He “realized that the Catholic faith,” thus presented, “was in fact intellectually respectable.”¹⁶⁰ Ambrose’s key for interpreting Scripture was 2Cor 3:6: “The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life.” With it, he drew “aside the veil of mystery and opened...the spiritual meaning of passages which, taken literally, would seem to mislead.”¹⁶¹ Ambrose was showing Augustine a new way to understand words. As a child, he had learned that words’ literal meaning points directly to observable things. He was now learning how spiritual meaning utilizes literal meaning to point to things not visible.

Understanding spiritual meaning is a function of faith, believing something to be true we cannot directly observe. Augustine did not yet have faith, afraid to believe in something he could not be certain was true, but Ambrose was planting the seed. Although Christian teaching depends on things which cannot be demonstrated empirically, it humbly confesses to depending on faith, rather than making a pretense of knowledge. Gradually, he came “to reflect how innumerable were the things I believed and held to be true, though I had neither seen them nor been present when they happened.” So many of the things we know depend upon on the testimony of others that, “unless we believe them, we should be unable to do anything in this life.”¹⁶² The authority

¹⁵⁹ *Conf.* V.13.23.

¹⁶⁰ *Conf.* V.14.24.

¹⁶¹ *Conf.* VI.4.6.

¹⁶² *Conf.* VI.5.7.

of the witness gives the testimony credibility. Christian faith thus begins taking root in Augustine with his recognition of the authority of Scripture: “It was because we were weak and unable to find the truth by pure reason that we needed the authority of the sacred scriptures; and so I began to see that...you had willed human beings to believe in you and seek you through them.” By hearing Ambrose teaching from the Bible, “in a reasonable and acceptable way, I came to regard those passages which had previously struck me as absurd, and therefore repelled me, as holy and profound *sacramentorum*.”¹⁶³ This spiritual meaning of Scripture sacramentally witnesses to the truth, with humble words stretching the understanding of those willing to listen.

With Ambrose as a teacher and the intellectual fellowship of his friends, Augustine renewed his search for truth. When Bk. VII starts, he believed that whatever did or could not have any physical quality must be nothing at all. Since his mind was accustomed to observing material things and imagining in terms of their forms, he assumed his mind was of the same nature. *Confessiones* VII tells the story of how he came to “see that this very act of perception, whereby I formed these images, was different from them in kind,” since “my mind would never have been able to form them unless it was itself a reality, and a great one.”¹⁶⁴ In this intellectual revolution, Augustine discovers a new way to understand truth and the nature of reality itself.¹⁶⁵ The catalyst for this transformation was reading “the books of the Platonists.” He recalls what he learned from them using the words of the Prologue to John: (Neo-)Platonism pointed him to the *Logos*, the meaning of God. Though they did not speak of Jesus Christ directly, these texts would help teach our searcher to recognize Truth itself, the divine Word, through an analogy with light.

¹⁶³ *Conf.* VI.5.8. Cf. Rudolf Otto’s definition of the holy as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. In Latin, the *sacramentum* originally referred to a military oath, which the *signum manipuli* symbolized with an open-palmed hand; see §5.1, n. 103 above.

¹⁶⁴ *Conf.* VII.1.2.

¹⁶⁵ Augustine’s account in *Conf.* VII exemplifies what Lonergan calls intellectual conversion; *Method*, 238. However, the former’s description also incorporates affective and scriptural dimensions into this event, which are discussed in §1.1 above.

To find the truth, these writings instructed him to return to himself. Having entered into “the innermost places of my being,” Augustine saw “incommutable light, far above my spiritual ken, transcending my mind.” Utterly different from physical light, this spiritual light was exalted above his mind, “because this very light made me, and I was below it because by it I was made.” “Anyone who knows truth knows” this light, “and whoever knows it knows eternity.” Knowing himself to be far away from God “in a region of unlikeness,” he seemed to hear, “I am the food of the mature; grow then, and you will eat me. You will not change me into yourself like bodily food; you will be changed into me.”¹⁶⁶ To learn truth is to partake sacramentally in God. As the body assimilates food by eating, so the mind incarnates truth by understanding. We come into being as truth comes to be in us. Truth is not a material thing, but is seen and understood through such things. Material things do not define what is real; they are signs pointing us to it. Our minds encounter reality not through physical senses, but by understanding the meaning of true signs.

Augustine came to believe that the light of truth creates reality. Anything so illuminated reflects some of this light, revealing itself by pointing to its source, and so becoming a sign. To understand a thing is to see it as a sign of the truth. He concludes that all things, “owe their being to you and that all of them are by you defined...not as though contained in a place, but because you hold all things in your Truth as though in your hand; and all of them are true insofar as they exist, and nothing whatever is a deceit unless it is thought to be what it is not.”¹⁶⁷ Ultimate reality is invisible but, “is plainly to be understood through created things.” Augustine “had been trying to understand how it was possible for [him] to appreciate the beauty of material things” and “to

¹⁶⁶ *Conf.* VII.10.16. Please refer to the quote at the beginning of this section, which picks up from this point. The eucharistic reference is key for Augustine, as it also is for Thomas Aquinas, a theme which will be developed in the Conclusion below.

¹⁶⁷ *Conf.* VII.15.21. As an illustration of things reflecting the light of truth, consider this quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: “A man is like a piece of labradorite spar, which has no luster as you turn it in your hand until you come to a particular angle; then it shows deep and beautiful colors.” Discovering the proper order of things is like moving such a stone in the light until you discover the angle that reveals its property of labradorecence.

make sound judgments” about them. In seeking the reason why “I was able to judge as I did, I realized that above my changeable mind soared the real, unchangeable truth, which is eternal.” Seeking to understand, his mind ascends from material things to spiritual truth. Material things are perceived by the soul through the body, whose senses report external impressions to the inner sense of the soul. Above this animal level is reason, to which sense data is referred for judgment. Human reason, swarmed with noisy phantasms, is subject to change. But since what is true does not change, the source of our intelligence must transcend the self. Reason seeks its origin in the unchangeable light of truth, “for unless it had in some fashion recognized Immutability, it could never with such certainty have judged it superior to things that change.” With this insight, “in the flash of one tremulous glance,” his mind “attained to That Which Is,” the reality of God.¹⁶⁸

Pulled back by the weight of his material existence, Augustine could retain only a loving memory of this vision, which he reflects upon in the most explicitly Christological passage of his *Confessiones*. The Doctor of Grace elaborates, the way to enjoy God is embracing “the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who is also God, supreme over all things.” He had come to recognize the vision he had as the Lord calling out to him, proclaiming, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). Jesus is the promised food, “mingled with our flesh; for the Word became flesh so that your Wisdom, through whom you created all things, might become the milk adapted for our infancy.”¹⁶⁹ In Jesus Christ, God becomes weak, giving of himself in order to teach spiritual infants, but our pride blinds us to his humility. Though the Platonic books would not bring Augustine to Christ explicitly, they became a prolegomenon to Scripture, so that the “insight would be mine to recognize the difference between presumption

¹⁶⁸ *Conf.* VII.17.23. Though he does not explicitly quote it here, Augustine seems to be drawing upon Rom 1:20.

¹⁶⁹ *Conf.* VII.18.24. The narrative of Bks. I-IX can be summarized as the story of how Augustine came to understand and affirm the truth of Jn 14:6. The promised food seems to be a reference to VII.6.10.

and confession, between those who see the goal but not the way to it and the Way to our beatific *Patria*, a homeland to be not merely described but lived in.”¹⁷⁰

By taking up the writings of Paul, Augustine would discover in Jesus the truth as grace. Since anything true must come from Truth, “no one who sees it can boast as though what he sees and the very power to see it were not from you.”¹⁷¹ The understanding of faith is a gift, not our individual achievement. With the example and fellowship of others, the truth of the Word will take root in his *cor* as he comes to recognize the meaning of God’s love in his own life. Thus, Bk. VII stands at the crux of the thirteen books of Augustine’s *Confessiones*, presenting the transformation of his mind as the catalyst for his decisive conversion into a Catholic Christian, with understanding serving to guide the heart, as if lighting the path ahead of him.

§6.2 Remembering Loves: Recognizing Oneself in Memory

*Not even I as I did all this: the faculty, that is, by which I achieved it, not even that faculty in me was you; for you are that abiding Light whom I consulted throughout my search. I questioned you about each thing, asking whether it existed, what it was, how highly it should be regarded; and all the while I listened to you teaching me and laying your commands upon me.*¹⁷²

Augustine’s search continues beyond the narration of his memories to an interrogation of memory itself in Bk. X, attempting to return to himself once more, now as a mature Christian. It is in memory, the place of self-understanding, that he comes to recognize himself. It is there also that he comes to meet his Creator: “Let me know you, O you who know me; then shall I know even as I am known.” This relationship is mediated by truth itself since, “anyone who does truth

¹⁷⁰ *Conf.* VII.20.26. In addition to the Prodigal Son, Augustine could be evoking his childhood hero Aeneas’ wonderings to describe the trajectory of his life and understanding as a journey from “a region of unlikeness” of material things to his spiritual *Patria* in Christ Jesus.

¹⁷¹ *Conf.* VII.21.27.

¹⁷² *Conf.* X.40.65.

comes to the light.”¹⁷³ *Veritas* illuminates through *poiesis*—this is done first in the *cor* of our being by confession, then for others by the witness of our words. The truth that understanding recognizes is made real incarnationally, by remembering, recreating this truth within ourselves.

In Augustine’s account, truth is thus realized dialogically. He confesses that, “I can say nothing right to other people unless you have heard it from me first, nor can you even hear anything of the kind from me which you have not first told me.”¹⁷⁴ The truth about himself first is heard and then spoken in confession, only then can he say it to others—a personal revelation heard, spoken, and believed by love: “You pierced my heart with your word, and I fell in love with you.” He understands all things as bearing witness to the truth, “telling me that I should love you.”¹⁷⁵ The beauty of things is their voice, testifying by their harmonious order. “My inner self recognized them all through the outer. I, who was that inmost self, I, who was mind, knew them through the senses of my body; and so I questioned the vast frame of the world concerning my God, and it answered, ‘I am not he, but he made me.’”¹⁷⁶ This beauty speaks to all, “but only they understand who test the voice heard outwardly against the truth within.”¹⁷⁷ We recognize the truth of things outside through the light of *veritas* that illuminates us from within.

Seeking this light, Augustine goes beyond the senses. He arrives, “in the fields and vast mansions of *memoria*, where are treasured innumerable images brought in there from objects of every conceivable kind perceived by the senses.”¹⁷⁸ Phantasms of everything he has experienced or imagined are stored in memory until he recalls them, making them present to mind once more. *Memoria* is also where he meets himself, recognizing who he is by the *remembering* that unites

¹⁷³ *Conf.* X.1.1.

¹⁷⁴ *Conf.* X.2.2. To know yourself is to hear the truth about who you are from the Author of reality itself.

¹⁷⁵ *Conf.* X.6.8. It is here that Augustine quotes Rom 1:20. For further discussion of this passage, see §1.2.

¹⁷⁶ *Conf.* X.6.9. Here he is developing insights from *De Pulchra et Apto*; see §1.1, n. 47 & §4.1, n. 21 above.

¹⁷⁷ *Conf.* X.6.10. This is the *sui generis* intellectual light of which he speaks in *Trin.* XII; see §4.2, n. 61 above.

¹⁷⁸ *Conf.* X.8.12. Memory does not hold sense impressions themselves, but images of the things perceived.

his inner life. Yet the limitless caverns of memory surpass his conscious awareness, making him unable to comprehend all that he is, for in *memoria* we are open to infinity. Thinking of this fills the Doctor of Grace with awe, dumbfounding him.¹⁷⁹ Using this faculty of memory, he is able to imagine and contemplate mountains, rivers, the ocean (though never having seen it himself), the entire visible universe, in spaces as vast as if he were physically seeing them outside himself.

But his memory contains more than images alone; Augustine believes it holds everything he has learned—not only their images, but the realities themselves. Although understanding is not a physical thing, it is realized in *memoria*. But if not through the senses, how can something come to be real in his mind? The things he has learned, “I did not take them on trust from some stranger’s intelligence, but recognized them as present in my own, and affirmed them as true, and entrusted them to my memory for safekeeping.” He thus concludes that the things he has learned, “were there even before I learned them, but not remembered...because they were already in my memory,” hidden until a teacher would remind him.¹⁸⁰ We come to understand intelligible things by recognition, “collecting by means of our thought those things which the memory already held, but in a scattered and disorderly way,” using our minds to place them into a usable order. When not used, eventually they will slip away into memory’s distant caverns, but these things can be retrieved, herded together (*cogenda*) to become knowable once more, “that is to say they need to be collected again (*conligenda*), which is why we call this activity cogitating (*cogitare*), or collecting one’s thoughts,” since, “*Cogo* is related to *cogito* as *ago* is to *agito* and *facio* to

¹⁷⁹ Both Plato and Aristotle believe philosophy arises from awe. Denys Turner emphasizes the incompleteness of our comprehension and openness to the infinite in his discussion of Thomas’ decision to leave *ST* incomplete, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2013), 40-46.

¹⁸⁰ *Conf.* X.10.17. Plato taught that learning is *anamnesis*, remembering eternal truths we knew before our present incarnation. Augustine retrieves this understanding of learning as remembering, but explicitly rejects any belief in the preexistence of the soul in *Retract.* I.8.2. Memorization figured prominently in his own education; learning the *Aeneid* meant not just reading, but having to remember substantial portions of the text. He would have known well that the truth of poetry cannot be separated from the experience of life.

factito.”¹⁸¹ Thinking is the mind’s act of collecting and gathering intelligible things into a pattern from memory, as the truths and laws of mathematics are known. The Doctor of Grace believes that everyone knows these truths without any physical representation involved, by recognizing these principles of order within ourselves, whose existence is more real—because eternal—than any physical things we can count.

Augustine holds *mens* and *memoria* to be of the same substance. Our understanding is digested in memory, the mind’s stomach. It is there we recognize meaning, for he contends it is in *memoria* that the mind connects signs with the objects signified, not the physical presence of the objects themselves. Meaning is not a physical reality that can be sensed; it is an intelligible reality recognized in memory. This is also true of the self: “the person who remembers is myself; I am my mind.”¹⁸² He cannot even speak of himself without memory. Memory, mind, and the self, though distinct, are all of the same substance. Yet, unable to comprehend the nature of his own memory, he is ultimately a mystery to himself. Augustine concludes his nature, “is teeming life of every conceivable kind, and exceedingly vast.” In the infinite space of his inner self, he is made free of all things, “free to run and fly to and fro, to penetrate as deeply as I can, to collide with no boundary anywhere.”¹⁸³ Realizing myself in freedom is how I recognize who I am.

Continuing to search for his Creator, Augustine seeks to transcend his memory, but finds that he cannot. Memory is inexhaustible and inescapable; anything outside of it is unintelligible. And so, the Doctor of Grace concludes it is therefore in *memoria* that we find God:

How widely I have ranged through my memory seeking you, Lord, and I have not found you outside it; for I have discovered nothing about you that I did not remember from the time I learned to know you. From that time when I learned about you I have never forgotten you, because wherever I have found truth I have found my God who is absolute

¹⁸¹ *Conf.* X.11.18. Augustine took this Latin etymology for “I think” (*cogito*) from Varro, deriving it from *cogo*, meaning “I force, huddle, get together,” with the suffix *-ito* denoting intensification or frequent repetition.

¹⁸² *Conf.* X.16.25. According to Augustine, the self originates in memory: *memoro, ergo sum*.

¹⁸³ *Conf.* X.17.26.

Truth, and once I had learned that I did not forget it. That is why you have dwelt in my memory ever since I learned to know you, and it is there that I find you when I remember and delight in you.¹⁸⁴

Our minds are able to recognize truth because Truth itself dwells in our memory. To learn that something is true is to glimpse the *Logos* of God, for all who seek truth turn to God for counsel, “and to all of them you respond at the same time, however diverse their pleas. Clear is your response, but not all hear it clearly.”¹⁸⁵ Hearing truth is embracing what it says by willing it truly.

In *Confessiones*, Augustine presents understanding as emerging from an inner dialogue with *veritas* that dwells within. It is in this prayer that he remembers and recognizes who he is, integrating his true self by hearing the *Logos*. But only those who desire truth more than things they want for themselves will hear this Word clearly. Concupiscence entails misunderstanding—embracing our own will rather than willing God is to reject the truth. Confession is needed to correct this error to which we are prone. Augustine warns against “concupiscence of the mind, a frivolous, avid curiosity,” which “masquerades as a zeal for knowledge and learning.” This “lust of the eyes” is the disordered desire for sense experience, mistaking seeing for understanding: “when the other senses explore an object in an effort to collect knowledge, they claim for themselves, by a certain analogy, the office of seeing, in which the eyes unquestionably hold the primacy.”¹⁸⁶ Assuming that the senses know truth without need of thought or word, the mind throws itself outside seeking sense experience, either for pleasure or curiosity. Augustine sees *curiositas* is an intellectual vice, the craving for shows and spectacle. He believes this is also the reason people, “scrutinize the secrets of the natural world that lie beyond our sight; knowledge of

¹⁸⁴ *Conf.* X.24.35.

¹⁸⁵ *Conf.* X.26.37. There is, for Augustine, a voluntary dimension to understanding the truth, see §1.2 above.

¹⁸⁶ *Conf.* X.35.54. The body of Augustine’s argument in Bk. X ends by analyzing concupiscence, i.e., how the image of God becomes distorted in us. Drawing upon 1Jn 2:16, his analysis is threefold. Since it prizes firsthand, sensory information above other forms of knowing, and “since the eyes are paramount among the senses in acquiring information,” he considers this intellectual vice fittingly called the concupiscence of the eyes. The other two forms, concupiscence of the flesh and pride, are discussed in §1.2 above.

these is of no profit, yet people want to know them simply for the sake of knowing.”¹⁸⁷ The lust of the mind seeks to know anything that strikes its fancy without a greater commitment to truth itself, or to any of the things that it might come to know.

The Doctor of Grace concludes Bk. X by explicitly confessing his need for Christ Jesus, Who Is the Truth and the Light. He asks his Savior, “O Truth, is there any road where you have not walked with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to aim at, whenever I referred to you the paltry insights I had managed to attain, and sought your guidance?”¹⁸⁸ Looking back on his attempted ascent to God, he realizes God was with him from the start as the Light showing him the way. In things he found no safe haven for his soul, only in the Word are the many scattered elements of his being collected. The Truth in whom all things are created has authority over them all. But in concupiscence the will desires its own private truth over which it can be sovereign. In this way, we lose our sense of what is true, by wanting to master reality we close ourselves off from it instead, refusing to listen to its voice. Understanding truth entails overcoming our pride, the lie that knowing consists in our words alone, by confessing to God: “In your unfathomable mercy you first gave the humble certain pointers to the true Mediator, and then you sent him, that by his example they might learn even a humility like his.”¹⁸⁹ Jesus Christ is thus both Mediator and Word, taking on our human flesh to make it a sign by which we recognize divinity. For by remembering the *Logos*, believers come to understand the truth of all things eucharistically.

¹⁸⁷ *Conf.* X.35.55. Augustine considers the desire to see the entertainments of his day the epitome of *curiositas* as described in III.2.2 & VI.7.11, see §1.1 above. It is important to note that in his time some of the most prominent uses for scientific knowledge involved astrology (e.g., the Antikythera mechanism), spectacles at temples (Heron of Alexandria’s *Automata*), or warfare. It is mistaken to deny the value of scientific knowledge but, considering the ways it can be abused, his critique is not quite invalid: *scientia* without reference to the human good is questionable.

¹⁸⁸ *Conf.* X.40.65. This passage reaches a crescendo in the introductory quotation at the beginning of the present section. As should be clear by now, the faculty he is referring to is *memoria*.

¹⁸⁹ *Conf.* X.43.68.

§6.3 Understanding Loves: Recognizing the Order of Creation

*We, therefore, see these things you have made, because they exist, but for you it is different: they exist because you see them. Moreover when we see that they exist, we see it outside ourselves, but when we see that they are good, we see it by inner vision, whereas you see them as created in no other place than where you saw them as non-existent things you willed to create.*¹⁹⁰

Continuing to recapitulate the intellectual journey of Bk. VII, Augustine turns his search to the words of Scripture in Bks. XI-XIII. He knocks at their door, asking God to open the inner meaning of their verses, seeking to understand how God creates all things through his Word, in whom are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). Augustine thus concludes the search for his own origin with creation, by interpreting Gn 1 in light of Jn 1. He recognizes the account as true, “within myself, in that inner habitation of my thought, the truth that is neither Hebrew nor Greek nor Latin nor any vernacular would speak to me without bodily organ or mouth or tongue, and without any clatter of syllables would tell me, ‘He is speaking the truth.’”¹⁹¹ And so, the Bishop of Hippo interprets the visible universe as a sign of creation. Things, by existing, and by “the very fact that they undergo change and variation...cry out that they were made,” for their “visible existence is the voice with which they say this. It was you who made them, Lord: you are beautiful, so it must have been you, because they are beautiful; you who are good must have made them, because they are good; you who are, because they are.”¹⁹² To be is to reflect I AM. All things are made by God’s Word, of which our existence echoes in reverberation.

The Doctor of Grace thus understands the divine Word as spoken eternally. Through this *Logos*, “are eternally uttered all things,” not as though they have been spoken one after another in temporal succession; instead, he believes, “all things are uttered simultaneously in one eternal

¹⁹⁰ *Conf.* XIII.35.50.

¹⁹¹ *Conf.* XI.3.5. Augustine’s description of reading Scripture and affirming its truth in faith is a concise summation of his account of understanding in Bk. X, see §6.2 above.

¹⁹² *Conf.* XI.4.6. This is the same starting point as the vision at Ostia in IX.10.25; see §1.1 above.

speaking.”¹⁹³ God’s creative act is God’s speech. Yet the things God creates do not come to be at once, for they exist in time. Their existence begins and ends at the times “decreed in that eternal Reason where nothing begins or comes to an end. This eternal Reason is your Word, who is the Beginning in that he also speaks to us,” within ourselves in truth. Truth eternal “is the Beginning for us in the sense that if he were not abidingly the same, we should have nowhere to return to after going astray” on our errant ways, rather “it is by acknowledging the truth that we turn back, and he it is who teaches us to acknowledge it, because he is the Beginning who speaks to us.”¹⁹⁴ It is in this Beginning, the eternal *Logos*, that God has made heaven and earth, ordering all things that exist in time and matter by a transcendent Truth that addresses us with love.

Understanding time and its relationship to eternity is thus the first step for interpreting Genesis’ account of creation, to which Augustine will choose to devote the remainder of Bk. XI. Radically departing from classical philosophy, he contends time is neither circular nor eternal but radial, and emerging from an absolute starting point. Eternity stands forever, but time’s fugitive moments can never stand still for, “in eternity nothing passes, for the whole is present, whereas time cannot be present all at once,” as it is a vector moving from the past to the future, not some static quantity.¹⁹⁵ God’s today is eternity, and from the eternal *Logos*—the Beginning—all eras of time emerge. Therefore, Augustine believes, time itself is one of God’s creatures. But time is not like anything else. In eternity, nothing slips away. But what we call the present’s only claim to being time is that it is slipping away into the past. The Doctor of Grace concludes, “we cannot really say that time exists, except because it tends to non-being,” for that which is past no longer

¹⁹³ *Conf.* XI.7.9.

¹⁹⁴ *Conf.* XI.8.10. Extending the analogy of light, we can compare the intelligibility present in all things to cosmic background radiation, the omnipresent electromagnetic echo of the Big Bang. However, this light is individually received by each person. This is the *sui generis* intellectual light Augustine refers to in *Trin.* XII; see §4.2, n. 61.

¹⁹⁵ *Conf.* XI.11.13.

exists.¹⁹⁶ Thus his early life “belongs to past time which exists no longer, but when I recall it and tell the story I contemplate the image of it which is still in my memory.”¹⁹⁷

Only in the mind can either the past or future be said to exist. Augustine elucidates, “the present of past things is memory, the present of present things is attention, and the present of future things is expectation.”¹⁹⁸ He describes time as moving from what is not yet real, through what occupies no space, bound for what is real no longer. The movements of heavenly bodies are signs of time—not time itself. We can measure time passing, without knowing what it is we are measuring. Augustine posits that time is a kind of *distentio*, an extension of consciousness itself, as if being pulled. He measures time in his mind based on the impressions passing phenomena leave, which abide in memory, where they are present to be measured. The *mens* performs this operation of recognizing time, “so that what it expects passes by way of what it attends to into what it remembers,” by being itself stretched and extended.¹⁹⁹ Time is the hand writing on the wall, a sign of our impending non-existence. It is here in time, perched between being and the void, that God’s eternity comes to us graciously in the person of the *Logos*, Christ Jesus.

Differentiating the heavens from the earth in Bk. XII, Augustine distinguishes between spiritual and material creation. In the act of creation, matter is endowed with the beauty of form. Without form, the earth was “neither visible nor organized; it was an abyss of inconceivable depth over which no light dawned, because it had no *species*.”²⁰⁰ Formless matter is invisible. unintelligible, since *species* defines what each thing is, differentiating one thing from another. Augustine takes receptivity to form to be the defining characteristic of matter, viz. its mutability.

¹⁹⁶ *Conf.* XI.14.17. For Augustine, this is the essence of time: it slips away, like water in a stream. As with the world being in accordance with *Logos*, he stands in the tradition of Heraclitus, who taught that “everything flows” (*panta rhei*). Cf. Heidegger’s development of this insight into human “being-toward-death.”

¹⁹⁷ *Conf.* XI.18.23.

¹⁹⁸ *Conf.* XI.20.26. Thus we have a mental triad of *memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio*.

¹⁹⁹ *Conf.* XI.28.37.

²⁰⁰ *Conf.* XI.3.3.

Neither body nor form, that which is mutable is “a nothing-something or an is-that-is-not,” that which is potentially something.²⁰¹ This is to be unlike God, who does not vary from one time to another, who is unchanging, *idipsum*—the selfsame—Being Itself. And so, creation is both like and unlike its Creator. While heaven partakes in the spiritual likeness of God, the earth (material creation) in unlikeness passes through time, and borders on nothingness. Form and matter are created simultaneously, but the former comes logically first. The Doctor of Grace holds wisdom to be the foremost of all created things: “the intellectual order of being which by contemplating the Light becomes light itself.” Beholding the eternal *Sapientia* which forms all things, created wisdom thus becomes, “the rational, intelligent mind of your chaste city.”²⁰²

Creatures come into being because God is mindful of us. As we are all made from the same clay, whatever truth we know has to come from Truth itself. Aware there are myriad ways to understand what Gn 1 means by creation, Augustine defends his own interpretation by making the case for hermeneutical pluralism, since manifold “valid points of view are available to people who entertain no doubts about their truth because you have granted them the grace to discern these matters with the inner eye, and they believe unwaveringly” the author’s words are true.²⁰³ With *veritas* guiding the way, believers are free to follow meaning where it leads. The Doctor of Grace considers the story of creation to be, “a spring whence rivers of limpid truth gush forth,” with interpreters drawing its meaning through the meandering channels of their own discourse.²⁰⁴ Understanding brings us to recognize that God made all things, “not from your own substance, in that image of yourself that gives form to all things, but out of nothing, as formless matter quite unlike yourself, which was yet destined to be formed through your image by returning to you, the

²⁰¹ *Conf.* XI.6.6.

²⁰² *Conf.* XI.15.20.

²⁰³ *Conf.* XI.20.29. He proposes *caritas* as the solution to the problem of multiple interpretations, see §1.3 above.

²⁰⁴ *Conf.* XI.27.37.

One, in proportion to the capacity of each, as imparted according to its kind.”²⁰⁵ It is by seeking the truth in this way that our minds are stretched so as to be filled with the Truth of God.

And so, *Confessiones* culminates with the act of creation. Joining his words to the chorus of praise for the Creator, Augustine realizes his true self as a creature of the Word. Through this *Logos*, our matter is formed and our spirit converted: “Only through the same Word that gave it being could it be converted to him who made it and become light at his illumination, not indeed as his equal, but by being shaped and conformed to him who, being in the form of God, is equal to you.”²⁰⁶ Conversion is the form of our illumination. Understanding truth is to live in accord with wisdom, namely, the recognition of Christ Jesus as the pattern of our own life. Words shape our existence, actualizing our self, either as being ordered by the light of truth—or disintegrating into darkness, distorting, and dissolving what God has made. Augustine thus concludes his true self is a created *imago* of his Creator, an embodied integration of being, knowledge, and will.

Augustine completes the book with his spiritual interpretation of Gn 1 as an account of God’s creation of the community of believers, the Church. Emerging from the waters of baptism, “among us too has God created a heaven and an earth: the spiritual and carnal members of his Church.”²⁰⁷ His story was never about himself alone. Through knowing himself, he becomes able to recognize what it means to be human, and part of the story of us all. Repentance is the dawn of enlightenment, the first day of a new creation. To learn is to be converted to truth, recognizing that we were in the darkness of ignorance.²⁰⁸ Augustine interprets the creation of the firmament on the second day as an allegory for the revelation of divine Scripture. Firm authority inheres in

²⁰⁵ *Conf.* XI.28.38. For the food of the mature, see VII.10.16 (discussed in §6.1 above). The Neoplatonic teaching of emanation from and return to the One will also be taken up by Thomas Aquinas, who will adapt it into the overall *exitus-reditus* structure of *ST*, see §11 below.

²⁰⁶ *Conf.* XIII.2.3.

²⁰⁷ *Conf.* XIII.12.13.

²⁰⁸ James Alison develops this understanding of learning as *metanoia* in *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad, 1998); see §10, n. 147 below.

its transcendent words, signs held up for all to see. By looking up at the heavens, into the vault of Scripture, we can recognize God's mercy manifest in time. The eternal Word is mediated by the humble words of mortal preachers and writers, appearing as if in a cloudy mirror. Unchangeably existing, knowing, and willing, God alone is the fullness of knowledge. Changeable creatures are illuminated from above—it is only in God's Light that we see light. The dry land created on the third day are those who thirst for God. From the earth that we are, the truth springs up in *caritas*. Rising from the crop of active works to contemplation, believers "lay hold on the Word of Life above, and appear like luminaries for the world, firmly set in the vault that is your scripture."²⁰⁹ The saints thus become the lights set in the firmament on the fourth day. As sun and moon mark day and night, so their lives manifest the distinction between devotion to truth known through the mind and the preoccupation with sensible things. The greater light is the gift of speaking with *sapientia*; the lesser light is the gift of putting the *scientia* one has into words, with all other gifts of the Holy Spirit as the stars. In this dialectic between contemplation and action, wisdom and knowledge, eternal truth comes to be realized in time through the life of the Church.

The living creatures brought forth from the waters on the fifth day represent the sacred signs worked by God's spokespeople and, Augustine suggests, the birds represent the voices of God's messengers. Truth itself is fixed, not subject to development, but its reality is worked out in material creation through "a great variety of forms which constantly increase and multiply." God provides for our learning processes in a way that, "our minds should attain to understanding as one single truth is figuratively expressed and enunciated in many different ways through the variations to which corporeal things are subject."²¹⁰ Emerging from the need of those adrift from *veritas* in the sea of desire, these signs bear witness in response to presence of the creative Word

²⁰⁹ *Conf. XIII.18.22.*

²¹⁰ *Conf. XIII.20.27.*

as sacraments of understanding. Arising from the deepest depths, an IXΘΥΣ is raised up in order to water the dry land, transforming it into living creatures who are believing earth. In eating this fish, the creatures created on the sixth day do not merely listen, by enacting what they hear, they become examples for others. When this living thing is formed, “by your word, delivered through your evangelists, it is enabled to bring forth a soul that restrains itself from excesses by imitating those who imitate your Christ.”²¹¹ This creature, *Homo sapiens*, receives its species (“according to its kind”) by this act of patterning itself after the *Logos* in the communion of friendship.

With the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God, the account of Gn 1 reaches its crescendo. Augustine believes this verisimilitude is realized spiritually by allowing ourselves to be “reformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may be able to discern what is God’s will, what is good and pleasing to him and perfect” (Rom 12:2). Thus made new, a person “considers your truth and understands it,” without need of a human teacher to imitate, for “you explain it to him so that he can discern for himself what is your will.” Given this capacity for understanding, “you teach him to contemplate the Trinity in Unity, the Unity that is Trinity.” In this way, “man is renewed in the knowledge of God in accordance with the image of his creator,” becoming “a Spirit-filled person, fit to judge any matters that call for judgment.”²¹² Exercised through the intelligent mind, this judgment gives insight into spiritual things. Guided by the lights of wisdom and knowledge fixed above, spiritual understanding is able to judge the things over which God has given humans dominion. Being made in the image of God is thus a creative cooperation in which humans participate in the unfolding of spiritual meaning in history. God’s people point to a new way of understanding by making signs, helping to show others the way:

²¹¹ *Conf.* XIII.21.31.

²¹² *Conf.* XIII.22.32. Here is the nucleus of the religious argument Newman makes in *Grammar of Assent*: those who practice love, by doing so, develop the capacity to recognize what love is.

They judge and approve what they find done rightly, but condemn anything they find amiss; and this they do through the celebration of those rites whereby people whom your mercy has sought out in the vast ocean are initiated; or at the solemn rite which makes present the fish raised up from the deep and devoutly eaten by the faithful; or by preaching, which through exegesis, discussion, and argument attempts to make plain the meaning of your words...and through blessing and invoking you, so that as these sounds break from our mouths and make themselves heard, the populace may answer, Amen!²¹³

By the ordering of these signs, human beings can recognize the Word, and judge their likeness to this pattern in the light of the Spirit, thereby realizing the *imago Dei* in creation.

Meaning increases and multiplies. Something may be signified in a variety of material ways, but understood by the mind in only one way. Augustine gives the example of love, a single concept with innumerable forms of tangible expression. Or, something may be signified in only one way materially, but understood in multiple ways by the mind. In simple words, one verse expresses a single truth, “In the beginning God made heaven and earth,” which has many valid readings. Interpreting the meaning of Scripture, Augustine believes that what comes to his mind speaks, “the truth that is in me by your inspiration, since you have willed me to say what these words mean to me. I do not believe I could speak truthfully under inspiration from anyone other than you, since you are the Truth.”²¹⁴ As the source of understanding, God gives its increase.

The eternal touches time and the many are integrated into one in the realization of truth. Each day, God saw that the work of creation was good. In response to the inquiry of his exegesis, God tells Augustine, “what my scripture says, I myself say, but whereas scripture says it in terms of time, my Word is untouched by time, because he subsists with me eternally, equal to myself. What you see through my Spirit, I see, just as what you say through my Spirit, I say.”²¹⁵ We see and say these things in time, but God speaks in a way not conditioned by time. It is through the

²¹³ *Conf.* XIII.23.34. This passage is a succinct description of Augustine’s own ministry as bishop.

²¹⁴ *Conf.* XIII.25.38.

²¹⁵ *Conf.* XIII.29.44.

Holy Spirit that humans see all God has created in the *Logos* as good. When people see creation through the Spirit, God is seeing it in time through their eyes. Only by seeing something as loved and loveable are we ever able to understand it truly. And so, *Confessiones* will end as it began, with the Doctor of Grace's love for the love that makes us: "Your creation sings praise to you so that we may love you, and we love you so that praise may be offered to you by your creation."²¹⁶

§7 *De Civitate Dei & Regula: Understanding the Truth + Loving the Good Together*

*The peace of the body, we conclude, is a tempering of the component parts in duly ordered proportion; the peace of the irrational soul is a duly ordered repose of the appetites; the peace of the rational soul is the duly ordered agreement of cognition and action. The peace of body and soul is the duly ordered life and health of a living creature; peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience, in faith, in subjection to an everlasting law; peace between men is an ordered agreement of mind with mind; the peace of a home is the ordered agreement among those who live together about giving and obeying orders; the peace of the Heavenly City is a perfectly ordered and harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and a mutual fellowship in God; the peace of the whole universe is the tranquility of order—and order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal in a pattern which assigns to each its proper position.*²¹⁷

Although Augustine was a pioneer in the consciousness of the self, the Doctor of Grace was by no means an individualist. Framed by *Confessiones*, the analysis of these two chapters has focused on the image of God as present in the individual self. However, this is hardly the limit of Augustine's vision. Through the microcosm of the self, he describes the macrocosm. By finding his place within, he begins to discern the pattern of the whole to which he ultimately belongs. If we understand and love them rightly, all things are given as signs pointing us to God. The existence of every single thing in itself is good, but only together are all things very good. In his theological synthesis, Augustine seeks to incorporate everything. It seems fitting for us to conclude this study of the Bishop of Hippo's thought by locating it in the context of his total

²¹⁶ *Conf.* XIII.33.48.

²¹⁷ *Civ. Dei* XIX.13. Trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Classics, 1972).

ministry—the integration of love and understanding in a human community—sketching out how the *imago Dei* might be realized interpersonally in the body of Christ. This section will begin with a reading of two classic texts representing Augustine’s mature understanding of community: *De civitate Dei* & the Rule (*Regula*) of Saint Augustine. To expand upon his insights and make a case for their enduring relevance, §7 concludes by drawing parallels with an idea that animated two exemplary social justice movements from the last century, *satyagraha*, which was originally developed by Mahatma Gandhi, and later adapted by Martin Luther King, Jr. within specifically Christian and American contexts into a movement for civil rights.

Augustine’s longest single work, *De civitate Dei* represents his most sustained effort at uniting Jerusalem and Athens. In response to the historic catastrophe of the sack of Rome in 410, portending the collapse of Roman authority in the West, Augustine would deliver a theology of history and politics. In Part II of the work, he presents human history as a struggle between the Earthly City and the City of God. From the former, those who devote themselves to enjoying this present life with its cares and pleasures, arises the latter, those who have dedicated their lives to God. These two cities signify two trajectories of love: one directed at mutable things, the other toward eternal truth.²¹⁸ His introduction to this history in Bk. XI is a summation of the argument of this chapter. The understanding of the City of God is founded on revelation. God speaks to us, “by the direct impact of truth, to anyone who is capable of hearing with the mind instead of with the ears of the body.” This truth resonates because at its core the human self is made in the image of God. Darkened by identifying itself as a material thing, the human mind must be renewed day after day, “trained and purified by faith; and in order to give man’s mind greater confidence in its journey towards the truth along the way of faith, God the Son of God, who is himself the Truth,

²¹⁸ For discussion of the two forms of love and how they are meant to be ordered, see §2.2 above.

took manhood without abandoning his godhead, and thus established and founded this faith, so that man might have a path to man's God through the man who was God."²¹⁹ In the witness of Scripture, the *Logos* speaks authoritatively. From the beginning, "the Wisdom of God was there, and it was through that Wisdom all things were made; and that Wisdom 'passes also into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets,' and tells them, inwardly and soundlessly, the story of God's works." The first thing the Bible tells us is that this world is made by God. But Augustine also believes that, "the world itself in all its ordered change and movement and in all the beauty it presents to our sight...bears a kind of silent testimony to the fact of its creation," a sign pointing to "the ineffably and invisibly great, the ineffably and invisibly beautiful."²²⁰ Our understanding by itself is "a kind of twilight" flickering in the darkness. But the light of morning dawns forever, "when that knowledge is linked with the praise and love of the Creator."²²¹

In this light, Augustine recognizes one sole Good, simple and unchangeable: our LORD. By this Good, all good things are created. The Form of this Good is its perfect Image, which is not made, but begotten. Begetter and Begotten are united by Love, which is their Spirit. This Trinity is simple, meaning that "its being is identical with its attributes," differentiated only by the order of their relationship. In God's Oneness, substance integrates species. As Wisdom, God is the infinite storehouse of all things intelligible, containing "all the invisible and unchanging causes of things visible and changing, which were created by the operation of Wisdom."²²² Our understanding of the world comes from its existence; and the existence of the world comes from God's understanding. God seeing the goodness of creation in Gn 1 emphasizes, "that the work

²¹⁹ *Civ. Dei* XI.2.

²²⁰ *Civ. Dei* XI.4. Augustine is quoting from Wis 7:27.

²²¹ *Civ. Dei* XI.7. Hegel famously remarks in the Preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, "the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk." Only as something passes away can we understand it. Cf. *Conf.* X.27.38, in which Augustine confesses that only belatedly has he come to realize his Creator's love; see §1.2 above.

²²² *Civ. Dei* XI.10.

corresponded with the goodness which was the reason for its creation.” When this goodness is interpreted as the Spirit, “then the whole united Trinity is revealed to us in its works.” This is the genesis of the Holy City, which exists by grace, receiving “its mode of being by subsisting in God, its enlightenment by beholding him, its joy from cleaving to him. It exists; it sees; it loves. It is strong with God’s eternity; it shines with God’s truth; it rejoices in God’s goodness.”²²³ The Doctor of Grace thus contends we can recognize in ourselves an image of the divine Trinity: “we exist; we know that we exist; and we are glad of this existence and this knowledge.”²²⁴ As if longing to be known, material things “offer their forms to the perception of our senses, those forms which give loveliness to the structure of this visible world.” We apprehend these things by our bodily senses, but form judgments on them by a sense belonging to our inner self, “by which we apprehend what is just and what is unjust,” by means of an idea which is presented to the intellect. It is through this sense that, “I am assured of my existence; and through this I love both existence and knowledge, and am sure that I love them.”²²⁵ To be good, therefore, is to unite the knowledge of what is good with the love of goodness itself.

Starting from Gn 1, Augustine traces the history of the two cities, considering their ends in Bk. XIX. He distinguishes them according to their understanding of Ultimate Good and Evil. All of us ultimately desire happiness, and what makes us happy is the Ultimate Good, which is the true objective of philosophy. For the City of God, the Ultimate Good is eternal life, eternal death the Ultimate Evil, “and to achieve the one and escape the other, we must live rightly.” Scripture tells us, “The one who is just lives by faith,” since in this life, “we do not yet see our good, and hence we have to seek it by believing; and it is not in our power to live rightly, unless

²²³ *Civ. Dei* XI.24.

²²⁴ *Civ. Dei* XI.26. Cf. Descartes’ *Cogito*, see §4.2, n. 42 above.

²²⁵ *Civ. Dei* XI.27.

while we believe and pray we receive help from him who has given us the faith to believe that we must be helped by him.”²²⁶ To believe *in* eternity is to live *for* it. This happiness is living by the love of the invisible God. The Earthly City, on the other hand, seeks happiness here in the visible world by their own efforts. Yet even the virtues, the best and most useful of our faculties in this life, by our need for them, testify to its inherent hardship. But suffering for what is right yields hope which, as happiness in expectation, is a sign of our ultimate salvation.²²⁷

Amidst the agony of life in a world passing away, we seek the perfect order of peace. Classical philosophy searches for the peace of a good life through virtue, perfecting ourselves by living rightly. Virtue is the proper human pattern. But, for Augustine, “virtue is truly virtue when it refers all the good things of which it makes good use, all its achievements in making good use of good things and evil things, and when it refers itself also,” to this end of perfect peace.²²⁸ Just as all desire happiness, so all desire *pax*—in this mortal state, nothing better can be found. The problem is the chaos of our disordered will. The self-love of pride (*superbia*) acts as a perverted imitation of God, hating a fellowship of equality under God, and seeking to impose its own will on others. And so, pride “hates the just peace of God, and loves its own peace of injustice.”²²⁹ All things must have some kind of peace as the condition of their being, or else they could not exist. Thus, the peace of the cosmos is the tranquility of order uniting everything in existence. Since God “created all things in supreme wisdom and ordered them in perfect justice; and in establishing the mortal race of mankind as the greatest ornament of earthly things, he has given to mankind certain good things suitable to this life,” on the condition that we use them rightly.²³⁰

²²⁶ *Civ. Dei* XIX.4. The quotation is from Hab 2:7, which Paul cites in Rom 1:17.

²²⁷ On the theological virtue of hope, see Rom 5:1-5; 8:24-25; Heb 11:1-3; and §11, n. 254 below.

²²⁸ *Civ. Dei* XIX.10.

²²⁹ *Civ. Dei* XIX.12.

²³⁰ *Civ. Dei* XIX.13. The NT Gospels all portray this as one of the central themes of Jesus’ teachings, for example Mt 10:39; 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25.

The Earthly City, then, seeks peace by using temporal things for the enjoyment of earthly life, while the Heavenly City orders this mortal life in the light of what is eternally true.

On the level of the rational self, peace is the interface that integrates cognition and action. With this end in mind, one comes “to some profitable knowledge and may order his life and his moral standards in accordance with this knowledge.” But to do this, “he needs divine direction, which he may obey with resolution, and divine assistance that he may obey it freely, to prevent him from falling, in his enthusiasm for knowledge, a victim to some fatal error, through the weakness of the human mind.” To be at peace with ourselves is to recognize our insufficiency, our essential need for God. Thus, *pax* between the self and the ultimate ground of our existence is, “an ordered obedience in faith in subjection to the everlasting Law,” viz. the love of God, neighbor, and self.²³¹ We realize this peace by doing no harm and helping everyone whenever possible. This compulsion of love undertakes righteous engagement with one another. God’s people relate earthly peace to heavenly peace, pointing toward perfect harmonious fellowship, in which all of creation is united with the Creator in the joy of divine Love as our Ultimate Good.

Truth and love thus create a community, a commonwealth. Augustine cites Cicero’s definition of a people as a multitude, “united in association by a common sense of right and a community of interest.”²³² The Earthly City establishes a compromise between human wills about the things of this life; however, not subjecting itself to what is right, it will inevitably be unjust. But by giving themselves in *caritas*, God’s City becomes a sacrament of justice, God’s best, most glorious sacrifice. Thus, just as the individual righteous person lives on the basis of faith active in love, so the people of righteousness lives on the same basis. Modifying Cicero, the Doctor of Grace contends, “a people is the association of a multitude of rational beings united by

²³¹ *Civ. Dei* XIX.14.

²³² *Civ. Dei* XIX.21. Augustine is quoting the definition advanced by Scipio in the dialogue *De re publica*.

a common agreement on the objects of their love,” and “it follows that to observe the character of a particular people we must examine the objects of its love.”²³³ The Earthly City desires the good things of mortal life for itself more than any truth independent of the self. But God’s people live by uniting understanding and love. Thus, “the true philosopher is the lover of God,” for “no wisdom is true wisdom if it does not direct its attention, in all its prudent decisions, its resolute actions, its self-control and its just dealings with others, towards that ultimate state in which God will be all in all, in the assurance of eternity and the perfection of peace.”²³⁴

The love of God is not lived alone, but creates community. Augustine was not primarily concerned with abstract theory; as a bishop, his vocation was the life of Church. The building of a Christian community is the heart of his project. Picking up where the narrative of *Confessiones* leaves off, upon returning to Thagaste, Augustine sold his inheritance and gave the money to the poor, keeping only the family home, which he converted to a monastery where he and his friends shared a life of prayer and study. When he became bishop, he invited the priests of his diocese to share a common life with him. Distilling his experience into a *Regula*, he sketches the essential pattern of life in community by giving a set of precepts. This is the first: “The main purpose for you having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.”²³⁵ Quoting Acts 4:32 Augustine instructs them to call nothing their own, but to let everything be theirs in common. Their shared life is a sacrament: “Let all of you then live together in oneness of mind and heart, mutually honoring God in yourselves, whose temples you have become.”²³⁶ Learning together, each should think over in their hearts the words that come

²³³ *Civ. Dei* XIX.24.

²³⁴ *Civ. Dei* VIII.1; XIX.20.

²³⁵ *Reg.* I.2. Trans. Robert Russell, O.S.A. (Brothers of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, 1976). Written around 400, the Rule of St. Augustine is the oldest monastic rule in Western Christianity. On March 1, 1244 (the same year Thomas Aquinas would join the Dominicans) the mendicant Order of St. Augustine would be founded, uniting several eremitical groups in the region of Tuscany, with their formal adoption of the *Regula*.

²³⁶ *Reg.* I.8.

from their lips, while letting their hearts hunger for the words of God. Rather than an atmosphere of individual achievement, “no one shall perform any task for his own benefit, but all your work shall be done for the common good, with greater zeal and more dispatch than if each one of you were to work for yourself alone.” Citing 1Cor 13:5, he states that *caritas* “is not self-seeking,” this means “it places the common good before its own, not its own before the common good.”²³⁷ By showing greater concern for the common good than for their own, they grow in this charity. Rather than giving detailed instructions concerning the fleeting necessities of life, he emphasizes letting the abiding virtue of *caritas* prevail in all things. He concludes with a prayer: “The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity as lovers of spiritual beauty, giving forth the good odor of Christ in the holiness of your lives: not as slaves living under the law but as men living in freedom under grace.”²³⁸ Finally, Augustine asks that followers may see themselves in his Rule as in a mirror, judging their lives by reflecting upon his personal standard.

A detailed application of Augustine’s insights to our present context lies beyond the scope of this project, but it is fitting to conclude by looking to two martyrs for civil rights and freedom from the last century for signs to point us in that direction. Mahatma Gandhi pioneered a concept he called truth-force: “Truth (*satya*) implies love, and firmness (*agraha*) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement *Satyagraha*, that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence.”²³⁹ *Satyagraha* holds firmly to the truth in love. The root of *satya* is *sat*, being. Gandhi believed that this world rests on the bedrock of truth. Untruth (*asatya*) thus has no existence. The truth can never be destroyed. Its victory is assured, conquering not through violence but creating a new peace through conversion.

²³⁷ *Reg.* V.2.

²³⁸ *Reg.* VIII.1.

²³⁹ Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, trans. Valji Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1968), 107.

In a symbolic action that would shake British rule to its foundations, Gandhi walked to the sea in what became known as the Salt March. Identifying his movement with the poorest in the land, by making salt he liberated the stuff of life by drawing upon what is common for the good of all.

Martin Luther King, Jr. would adapt *satyagraha* in the struggle for civil rights in the U.S. His speech, “I Have a Dream,” at the March on Washington stands as a classic of American political theology. Quoting Is 40:4-5, King proclaims his dream that one day, “the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” With this hope we can face injustice,

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.²⁴⁰

Augustine, Gandhi, and King all recognized self-giving love as the heart of justice and the key to its realization in this life. Justice is the order that reflects the truth of who we all are. Illuminated by the light of the world, the *Logos*, believers become the salt of the earth by giving themselves in love for the sake of the good of all. From God’s limitless wisdom, which fills creation as water fills the oceans, believers distill the truth by confessing God’s love with their lives, becoming an incarnate sign of divine Light as the sacramental body of Christ in the world.

²⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (Speech, March on Washington, August 28, 1963).

3 *Intelligere: Thomas Aquinas on the Act of Understanding*

*First and principally, the image of the Trinity is attended in the mind according to the act, namely, insofar as we form in our thinking an inner word from the knowledge which we have, and from this we burst forth into love.*¹

Eight centuries would pass for the Doctor of Grace's words to reach the mind of Thomas Aquinas. From the remains of the classical world that was crumbling around Augustine, a new civilization would emerge, one shaped profoundly by his thought. It was into this Catholic world of the High Middle Ages that Tommaso, the youngest son of Landulf, the Count of Aquino, was born. At Monte Cassino, the prototypical Benedictine community, where he was sent for his elementary education, the shy young nobleman would first encounter the writings of Augustine.² At the age of 19, while studying at the University of Naples, Thomas resolved to join the Order of Preachers rather than follow the path of his family's ambitions. Founded only three decades prior, the Dominican Order was part of a revolutionary movement in medieval spirituality that emerged at the start of the thirteenth century. Mendicant orders would reject the monastic model in order to live with and minister to people living in the growing towns and cities. Renouncing property, mendicant friars staked their survival on the good will of those with whom they shared the good news, recalling the earthly ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. With his vows, Thomas would dedicate his life to this movement. Although he did not leave behind a detailed account of his inner life for us the way Augustine did, it is possible to know some things about the kind of person that Thomas Aquinas was. Above all else, Thomas was a Dominican friar, a member of a community devoted to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

¹ ST I Q. 93, art. 7. The translations of all section headings and underlined quotations in Chs. 3 & 4 are my own.

² Influenced by Augustine's *Regula*, the *Rule of St. Benedict* developed at Monte Cassino would set the pattern for monastic communities across Europe. Through the legacy of Cassiodorus Senator, the preservation and study of texts came to be a vital part of the life of these monasteries. That the massive corpus of Augustine's writings would survive the Dark Ages largely intact is testament both to their efforts and to his significance for them. It was through this tradition that Thomas would come to be introduced to the Doctor of Grace.

Instead of becoming the abbot of a wealthy monastery, as his family had wanted, or consecrated as a bishop, as Augustine had been, Thomas would become a friar and scholar, an academic theologian. His ministry would be one of writing and teaching. Not long after joining the order, the Dominicans sent Thomas to study at the University of Paris, the intellectual hub of Europe. There he would meet his great teacher and confrere, Albert. In the large, introverted young man whom others looked at as a dumb ox, Albert saw tremendous genius. Becoming his mentor and champion, he helped Tommaso find his voice.³ A towering figure, known even in his lifetime as the Universal Doctor, Albert would train his gifted student in the science of theology. As taught in the universities, this scholasticism sought to give a systematically ordered account of all things through the integration of faith and reason. The rediscovery of Aristotle in the Latin West begun in the previous century represented the defining challenge of their age: Could his philosophical system be harmonized with Christian revelation?⁴ Guided to this question, Aquinas would apply his brilliance to formulating an answer that could unite Jerusalem and Athens.

Both of these concerns animate Thomas' masterpiece, the *Summa theologiae*. Written for "the instruction of beginners," it is his attempt to present Christian religion as a systematically interconnected whole in order to educate newcomers to the Order of Preachers. This sacred teaching (*sacra doctrina*) represents a synthesis of reason and faith. In the *Summa*, Thomas will attempt to incorporate the philosophy of Aristotle into understanding the Bible, and the truths discerned in the subsequent theological tradition, by developing possibly relevant analogies (*rationes convenientiae*) in dialogue with questions emerging from those truths. The difficulty it

³ Regarding Aquinas' unflattering nickname, Albert would prophetically remark, "We call him the dumb ox, but in his teaching he will one day produce such a bellowing that it will be heard throughout the world." If he was shy in his youth, Thomas would overcome it, his words transforming him into one of the leading lights of his (or any) time.

⁴ On the more obvious level, how could a pagan who lived over 3 centuries before Jesus teach believers about Christ? Behind this was another challenge. Since Justin Martyr, Platonism had been the prevailing philosophical influence on Christian theology. Augustine's thought in particular would cement this connection for the Catholic West. And so, could Aristotle be reconciled with the Platonism that had become incorporated into the tradition?

now takes to imagine just how controversial both the ministry of the mendicant orders and the use of Aristotle in Catholic theology were in his own time testifies to the greatness of Aquinas' achievement. His aim in the *Summa* is fittingly bold, seeking to demonstrate how *veritas* can be integrated into an understanding of what it means to live as Christians in word and deed.

The Angelic Doctor presents an ideal partner for further appreciating the relationship between love and understanding. In the *Summa*, Thomas mediates a discussion between figures he refers to as the Philosopher and the Theologian, Aristotle and Augustine, in order to show how their respective achievements might be reconciled. After having explored the thought of Augustine, these final two chapters seek to complement our findings by exploring the synthesis of Aquinas. In many respects, Augustine and Thomas represent a study in contrasts, the sociable prelate and the contemplative scholastic, that are manifest also in their theological approaches. In Lonergan's characterization, "For Augustine our hearts are restless until they rest in God; for Aquinas, not our hearts, but first and most our minds are restless until they rest in seeing him."⁵ And so, our exploration of Thomas begins in this chapter by studying the act of understanding, and conclude with its perfection by the grace of wisdom in the chapter following.

Behind our dialogue partners stand their respective philosophical guides, Plato and Aristotle.⁶ Augustine follows the Platonists in believing Ideas rise above the natural world, that understanding truth points upward toward the reality of the Good. Thomas holds with Plato's outstanding student, Aristotle, that the transcendence of Plato's Ideas and the Good is not in a separation from material reality, but a union of *information*, enabling it to be sensibly perceived

⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* CWL 2, eds. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1997), 100. This work provides the background for my study of the *ST* in this chapter.

⁶ While Thomas studied and commented on numerous Aristotelian texts, there is no evidence that Augustine did the same with Plato's dialogues. Plato is Augustine's guide in the sense that the philosophy informing the Doctor of Grace's thought draws upon the Platonic tradition broadly speaking. The Manicheanism he once held is an even more radical rejection of the material world than is Platonic idealism. Interestingly, *Confessiones* tells us how "the books of the Platonists" would ultimately open him to appreciating the goodness of creation; see §1.1 & §6.1 above.

and intelligently understood. This hylomorphic union of matter and form characterizes all beings conditioned intrinsically (non-human) or extrinsically (human) by space and time. The form or the essence that specifies the quiddity of a material substance constitutes *what* the given thing is. According to Thomas, we perceive this form first with our senses, spontaneously imagining what has been sensed, asking what, why, how it is, having an insight into its potential intelligibility, formulating precisely what is relevant to that intelligibility, and then, after raising the question whether this *possibly* relevant understanding is *actually* relevant (i.e., fitting), reflecting to assess whether the evidence is sufficient to warrant a judgment that it is actually, probably, or only possibly true—this is how we come to know what is real with certainty.

Thomas' system incorporates Aristotle's theorem of formal identity, that *sense in act* **is** *the sensible in act*, and *intelligence in act* **is** *the intelligible in act*. Our senses become identical with whatever is sensible, and then our intellect becomes identical with the intelligibility of whatever is understood. But Aquinas recognized there was a further need: to verify whether the sensibly and intelligently apprehended identity is actually real. For the Angelic Doctor regarded the Christian belief in God's grace to be our salvation, not merely because it appears to "work," but because it is **true**. Thanks to the Doctor of Grace's insistence on love of *veritas*, Thomas was able to recognize Aristotle's identity theorem failed to explain *how* the intentional identities of sensation and understanding ascertain **true** knowledge of the other *as* other. And thus, it was the Theologian, and not the Philosopher, who enabled Thomas to work out an empirically-accessible justification of the way our rational reflection attains knowledge of the truth as such. However, at the same time, it was Aristotle who helped Aquinas to eliminate the last vestiges of Plato's error from Augustine, the failure to recognize the true significance of matter as the medium of form.⁷

⁷ *Summa contra Gentiles* 2, c. 98 ad fin. This interpretation of Aquinas owes much to Lonergan's *Verbum*. My own reading of the *ST* is meant to show how Thomas develops Augustine, through Lonergan's development of him.

This process of coming to know reality is the heart of Aquinas' relentless intellectualism. Having acknowledged the congruence between the Philosopher's claim that human beings have a natural desire and capacity to make or become everything, including the Prime Mover, and the Theologian's conviction regarding our restless heart (*cor inquietum*), Thomas could transcend Aristotle's argument in both the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* that one must deliberate about the right course of action in the light of a limit or end (*telos*)—the “that-for-the-sake-of-which” or highest good—as happens every time one begins to discern and decide what to do. Thomas contends that this ultimate end of the human desire to know and love is God, the origin and end of the cosmos. What our restless minds long to behold is this truth of all things in perfect understanding.

In *On the Soul*, Aristotle applies his insights to an analysis of the human desire to know by drawing a distinction between the passive capacity to know and active or agent intellect that gives rise to questions for understanding, and illumines the images or phantasms in our minds.⁸ Our study of Aquinas is organized around this distinction, beginning in §8 with the receptivity of the passive intellect, by exploring the nature of the created human intellect in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa*. Thomas argues that God, as *ipsum intelligere* or *intelligentia intelligentiae*,⁹ bestows on human beings a created participation in the uncreated light of the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*), which moves our intellectual potential into act every time understanding takes place.

Having explained created and finite human nature using a metaphysical psychology delineating the essence of the soul, with its potencies, habits, and acts, and specifying human nature as the endowment of a finite potency to understand and love, Aquinas turns in the *Pars Secunda* of the *Summa* to explain how God's free initiative, as elevating *operative* grace, raises

⁸ *On the Soul* III.4-5; *Metaphysics* XII.7-10.

⁹ Respectively, “to understand itself” and “the understanding of understanding.” Thomas uses this to translate Aristotle's formulation of the divine nature as *noesis noeseos*, instead of the translation used by those who, having misunderstood Aristotle's analysis in *On the Soul*, interpreted the Greek expression as “thought thinking thought.”

our nature to the supernatural. This sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) becomes entitative habit rooted in the soul, making one not only loved by God, but also objectively loveable by the grace of conversion. In the converted soul, *cooperative* grace emerges as a habitual elevation rooted in our potential, by which the gift of our conversion is realized in the way we then live. This grace-empowered journey culminates in the gift of beatific knowledge, created participation in the Son's relationship with the Father, as *Theos* eternally both speaks and hears *Logos*. Thus, there is a proportion: as the active intellect activates human being's passive intellect, and in this way enables pilgrims to understand and judge, so too grace perfects nature by God's induction of humanity into the supernatural order of grace, in which the activity of operative grace generates the theological virtues: faith (*fides*), love (*caritas*), and hope (*spes*).

Thomas considers the virtue of *caritas* to have a corresponding gift: wisdom (*sapientia*), which will be the subject of the next chapter, starting with the principles of *sacra doctrina* as the basis of a wisdom that transcends the wisdom of philosophy, which is grounded in human nature alone (§9). Following Anselm's definition of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum*, §10 turns to Thomas' treatise on the theological virtue of faith, with which he begins the *Secunda Secundae*. By grace, God perfects human intellect by orienting it to the beatific vision (*visio beatifica*)—to beholding the communication of the divine self as the supernatural end of all our knowing and loving, perfected in seeing face-to-face (1Cor 13:8-13). Our study thus concludes in §11 with a study of the culmination of the *Prima Secundae*, the treatise on grace.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the greatest difficulty with Augustine's account of understanding is his inability to bridge the gap between *scientia* and *sapientia*.¹⁰ Only knowledge

¹⁰ While Augustine unites the two by faith in Christ, he was unable to do so theoretically on the level of nature, as the distinction between nature and grace would not emerge in the Latin West until the rediscovery of Aristotle's account of nature made it appropriate. Since the Doctor of Grace could not account for the legitimacy of natural science (see §4.2, n. 49 & §5.1 above), it would fall to Thomas and his fellow Scholastics to synthesize the two.

pertaining to salvation is ultimately valid for the Doctor of Grace. The Universal Doctor would never have let a student of his get away with any such thing. Albert, who would himself be made a bishop, was also a philosopher and man of science. Not only did he comment on the entire Aristotelian corpus, he would develop new fields of scientific inquiry as well. Albert embodied what Lonergan calls the pure and unrestricted desire to know. But is such insatiable curiosity a virtue, or a vice distracting us from the contemplation of God? Thomas' answer in the *Summa* integrates Albert and Augustine in a unified vision of universal truth, in which what we know through natural philosophy is perfected by understanding divine Truth. Science, as a movement toward truth, attains fulfillment in wisdom, in harmony with the teaching of God's gracious love.

§8 *Ratio*: Natural Reason

*It remains, therefore, that the material known must exist in the knower, not materially, but rather immaterially. And the reason (ratio) for this is that the act of knowing (cognitionis) extends to things outside the knower; for we know (cognoscimus) even those things that are outside of us.*¹¹

If Augustine paints with his words, Aquinas uses them like an engineer. The styles of their Latin reflect their different approaches. If Augustine depicts vivid images, Thomas drafts schematics and solves equations, working out differentiated proportions or analogies to explain what is divinely revealed in Scripture. The former approach aspires to be evocative—the latter, to be clear and precise. As a rhetorician, Augustine employs words descriptively. Aquinas uses words more as technical or scientific terms to elucidate and analyze realities both natural and supernatural.¹² *Confessiones* is a work of literary art. The *Summa theologiae* is the theological application and analogical adaptation of Aristotle's notion of a subordinated science. Following

¹¹ *ST I Q.* 84, art. 2.

¹² As a general rule, Augustine is prone to using different words to mean the same thing poetically. In the *ST*, Thomas will use the same word when he means the same thing whenever he possibly can.

Peter Abelard's *Sic et Non*, scholastics would seek to formulate problems through the systematic ordering of authorities.¹³ This led them to develop the *quaestio* method, supplementing the mode of *lectio* in theology with *disputatio*, which Thomas applies in the articles of his *Summa*, drawing upon earlier interpretations through an interconnected series of disputed questions about *sacra doctrina* in order to formulate the questions he desired to answer more precisely. Making use of theoretical distinction—distinguishing in order to unite—his answers give coherent and plausible *rationes convenientiae*. As tracery supports a stained-glass window, so in the *Summa* Aquinas traces intelligible relationships to frame a rational synthesis illustrating the mystery of God.

Thomas studied and taught in Paris as builders were bringing the construction of Notre-Dame to completion. A quintessential Gothic cathedral, its architecture is an expression of the medieval universe in stone, wood, and glass, an intricate structure intended to reflect the order of God's creation. This is what Aquinas would achieve in the *Summa*, from thought and words he constructs an intellectual cathedral to reveal the entire universe as intelligible, created through the Word. Both projects have the same purpose: Christian religious instruction. As Notre-Dame depicts Christianity in a way that a mostly illiterate population could understand, so Thomas writes, "in such a way as may tend to the instruction of beginners," as he states his goal for the *Summa* in its Prologue: to teach *sacra doctrina* according to the order of the subject matter, "as briefly and clearly as the matter itself may allow." The form of this instruction is the order of teaching the subject, the *ordo doctrinae*. Thus, to help make Christian teaching understandable, Aquinas will give us, his students, an account of understanding itself.

For the Angelic Doctor, the intellectual soul is the form of the human body, the schema for God's dwelling in the matter of our flesh. Buttressing the structure of his anthropology, the

¹³ This is the approach of Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences*, the standard textbook of Scholastic theology. As a dissertation is required for a Ph.D. today, so a commentary on the *Sentences* was required to become a Master.

treatise on human intellect (I QQ. 79, 84-89) will be the focus of this section. Thomas considers the intellectual principle as our form since, “that whereby primarily anything acts is a form of the thing to which the act is to be attributed.” As health heals a body, “that whereby the soul (*anima*) knows (*scit*) primarily is *scientia*,” the soul knows by knowledge, “a thing acts by that whereby it is in act.”¹⁴ Following Aristotle, Aquinas considers the soul to be the primary principle of our nourishment, sensation, local movement, and understanding—the integration of our specificity, the essence of who we are. Socrates understands by who he is as an embodied human being, and because he understands, Socrates is thus moved by his intellect.¹⁵ This specific man understands because the intellectual principle is his form. The nature of a thing is shown by its act. Aquinas names the act proper to humans as human as *intelligere*, to understand; this is what distinguishes us from all other animals. We derive our species from this act, as the species of a thing is derived from its form. What befits us as *Homo sapiens* is *sapientia*—for wisdom is the perfection of our form, our proper end and ultimate happiness.¹⁶ The essence of form is to be distinct from matter by excelling it. Thomas holds the human soul to be the highest and noblest of all created forms, excelling its corporeal matter by an operation and a power which completely transcends it, viz. our intellect. The matter of our bodies is our potentiality, and to understand is our act. To be a human being, a rational animal, is thus to act as a ratio, by making matter proportionate to form. In this way, “The soul communicates that existence in which it subsists to the corporeal matter, out of which and the intellectual soul there results unity of existence; so that the existence of the whole composite is also the existence of the soul.”¹⁷

¹⁴ *ST I Q.* 76, art. 1. Quotations of the *ST* are from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920), unless underlined or otherwise noted, save for minor, cosmetic changes, e.g., capitalization.

¹⁵ Plato also holds that we know by the essence of who we are, but disagrees with Aristotle and Thomas by identifying the soul as an intellectual essence independent of the body and the senses. While Augustine does not follow Plato in this error, he does struggle to understand the human soul as fully embodied.

¹⁶ In this, Thomas follows the Philosopher in *Ethics* X.7.

¹⁷ *ST I Q.* 76, art. 1, ad 5. For this reason, Thomas believes the human soul retains its existence after death.

Thomas classifies the intellect as a power (*potentia*) of the human form, the soul. Since matter is only in potentiality and form is in act, the soul as form is the animating principle of our existence. Citing (Pseudo)Dionysius, Aquinas differentiates heavenly spirits into essence, power, and operation.¹⁸ As a power, the intellect is our soul's receptivity to intelligible form, specified by means of what he refers to as *phantasma*, which "itself is not a form of the possible intellect; it is the intelligible species abstracted from the phantasm that is a form."¹⁹ The phantasm is not itself the form; it is the means by which intellect is formed by means of a process of abstraction. As the image of an intelligible relationship, the phantasm acts as a ratio mediating species to the intellect. "As every action is according to the mode of the form by which the agent acts," so too "knowledge is according to the mode of the species by which the knower knows." The intellect understands by abstracting universal species from individual matter, generating within itself, "a likeness of the nature without those things which make it distinct and multiplied."²⁰ What is understood is not in the intellect, "according to its own nature, but according to its likeness." To quote Aristotle, "the stone is not in the soul, but its likeness is." What is understood is the stone, however, not the likeness of the stone. In this way, "knowledge is begotten according to the assimilation of the knower to the thing known."²¹ The stone sensed exists outside the soul in the mode of individual matter. But inside the soul, as known, the stone exists as intelligible species. A thing is understood by the generation of its proportionate likeness in the mind of the knower.

¹⁸ *Celestial Hierarchy* XI. The writings of Dionysius the Areopagite were regarded by Thomas as authoritative, although they would be shown to be pseudonymous by Lorenzo Valla in the 15th century. Most likely written in the century following Augustine, the *Corpus Areopagiticum* nevertheless provided Aquinas with an additional Christian mediation of (Neo)Platonic thought complementing that of the Doctor of Grace. For the sake of clarity, I will follow Thomas' usage in the *ST* and refer to Pseudo-Dionysius as Dionysius.

¹⁹ *ST I Q.* 76, art. 2. Borrowed from the Greek, *phantasma* comes from the verb *phantazō*, "become visible" or "appear," and ultimately *phainō* (see Ch. 1, n. 124). Heb 12:21 uses *phantazomenon* referring to the theophany to Moses on Mt. Sinai. A phantasm is an apparition, a spiritual appearance, a revelation; BDAG, 1046-49.

²⁰ *ST I Q.* 76, art. 2, ad 3. This recognition by the abstraction of form is the intellectual act of our consciousness. Lonergan warns against the conceptualism of naïve realism, i.e., the notion that concepts emerge unconsciously.

²¹ *ST I Q.* 76, art. 2, ad 4. The quote of Aristotle is from *On the Soul* III.8. Intelligible species as such can only be understood by the reflection of the intellect upon itself, unlike our understanding of particular things.

The soul is that which actualizes our body. The Philosopher defines the soul as “the act of a natural body which has life potentially.” Thomas considers this act of the soul to be twofold, with the first act, the information of the body by the soul resulting in potentiality to its second act, which is its operation.²² This means that intellect, as *potentia* in relation to its operation, is essentially passive, open to receiving some form. When the intellect asks questions, its operation (*intelligere*) generates potential answers. As the body’s engine, the soul “does not move the body by its essence, as the form of the body, but by the motive power, the act of which presupposes the body to be already actualized by the soul: so that the soul by its motive power is the part which moves; and the animate body is the part moved.”²³ As opposed to Platonism, Aquinas will contend that the soul needs the body in order to understand. Since our intellectual soul, “is not naturally gifted with the knowledge of truth,” it “has to gather knowledge from individual things by way of the senses. Therefore, the intellectual soul has “to be endowed not only with the power of understanding, but also with the power of feeling (*virtutem sentiendi*).” Since the action of the senses requires a corporeal instrument, it was thus right (*oportuit*) for “the intellectual soul to be united to a body fitted to be a convenient organ of sense.”²⁴ United “by its very being to the body as a form,” the intellectual soul “guides and moves the body by its power and virtue,” as both its engine and guidance system.²⁵ Through itself, the form, as essentially an act, is what makes a thing the kind or *species* it is, integrating all of its constituent parts into a united whole, a *being*.

Plato maintains that the essence of the soul is its power, that what I am *is* my intellect. Thomas considers this impossible for all, save God, for “the divine Power which is the principle of God’s operation is the divine Essence itself,” a power that is not “an act ordained to another

²² *STI* Q. 76, art. 4, ad 1. The definition of Aristotle is cited from *On the Soul* II.1. See also I Q. 75, art. 5, ad 4.

²³ *STI* Q. 76, art. 4, ad 2.

²⁴ *STI* Q. 76, art. 5. As an authority, Thomas cites Dionysius, *Divine Names* V & VII.

²⁵ *STI* Q. 76, art. 6, ad 3.

act, but the ultimate term of generation.” For the soul to be in potentiality is a function, not of its essence, but its power. As the subject of its power, the soul itself “is called the first act, with a further relation to the second act.”²⁶ In *De Trinitate*, however, Augustine states that memory, understanding, and will are the one essence of the soul. Thomas solves this potential objection by clarifying that the Theologian “is speaking of the mind as it knows and loves itself.” Therefore, “knowledge and love as referred to the soul as known and loved, are substantially or essentially in the soul, for the very substance or essence of the soul is known and loved.”²⁷ Knowing and loving are acts, and “action belongs to the composite, as does existence; for to act belongs to what exists,” and “the composite has substantial existence through the substantial form; and it operates by the power which results from the substantial form.”²⁸ Thus, according to Aquinas, I am that which is loving when I love; I am that which is understanding when I understand.

There is still a problem, however. In order to rescue the Theologian, Thomas has to take on the Philosopher, according to whom there can be no medium between substance and accident. But the Angelic Doctor recognizes that the category of accident is itself a universal, which means “the substance is all that belongs to the essence of a thing,” and the accident is “only what is not caused by the essential principle of the species.” Thomas calls the medium between these two the **proper** (*proprium*), that which “does not belong to the essence of a thing, but is caused by the essential principles of the species.” Therefore, as natural *properties*, “the powers of the soul may be said to be a medium between substance and accident.”²⁹ For understanding and love to belong to my essence means that I am that for which it is proper to understand and to love. Thus, since the substantial form in itself is unknown to us, and the soul is an admixture of potentiality and

²⁶ *STI* Q. 77, art. 1.

²⁷ *STI* Q. 77, art. 1, ad 1. Thomas cites *Trin.* IX.4 & X.11; see §4.2 above.

²⁸ *STI* Q. 77, art. 1, ad 3.

²⁹ *STI* Q. 77, art. 1, ad 5.

act, there is nothing to prevent us from substituting proper accidents for substantial differences. Even if we cannot know the essence of a thing, we can attempt to learn what is fitting for it.

Spiritual and corporeal powers come together in the human soul. These two powers are differentiated by their acts and objects. A power, as such, is directed to an act. Thomas makes a distinction: “every act is either of an active power or of a passive power.” To the act of a passive power, the object is “as the principle and moving cause.” And, to the act of an active power, “the object is a term and end.” Thus, “from these two things an act receives its species, namely, from its principle, or from its end or term.”³⁰ Although act is subsequent in existence to power, it is “prior to it in intention and logically; as the end is with regard to the agent.” While extrinsic, the object is nevertheless, “the principle or end of the action; and those conditions which are intrinsic to a thing, are proportionate to its principle and end.”³¹ The subject of an operative power, on the other hand, “is that which is able to operate, for every accident denominates its proper subject.” Since what is *able* to operate is that which *does* operate, “the subject of power is of necessity the subject of operation.”³² Operations of the soul that are performed without a corporeal organ, such as understanding and willing, are in therefore in the soul as their subject, while those operations performed by means of a corporeal organ have their subject in the composite of body and soul. Plato teaches understanding *and* sensation are operations proper to the soul—is this Augustine’s view as well? Thomas notes, “in many things relating to philosophy Augustine makes use of the opinions of Plato, not asserting them as true, but relating them.” Aquinas holds, “the soul senses nothing without the body, because the action of sensation cannot proceed from the soul except by a corporeal organ.” Since it is the body that feels, a body is necessary in order for one to be able

³⁰ *STI* Q. 77, art. 3.

³¹ *STI* Q. 77, art. 3, ad 1.

³² *STI* Q. 77, art. 5.

to feel. However, the Angelic Doctor affirms that the body can sense some objects which do not exist in the body, “but only in the apprehension of the soul, as when it feels sad or joyful on hearing something.”³³ While a subject needs a body in order to feel, the object, what we can feel, does not need to be material itself. We can feel happiness, though not directly through the senses.

Having explained the relationship between powers and operations, Thomas then explores the relationship of the soul’s powers to its essence. Substantial form is an act, as is the accidental form, for “by each of them something is after a manner actual,” but they also differ in two ways. The first is, “because the substantial form makes a thing to exist absolutely, and its subject is something purely potential.” On the other hand, the accidental form causes a thing, not to exist absolutely, “but to be such, or so great, or in some particular condition,” since its subject is an actual being. The substantial form is the cause of existence in its subject, while “the actuality of the accidental form is caused by the actuality of the subject.” Thus, “the subject, forasmuch as it is in potentiality, is receptive of the accidental form: but forasmuch as it is in act, it produces it.” The second way is because matter exists on account of the substantial form, while “the accidental form exists on account of the completeness of the subject.” Since, “the accident is caused by the subject according as it is actual, and received into it according as it is in potentiality,” all of the powers of the soul, “flow from the essence of the soul as from their principle.”³⁴ The essence of the soul is thus, “the cause of all its powers, as their end, and as their active principle; and of some as receptive thereof.” This renders the subject as, “both the final cause, and in a way the active cause, of its proper accident. It is also as it were the material cause, inasmuch as it is receptive of the accident.”³⁵ And so, my essence—what I am—is what I am making of myself.

³³ *ST I Q. 77*, art. 5, ad 3. Augustine describes each of his three conversion experiences in *Conf.* VII-IX in terms of hearing in the heart (*auditor in corde*) a word without a material cause. See §1.1 & §6.1 above.

³⁴ *ST I Q. 77*, art. 6.

³⁵ *ST I Q. 77*, art. 6, ad 2. This is what Lonergan will refer to as self-actualization.

Understanding and will are thus both proper accidents of the soul, the former passive and the latter active. But how are the two related to each other? Thomas answers that, “one power of the soul proceeds from the essence of the soul by the medium of another,” as the action of the senses causes the activity of the imagination. Our powers proceed according to an order. In the order of nature, that which is nearer to the first cause is, in a way, the cause of that which is more remote. In the order of perfection, the agent and end are more perfect than that which receives. Therefore, “those powers of the soul which precede the others, in the order of perfection and nature, are the principles of the others, after the manner of the end and active principle.” And so, Thomas concludes, “the senses are for the sake of the intelligence,” and not the other way round. The senses themselves, “are a certain imperfect participation of the intelligence,” proceeding “as the imperfect from the perfect.” Thus, “considered as receptive principles, the more imperfect powers are principles with regard to the others.” As possessing the sensitive power, the soul “is considered as the subject, and as something material with regard to the intelligence.” This is the order of generation, in which what is imperfect precedes the order that perfects it, “for the animal is generated before the man.”³⁶ The powers of my soul working together make me what I am.

Thomas addresses the intellectual powers directly in Q. 79. Through its immateriality, the created intelligent substance has the power of intelligence. Therefore, the intellect is both a *virtus* and *potentia* of the soul. Following Aristotle, Aquinas draws the conclusion: *intelligere nostrum est pati* (“our to understand is to suffer”).³⁷ Something which passes from potentiality into act is passive, even when perfected. As the operation of the intellect extends to universal being, its act

³⁶ ST I Q. 77, art. 7. Cf. Darwin’s hypothesis of natural selection (evolution) as the origin of biological species.

³⁷ ST I Q. 79, art. 2. Thomas cites Aristotle, *On the Soul* III.4. Lonergan characterizes the basic meaning of *pati* as to undergo change for the worse; *Verbum*, 312. In a fragment, the Philosopher uses the formulation *pathein mathein* (“to suffer to learn”) to describe the Mysteries of Eleusis, which Plato also uses to relate the structure of his doctrine of Ideas, as in the stages in the mystagogue Diotima’s speech in the *Symposium* (purification, instruction, revelation) and in *Phaedrus*, which is set where the Lesser Mysteries took place, see Bianca Dinkelaar, “Plato and the Language of Mysteries,” *Mnemosyne* 73.1 (2020): 36-62.

is to relate these two. The intellect, “whose relation to universal being is that of the act of all being,” is the divine Intellect, “which is the Essence of God, in which originally and virtually, all being pre-exists as in its first cause.” As fully realized, the divine Intellect is pure act (*actus purus*). But only *ens infinitum* can be the *actus essendi* in relation to *ens universale*. As finite, created intellect, “is not the act of all things intelligible, by reason of its very existence; but is compared to these intelligible things as a potentiality to act.” With regard to what is intelligible, human intellect proceeds receptively, “as we observe in things corrupted and generated,” and its potentiality, “is at first like a clean tablet on which nothing is written.”³⁸ To understand is to have the intelligible written on our minds, a reception of form not generated by ourselves.

If human intellect is passive, then it needs to be activated. The question of active intellect (*intellectus agens*) goes to the heart of the question from the Introduction: *How do we encounter reality?* According to Plato, humans have “no need for an active intellect in order to make things actually intelligible; but perhaps in order to provide intellectual light to the intellect.” Platonic Ideas are intelligible because they subsist apart from corporeal matter, which is formed by its participation in them. He believed, “that our intellect was formed by such participation in order to have knowledge of the genera and species of things.” Aristotle, on the other hand, maintains that the forms of natural things do not exist apart from matter, and that forms existing in matter are not actually intelligible. From this, “it follows that the natures or forms of the sensible things which we understand are not actually intelligible,” since “nothing is reduced from potentiality to act except by something in act; as the senses are made actual by what is actually sensible.” It is

³⁸ Ibid. Here Thomas is quoting Aristotle in *On the Soul* III.4. The Latin is *in principio est sicut tabula rasa in qua nihil est scriptum*. We should not here conflate Aquinas with the epistemology of John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, with which the phrase *tabula rasa* is commonly associated, and in critique of which John Henry Newman would write *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Taking the metaphysical category literally, Locke redefines the human subject, arguing that our minds are blank slates at birth and conditioned by sense perception, concluding that all our knowledge is empirical, denying the need for an active intellect.

necessary, therefore, to “assign on the part of the intellect some power to make things actually intelligible, by abstraction of the species from material conditions.”³⁹ Being immaterial, “the intelligible in act is not something existing in nature; if we consider the nature of things sensible, which do not subsist apart from matter.” “Therefore, in order to understand,” the passive intellect needs “the presence of the active intellect, which makes things actually intelligible by way of abstraction.”⁴⁰ By the light of agent intellect, we are empowered to see that which is intelligible.

Following the Philosopher, Aquinas locates the active intellect in the soul. He postulates that above the human intellectual soul, “we must needs suppose a superior intellect, from which the soul acquires the power of understanding.” For that which is imperfect, “always requires the pre-existence of something essentially such, immovable and perfect.” Thus, “the human soul is called intellectual by reason of a participation in intellectual power (*intellectualis virtutis*); a sign of which is that it is not wholly intellectual but only in part...it reaches to the understanding of truth by arguing, with a certain amount of reasoning (*discursu*) and movement.” A ship having sails, but no wind to fill them, cannot go anywhere. Something must illuminate the phantasms to make them understandable. Thus, “we must say that in the soul is some power derived from a higher intellect, whereby it is able to light up the phantasms. And we know this by experience, since we perceive that we abstract universal forms from their particular conditions, which is to make them actually intelligible.” Aristotle compares this active intellect to light, while Plato compares it with the sun. “But the separate intellect, according to the teaching of our faith, *est ipse Deus*, Who Is the soul’s Creator, and only beatitude.”⁴¹ According to Thomas, the human

³⁹ STI Q. 79, art. 3.

⁴⁰ STI Q. 79, art. 3, ad 3.

⁴¹ STI Q. 79, art. 4. Light is received into the air in Aristotle’s analogy, see *On the Soul* III.5. Themistius’ commentary on this work is the source of the characterization of Plato. To support his position, Aquinas quotes Ps 4:6: *signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, domine* (“The light of your countenance is signed upon us, O Lord”). The light of *intellectus agens* is thus the **signature** of God which is written in the medium of our understanding, for “in your light we see light” (Ps 36:9).

soul's intellectual light derives from God. As this intellectual soul is actually immaterial, it has the power of active intellect, "by which it makes things actually immaterial, by abstraction from the conditions of individual matter." By the power of passive intellect, this same soul receives the abstracted species, "by reason of its being in potentiality to such species."⁴² I understand by suffering to receive the truth, thus letting myself be transformed—illuminated—by it.

As a ray of light from the sun hits a stained-glass window, each pane is illuminated in its own way. So too does the light of active intellect individually enlighten every human soul. This "active intellect is the cause of the universal, by abstracting it from matter," by being one in its relationship with all things for, "with respect to which things the universal is one."⁴³ All things belonging to a single species, "enjoy in common the action which accompanies the nature of the species, and consequently the power which is the principle of such action." So, for Thomas, "to know the first intelligible principles (*prima intelligibilia*) is the action belonging to the human species." Therefore, all human beings, "enjoy in common the power which is the principle of this action," the active intellect.⁴⁴ The truth belongs to all in common, but to be understood by each.

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine identifies the triune operation of memory, understanding, and will as the action that defines the human person.⁴⁵ In Thomas' account, the nature of memory as intellectual is, "to preserve the species of those things which are not actually apprehended." He thus builds on Aristotle, "the passive intellect is said to be each thing, inasmuch as it receives the intelligible species of each thing," by being conformed to its intelligible likeness. However, our memory also includes that which is past, and particular to each individual. As such, the memory

⁴² *ST I Q. 79*, art. 4, ad 4. *Intellectus agens* abstracts from the data of consciousness by causing the spontaneous emergence of questions, while the intellect as passive is formed into the likeness of possible answers.

⁴³ *ST I Q. 79*, art. 5, ad 2. Thomas' account of human understanding thus recapitulates the overall structure of *ST* itself, the schema of *exitus-reditus* that he adapts from the Platonism of Plotinus (Neoplatonism), according to which all things emerge from, and return to, the One; see the conclusion of §11 below.

⁴⁴ *ST I Q. 79*, art. 5, ad 3.

⁴⁵ For discussion, see §4.2 above.

is also “in the sensitive part, which apprehends individual things,” the act of a bodily organ.⁴⁶ Memory functions by the union of body and soul, mediating sensation to the intellect. Abstracted from matter, the intelligible species can be in the intellect in potentiality, “and then the intellect is said to be in potency.” When “the intelligible species is in the intellect as regards the ultimate completion of the act...then it understands in act.” But sometimes, “the intelligible species is in a middle state, between potentiality and act.” Thomas calls this habitual knowledge, in which “the intellect retains the species, even when it does not understand in act.”⁴⁷ Peter the Lombard takes memory, understanding, and will to be three distinct powers.⁴⁸ Aquinas disputes this, as powers are defined in reference to their objects, and “intellect regards its object under the common ratio of being (*rationem entis*).” And so, “the passive intellect is that in which all are in potentiality.” Being immaterial, “there can be no other difference of powers in the intellect, but that of passive and active.”⁴⁹ Thomas thus clarifies the Doctor of Grace’s formula, “by memory he understands the soul’s habit of retention; by intelligence, the act of the intellect; and by will, the act of the will.”⁵⁰ It is from memory that intelligence arises, as actions emerge from habit.

Following the Theologian, Thomas identifies the human power of intellect with *ratio*.⁵¹ Aquinas defines his terms: “to understand is simply to apprehend intelligible truth; and to reason is to advance from one thing understood to another, so as to know an intelligible truth.” Human beings arrive at knowledge of intelligible truth *procedendo de uno ad aliud* (“by proceeding from one to another”), and are thus called rational. The Angelic Doctor draws an analogy: reasoning is

⁴⁶ *STI* Q. 79, art. 6. In this art., Thomas quotes *On the Soul* III.4. For Augustine on memory & species; see §6.2.

⁴⁷ *STI* Q. 79, art. 6, ad 3.

⁴⁸ 3 *Sentences* D.1.

⁴⁹ *STI* Q. 79, art. 7. Here is the key to the distinction between *scientia* & *sapientia* that eluded Augustine.

⁵⁰ *STI* Q. 79, art. 7, ad 1.

⁵¹ Thomas cites *Gen. ad litt.* III.20, in which Augustine states, “that in which man excels irrational animals is *ratio*, or *mens*, or *intelligentia*, or whatever appropriate name we like to give it.” *Ratio* is usually translated into English as “reason.” My preference is to keep the Latin when used as a noun and to translate the verb.

to understanding as acquisition is to possession, as the imperfect is to the perfect. As movement, which “always proceeds from something immovable, and ends in something at rest...human reasoning by way of inquiry and discovery, advances from certain things simply understood—namely, the first principles; and, again, by way of judgment returns by analysis to first principles, in the light of which it examines what it has found.”⁵² With this, Thomas turns to Augustine’s distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*, which he refers to as *ratio inferior* and *ratio superior* respectively. The higher *ratio* is intent on the consultation and contemplation of things eternal, and the lower *ratio* on the disposal of temporal things. Aquinas is adamant these do not refer to two distinct powers of the soul, however, maintaining that the eternal and temporal “are related to our knowledge (*cognitionem*) in this way, that one of them is the means for knowing the other.” Human intellect can move in two ways. By the way of discovery (*via inventionis*), “we come through knowledge of temporal things to that of things eternal” (cf. Rom 1:20). By the way of judgment (*via iudicii*), “from eternal things already known, we judge of temporal things, and according to laws of things eternal we dispose of temporal things.”⁵³

Human intellect acts as a ratio, the middle term in a syllogism relating the temporal and the eternal. The medium and what is attained thereby may belong to different habits, as is the case with “the indemonstrable first principles, which belong to the habit of intellect; whereas the conclusions which we draw from them belong to the habit of science.” Thomas thus provides the theoretical link that Augustine could not: the power of *ratio* “is such that both medium and term (*ultimum*) belong to it,” and in its act, “the same movable thing passes through the medium and reaches the end.” Rather than referring to a higher truth and a lower truth, Thomas will interpret Augustine as distinguishing *scientia* and *sapientia*, “by the functions of their actions...according

⁵² *STI* Q. 79, art. 8. For discussion of Thomas on movement & Zeno’s paradoxes, see §11 below.

⁵³ *STI* Q. 79, art. 9. This way of judgment thus corresponds to the order of teaching (*ordo doctrinae*).

to their various habits.”⁵⁴ The intellect knows (*cognoscit*) both contingent and necessary things, “under the same objective aspect—namely, under the aspect of being and truth (*rationem entis et veri*).” Each of these movements of the intellect is, therefore, the inverse function of the other. It knows perfectly, “necessary things which have perfect being in truth; since it penetrates to their very essence, from which it demonstrates their proper accidents.” Contingent things, it knows imperfectly, “forasmuch as they have but imperfect being and truth.” The power of the intellect unites perfect and imperfect in its action. This power does not vary, but the twin *viae* “vary the actions as to the mode of acting, and consequently the principles of the actions and the habits themselves.”⁵⁵ Thomas describes the act of judgment as measuring (*mensurare*) by “applying certain principles to examine propositions,” from which the word *mens* (“mind”) is taken. The *ratio* is the form which the intellect applies to measure. According to Aquinas, to understand is therefore, “to adhere to the formed judgment (*approbatione diiudicatis*) with approval.”⁵⁶

In Thomas’ terminology, the name *intelligence* properly signifies the act of the intellect itself (*ipsum actum intellectus*), to understand (*intelligere*). He identifies three distinct intellects, “as three states of the passive intellect, which is sometimes in potentiality only, and thus it is called passive; sometimes it is in the first act, which is knowledge (*scientia*), and is thus called intellect in habit; and sometimes it is in the second act, which is to consider, and thus it is called intellect in act, or actual intellect.”⁵⁷ In Aquinas’ account, the human intellectual power

first of all only apprehends something; and this act is called *intelligence*. Secondly, it directs what it apprehends to the knowledge (*cognoscendum*) of something else, or to some operation; and this is called *intention*. And when it goes on in search of what it

⁵⁴ Ibid. This is a gracious interpretation on Aquinas’ part. While Augustine knows by faith that the image of God in the human person is one, he was unable to unite *scientia* and *sapientia* theoretically by grasping that the former is the medium of the latter. To give an example of what I mean by ratio, consider the fundamental constants of physics, such as Planck’s constant, h , which is the ratio of a wave of light’s energy to its wavelength: $E = hv$. The constant thus represents an immutable standard by which the two variables in the equation are united.

⁵⁵ ST I Q. 79, art. 9, ad 3.

⁵⁶ ST I Q. 79, art. 9, ad 4. The remainder of this section is devoted to explicating what Thomas means by this.

⁵⁷ ST I Q. 79, art. 10. *Intellectus* is Thomas Aquinas’ equivalent in Latin of Aristotle’s *nous*.

intends, it is called *invention*. When, by reference to something known for certain, it examines what it has found, it is said to know (*scire*) or to be wise (*sapere*), which belongs to *phronesis* or wisdom; for “it belongs to the wise man to judge,” as the Philosopher says. And when once it has obtained something for certain, as being fully examined, it thinks about the means of making it known to others; and this is the ordering of interior speech, from which proceeds external speech.⁵⁸

This framework unites the speculative and practical intellects within the same power. The former “directs what it apprehends, not to operation, but to the consideration of truth; while the practical intellect is that which directs what it apprehends to operation.”⁵⁹ Following the Philosopher, Thomas distinguishes the two by their respective ends. From this he concludes, “Truth and good include one another; for truth is something good, otherwise it would not be desirable; and good is something true, otherwise it would not be intelligible.” Thus, “when some one desires to know the truth, so the object of the practical intellect is the good orderable to work under the ratio of truth (*bonum ordinabile ad opus, sub ratione veri*).” The practical intellect knows *veritas*, just as the speculative intellect does, “but it orders the truth known to work (*veritatem cognitam ordinat ad opus*).”⁶⁰ As the power of *ratio*, the intellect works by making truth and good convertible.

In this treatment of practical intellect, Aquinas anticipates the Second Part of his *Summa*. Thomas concludes Q. 79 by raising the question of judgment. In scholastic moral philosophy, *synderesis* refers to practical reason’s natural capacity to apprehend the first principles of human action. Citing the Philosopher, “rational powers regard opposite things,” Aquinas concludes that *synderesis* is not a power, since it inclines us to good only, but a *habitus*.⁶¹ He explains that the human act of reasoning (*ratiocinatio hominis*) is a kind of movement, that proceeds from our understanding (*ab intellectu*) of certain things, “which are naturally known (*scilicet*) without any

⁵⁸ STI Q. 79, art. 10, ad 3. The quote is from *Metaphysics* I.2.

⁵⁹ STI Q. 79, art. 11.

⁶⁰ STI Q. 79, art. 11, ad 2. The underlined passages are my own translations.

⁶¹ *Metaphysics* VIII.2. Aristotle bases his philosophy on the principle of non-contradiction. But truth and good are not opposites. Consider, on the other hand, order and disorder, the rational and the absurd.

investigation on the part of *ratio*, as from an immovable principle.” This movement also ends “at the understanding (*ad intellectum*), inasmuch as by means of those principles naturally known, we judge of those things which we have discovered by reasoning (*ratiocinando invenimus*).” Thomas believes these principles, both speculative and practical, must be “bestowed on us by nature.” According to Aristotle, the first theoretical principles are bestowed on us by a special habit, which Thomas calls *intellectus principiorum*.⁶² Likewise, *synderesis* bestows the *principia operabilium* on us by inciting us to good and murmuring at evil, just “as through first principles we proceed to discover, and judge of what we have discovered.”⁶³ Therefore, we judge naturally both by *ratio* as a power and wisdom as the habit of making proper judgments of goodness and truth. Conscience, according to the propriety (*proprietaem*) of the word, implies the order of knowledge (*ordinem scientiae*) to something. In Thomas’ etymology, conscience is *cum alio scientia*, the act of applying our knowledge of a principle to inform an individual case.⁶⁴

The Angelic Doctor goes on to discuss the acts of the *anima* in regard to the intellectual power in QQ. 84-89. Aquinas’ inquiries in this section begin by asking how the soul understands (*intelligit*) when united with the body, proceeding to how the soul understands when separated therefrom. The first inquiry is threefold, asking (1) how the human soul understands corporeal things (i.e., bodies) which are below itself (*infra ipsam*) [QQ. 84-86]; (2) how it understands itself and the things contained in itself [Q. 87]; (3) how it understands immaterial substances which are above it [QQ. 88-89].⁶⁵ When it comes to the knowledge (*cognitionem*) of corporeal things, Thomas will consider three points. In Q. 84, he asks, “Through what does the soul know

⁶² Literally, “the understanding of [first, i.e., indemonstrable] principles,” this is Thomas’ translation of *sophia* in the sense of theoretical wisdom the Philosopher uses in *Ethics* VI.6. Following *Metaphysics* V.25, Thomas defines *habitus* as a quality, “a disposition whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill,” in *ST* I-II Q. 49, art. 1.

⁶³ *ST* I Q. 79, art. 12.

⁶⁴ *ST* I Q. 79, art. 13.

⁶⁵ These correspond with Lonergan’s three questions of cognition, epistemology, and metaphysics: What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that considered knowing? What exactly do I know when I do it?

them?” On which Q. 85 builds by adding, “How and in what order?” This culminates in Q. 86, with Thomas asking “What does it know (*cognoscit*) in them?”

Before he proceeds to answer any of these questions, Aquinas considers it fitting first to survey answers which have preceded his. He begins with Heraclitus, as related by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* IV. According to the Philosopher, Heraclitus believed that we could have no certain knowledge of the true nature of things, since all things are bodies in a continual state of flux, like water in a river. Next comes Plato who, “wishing to save the certitude of our knowledge of truth through the intellect,” maintains that besides corporeal things “there is another genus of beings, separate from matter and movement,” which he calls Ideas, “by participation of which each one of these singular and sensible things is said to be either a human, or a horse, or the like.” For Plato, “whatever appertains to the act of the intellect,” refers not “to these sensible bodies, but to those beings immaterial and separate: so that according to this the soul does not understand these corporeal things, but the separate substances thereof.” In the Angelic Doctor’s diagnosis, Plato strays from the truth since, “having observed that all knowledge takes place through some kind of similitude, he thought that the form of the thing known must of necessity be in the knower in the same manner as in the thing known.” Plato would also observe, “that the form of the thing understood is in the intellect under conditions of universality, immateriality, and immobility,” concluding from this, “that the things which we understand must have in themselves an existence under the same conditions of immateriality and immortality.”⁶⁶

But Thomas makes an additional observation. In sensible things, “the form is otherwise in one sensible than in another,” as matter is naturally variable. Similarly, “the sensible form is conditioned differently in the thing which is external to the soul, and in the senses which receive

⁶⁶ ST I Q. 84, art. 1.

the forms.” Urine is yellow, as is gold, but that does not mean urine contains gold, nor is to see yellow the same as receiving gold. Aquinas concludes that, “the intellect, according to its own mode, receives under the conditions of immateriality and immobility, the species of material and mobile bodies; for the received is in the receiver according to the mode of the receiver,” and thus, “through the intellect the soul knows bodies by a knowledge which is immaterial, universal, and necessary.”⁶⁷ Therefore, “the intellect knows (*cognoscit*) bodies (*corpora*) by understanding (*intelligendo*) them, not indeed through bodies, nor through material and corporeal *similitudines*; but through immaterial and intelligible species.”⁶⁸

In the next article, Aquinas continues his survey, bringing the Philosopher into dialogue with the Theologian on the question of whether the soul understands (*intelligat*) bodies through its essence. He interprets Heraclitus and the other pre-Socratics as answering in the affirmative, “in order to ascribe to the soul a knowledge of all things, they held that it has the same nature in common with all,” thus “things exist in the soul materially,” ultimately concluding that, “all the soul’s knowledge (*cognitionem*) is material.” In Thomas’ diagnosis, they fail to discern intellect from sense.⁶⁹ It was Plato who perceived that “the forms of things known subsist immaterially.” The Philosopher develops his teacher’s insight in *Metaphysics* IX, showing that “a thing is not known according as it is in potentiality, but only as it is in act.” To know is an act, not a thing, for matter can be only potentially knowable. Aquinas will conclude that, “material things known must needs exist in the knower, not materially, but immaterially...because the act of knowledge extends to things outside the knower.” We can know things outside ourselves. In matter, the form

⁶⁷ Ibid. Thomas’ response to Plato would seem to point back to Heraclitus: natural things are variable and in flux.

⁶⁸ *STI Q.* 84, art. 1, ad 1.

⁶⁹ The position Aquinas discusses here would come to be known as *materialism*. At low ebb in Thomas’ time, materialistic philosophy would make a resurgence with the rediscovery of Lucretius’ *On the Nature of Things*, a work inspired by the atomism of Democritus. Stephen Greenblatt argues this is a decisive moment in the emergence of modernity in *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012).

of a thing is determined to something singular. From this, “it is clear that the ratio of cognition (*ratio cognitionis*) is the inverse of the ratio of materiality (*rationem materialitatis*)...the more immaterially a thing receives the form of the thing known, the more perfect is its knowledge.”⁷⁰ Therefore, Thomas contends, “the intellect which abstracts the species not only from matter, but also from the individuating conditions of matter, has more perfect knowledge than the senses, which receive the form of the thing known,” through the medium of matter. It follows that, if there is “an intellect which knows all things by its essence, then its essence must needs have all things in itself immaterially.” And this is proper of God (*proprium Dei*), that the divine Essence, “comprise all things immaterially, as effects pre-exist virtually in their cause.”⁷¹

Enter the Theologian. The first objection cites *De Trinitate* X.5 to suggest that Augustine thinks the soul understands bodies through its essence. Thomas interprets the passage as referring to “an imaginary vision, which takes place through the image of bodies. Forming the images, the soul gives some of its substance, just as a subject is given in order to be informed by some form. In this way, the soul makes such images from itself.” Imagination is the *animation* of the soul. Aquinas lets Augustine explode the objection by quoting him further: the soul “keeps something which is able freely to judge of the species of these images,” which is the mind or intellect; while the imagination, that which is formed with the images, is common to us and the other animals.⁷² The second objection then cites the Philosopher: “the soul, in a way, is all things.” Responding, Thomas explains Aristotle’s meaning. The *anima* is not actually composed of all things, but “it is in potentiality to all—through the senses, to all things sensible—through the intellect to all things

⁷⁰ ST I Q. 84, art. 2.

⁷¹ Ibid. Cf. Jn 1:3.

⁷² ST I Q. 84, art. 2, ad 1. For discussion of *De Trin.*, see §4.1 above. The underlined is my own translation of *Quibus imaginibus formandis dat anima aliquid suae substantiae*.

intelligible.”⁷³ The third objection argues from the Platonic hierarchy of being that all corporeal creatures exist in the substance of the soul in a more noble way than in themselves, to which Thomas replies directly. He argues that, “every creature has a finite and determinate *esse*...the essence of the higher creature has a certain likeness (*similitudinem*) to the lower creature insofar as they share (*communicant*) in some genus.” But the likeness is incomplete, since the former “is determined to a certain species other than the species of the lower creature.” The *essentia* of God, however, “is a perfect likeness of all, whatsoever may be found to exist in things created,” as “the universal principle of all.”⁷⁴ All things are known and knowable in God, their Creator; this is the essence of what it means to be creatures, to participate in the act of creation.

If we do not know things by our essence, then our understanding requires a medium. In Q. 84, art. 3, Aquinas considers whether the soul understands bodies *per species sibi naturaliter inditas* (“by species naturally infused into it”). He rejects this possibility, following Aristotle that the intellect is by nature receptive to species, “like a tablet on which nothing is written.” Thomas observes that the human, “sometimes is knowing in potentiality only, both as to sense and as to intellect. And from such potentiality it is reduced to act—in order that one might sense in truth, by the action of sensible things on the senses—that one might understand it, by instruction or discovery.” And so, “the cognitive soul is in potentiality both to the *similitudines* which are the principles of sensing, and to those which are the principles of understanding.”⁷⁵ Against this, the third objection argues from Plato’s theory of knowledge as recollection (*anamnesis*) in *Meno*. Aquinas answers by explaining what he means by instruction: “An ordered question proceeds from common self-evident principles to things proper (*ex principiis communibus per se notis, ad*

⁷³ ST I Q. 84, art. 2, ad 2. The quote of Aristotle is from *On the Soul* III.8 (own translation).

⁷⁴ ST I Q. 84, art. 2, ad 3. The objection quotes from Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* XII.

⁷⁵ ST I Q. 84, art. 3. Underlined quotations represent my own translations, unless otherwise noted.

propria). Now by this process knowledge (*scientia*) is caused in the soul of the learner.⁷⁶ When I learn, it is not by remembering the truth—it is by causing my mind to know something true.

Following Aristotle, Thomas identifies the medium of our understanding as intelligible species. He rejects Plato’s belief that these forms exist separately from matter, otherwise, there would be no sufficient *ratio* for the *anima* to be united to our *corpus*. Aquinas contends that matter exists for the sake of form and the moved for the sake of the mover, not the reverse. The Angelic Doctor considers the body especially “necessary to the intellectual soul, for the latter’s proper operation, which is to understand, since as to its being (*esse*) the soul does not depend on the body.”⁷⁷ These intelligible species, by which our soul understands, “which our intellect participates in, are reduced as to their first cause into some principle, intelligible through its essence, namely into God.” However, these species “proceed from that principle by means of the sensible forms and material things from which we gather knowledge.”⁷⁸ Thus are our intellects activated, *informed* by instruction and discovery respectively—and not by the senses. Aquinas affirms Plato’s insight that sense and intellect are incommensurable: “Material things, as to the being which they have outside the soul, may be actually sensible, but not actually intelligible.”⁷⁹ It is not by the matter of corporeal things that I understand, but by the order which unites us.

To describe how we know material things by the *rationes aeternae*, Thomas consults the Theologian in the next article. He quotes *Confessiones* XII.25 in the *Sed contra*: we see the truth of the things we say in the immutable truth which is above our minds. Citing the Theologian’s hermeneutic of the liberation of *veritas*, Aquinas explains that, “whenever Augustine, who was

⁷⁶ *ST I Q.* 84, art. 3, ad 3. Here Thomas explains his own pedagogical approach in the *ST* itself as a process of specification: a movement from truths known by all (principles) to that which is proper for each thing (species).

⁷⁷ *ST I Q.* 84, art. 4.

⁷⁸ *ST I Q.* 84, art. 4, ad 1. For his description of the way of discovery here, Thomas cites *Divine Names* VII.

⁷⁹ *ST I Q.* 84, art. 4, ad 2.

imbued with the doctrines of the Platonists, found in their teaching anything consistent with faith, he adopted it; and those things which he found contrary to faith, he amended.” Thus, the Doctor of Grace, “posited in place of the Ideas asserted by Plato that the *rationes* of all creatures exist in the divine Mind, according to which all things are formed, and according to which also the human soul knows all things.” Thomas notes that something can be known in two ways. First, “as in an object itself known,” as one sees the images of things reflected in a mirror. “In this way,” Aquinas states, “the soul, in the present state of life, cannot see all things in the eternal ratios, but thus in the eternal ratios the blessed know all things, who see God and all things in God.” Second, “a thing is said to be known in another as in a principle of knowledge,” as “we see in the sun what we see by the sun.” In this way, it is necessary to say, “the human soul knows all things in the eternal ratios, by which participation we know all things. For the intellectual light itself which is in us, is nothing else than a participated likeness (*similitudo*) of the uncreated light, in which are contained the eternal ratios.” Thomas quotes from the Psalm: “Many say, ‘Who will show us good things?’ To which the Psalmist responds, saying, ‘The light of your countenance is signed upon us, O Lord.’ As if to say that, by the seal of divine Light in us, all things are made known to us.”⁸⁰ Aquinas cites *De Trinitate* IV.16 to demonstrate Augustine’s awareness that intelligible species are required in order for us to have knowledge of material things. However, it is also clear to him Augustine does not understand that seeing the *rationes aeternae* is not proper to every rational soul in this present life—only to the blessed in eternity.

To correct the Theologian’s misunderstanding, in the next article Aquinas will turn to the Philosopher. As we have seen, the greatest difficulty with Augustine’s account of understanding is his inability to bridge the gap between knowledge of sensible things (*scientia*) and of things

⁸⁰ *ST I Q.* 84, art. 5. For discussion of *Conf.*, see §6.3 above. For Augustine’s hermeneutic, Thomas cites *doc. Chr.* II.11, see §5.1 above. For the immutable *rationes*, Thomas cites *div. qu.* 83 Q. 46.

eternal (*sapientia*). The objections quote him: “We must not think that the body can make any impression on the spirit, as though the spirit were to supply the place of matter in regard to the body’s action; for that which acts is in every way more excellent than that which it acts on,” thus “the body does not cause its image in the spirit, but the spirit causes it in itself.”⁸¹ But, on the other hand, Aristotle says that, “the principle of our knowledge (*cognitionis*) is in the senses.”⁸² Explaining his answer, Aquinas tells us the philosophers hold three opinions on the relationship of sensible things and intellectual knowledge. According to the *materialism* of Democritus, since “the sense is affected by the sensible...all our knowledge is affected by this mere impression brought about by sensible things,” by means of a “discharge of images.” In Plato’s *idealism*, “neither does intellectual knowledge proceed from sensible knowledge, nor sensible knowledge exclusively from sensible things; but these rouse the sensible soul to the sentient act, while the senses rouse the intellect to the act of understanding.” Aristotle takes a middle course: *realism*. The Philosopher agrees with Plato’s differentiation of sense and intellect, yet also holds “that the sense has not its proper operation without the cooperation of the body; so that to feel is not an act of the soul alone, but of the composite.” He also agrees with Democritus, “that the operations of the sensitive part are caused by the impressions of the sensible on the sense,” but holds that this impression comes not by an atomic discharge, but by the operation of the intellect, “which is independent of the body’s cooperation.” But nothing corporeal can make an impression on the incorporeal. This gap is bridged, not by participation in Plato’s Ideas, but by “the higher and more noble agent,” that Aristotle call the active intellect, which “causes the phantasms received from the senses to be actually intelligible, by a process of abstraction.”⁸³ Sensible knowledge is

⁸¹ ST I Q. 84, art. 6, arg. 2. This objection quotes from *Gen. ad litt.* XII.16. Objection 1 cites *div. qu.* 83 Q. 9.

⁸² In this *Sed contra*, Thomas is citing *Metaphysics* I.1 and *Posterior Analytics* II.15.

⁸³ ST I Q. 84, art. 6.

thus the material cause of intellectual knowledge. The senses cause the phantasms, which are made actually intelligible by the active intellect. Thomas interprets the Theologian's quote as parallel to the Philosopher's proof that the active intellect is separate, in order "to show that corporeal images are impressed on the imagination, not by bodies, but by the soul." Thus, he considers the two as in agreement that there is in the human, "an operation which by dividing and composing forms images of various things, even of things not perceived by the senses."⁸⁴

Thomas considers the phantasms themselves in the next article, asking whether intellect can actually understand through intelligible species without our turning to them. The *Sed contra* quotes Aristotle (*On the Soul* III.7): "the soul understands nothing without a phantasm." Aquinas concurs that this is true in the present life, in which soul is united to body. The phantasm serves as an example for us to examine, and from which to learn. Thomas explains, "the ratio for this is because the power of knowledge is proportioned to the knowable." Intellect has an object proper to it. For the human intellect, united to a body, the proper object "is a quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter; and through such natures of visible things, it rises to a certain knowledge of things invisible. Moreover, it belongs to the ratio of this nature that it exists in some individual, that it is not without corporeal matter, thus it belongs to the ratio of the nature of a stone to be in this stone." As a result, "the nature of any material thing cannot be known completely and truly, except in as much as it is known as existing in the individual. Now we apprehend the individual through the senses and the imagination. And, therefore, for the intellect actually to understand its proper object, it must of necessity turn to the phantasms in order to perceive the universal nature existing in the individual."⁸⁵ The phantasm itself is a likeness (*similitudo*) of an individual thing.

⁸⁴ ST I Q. 84, art. 6, ad 2. As Aristotle says, "The agent is more noble than the patient."

⁸⁵ ST I Q. 84, art. 7. But if Plato were correct that the natures of sensible things exist apart from the individual, then the phantasms would not be necessary for us to understand, but neither would our bodies.

Even incorporeal things, “of which there are no phantasms, are known to us by comparison with sensible bodies,” for which there are. So, “we understand truth from considering the thing about which we observe the truth.” As we know God “as cause by way of excess and remotion,” so we know other incorporeal substances, “in the present state of life only by way of remotion or by some comparison to corporeal things” by turning to the phantasms.⁸⁶ In this life, “the proper object of our intellect is proportioned to the nature of the sensible object.” By the ratio of our intellect, “whatever we understand, we know by comparison to natural sensible things.”⁸⁷ By trying to imagine the likeness of something, I come to understand what is proper for **that** thing.

Aquinas proceeds to explore the mode and order of understanding in Q. 85. He situates the human intellect in a middle place between immaterial universals and individual matter.⁸⁸ Our intellect thus understands by abstracting the former, the intelligible species, from the latter, the phantasm. The phantasms “are images of individuals and exist in corporeal organs,” and thus, they do not have “the same mode of existence as the human intellect, and therefore have not the power of themselves to make an impression on the passive intellect.” By the power of the active intellect, “there results a certain likeness in the passive intellect by converting the active intellect over (*supra*) to phantasms, which is representative only of those whose phantasms regard the nature of the species. It is thus that the intelligible species is said to be abstracted from the phantasm.”⁸⁹ Therefore, in Aquinas’ analogy, intelligible species is to intellect as sensible image is to sense, with understanding mediating between them.

⁸⁶ ST I Q. 84, art. 7, ad 3. On knowing God as cause, Thomas cites *Divine Names* I. This is the goal of *sacra doctrina*, and of the *ST* itself, as we shall see in the next section (§9). “Remotion” means removal, negation.

⁸⁷ ST I Q. 84, art. 8.

⁸⁸ ST I Q. 85, art. 1, ad 2. According to Thomas, matter is twofold, distinguishing common matter from individual or *signate* (in the sense of designated or identified as explicit instead of implicit) matter. As common to vertebrates, for example, bones are undifferentiated, but an individual bone—**this** or **that** bone—can belong to a human or a to horse, etc. Such designation serves to name our understanding of what kind of a thing *something* is.

⁸⁹ ST I Q. 85, art. 1, ad 3. In Lonergan’s helpful explanation, “intellect directly knows not phantasm but the thing the phantasm represents; accordingly, insight into phantasm is like looking *in*, not *at*, a mirror,” *Verbum*, 174.

He explains in Q. 85, art. 2 how the intelligible species is that by which we understand.

Citing the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* IX, Thomas describes a twofold action (*duplex actio*):

*one which remains in the agent; for instance, to see and to understand; and another which passes into an external object; for instance, to heat and to cut; and each of these proceeds in virtue of some form. And as the form from which proceeds an act tending to something external is the likeness of the object of the action, as heat in the heater is a likeness of the thing heated, so the form from which proceeds an action remaining in the agent is the likeness of the object. Hence that by which the sight sees is the likeness of the visible thing; and the likeness of the thing understood, that is, the intelligible species, is the form by which the intellect understands. But since the intellect reflects upon itself, by such reflection it understands both its own act of intelligence, and the species by which it understands. Thus, the intelligible species is that which is understood secondarily; but that which is primarily understood is the object, of which the species is the likeness.*⁹⁰

This *duplex actio*, in which the intellect proportions itself by likeness to the intelligible, enacts the ratio proper to understanding. In this way, Aquinas affirms the insight of Heraclitus and the pre-Socratics that “like is known by like” (*simile simili cognosci*). Our intellect understands not by a physical union, nor participation in an eternal Idea, but by **an act** in which, “the likeness of the thing understood is the form of the intellect.”⁹¹ This twofold operation is also found in the sensitive part. One is *impression*, in which “the operation of the senses takes place by the senses being impressed by the sensible.” The other is *formation*, in which the imagination converts itself to the image of a thing not immediately present to the senses. Both of these operations are also present in the intellect: “in the first place, there is the passion of the passive intellect as informed by the intelligible species; and then the passive intellect thus informed forms a definition, or a division, or a composition, which is signified by a word.” Therefore, “the ratio which the name (nomen) signifies is the definition; and the enunciation signifies the composition and division of the intellect.” Such words (*voces*) do not “signify the intelligible species themselves; but that

⁹⁰ ST I Q. 85, art. 2. Emphasis added.

⁹¹ ST I Q. 85, art. 2, ad 1.

which the intellect forms for itself for the purpose of judging of external things.”⁹² Intelligible species thus serves as the ratio by which acts of impression and formation are proportioned so as to be related to one another.

In intellectual cognition, these two orders of nature are united. In the way of generation and time, the more common—the potential and imperfect—comes first. The other, “is the order of perfection or of the intention of nature,” in which “act considered absolutely is naturally prior to potentiality, and the perfect to the imperfect.”⁹³ Thomas deduces from this, “that knowledge of the singular and individual is prior, as regards us, to the knowledge of the universal; as sensible knowledge is prior to intellectual.” However, “in both sense and intellect the knowledge of the more common precedes the knowledge of the less common.”⁹⁴ As understood with the intention of universality, the universal is a principle of knowledge, insofar “as the intention of universality results from the mode of understanding by way of abstraction.” However, since there are times when we know causes and substances by way of generation, through their effects and accidents respectively, that which “is a principle of knowledge is not of necessity a principle of existence,” contra Plato. Considered in this way, Thomas concurs with Aristotle that the universal “is neither a principle of existence, nor a substance.” The Angelic Doctor goes further still, believing that human beings are created in the likeness of God: “if we consider the generic or specific nature itself, insofar as it exists in singulars, it has in a way the ratio of a formal principle (*rationem principii formalis*) with respect to singulars; for it is singular on account of its matter, while the ratio of species is taken from the form.” The generic nature of a thing is taken from that which is material in it, “while the idea of species is taken from that which is formal.” Thomas concludes,

⁹² STI Q. 85, art. 2, ad 3. Lonergan’s *Verbum* could thus also have been titled *Ratio*, as I have the present section.

⁹³ STI Q. 85, art. 3, ad 1. According to Aquinas, the universal can be considered together with the intention of universality (relating the one to the many), or considered in the nature itself (the universal in the individual).

⁹⁴ STI Q. 85, art. 3.

“Thus it is that the ultimate intention of nature is to the species and not to the individual, or the genus: because the form is the end of generation, while matter is for the sake of the form.”⁹⁵

By the integration of these two orders, the intellectual soul understands **this** person as the self that I am, united into one. Thomas maintains, “the intellect can understand many things by the mode of one (*per modum unius*), but not many things by the mode of many—that is to say by one, not by many intelligible species. For the mode of each action follows the form which is the principle of that action.” From this Aquinas concludes that, “whatever things the intellect can understand under one species, it can understand at the same time.” It is in this way that, “God sees all things at once because God sees by one, which is the divine Essence.” Therefore, “all intelligible species are of one genus, because they are the perfections of one intellectual power; although the things of which they are species may be of different genera.” But, as composite beings, humans understand by ratio; and therefore, “it is impossible for one and the same subject to be perfected at the same time by many forms of one genus and diverse species, just as it is impossible for the same body to be colored in different colors at the same time.”⁹⁶ For us, it is possible to think only one word at a time—not all things at once eternally, as God does.

As a process unfolding in time, Thomas contends that the human intellect necessarily understands by composition and division. According to the Philosopher, “Words signify the conceptions of the intellect.” And as words compose and divide via affirmative and negative propositions, so also our intellect acts. As in the way of generation, the intellect does not attain perfection at once, but by degrees. At first, the intellect “apprehends something about its object, such as its quiddity, and this is its first and proper object; and then it understands the properties, accidents, and the various relations of the essence.” Hence, “it is necessary to compose or divide

⁹⁵ *ST I Q. 85, art. 3, ad 4.* Thomas is citing the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* VII.

⁹⁶ *ST I Q. 85, art. 4.*

one apprehended thing to another; and to proceed from one composition or division to another, which is to reason (*rationari*).⁹⁷ For us, to reason is in an unfolding process of proportioning one thing to another by ratios, while God understands all things at once by simple essence. But, as we saw (Q. 85, art. 2), the intellect understands things by a process of assimilation with them. Thomas clarifies that this likeness, “is received into the intellect according to the mode of the intellect, not according to the mode of the thing.” Accordingly, “the proper object of the human intellect is the quiddity of a material thing, which comes under the action of the senses and the imagination.” A material thing has a twofold composition. First is the composition of form with matter, which “corresponds to that composition of the intellect whereby the universal whole is predicated of its part [as] the genus is derived from common matter, while the difference that completes the species is derived from the form, and the particular from individual matter.” The second is the composition of accident with subject, “and to this real composition corresponds that composition of the intellect, whereby accident is predicated of subject.” The composition of things differs from that of the intellect by an inverse ratio. In the former, the things are diverse; but the “composition of the intellect is a sign of the identity of the components.”⁹⁸ As a rational animal, I am a composition of individual matter uniting a sensitive and an intellectual nature. My immaterial essence empowers me potentially to understand the essence of a thing, its quiddity or species. Therefore, “the truth of the intellect consists in this: that a thing is understood to be just as it is.”⁹⁹ The likeness which I understand, “is the species of the known in the knower.” In this way, “a thing is known first, not on account of its natural likeness to the cognitive power, but by compatibility to the object (*per convenientiam ad obiectum*),” the propriety of its *properties*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ ST I Q. 85, art. 5. The quotation from Aristotle is taken from *On Interpretation* I.

⁹⁸ ST I Q. 85, art. 5, ad 3. From the Latin *quid* (“what”), the quiddity is the *whatness* of a thing.

⁹⁹ ST I Q. 85, art. 7. In this, Thomas follows the realist epistemology of Augustine, citing *div. qu.* 83 Q. 32.

¹⁰⁰ ST I Q. 85, art. 8, ad 3. Insight into phantasm is thus a grasp of the fittingness of a form; cf. *Verbum*, 38.

In Q. 86, Aquinas asks what our intellect can know in material things. He cites Aristotle in *Physics* I.5: “the universal is known by ratio; the singular is known by sense.” Thus, Thomas tells us, “Our intellect cannot know the singular in material things directly and primarily,” since “the principle of singularity in material things is individual matter,” whereas the human intellect “understands by abstracting the intelligible species from such matter. Now what is abstracted from individual matter is the universal. Hence our intellect knows directly the universal only.” But indirectly, by a kind of reflection, “the intellect, in order to understand, needs to turn to the phantasms in which it understands the species, as is said in *On the Soul* III.7. Therefore, it understands the universal directly through the intelligible species, and indirectly the singular represented by the phantasm.”¹⁰¹ Thus, my intellect forms the proposition: **I am** a human being. Similarly, following the Philosopher in *Ethics* VII.3, Thomas considers the choice of a particular thing to do as the conclusion of a syllogism of the practical intellect. The intellect perfects sense, as “the higher power can do what the lower power can, but in a more eminent way,” therefore, “what the sense knows materially and concretely, which is to know the singular directly, the intellect knows immaterially and in the abstract, which is to know the universal.”¹⁰²

This relationship of the intellect to the infinite is the subject of Q. 86, art. 2. Aquinas states, “Since a power is proportioned to its object, it must be understood in this mode to infinity, as is its object, which is the quiddity of a material thing.” In material things, the infinite does not exist actually, but it does “potentially, in the sense of one thing succeeding another,” as Aristotle says. Therefore, “in our intellect we find an infinite potentiality, namely, in considering one thing after another,” since our capacity to understand is unlimited. However, “our intellect cannot understand the infinite either actually or habitually,” as it knows actually through one species at a

¹⁰¹ *STI* Q. 86, art. 1.

¹⁰² *STI* Q. 86, art. 1, ad 4. To be higher in this sense means to encompass that which is lower than itself.

time.¹⁰³ As Thomas explained earlier (Q. 7, art. 1), “God is called infinite as form which is not limited by any matter.” While in material things, “something is said to be infinite by the lack of a formal termination.” As “form is known in itself, and matter without form is unknown, it follows that the material infinite is in itself unknown.” God, as form unlimited by matter, is infinitely intelligible *in se*, but “unknown to us, on account of the defect of our intellect, which, according to the present state of life, has a natural aptitude for understanding material things.”¹⁰⁴ Human intellect “is born to know species by abstraction from phantasms.” We cannot know that which we cannot imagine, except “potentially and confusedly” from general principles.¹⁰⁵ Yet, “just as our intellect is virtually infinite, so it knows the infinite. For its power is infinite, insofar as it is not terminated by corporeal matter.” In Thomas’ account our intellect, “is a universal cognitive process which is abstracted from individual matter, and in consequence is not limited to any individual, but as far as it exists in itself, extends to an infinite number of individuals.”¹⁰⁶ In this way, I am a being composed of individual matter proportioned according to the infinite.

Thomas devotes Q. 87 to how the intellectual soul relates to itself. The first article asks whether the intellectual soul knows itself by its essence. Citing the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* IX, Aquinas explains, “a thing is a being and is true, which falls under knowledge, as it is in act.” As pure and perfect act, the Essence of God “is simply and perfectly intelligible in itself,” thus “God understands not only the divine Self, but also all things by God’s own Essence.” On the

¹⁰³ ST I Q. 86, art. 2. Thomas cites *Physics* I.4 in the *Sed contra* & III.6 in the *Respondeo*. In ST I Q. 16, art. 1, he defines truth as “adequation of intellect and things.” [Lonergan: “conformity between mind and thing,” *Verbum*, 21.] To use terms from calculus, Thomas describes understanding as an integration proceeding to infinity; see §9 below.

¹⁰⁴ ST I Q. 86, art. 2, ad 1.

¹⁰⁵ ST I Q. 86, art. 2, ad 2. For example, I do not understand the meaning of “regular four-sided polygon” if I do not imagine a square. And if I can imagine a square, I am not far from understanding what a regular polygon is.

¹⁰⁶ ST I Q. 86, art. 2, ad 4. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein remarks that, “If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present. Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit” (6.4311). For eternity and infinity represent our ultimate horizon, though conversion—self-transcendence—is necessary in order for us to recognize this.

other hand, “human intellect is only a potentiality in the genus of intelligible beings, just as primary matter is a potentiality as regards sensible beings; and hence it is called possible.” In its essence, the human intellect, “has in itself the power to understand, but not to be understood, except as it is made actual.” In this life, our intellect “understands itself in such a way that it is made active by the species abstracted from sensible things through the light of the agent intellect, which is the act of intelligible things themselves and, mediated through them, of the possible intellect.” Thus, “our intellect knows itself not by its essence, but by its act,” either singularly, as when I perceive I have an intellectual soul because I perceive that I understand, or universally, “as when we consider the nature of the human mind from knowledge of the intellectual act.” But, “the judgment and force of this knowledge, whereby we know the nature of the soul, comes to us according to the derivation of our intellectual light from the divine Truth, in which the ratios of all things are contained.” On this, Thomas cites the authority of the Theologian, who says that, “We gaze at the inviolable truth, from which we define as perfectly as we can, not what the mind of each person is, but what it ought to be for the everlasting ratios.” On the one hand, our mind knows itself by its own presence. But to know itself in the *rationes aeternae*, the mind “requires a careful and subtle inquiry,” in order “to discern itself as present,” in Augustine’s words, which Thomas clarifies as meaning “to know its essence and nature.”¹⁰⁷ By integrating Philosopher and Theologian, *Doctor Angelicus* is able to conclude: “The mind knows itself by itself, because at length it arrives at knowledge of itself, albeit by its own act, because *it is what is known, since it loves itself*.” The mind is self-evident since we can know it “by nothing else except itself.”¹⁰⁸ The truth self-evidently known by our consciousness is its loving presence to itself: I am **this** love. Thomas explains that, “the intellect in act is the intelligible in act, on account of the similitude of

¹⁰⁷ STI Q. 87, art. 1. Thomas quotes Augustine from *Trin.* IX.6 and X.9 respectively.

¹⁰⁸ STI Q. 87, art. 1, ad 1. Here we have Aquinas’ answer to the Delphic injunction. Emphasis mine.

the thing understood, which is the form of the intellect in act. And, therefore, the human intellect, which is made in act by the species of the thing understood, is understood by the same species, as by its form.” Aquinas builds on Aristotle, “in those things actually understood, the intellect and what is understood are the same. For a thing is actually understood in that it is immaterial.”¹⁰⁹ The intellectual soul is my understanding of who I am, the form of myself, the act of being me.

According to Aquinas, our potential is mediated by *habitus*. He defines habit as the ratio by which a power of the soul is perfected in act, the principle by which a thing’s essential nature is proportioned into operation.¹¹⁰ In Q. 87, art. 2, Thomas asks whether the intellect knows the habits of the soul by its essence. He answers that a *habitus* is a kind of medium between potency and act. Since nothing is known except as it is in act, “so far as a habit falls short of being perfect act, it falls short of this, that it is not knowable by itself.” A habit can only be known by activity. The knowledge one has of a habit is twofold: one knows one has a habit when one “perceives that one’s own self produces the act proper to the habit (*actum proprium habitus*); or when one inquires about the nature and ratio of the habit from consideration of the act.”¹¹¹ The term that Thomas uses for a habit which perfects a power is *virtue*,¹¹² and he frames the question discussed in Q. 87, art. 2 and the Philosopher’s answer to it with what the Theologian says about the virtue of faith. Vindicating Augustine, Aquinas states that faith, “is perceived by the subject wherein it resides by the interior act of the heart. For no one knows he has faith unless he perceives himself to believe.”¹¹³ He continues, “Habits are present in our intellect, not as its object...but as that by

¹⁰⁹ ST I Q. 87, art. 1, ad 3. The objection refers to *On the Soul* III.4. In ST II-II Q. 8, art. 1, Thomas gives an etymology of *intelligere* (“to understand”) as a composite of *intus* and *legere* (“to read inwardly”); see §10 below.

¹¹⁰ ST I-II Q. 49, art. 3. In art. 4, Thomas summarizes: “habit implies a disposition in relation to a thing’s nature, and to its operation or end, by reason of which disposition a thing is well or ill-disposed thereto.”

¹¹¹ ST I Q. 87, art. 2. This is the mind’s twofold act (*duplex actio*): the composition of understanding (impression of the object) & judgment (formation of the subject); see discussion of ST I Q. 85, art. 2 above.

¹¹² ST I-II Q. 55, art. 1.

¹¹³ ST I Q. 87, art. 2, ad 1. The objection quotes Augustine in *Trin.* XIII.1; see §4.2 above. For Thomas on the theological virtue of *fides*, see §10 below.

which it understands.”¹¹⁴ In this way, faith is the virtue by which God becomes the truth of our acts, the recognition of the intention of which our actions are the realization.

Thomas asks whether our intellect can know its own act in the next article. In the *Sed contra* he cites the Theologian: “I understand myself to understand (*intelligo me intelligere*).” Aquinas answers that, “a thing is known so far as it is in act, but the ultimate perfection of the intellect is its own operation.” The perfection of our understanding is not something we make in the sense that “building is the perfection of the thing built; but it remains in the operator as its perfection and act,” as the Philosopher says. Therefore, Thomas concludes, “this is the first thing that is understood of the intellect, namely, to understand itself of it (*ipsum eius intelligere*).”¹¹⁵ The divine Intellect is “to understand itself of its own self (*ipsum suum intelligere*).” For in God, “it is the same that he understands his understanding, and that he understands his own essence, because his essence is his act of understanding.” The human intellect, on the other hand, “neither is its own act of understanding, nor is its own essence the first object of its act of understanding, but something extrinsic, namely the nature of a material thing.” The primary object of human understanding is this nature, the intelligible species, “and secondarily, the act itself is known by which the object is known; and the intellect itself is known by the act, the perfection of which is to understand itself.” This is why, Thomas tells us, the Philosopher asserts, “objects are known before (*praecognoscuntur*) acts, and acts before powers.”¹¹⁶ According to Aquinas, “The object of the intellect is something common, namely, being (*ens*) and true (*verum*), under which the act of understanding itself is comprehended. Hence, the intellect is able to understand its own act.” In this life, the first object of our intellect is *ens* and *verum* as specifically considered in material

¹¹⁴ ST I Q. 87, art. 2, ad 2.

¹¹⁵ ST I Q. 87, art. 3. The citation of Augustine is from *Trin.* X.11. Thomas cites Aristotle in *Metaphysics* IX.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Thomas here cites Aristotle in *On the Soul* II.4. Refer to the opening sentence of Ch. 1 above.

things, “from which it comes into the knowledge of all other things.”¹¹⁷ Since by my intellect I can know what is true in material things, by my intellect I can also know what is true in myself.

Aquinas brings Q. 87 to a close by considering whether the intellect understands the act of the will. Again, the *Sed contra* cites Augustine in *De Trinitate* X.11: “I understand myself to will (*intelligo me velle*).” Thomas responds, “the act of the will is nothing else than an inclination that follows the form understood; thus, the natural appetite (*appetitus naturalis*) is the inclination that follows the natural form,” and this “inclination of any thing is in the thing itself according to its mode.” In this way, “the intelligible inclination, which is the act of the will, is intelligibly in the one who understands it, as in its principle and proper subject,” which Thomas integrates with what the Philosopher says: “the will is in the ratio (*voluntas in ratione est*).” The Angelic Doctor explains, “that which intelligibly is in any intelligent subject, consequently is understood by him. Hence the act of the will is understood by the intellect (*intelligitur ab intellectu*), and insofar as one perceives oneself to will; and insofar as one knows the nature of this act, and consequently the nature of one’s principle, which is a habit or a power.”¹¹⁸ Thus, the intellect and will are “both rooted in the same substance of the soul, and since one is in a certain way the principle of the other, consequently what is in the will is, in a certain way, also in the intellect.”¹¹⁹ The true, the object of the intellect, is good; and the good, the object of the will, is true—the two differ by ratio (*differunt ratione*).¹²⁰ The third objection cites the Theologian’s statement that the soul’s affections are known by certain notions. Aquinas counters, “The affections of the soul are in the intellect not by similitude only, like bodies; nor by being present in their subject, as the arts; but

¹¹⁷ *ST I Q. 87, art. 3, ad 1.*

¹¹⁸ *ST I Q. 87, art. 4.* Emphasis mine. Thomas cites his own definition from *ST I Q. 59, art. 1.* He quotes Aristotle from *On the Soul* III.9.

¹¹⁹ *ST I Q. 87, art. 4, ad 1.*

¹²⁰ *ST I Q. 87, art. 4, ad 2.* See also in the *Prima pars* Q. 82, art. 4, ad 1; Q. 16, art. 4, ad 1.

as the thing caused is in its principle, in which we have the notion of the thing caused (*notio principiati*).” Thus, he tells us, “Augustine says that the soul’s affections are in the memory by certain notions.”¹²¹ By proportioning intellect and will, the true and the good become convertible terms to each other.

Continuing to ascend in Q. 88, Thomas considers how the human soul knows immaterial substances which are *supra se*, “above itself.” He begins in the first article by asking whether, in this life, the soul is able to understand immaterial substances in themselves. In formulating his answer, Aquinas integrates Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine, with Averroes.¹²² Plato teaches that immaterial subsisting forms, which he calls Ideas, are the proper objects of our intellect, and thus “material objects are known by the soul inasmuch as phantasy and sense are mixed up with the mind.” But in Aristotle’s opinion, “which we experience to a greater extent (*magis experimur*), our intellect, according to the state of the present life, has a natural relationship to the natures of material things; hence it understands nothing unless it converts itself (*convertendo se*) into phantasms.” And so, Thomas concludes, “it is clear that we are not able to understand immaterial substances, which do not fall under the senses and imagination primarily and *per se*, according to the mode of knowledge (*cognitionis*) experienced by us.”¹²³ I cannot understand anything whose likeness I am unable to imagine, because when I understand my intellect converts itself into the likeness of what it is that I am knowing. There is no such thing as immediate knowledge for us in this life—any such “knowledge” would be *irrational* by definition and incommunicable.

¹²¹ *ST I Q. 87*, art. 4, ad 3. The objection is quoting *Conf. X.17*; see §6.2 above.

¹²² Throughout the *ST*, Thomas refers to Averroes as the Commentator, in recognition of his commentaries on the works of the Philosopher, which did so much to mediate the Aristotelian corpus to the Latin West. It is from the Commentator that Aquinas derives the article format which is his method of exposition in the *ST*. This article is representative of the ecumenism of Thomas’ approach, as he seeks to integrate different perspectives. Thus, we see him in the *ST* drawing upon the insights of Muslim and Jewish commentators, such as Averroes, Avicenna, and Maimonides. He also dialogues extensively with the Orthodox systematician John of Damascus (the Damascene).

¹²³ *ST I Q. 88*, art. 1.

However, Averroes contends, “that in this present life man can in the end arrive at the knowledge of separate substances by being coupled or united to some separate substance, which he calls the active intellect.” Aquinas considers this opinion to be mistaken. If *intellectus agens* is a substance separate from the soul, then “it is impossible for us to understand it formally, because that by which the agent acts formally is the form and act of the agent; since every agent acts in so far as it is in act.” He draws an analogy: when “we see colors set off by the sun, we are not united to the substance of the sun so as to act like the sun, but its light only is united to us, that we may see the colors.” Thomas refers to Aristotle in *Ethics* I.9-10, who says “happiness is a common good, to which all who are not bereaved of virtue can attain.” Were it possible for us to understand all things, only a few could attain this perfect felicity, and “it is contra rationem that the end of a species is to obtain in a few cases those things contained in the species,” since the Philosopher tells us, “happiness is an operation according to perfect virtue.” Referring back to Q. 79, art. 4, Aquinas explains the active intellect is “a power (virtus) of the soul extending itself actively to the same things to which the possible intellect extends receptively,” as Aristotle says (*On the Soul* III.5): “the passive intellect is all things potentially, and the active intellect is all things in act.” Therefore, “both intellects according to the present state of life, extend to material things only, which are made actually intelligible by the active intellect, and are received in the passive intellect.”¹²⁴ Augustine’s statement in *De Trinitate* IX.3, cited in the first objection, would appear to support Averroes’ position. Thomas clarifies that, “Augustine may be taken to mean that the knowledge of incorporeal things in the mind can be gained by the mind itself,” as the philosophers say, “knowledge of the soul (scientia de anima) is a certain principle toward the knowledge (cognoscendum) of separate substances.” By “our soul knowing itself, it extends to

¹²⁴ Ibid.

have some knowledge of incorporeal substances by cognition, such as it is possible to have, not knowing them simply and perfectly by knowing itself,” as God does.¹²⁵ Human reason is by proportioning the knowledge of material things in time to that which is essentially and eternally true: this is the essential ratio that unites our understanding.

While we are material beings, likeness of nature by itself is insufficient for the ratio of cognition. Thomas makes clear how materialism is mistaken. Were it not, it would be necessary to hold with Empedocles “that the soul needs to have the nature of all, in order to know all.” Per Aquinas, “it is necessary to cognition that there be a likeness of a thing known in the knower as if it were its form.” This is the role of our passive intellect which, “in the present state of life is such that it can be informed with similitudes abstracted from phantasms,” therefore, “it knows material things to a greater extent than immaterial substances.”¹²⁶ Thomas concludes there needs to be “some proportion of the object to the cognitive power, such as the active to the passive, and the perfection to the perfectible.” As we cannot see by staring directly into the sun, since its light is beyond our power of sight, “thus it is that immaterial substances are disproportionate to our intellect, in our present state of life, so that it cannot understand them.”¹²⁷

Developing this point further in the next article, Aquinas asks whether our intellect can understand immaterial substances through the cognition of material things. If Plato is correct that his Ideas are the forms and species of material things, then it can. But if the two are not identical, “however much our intellect abstract from the quiddity of material things from matter, it could never arrive at anything akin to immaterial substance,” and thus, “we are not able perfectly to understand immaterial substances through material substances.”¹²⁸ However, Thomas tells us,

¹²⁵ *STI* Q. 88, art. 1, ad 1. For discussion of the relevant section of *Trin.*, see §4.1 above.

¹²⁶ *STI* Q. 88, art. 1, ad 2.

¹²⁷ *STI* Q. 88, art. 1, ad 3.

¹²⁸ *STI* Q. 88, art. 2.

“From material things we can ascend to some kind of knowledge (*cognitionem*) of immaterial things—but not yet to perfect knowledge, because there is not a sufficient commensurability (*comparatio*) of material things to immaterial; and indeed, likenesses, if any are received from material things to understand the immaterial, are very dissimilar.”¹²⁹ *Doctor Angelicus* gives the solution to the Theologian’s dilemma: in the sciences (*scientiis*), the higher things “are treated mainly by way of remotion,” as the Philosopher will make known “the heavenly bodies by the negation of the properties of the lower bodies.” Hence, it follows, “to a much greater extent that immaterial substances cannot be known by us in order to apprehend their quiddities, but they are taught to us in the sciences by way of remotion and of some relation (*habitudinis*) to material things.”¹³⁰ But the human soul is an immaterial substance and can understand itself! And thus, “The human soul understands itself through its own act of understanding, which is its proper act, perfectly demonstrating its power and nature,” viz. I am **this love**. However, “neither by this, nor by the other things which are found in material things, can the power and nature of immaterial substances be perfectly known, because such virtues do not equal their virtues.”¹³¹

Aquinas concludes Q. 88 by integrating the first two articles in the third, citing Augustine extensively, asking whether God is the first object known by the human mind. The Theologian tells us that we know all things in the light of the first truth, and thereby judge of all things.¹³² To this, Thomas cites the authority of the Evangelist and the Apostle. John tells us that, “no one as seen God at any time” (Jn 1:18); and Paul writes, “the invisible things of God are clearly seen,

¹²⁹ ST I Q. 88, art. 2, ad 1. In giving his answer, Thomas cites the authority of Dionysius: *Divine Names* I in the *Sed contra*, and *Celestial Hierarchy* II here. His conclusion affirms the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) on analogy: “One cannot note any similarity between Creator and creature, however great, without being compelled to note an even greater dissimilarity between them.”

¹³⁰ ST I Q. 88, art. 2, ad 2. Thomas is referring to Aristotle in *On the Heavens* I.3.

¹³¹ ST I Q. 88, art. 2, ad 3. Hence the need for a discussion of the virtues in the Second Part of the *ST*.

¹³² Thomas cites Augustine in *Trin.* XII.2 and *De Vera Religione* XXXI, but could well have added *Conf.* XII.25; see §§ 4.2, 6.2, & 6.3 above.

being understood by the things that are made” (Rom 1:20). Thus, Aquinas’ answer that the first and proper object of our intellect in this life is the quiddity of material things. However, he adds, we “understand and judge of all things in the light of the first truth, inasmuch as the light of our intellect itself, whether natural or gratuitous, is nothing else than the impression of the first truth upon it.” Thus, “since the very light of our intellect is not related to our understanding as what is understood, but as by which it is understood; much less is God what is first understood by our intellect.”¹³³ As “whatever causes a thing to be such is *magis*,” therefore, “for God’s sake other things are known, not as on account the first thing known, but as on account of the first cause of the cognitive power (*virtutis*).”¹³⁴ I see truth by the light of Truth, for this is to understand.

Thomas brings his treatise on the human intellect to its close in Q. 89 by discussing the knowledge of the soul as separate from the body. In the first article he asks whether the soul, as separated, is able to understand anything. Aquinas adverts to the difficulty of this question at the outset; for the soul, as united to the body, is “unable to understand anything except by converting itself to phantasms, as is clear from experience.” Seeking a solution, he considers, “since nothing operates except insofar as it is in act; the mode of operation (*modus operandi*) of each thing follows its own mode of being (*modum essendi ipsius*).” Our existence in this life is one mode, but when the soul is separated from the body, it will have another mode of understanding, “by conversion to those things which are intelligible simply, just as other separate substances do.”¹³⁵ But this raises another difficulty. Since “nature is always ordered to what is better,” and better it is to understand by conversion *ad intelligibilia simpliciter*, why does human nature have need for

¹³³ ST I Q. 88, art. 3, ad 1. Thomas refers to his answer in I Q. 12, art. 2 (Whether the Essence of God is seen by the created intellect through an image?). Cf. 1Jn 4:12; see §2.3 above.

¹³⁴ ST I Q. 88, art. 3, ad 2; see the comments on Q. 87, art. 2, ad 3 above.

¹³⁵ ST I Q. 89, art. 1. For Augustine, the divine Essence is immutable: God is the Constant, the unchanging Standard, the unwavering *Signum*. For Aquinas, the divine Essence is Simplicity: the One-in-Act (*ipsum esse*, “to be itself”), which is the third subject he discusses in the ST (I Q. 3).

a body? To resolve this difficulty, Thomas clarifies that to understand by the soul's conversion to higher things is more simple than by conversion to phantasms, but as regards what is *possible* for the soul, it is more imperfect. To explain, Aquinas draws an analogy with the sun and its light:

in all intellectual substances the intellectual virtue is found by the influence of the divine Light, which indeed is one and simple in the first principle; and the greater (*magis*) the distance intellectual creatures are from the first principle, the greater extent (*magis*) that light is divided and diversified, as is the case in lines going out from the center. And from this it is that God understands all things by God's one Essence.¹³⁶

Here is a ratio. Superior intellectual substances understand by fewer, but more universal (*magis universales*) species, thus more powerful in comprehending things, on account of the efficacy of the intellectual virtue of such natures; whereas in inferior intellectual substances, “there are more species, and less universals, and less efficacy in comprehending things, insofar as they fall short of the intellectual virtue of the higher.” And, therefore, “if inferior substances received species in that universality in which the superior have, because they are not so efficacious in understanding, they would not receive through them a perfect knowledge of things, but in a certain community and confusion.” This is evident in human beings, “for they who are of weaker intellect do not receive perfect knowledge through the universal conceptions of the more (*magis*) intelligent, unless the particulars are explained to them in detail.” Aquinas concludes, “it is manifest that among intellectual substances, according to the order of nature, human souls are the lowest to be. But the perfection of the universe required this, that *esse* should be in diverse grades in things.” Our Creator understands that the entire spectrum is more beautiful than a single wavelength. It is in order to fit the life that we have presently, “that human beings might have perfect and proper knowledge of things, they were so established naturally as to be united to bodies, and thus they receive their proper knowledge of them from the sensible things themselves.” Thomas illustrates

¹³⁶ Ibid. Translation mine.

this principle with the example of uneducated people, who “are unable to be led to knowledge (*ad scientiam*) except through sensible examples.”¹³⁷ It is by uniting the light of *esse* with **this** matter that I am; as such it is **good** for me to learn to understand in **this** life, in **this** way. But regardless of the mode of life, God converts our souls to the truth, “for God is the author of the influx both of the light of grace and of the light of nature,” and **this Light** shines truly, always.¹³⁸

Aquinas proceeds to integrate these conclusions with Augustine and Aristotle. In Q. 89, art. 2 he asks whether the separated soul can understand other separate substances. He begins his answer by quoting the Theologian: “our mind receives the knowledge of incorporeal things by itself.” Or, as Thomas will put it, the soul knows other separate substances, “by knowing itself (*cognoscendo seipsam*).” Restating what he has already explained, Aquinas states that in this life, when united to the body, the soul cannot “understand itself, except insofar as it becomes actually intelligent by means of a species abstracted from phantasms; for in this way it understands itself through its act.” But when it is separated from the body, our intellect “will understand, not by converting itself to phantasms, but to those things which are intelligible in themselves; hence it will understand itself by itself.” In this state, as intelligible itself, and in common with all such

¹³⁷ Ibid. Lonergan would refer to such people (*homines rudes*) as “intellectually unconverted picture-thinkers.” Thomas’ Latin literally means “rural people,” or “rustics,” which in his 13th century context would have referred to peasants, who would have had no formal education whatsoever without the ministry of the Church. One of the most remarkable things about someone as remarkable as Thomas Aquinas is that a man of such tremendous learning would have the humility to conclude, “A little old woman now knows more about what belongs to faith than all the philosophers once knew,” which he preached in a sermon on July 26, 1271 in Paris. Such a thought as this, of the holy old woman as a paradigm of human wisdom, would have been totally inconceivable to the Philosopher, whose aristocratic bias led him to refer to similarly situated people in his own time, the *douloi* (“slaves”) as “living tools” in his *Politics*. But *Doctor Angelicus* understands that to be *magis* is to serve, donate, give oneself to the lesser. As Jesus teaches (Mt 23:8-12), as the Apostle testifies (Phil 2:1-18), and as Augustine helps to make clear (§6.1 above), **the majesty of truth comes to us in loving humility**. We see this in Lonergan’s own life: he would learn true love from a nurse, a woman who cared for him in his weakness. Intellectual conversion is **far more** than a hermeneutical strategy used by scientists; it transforms human life into a likeness of the light of truth itself: *verisimilitude* in the fullest sense of the word. Lonergan alludes to this in §6 of Ch. 3 as incarnate meaning; *Method*, 73. But Lonergan does not appear to grasp its full significance—he has very little to say about it in *Method*, and what there is seems barely connected to his larger argument. The remainder of this project is devoted to showing how incarnate meaning is the solution to the problem of communication identified in the Introduction. For those who understand something become the image of that understanding for others.

¹³⁸ *ST I Q.* 89, art. 1, ad 3.

substances, it “understands that which is above itself, and that which is below itself, by the mode of its substance.” Thomas explains, “for in this way something is understood according to what is in the one understanding; while one thing is in another by the mode in which it is.”¹³⁹ Thus, an inverse proportion: as separated, the soul is “more imperfect, if we consider the nature by which it communicates with corporeal nature; yet in a way it is freer for understanding, insofar as the body’s heaviness and the preoccupation with it impedes the soul from the purity of intelligence,” in this present life.¹⁴⁰ I live in this body in order that matter might be informed by understanding.

Our discussion of Q. 89 will draw to a close by considering Thomas’ interaction with the Philosopher. In art. 5, he asks whether the habit of knowledge (*habitus scientiae*) acquired in this life remains in the separated soul. To answer, he refers to *On the Soul* III.4: “knowledge is in the intellect, which is the *locus* of species.” Thus, Aquinas tells us, “it is necessary that this acquired habit of knowledge be partly in the aforesaid sensitive powers, and partly in the intellect itself.” And this we can see, “from the acts from which the habit of knowledge is acquired; since habits are similar to the acts by which they are acquired,” as Aristotle states in *Ethics* II.1. But, “the acts of the intellect from which knowledge is acquired in the present life are by the conversion of the intellect to phantasms, which are in the aforesaid sensitive powers.” *Doctor Angelicus* concludes, “as regards what a person possesses of the present knowledge in the lower powers, it will not remain in the separated soul, but as to what it has in its very intellect (*in ipso intellectu*), it must necessarily remain.” When we die, our intellect’s potential in this life is at an end, but the truth we have actually realized does not end. Thomas cites *On the Long and Short Life* II as proof, “a form may be corrupted in two ways,” directly, by contradiction, and indirectly, by corruption.

¹³⁹ *STI* Q. 89, art. 2. Thomas quotes from *Trin.* IX.3; see §4.1 above. He also makes reference to *De Causis* VIII, but does not attribute it to Aristotle in the text—possibly demonstrating an awareness that the work itself, although commonly attributed to the Philosopher by his contemporaries, might not have actually been written by Aristotle.

¹⁴⁰ *STI* Q. 89, art. 2, ad 1.

But, “the intelligible species which exist in the possible intellect cannot be corrupted by contrary, because nothing is contrary to intelligible intention, especially with regard to simple intelligence, by which it understands what it is (*qua intelligitur quod quid est*),” viz. I am **this** love.¹⁴¹

Aquinas asks in the next article whether this act of knowledge acquired here in this life remains in the separated soul. He continues to develop the Philosopher’s insight from *Ethics* II.1: “habits render acts similar to the acts by which they are acquired.” Thomas explains, “In action there are two things to consider: the species of the act and its mode. The species of an act is considered from the object to which the act of the cognitive power is directed by the species, which is the likeness of the object; but the mode of the act is measured by the power of the agent (*ex virtute agentis*).” Thus, Aquinas concludes that the act of knowledge acquired here remains in the separated soul, but in a different mode. **This** love that I am cannot end with my body.

And so, this leaves us with one question remaining to consider: whether one human being can share **this** understanding with another in this life. For an answer from Thomas, we can turn to one of the final questions of the First Part of the *Summa*. In Q. 117, art. 1 he asks whether one human being can teach another. The *Sed contra* cites the authority of the Apostle’s *signature* in 1Tim 2:7, “in which I, myself am appointed a preacher and an apostle, a teacher of the nations in faith and truth (*in fide et veritate*).” In formulating his answer, Aquinas first cites Averroes, who maintains that all human beings have one passive intellect in common. In addition, the Platonists believe, “that our souls are possessed of knowledge from the very beginning,” by participation in the Ideas. But Thomas has disproven both, following Aristotle in *On the Soul* III.4 to show that, “the possible intellect of the human soul is in pure potentiality to the intelligible.”¹⁴² Thus, as the

¹⁴¹ STI Q. 89, art. 5. Thomas explains further that the intellect can, however, be corrupted by forgetfulness, on the part of the memory, or by deception—as lying is a betrayal of the truth of our own selves.

¹⁴² STI Q. 117, art. 1. While 1Tim was almost certainly written pseudonymously, the verse cited by Thomas is true to the spirit of Paul’s signature as he uses it in the undisputed letters, the exemplar of which is Phlm 1:19. For

Philosopher explains in *Physics* VIII.4, “the one who teaches causes knowledge in the learner by reconsidering (*reducendo* or, more literally, ‘re-leading’) the learner’s very self from potential to act,” as an effect proceeding from an exterior principle. But learning truly takes place when this exterior principle of the teacher is united with the interior principle of the learner’s desire for the truth. In this way, “art imitates nature in its operation, for just as nature heals the sick by altering, digesting, and expelling the matter which causes disease, so does art.” As exterior principle, art acts, not as “a principal agent, but as an assisting principal agent (*coadiuvans agens principale*), which is an interior principle, by strengthening it (*confortando ipsum*) and ministering to it with the instruments and auxiliaries it uses to produce an effect, as the physician strengthens nature.”

As an intensification, a distillation of nature, art helps nature recognize its proper end. And thus,

knowledge is acquired in the human both from an interior principle (*principio*), as is clear in one who acquires knowledge through one’s own discovery; and from an external principle, as is clear in the one who is a learner. For there in every human is this principle of knowledge: the light of the active intellect, through which **the certain**, the universal principles of all knowledge are naturally known from the beginning (*a principio*).¹⁴³

Like solving an equation, “when one applies these universal principles to some particulars, the memory and experience of which one receives through the senses, by one’s own invention one accepts a knowledge of those things which one knew not, proceeding from the known to the unknown.” Hence, “whoever teaches from the things which the disciple knows, leads him to the knowledge of those things which he did not know,” according to what the Philosopher says in *Posterior Analytics* I.1, that “every doctrine and every discipline is made from pre-existing knowledge.” Thomas tells us that, “the master (*magister*) leads the disciple from the previously

Augustine’s take on the personal authority of the preacher, see the conclusion of §5.2 above. Regarding Aquinas on the nature of the possible intellect, see Q. 79, art. 2 & Q. 84, art. 3, both discussed above in this section.

¹⁴³ Ibid. In Latin, *principio*, which I have translated largely as “principle,” also means “beginning,” as Jn 1:1 is rendered in the Vulgate: *in principio erat Verbum*. I propose that Thomas intends even more meaning here, for *this* beginning is also our ultimate End, the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8). This indemonstrable first principle is the beginning of all our understanding, identified in n. 145 below.

known to the knowledge of the unknown in two ways,” as if the Master himself were narrating his own pedagogy for us:

First of all, by proposing to him some auxiliaries or instruments which his intellect may use to acquire knowledge; for example, when she proposes to him some less universal propositions, which the disciple can still discern from things previously known (*ex praecognitis*), or when she proposes to him some sensible examples, or similar, or opposites, or the like, by which the intellect of the learner is guided into the knowledge of an unknown truth (*in cognitionem veritatis ignotae*). The other way (*modo*) is when the teacher strengthens the understanding of the learner, not by the active power (*virtute*) of some superior nature, as if she were of a higher nature, as was said above concerning the illuminating angels, because all the human intellects are of one degree in the order of nature; but insofar as she sets the order of principles to conclusions to the disciple, who, perhaps of himself, would not have so much collating power as to be able to draw conclusions from principles.¹⁴⁴

This methodology is in accord with the Philosopher in *Posterior Analytics* I.2: “a demonstration is a syllogism that makes one to know.” It is in this way that a teacher, as one who demonstrates, “makes a knowing hearer (*auditem scientem facit*).” For, “the person teaching employs only the outward ministry, as a doctor (*medicus*) heals; but just as interior nature is the principal cause of healing, so the interior light of the intellect is the principal cause of knowledge. And each of these is *a Deo*.”¹⁴⁵ And therefore, replying to the Commentator, Thomas will conclude, “it is not necessary that science be an active quality, but it is the principle by which one is directed in teaching; just as art is the principle by which one is directed in operating.”¹⁴⁶ What this means is that, “the *magister* does not cause the intelligible light in the disciple, nor the intelligible species directly, but moves the disciple through her teaching to the point that, through the power of his intellect, (*the disciple*) forms intelligible conceptions, the signs (*signa*) of which he sets

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Own translation. Cf. the opening of Paul’s sermon to the Areopagus when he describes what he saw while carefully examining (*anatheōrōn*) the objects of their worship, an inscription on an altar, “To an unknown God” (*Agnōstō Theō*), which the Apostle proceeds to proclaim to those assembled there (Acts 17). Characteristic of his humility, here we can detect the Angelic Doctor denying that he is anything other than human.

¹⁴⁵ ST I Q. 117, art. 1, ad 1. Emphasis added. The Latin is left untranslated to reflect its ambiguity, as it means both *from* and *by* God. Thomas also cites the Psalms (102:3; 93:10; 4:7) to illustrate his larger point in the article, and to respond to the objection, which cites Mt 23:8, that only God can properly be called *Rabbi*, i.e., teacher.

¹⁴⁶ ST I Q. 117, art. 1, ad 2.

outwardly himself.”¹⁴⁷ We realize understanding through making the signs that are our actions—by giving our *signatures*—expressing our personal identity, as well as our promise. And so it is, we human beings all share this present life in mortal flesh with one another, because God understands how **good** it is for us to learn the truth by giving us the grace of letting us teach it to, and learn it from, one another.

¹⁴⁷ ST I Q. 117, art. 1, ad 3. In my translation of this article, I have rendered the teacher as feminine and the disciple as masculine for the sake of clarity, and to reaffirm my point in n. 137 above. However, I could as easily have changed the roles of the sexes, as the conceptions in question are analogous to childbearing. The *verbum* for which Lonergan titled his study of Aquinas has thus been shown to be the *signum* of a human being; see §5 above.

4 *Sapientia*: Thomas Aquinas on the Perfection of Understanding

*Human intellect has some form, namely (scilicet) the intelligible light itself (ipsum intelligibile lumen), which is sufficient in itself for knowing (cognoscenda) certain intelligible objects, namely, to that in whose acquaintance (notitiam) we are able to attain (devenire) through sensible things. But human intellect is not truly able to know (cognoscere) higher intelligible things unless it be perfected by a stronger light, as by the light of faith or prophecy, which is called the light of grace (lumen gratiae), inasmuch as it is naturae superadditum.*¹

Having listened attentively thus far to the instruction of two masterful Christian teachers, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, we are strengthened so as to point *knowingly* to the truth being revealed to us presently. This *judgment* is the power to name **what** it is that I love (2Cor 3:16-18; cf. Gn 2:19).² But how can we know that **this love** which we humans are is *a Deo*? Are we *really from and by God*? Discovering the answer Thomas Aquinas gives to this question is the object of this chapter, namely, the meaning of *sapientia*, the virtue of wisdom. The previous chapter has shown how each and every human act of understanding functions as a ratio by proportioning the subject's intellect into a kind of similitude with its object. The subject of this chapter is *Doctor Angelicus*' master ratio, which forms the ultimate keystone of the entire theological synthesis he attempts to build in the *Summa*: grace perfects nature. The light of Truth perfects the nature of the human mind by *duplex actio*. The first act, discussed in §8, is the intelligible light itself. The second act, which forms the subject of this chapter, is *ipsum lumen gratiae*, the light of grace itself, namely, **this Gift** of the divine Self into our mortal flesh. Based on what our experience of this world tells us, this all seems too good to possibly be true. However, the author of the *Summa theologiae* promises us that **it is**.

¹ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 1. My translation sometimes renders *scilicet*, when used adverbially, with a colon for emphasis, but not here. This chapter will develop the meaning of the final phrase (lit., "of nature added above").

² **This** is what Newman means by the illative sense in *Grammar of Assent*. In Latin, *illa* simply means "this." The illative sense is what tells us **this truly** is so. Lonergan refers to this "sense" as judgment. In short, to say **yes** to the **good** of this truth with yourself is what Newman means by assent, in the sense of Paul's *signature* discussed at the end of §8. But Lonergan's notion of intellectual conversion rules out such full assent for all but the few, a cognitive elite. In this, Lonergan rejects Newman's argument in *Grammar* to side ultimately with Locke; see §8 n. 38 above.

Thomas' point is the same one the builders of the Gothic cathedrals were trying to make with physical structures at which people, even in our technological age, still marvel. What we see today, however, is but a glimpse of how marvelous they would have appeared to the people who built them. It takes an historical understanding for the visitor to imagine how the present City of Light would have looked when Thomas taught there. In the 13th century, Paris became the largest city in Western Europe, with around 80,000 inhabitants. What are now wide and airy boulevards were then a tangled warren of narrow alleys centered on the *Île de la Cité*, an island in the Seine that affords the best place to cross. There, in a place considered holy even before the coming of Christ, the people came together to build what they would call *Notre-Dame de Paris*. No one alive today knows what she looked like when the builders consecrated her as complete, but the structure would have soared high above all the others for as far as any eye could see, beckoning all from miles around. As they drew closer, people would have seen that she was not grey, let alone white, but painted in an array of many bright colors—a dazzling jewel!³

Drawn toward its beauty, a pilgrim who entered into **Our Lady's** house for the first time would have been transported to a world almost beyond imagination. Immediately, the visitor's gaze would be drawn toward heaven. From the darkness at the bottom, one looks *upward* to an almost otherworldly light—the sun, filtered through stained glass. In a world where bright colors were the mark of nobility, the builders of Notre Dame gave them to the masses, to make images of the stories of Scripture, as well as scenes of everyday life, appear to come alive—terms which the people could then draw upon to make sense of the intelligible. One would be in a space that

³ Le Corbusier, the Modernist architect, offers a cautionary example of how misunderstanding can lead to mistaken judgments. Reflecting on his experience of New York, he wrote a book entitled, *When the Cathedrals Were White* (French in 1937, English in 1946), judging scientific standardization to be the way of the future. His ideas are exemplified by his proposal to demolish half of Paris in order to reengineer it as a kind of “machine for living.” Jane Jacobs, who would write *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961 to save her beloved home in Greenwich Village from such destruction, might not have understood that the Gothic cathedrals were never intended to be white, but she *knew* that Le Corbusier's judgment was wrong, and *then* tried to explain in her book.

was open, airy, *soaring*, yet also enclosed within the geometry of the vaulted ceiling. At the heart of the cathedral is the crossing, where the nave and transept meet. As one approaches the raised platform of the altar, on either side there is the same vision: a great circle, in which all the colors come together into one.⁴ Thereby would one be left with the impression that my own reason to be **IS ITSELF TO BE WITH YOU** (cf. Ex 3:14). This is how believers in Thomas' time would come to understand God as both *Magister* and *Gratia*: as the **GIVER OF ALL GIFTS!!!**

The physical structure that supports **this beautiful art** depends on two key innovations in the building technology of their age: the flying buttress and the vaulted arch. The first is an arch that connects the walls of the church to an external supporting structure, explored in the previous chapter as the natural ratio of our act of understanding. Second is the vault, which transforms the pointed Gothic arch into a three-dimensional structure. And this represents the present chapter on the gift of wisdom (*sapientia*), which gives human beings the ability to discern and to name the proper order of things. This gift has three distinct aspects which we shall consider. First is the art of teaching grace, which Thomas calls *sacra doctrina* (§9). Second is the power to recognize and to assent to accept an unseen gift (§10), which is the virtue of faith (*fides*). Third and finally, §11 is a consideration of the Gift of the Divine Self as grace (*gratia*), which will bring the chapter, as well as the body of this dissertation, to its culmination. Through his refinements to the doctrine of grace, Aquinas shows how our natural knowledge (*scientia*) is encompassed and perfected by the recognition of a wisdom that is not our own, but the *sapientia* of God Who creates and unites all things in and through the self-emptying love of *caritas* (cf. Jn 14:15-21).

⁴ The term "rose window," while beautiful, does **not** describe the builders' original intention, appearing first in the 17th century. With the technology at the time, they were unable to build a great dome like that of the Pantheon in Rome. The *oculus* at its apex, a sublime void open to the heavens, represents the opening of the human to the divine **Other**. Lonergan refers to the opening of our mind as the *differentiation* of consciousness, but does not appear to see the *duplex actio* clearly: the *unification* of differentiated consciousness by meaning made incarnate in our own signs. Here we catch a glimpse of its fulfillment: Christian religious conversion that entails loving God through and in one another (Mk 12:29-31; Mt 22:37-40; Lk 10:25-37, which explains by telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan).

§9 *Sacra Doctrina*: Teaching Grace

It was necessary for human salvation to be a kind of teaching (doctrinam)—a process based on divine revelation—in addition to the philosophical disciplines which are investigated by human reason (ratione humana).⁵

Like the builders of the Gothic cathedrals, Thomas Aquinas and the medieval theologians were delineating the architecture for an intellectual Church, to reveal how all things are sheltered within an orderly universe.⁶ Far more than a mere academic, Aquinas is better understood as a great artist—but in what medium does he work? Thomas calls it *sacra doctrina*, sacred teaching. He devotes the very first question of the *Summa theologiae* to setting out his aim for the project: “in order that our intention may be comprehended under certain limits, it is necessary first to investigate sacred doctrine herself (*ipsa sacra doctrina*) and to what extent she exists.”⁷ This section explores this question (I Q. 1) in detail, to listen as the Angelic Doctor explains what he intends to do in the *Summa* and how he intends to do it: his methodology for sacred teaching.

Thomas begins by inquiring into the need for such teaching in the first article. For if the disciplines of philosophy treat of all things knowable by our natural ratio, what more is there to teach? The *Sed contra* cites 2Tim 3:16, that Scripture is inspired (*inspirata*) of God, pointing to another kind of useful knowledge (*scientiam*). Aquinas begins his *Respondeo* with the sentence quoted above to introduce this section. It is necessary, first, “because the human is ordered to God (*homo ordinatur ad Deum*).” Epitomized by Aristotle, the classical tradition of philosophy takes for granted that I am meant for some good beyond myself, that life is directed purposefully,

⁵ ST I Q. 1, art. 1.

⁶ Henry Adams dedicates the final chapter of his historical and architectural tour of the High Middle Ages in France, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, to Thomas Aquinas, declaring him to be the greatest artist of the age. In Adams’ telling, “The hive of Saint Thomas Aquinas sheltered God and Man, Mind and Matter, the Universe and the Atom, the One and the Multiple, within the walls of a harmonious home.” *Henry Adams* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 665.

⁷ ST I Q. 1. Thomas uses the same term for his teaching as Augustine: *doctrina*. See Ch. 1, n. 11 above.

teleologically.⁸ But any such *telos* must be beyond my comprehension by definition. Thus, “the end must already be known (*esse praecognitum*) to humans, who ought to order their intentions and actions to the end.” This end, Aquinas believes, must be divinely revealed to us. Philosophy can discover certain truths about God, but these can be known only by a few, after much study, admixed with errors. But the salvation of all depends on the cognition of this truth: “Therefore, in order that salvation may come more fittingly and certainly to humans, it was necessary that they be instructed concerning the divine by means of divine revelation.”⁹ *Sacra doctrina* is the science of this revelation, which human beings receive by faith (*per fidem*). Thomas explains, “A diverse knowable ratio (*ratio cognoscibilis*) leads to a diversity of knowledge (*scientiarum*),” as physicists and astronomers can come to the same conclusion by different means.¹⁰ Aristotle writes about a branch of philosophy he calls *theologia*. Aquinas makes clear that *sacra doctrina* is different from the Philosopher’s style of theology, but not necessarily incompatible with it.

The next article questions sacred teaching’s scientific validity. Thomas cites the authority of the Theologian: “to this science is attributed only that by which the most wholesome faith is generated, nourished, defended, and strengthened.”¹¹ Aquinas begins his response by affirming, “sacred doctrine is a science (*esse scientiam*),” while noting, “the genus of science is twofold (*duplex est scientiarum genus*).” Sciences of the first kind, “proceed from the principles known by the natural light of the intellect (*notis lumine naturali intellectus*),” such as arithmetic and

⁸ In the modern turn to the subject, philosophy becomes instrumental, logic a tool. To the modern mind, reason is a process for getting what I want, the sense that it is used by Machiavelli in *The Prince*. Seeking to avoid this later association, my translation leaves what Thomas calls *ratio* as ratio, viz. that by which our minds are proportioned to the order of objective truth, as the subject comes to be illuminated by the intelligible light itself.

⁹ *ST I Q. 1*, art. 1. Thus, Aquinas affirms the maxim: *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*; see the opening of Ch. 1.

¹⁰ *ST I Q. 1*, art. 1, ad 2. Thomas understands natural science as both an investigation of the material world by means of matter itself (i.e., experimentally), and as an abstraction from matter through the medium of mathematics. Methodological differences need not exclude the ability of scientists in working in different fields to cooperate with one another, the promotion of which is Lonergan’s goal in *Method*. However, any such cooperation also requires communication, the solution to which problem Lonergan would leave unfinished, see Introduction.

¹¹ *ST I Q. 1*, art. 2, *sed contra*. The quotation of Augustine is from *Trin.* XIV.1; see §4.3 above.

geometry. Others, however, “proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science (*notis lumine superioris scientiae*),” as the science of perspective proceeds from principles known by geometry, and music from principles known by arithmetic. Thomas considers *sacra doctrina* to be a science in this second mode, “because it proceeds from principles known in the light of a higher science, which is namely the science of God and the blessed (*scientia Dei et beatorum*).” Thus, “just as music believes the principles handed down (*credit principia tradita*) to it by arithmetic, so sacred teaching believes the principles revealed (*credit principia revelata*) to it by God (*a Deo*).”¹² He concludes, “The principles of any science are either self-evident (*nota per se*) or reducible to the knowledge of a higher science. And such are the principles of sacred teaching.”¹³ This makes *sacra doctrina* the only science which treats of the particular, the singular, the individual. Although not primarily concerned with *singularia*, it introduces them, “as an example of life, as in the moral sciences; and also to declare the authority of the persons (*auctoritatem virorum*) through whom divine revelation has advanced to us, upon which sacred Scripture or teaching is founded.” Through sacred teaching, science is revealed *personally*.¹⁴

Thomas then asks whether sacred teaching is one science. In *Posterior Analytics* I, the Philosopher holds, “science is one which is of one kind of subject.” But *sacra doctrina* considers both the Creator and creatures. In the *Sed contra*, Aquinas cites Wis 10:10, “Wisdom gave him the knowledge of holy things.” He answers, “sacred teaching is one science” (*unam scientiam esse*). Thomas explains the unity of a power or habit is a function of the object, not materially, but “according to the formal ratio of the object (*rationem formalem obiecti*).” Since, “sacred

¹² *STI* Q. 1, art. 2.

¹³ *STI* Q. 1, art. 2, ad 1.

¹⁴ *STI* Q. 1, art. 2, ad 2. In *The Idea of a University* (originally published in 1852), Newman sets out his ideal for liberal education as the formation of human persons (“gentlemen”); and thus, he locates theology at the heart of the enterprise of a university. Without this core in place, Newman argues that misunderstanding will affect and distort the work of the other disciplines.

Scripture considers certain things according as they have been divinely revealed,” so, “all things whatsoever that are divinely revealed share (*communicant*) in one formal ratio of the object of this science.”¹⁵ *Sacra doctrina* is one for the same reason it is sacred: it is the science of divine revelation. He clarifies, “Sacred teaching does not designate of God and of creatures equally, but of God principally, and of creatures according to which they refer to God (*ad Deum*) as to their beginning or end.”¹⁶ Inferior powers or habits can still be, “differentiated about those matters which commonly fall under one power or higher habit, because a superior power or habit regards an object under a more universal formal ratio (*universaliori ratione formali*).” Aquinas uses the example of common sense (*sensus communis*), the object of which “is the sensible, which comprehends within it the visible and the audible.” As one power, common sense can extend to all the objects of our five senses. Similarly, all the objects of which the philosophical sciences treat, “the power of *sacra doctrina*, being one, considers under one ratio, namely, in so far as they are divinely revealed (*divinitus revelabilia*), so that sacred teaching may be regarded as an impression of the divine science, which is one and simple of all.”¹⁷ Being their Creator, God’s revelation extends to all things (Rom 1:20). Sacred teaching is one—as the science of wisdom, it is the science of the unity of all creatures in God, Who Is One (Dt 6:4).

In art. 4, Thomas asks whether *sacra doctrina* is a practical science, which Aristotle defines in *Metaphysics* II as one which ends in action. Building on his answer in the previous

¹⁵ ST I Q. 1, art. 3.

¹⁶ ST I Q. 1, art. 3, ad 1.

¹⁷ ST I Q. 1, art. 3, ad 2. Lonergan’s take on common sense (i.e., “common nonsense”) is impossible to reconcile with Aquinas, for whom it is the power to integrate our sensible experience. His position has more in common with that of Locke, who believes that most human beings did not understand how to use their minds properly, and which Newman wrote *Grammar of Assent* to rebut. Lonergan is correct that scientific specialization requires precision in the composition and interpretation of language as an instrument of meaning. It is the acquisition of this skill that he refers to as intellectual conversion. But this is impossible to reconcile with Augustine’s account of conversion in *Conf.* (see §1.1 and §6.1 above). The Theologian presents Monica, a simple believer, as the paradigm of the wisdom of the holy old woman, his preeminent Christian *magister*; see §8, n. 137 and 147 above. If intellectual conversion is integral to Christian conversion, then it must be open to all—for the light of truth is present to all—not only to those whose intellectual and spiritual gifts oblige them to develop the science of theology to communicate this **truth** to all.

article, Aquinas states that, being one, sacred teaching “extends to those things which pertain to the diverse philosophical sciences, on account of the formal ratio which it considers in different things, namely, insofar as they are knowable by the divine light (*divino lumine cognoscibilia*).”

While philosophical sciences can be either practical or speculative, “sacra doctrina comprehends both within itself; just as God knows himself by the same science as what he makes.” However, it is “more (*magis*) speculative than practical, because it treats of divine things more principally than of human acts.” Sacred teaching is concerned with the latter, “according as the human is ordered through them to the perfect knowledge of God, in which eternal blessedness consists.”¹⁸

Human beings are called to be both hearers and doers of the Word of this teaching (Jas 1:22).

Aquinas inquires next into whether sacred teaching is more noble (*dignior*) than other sciences. The *Sed contra* cites Pr 9:3, “Wisdom sent her maids to call to the tower,” to argue that the other sciences are handmaidens to *sacra doctrina*. As speculative and practical, “it transcends all others, both speculative and practical.” One speculative science is more noble than another, “both on account of the certainty and the dignity of the [subject] matter.” In both, sacred teaching surpasses the others. In certainty, “because other sciences derive their certainty from the natural light of human reason, which can err; but the latter derives certainty from the light of the divine science, which cannot be deceived.” In dignity, “this science is principally about those things which transcend ratio at its height, while the other sciences consider only those things which are subject to ratio.” One practical science is more noble than another, “which is ordered to a higher end.” But, “the end of this teaching, insofar as it is practical, is eternal happiness, to which all other practical sciences are directed, as to the ultimate end.”¹⁹ Therefore, in both modes, *sacra doctrina* is more noble than any other science. But if it is more certain, then how does anyone

¹⁸ ST I Q. 1, art. 4. Knowledge here is *cognitionem*. The present chapter is primarily speculative in nature as well.

¹⁹ ST I Q. 1, art. 5.

doubt it? Thomas explains that what is more certain in nature can be, “less certain in our view on account of the weakness of our intellect, which is related to the most manifest things of nature as the eye of an owl is to the light of the sun.”²⁰ But as the Philosopher says, “the least thing which can be obtained from the knowledge of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge which is obtained from the least things.”²¹ Rather than sacred teaching depending on the other sciences, they provide instead, “a greater manifestation of those things which are taught in this science. For it does not receive its principles from other sciences, but immediately from God through revelation (a Deo per revelationem).” *Sacra doctrina* makes use of other sciences “as inferior and handmaidens,” not because it lacks anything in itself, but “due to the defect of our intellect which, from those things which are known by natural ratio (from which proceed other sciences), is more easily guided into those things which are above ratio, which are taught in this science.”²² Thus, Thomas makes the case for theology as queen of the university disciplines.

Next, he asks whether this teaching is the same as wisdom (*sapientia*). Aquinas answers, *sacra doctrina* “is the greatest wisdom among all human wisdoms, not indeed in any genus only, but simply.” Developing the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* I, “it is the part of a wise man to order and to judge.” Since, “judgment is to be had through a higher cause of lower things, one is said to be wise in every genus who considers the highest cause of that genus.” Thomas illustrates with an example: “in the nature of the building, the artist who arranges the form of the house is said to be wise and the architect, compared to the artisans, who trim wood or prepare stones,” as the

²⁰ ST I Q. 1, art. 5, ad 1. Thomas takes the analogy of the owl from the Philosopher (*Metaphysics* II.1). At the end of the Preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel famously remarks, “when philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the coming of the dusk.” Due to the finitude of our natural intellect, human understanding is clearest in retrospect, when our day is nearing its end. Cf. Augustine’s insight into his conversions in *Conf.* X.27.38: “Late have I loved you,” discussed in §1.2 above.

²¹ Ibid. Thomas is citing *De Animalibus* XI (*Parts of Animals*).

²² ST I Q. 1, art. 5, ad 2. Cf. Heraclitus (B35): “Human beings that love wisdom must be inquirers into very many things indeed.” The other sciences are thus the matter which is formed according to the wisdom of *sapientia* in *sacra doctrina*. Theology seeks to perfect the *scientia* of how the world is made through the light of eternal *veritas*.

Apostle says, “as a wise architect I laid the foundation.”²³ In the general nature of human life, “the wise man is said to be wise, in so far as he orders human acts to their due end; hence it is said in Pr 10:13: ‘Wisdom is prudence to a man.’” Therefore, whoever “considers simply the highest cause of the whole universe, which is God, is said to be the most wise; hence wisdom is said to be the knowledge of the divine (*divinorum cognitio*),” as the Theologian says.²⁴ Since sacred teaching, “determines most properly of God insofar as he is the highest cause (*altissima causa*)—not only as regards that which is knowable by creatures, which philosophers have known...but also as regards what is known to him only of himself (*notum est sibi soli de seipso*), and communicated to others by revelation (*aliis per revelationem communicatum*),” it is most especially called wisdom.²⁵ *Sacra doctrina* is the hub of human science, not supposing any of its principles from them, but “from the divine science, from which, as from the highest wisdom all our knowledge is ordered.”²⁶ For, “the cognition proper to this science is that by revelation, and not that which is by natural ratio.”²⁷ It is the role of sacred teaching to judge the understanding of the other sciences. Since “judgment pertains to the wise, according to the twofold mode of judging, wisdom is received in two ways.” One mode of judgment is by the mode of inclination, “as one who has the habit of virtue judges rightly about what is to be done according to virtue, inasmuch as she is inclined to it.” Hence, as Aristotle says in *Ethics* X, “the virtuous person is the measure and rule of human acts.” The other mode of judgment is by the mode of cognition,

²³ ST I Q. 1, art. 6. Thomas is quoting Paul from 1Cor 3:10, who states in the next verse, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.” *Sacra doctrina* is the science of this revelation of the Word of God, upon Whom it is founded (Mt 7:24). While the eyes of the visitors to the Gothic cathedrals are drawn to the structure above ground, it all rests on one of the builders’ greatest achievements: the massive stone platform of the foundation. Though unseen, its stability is manifest by the endurance of the structure.

²⁴ Ibid. The citation is for *Trin.* XII.14. See §4.2 for Augustine’s distinction between *sapientia* and *scientia*.

²⁵ Ibid. Regarding what is knowable by creatures, including philosophers, Thomas cites the Apostle: “what is known of God is manifest to them” (Rom 1:19).

²⁶ ST I Q. 1, art. 6, ad 1. The Latin is *a summa sapientia omnis nostra cognitio ordinatur*. Thomas thus locates sacred teaching at the cartographic pole of the sphere of human knowledge, the point at which all the great circles of longitude intersect, the hub of our intellectual universe (*pace* Boston), like the oculus in the dome of the Pantheon.

²⁷ ST I Q. 1, art. 6, ad 2.

“as a man instructed in moral science is able to judge of acts of virtue, even if he did not have virtue.” The first mode of judging divine things, “pertains to the wisdom which is reckoned a gift of the Holy Spirit, according to 1Cor 2:7: ‘The spiritual person judges all things.’” The second mode pertains to sacred teaching, “insofar as it is acquired through study; although its principles are to be had from revelation.”²⁸ And so, *sacra doctrina* complements the virtue of *sapientia*.

In art. 7, Thomas discusses how God is the object of this science, which is properly called theology. He notes, “the subject is to the science, as the object is to the power or habit. Properly speaking that object is assigned the object of a power or habit, under which ratio all things are related to a power or habit.” In *sacra doctrina*, all things are treated, “under the ratio of God, or because they are *ipse Deus*; or because they have an order to God as their beginning and end (*principium et finem*).” It follows that God is the subject of this science, the principles of which, “are the articles of faith, which are of God, but the subject of the principles and of the whole science is the same, since a whole science is virtually contained in the principles.” But others, “attending to the things that are treated in this science, and not to the ratio in which they are considered, have otherwise assigned the subject of this science,” such as to “things and signs, or works of reparation; or the whole Christ, the head and members,” all of which are treated in this science, “but according to the order of God (*ordinem ad Deum*).”²⁹ However, we are unable to define what God is—the divine essence. Thomas responds, though “we may not be able to know what God is, we still use his effect, in this teaching, either of nature or of grace, in place of a definition, for those things which are considered about God in this teaching, just as in some

²⁸ *ST I Q. 1, art. 6, ad 3.* This would make *sacra doctrina* an acquired virtue. However, is it possible to accept its principles (viz., the revelation of God) without the infused virtue of faith? Thomas does not ask in Q. 1 whether it is possible for anyone to engage in sacred teaching without faith. We must therefore wait to address this question of the relationship of theology and faith until the next section (§10), which explores the theological virtue of *fides*.

²⁹ *ST I Q. 1, art. 7. Res et signa* is a clear reference to *doc. Chr.* (see §5.1 above). But, as we demonstrated in §8, a ratio *is* a sign. A science of the order of all things according to the sign of the Word of God seems fully in keeping with Aquinas’ description of *sacra doctrina* here, and his project in the *ST* overall.

philosophical sciences something is demonstrated about cause through effect, by taking the effect in place of the definition of the cause.”³⁰ Electricity is itself invisible to us, but we can know it through its effects, as an electrostatic discharge in the air causes lightning and thunder.

Whether sacred teaching is a matter of argument is the subject of art. 8. *Sacra doctrina* does not argue to prove its principles, “which are the articles of faith; but from them it proceeds to show something else,” as the Apostle argues from the resurrection of Christ to the general resurrection in 1Cor 15. Since no science is superior to sacred Scripture, it can only argue with those who concede some of the things held by divine revelation, “as we discuss by the authorities of sacred teaching against heretics, and by one article against those who deny another.” But, “if the adversary believes nothing of the things that are divinely revealed, there no longer remains a way to prove the articles of faith by means of ratios, but to resolve any ratios he might introduce against faith.” Thomas concludes, “since faith is based on infallible truth, and it is impossible for the contrary to be demonstrated concerning the truth, it is evident that the evidences which are brought against faith are not demonstrations, but unsolvable arguments.”³¹ Thus, “the arguments of human ratio do not have a place to prove the things of faith.” Truth itself cannot be proven in the same way other things are proved to be true—truth can only be accepted as authoritative by faith. Aquinas tells us that, “to argue from authority is most proper of this teaching, because the principles of this teaching are had by revelation, and thus it is necessary that we should believe the authority of those to whom the revelation has been made (*facta est*).” To make an argument from “the place from the authority which is founded on the human ratio is the weakest; however,

³⁰ STI Q. 1, art. 7, ad 1. See the discussion of STI Q. 77, art. 1 in §8 above.

³¹ STI Q. 1, art. 8. Paralleling the debate between Leibnitz and Samuel Clarke, Kant presents four antinomies in his *Critique of Pure Reason* as unsolvable arguments between rationalism and empiricism. From this contradiction, he argues against three proofs for God’s existence, which he calls the ontological, cosmological, and physico-theological. But, as we see, Thomas had already resolved these antinomies by clarifying that a superior science can neither prove or dispute its principles using inferior terms—their apparent contradiction pointing only to the need for a science that transcends our natural reason, rather than to the impossibility of any such form of learning.

the place from the authority which is founded on divine revelation is the most effective.” Sacred teaching makes use of our human ratio in order to exhibit some of the things which it teaches. And so, “since grace does not take away from nature, but perfects it, it is necessary that natural ratio should serve faith; just as the natural inclination of the will accommodates itself to charity” (2Cor 10:5). Thus, *sacra doctrina* “makes use of the authorities of the philosophers, where they were able to know (*cognoscere*) the truth by natural ratio,” as the Apostle quotes the word of the poet Aratus in Acts 17:28: “For we also are God’s offspring (*genus Dei sumus*).” Still, it makes use of such authorities as extraneous and probable arguments, using the authorities of canonical Scripture properly, rational argument out of necessity, and the doctors of the Church properly, but as probable. For Christian faith, “rests upon revelation made by the apostles and prophets, who wrote the canonical books, but not by revelation, if any were made by other teachers.”³² The authority of prophets and apostles comes from their authorship in telling the story of our faith.

Aquinas goes on in art. 9 to ask whether Scripture should use metaphors. He explains, “it is fitting for sacred Scripture to hand down divine and spiritual things under the similitude of corporeal things. For God provides for all according to what belongs to their nature.” As made clear in §8, Thomas believes, “it is natural for the human to come to intelligible things by means of sensible things, because all our knowledge has its origin in the senses.” He cites *Celestial Hierarchy* I, “It is impossible for us to shine in any other way than the divine ray, unless it is covered over with a variety of sacred veils.”³³ In keeping with Rom 1:14, it is fitting for sacred

³² ST I Q. 1, art. 8, ad 2. Thomas cites Augustine’s *Letter to Jerome* XIX.1 to the effect that the Theologian only considers canonical Scripture to be inerrant. But modern historical-critical biblical scholarship has rendered this position untenable; see §1.3, n. 106 & §2, n. 134 above. To overcome this objection to the authority of Scripture, we need to expand our understanding of revelation to include those who might not be prophets or apostles, but who are teachers, learners, interpreters—for the light of divine truth is being revealed to all; see n. 17 above. Revelation is by the Spirit, Who Is the Author of Scripture as inspired, the Co-Doer of all who believe. The authority of the signature is a function of the formation & identification of one’s own self with **this meaning**: the Love of God (Rom 5:5).

³³ ST I Q. 1, art. 9. Although Thomas makes no mention of this, imagine the pieces of countless colors and sizes of stained-glass windows, filtering the sun’s light to generate images of the divine; see the conclusion of §11 below.

Scripture to be proposed in common to all, both the wise and the unwise. Thus, “spiritual things are to be put forward under likenesses of corporeal things, so that even the simple may at least catch them, who are not qualified to grasp intelligible things as such.” Poetry will use metaphor for representation, since “representation is naturally pleasing to the human,” but sacred teaching “uses metaphors for necessity and utility.”³⁴ Divine revelation “remains in its own truth; so that it does not permit the minds to whom revelation is made to remain in similitudes, but elevates them to the cognition of intelligible things; and by those to whom the revelation was made, others may also be instructed about these matters.” Their truth being secure, “it is more fitting that the divine things in the Scriptures be handed down under the figures of lowly bodies than of noble bodies,” for three reasons. First, to prevent error by making clear, “that these things are not said of the divine according to their proper nature.” Using more noble bodies might lead to doubt, especially among those who are able to think of nothing more noble than bodies. Second, “this mode is more fitting for the cognition we have of God in this life.” The greater the contrast, the more clearly can we differentiate. What God is not is more apparent to us than what God is. Thus, “the similitudes of those things which are more distant from God give us a truer estimate, above that which we say or think of God.”³⁵ Third, in order to conceal divine things from the unworthy. In keeping with our human ratio, Scripture also proportions material likenesses to intelligible truth.

Expanding on the use of language in the final article of Q. 1, Thomas asks whether a word in Scripture may have more than one sense. To which he answers, “The author of sacred Scripture is God, in whose power it is that he not only fits (*accommodet*) the words to signify

³⁴ STI Q. 1, art. 9, ad 1.

³⁵ STI Q. 1, art. 9, ad 2. Thomas’ reply follows Dionysius’ in *Celestial Hierarchy* I. The first reason also tracks with 2 of Augustine’s 3 primary objections to the truth of Christian teaching prior to his conversion (the other being the problem of evil). Before his intellectual conversion in *Conf.* VII, he tried to understand God in physical terms, and could only read the Bible literally, failing to make sense of its use of metaphor; see §1.1 & §6.1 above. Aquinas here shows his sympathy for the approach of negative or apophatic theology, epitomized by the Areopagite.

(which humans also can do), but also the things themselves. And so, as in all the sciences words signify things, this science has this property: that the very things signified by the words also signify something.” The first signification, “by which words signify things, belongs to the first sense, which is the historical or literal sense.” And the other signification, “by which the things signified by the words again signify other things, is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal and presupposes it.” Aquinas proposes a threefold division of the spiritual sense into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses. The literal sense is that, “which the author intends, and the author of sacred Scripture is God, who comprehends all things simultaneously by his own intellect.” Thus, Thomas concurs with Augustine that it is not unfitting, “if there are several senses even in the literal sense of one letter of Scripture.”³⁶ One word can mean many things, or be understood in multiple senses. “The multiplicity of these senses,” however, “does not produce an ambiguity, or any other form of multiplicity,” as “these senses are not multiplied because one word signifies many, but because the things themselves signified by the words, can be signs of other things.” There is no confusion because, “all the senses are founded on one—the literal—from which alone an argument can be drawn, and not from those things which are said in an allegory.”³⁷ God’s intended meaning is the literal sense of Scripture. By *these* words, things can be signified properly and figuratively. But the literal sense should not be mistaken for the figure itself, rather it is that which the words figure. In the words of Scripture, the Word of God speaks to us properly through their signification.

³⁶ ST I Q. 1, art. 10. Aquinas cites *Conf.* XII on this point; see §1.3 above. Augustine’s ecclesial hermeneutic of charity seeks to unite believers in a shared enterprise: interpreting Scripture together as a common imagination, in which all discover their true selves by learning and reciting **our** love story with one another. The multiplication of interpretations and examples is his goal. But Thomas and *sacra doctrina* have a different context. After 8 centuries of such multiplication, the scholastics sought scientific precision and clarity, more definite explanations befitting theology’s place within the medieval universities as highest of all the sciences, their queen. The allegorical sense refers to how the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New. The things done in, or which signify, Christ are types of what we ought to do in the moral sense. The signification of future glory is the anagogical sense.

³⁷ ST I Q. 1, art. 10, ad 1. Thomas references Augustine in *Letter* XLVIII.

Sacra doctrina is thus the science of **this** sacred Scripture: Truth itself. Thomas presents sacred teaching as theology properly speaking. Question 1 of the *Summa theologiae* is commonly understood as his case for theology as the highest—the queen—of the sciences. *Sacra doctrina* is the pinnacle of human knowing precisely because it is also its very foundation. Aquinas’ case is that theology is the science of the meaning of words themselves. Sacred teaching gives words for the other sciences to use. It then takes what they do with those words, both to draw upon human knowledge to explicate divine revelation, and to judge of the truth of what we know in that light. As the science of divine wisdom, *sacra doctrina* is also a function of virtue as our inclination to the Truth itself. In the next section, we shall explore this virtue, which Thomas names as **faith**.

§10 *Fides*: Recognizing Grace

Now it is evident that the rational creature (rationalis creatura) is more noble than all temporal and corporeal creatures. Therefore, it is rendered impure by subjecting itself to temporal things through love (se subicit per amorem). From this impurity it is purified by a contrary movement, namely, when one tends to that which is above the self, namely, in God. In this movement indeed the first principle is faith; “for one who comes to God must believe,” as it is said in Heb 11.³⁸

Sacra doctrina is not some abstract body of knowledge, but a concrete project in which human beings are engaged. Entailing far more than a discrete set of propositional truths; it is our search for Truth itself. As shown in §8 above, human reason is a ratio proportioning the material by the intelligible. Natural understanding integrates the mind’s sense experience of the material world into an interpretation it judges to fit what actually is. In this way, the other sciences study the natural world. Sacred teaching, on the other hand, is the study of the revelation of the divine, the science of the Word of God, theology properly speaking. While the principles of the other sciences are evident to natural reason, theology is different; its principle—God—transcends this

³⁸ ST II-II Q. 7, art. 2. The quotation is from Heb 11:6.

ratio. God is not a composite, but One: simple and immaterial.³⁹ We cannot know the Creator in the same way that we know creatures. To know God as *prima veritas* is not the same as knowing the truth of things. Beyond desiring to understand our world, Aquinas contends human beings are also disposed to Truth itself. This perfection he calls *fides*, the theological virtue of faith, which Thomas identifies as the foundation of *sacra doctrina*, Christian moral life, and the Church itself.

Aquinas begins the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa* with his treatise on faith (QQ. 1-16), the first in his account of the theological and cardinal virtues. The Second Part of the *Summa* is Thomas' theological ethics, his blueprint of the moral life. At its foundation he places faith.⁴⁰ In order to do the good, it is necessary to have some understanding of what our true good actually is. But goodness and truth are both immaterial in themselves. We cannot know our good in the way a builder studies the physical properties of a stone. Our true good must be revealed to us. The human capacity to receive this revelation is the virtue of faith. It is by faith that human beings come to know the reality of God's loving presence to us—that **this love** is the **truth** of who we are. Faith is our recognition of grace, that we are truly from and by God (*a Deo*), a habit of the mind that draws believers toward this unseen First Truth (*prima veritas*). This section will thus survey the first part of Thomas' treatise on faith (QQ. 1-9), culminating with his account of the spiritual gifts of understanding (*intellectus*) and knowledge (*scientiae*).

Question 1 concerns the object of faith. In art. 1, Aquinas identifies the object of faith as the First Truth. For, "the object of any cognitive habit (*cognoscitivi habitus*) has two things: that which is known (*cognoscitur*) materially, which is like a material object; and that by which it is

³⁹ *ST I Q. 3*. Beyond *ipsum esse*, existence itself (Q. 2), the primary attribute of God in Aquinas' telling is this very simplicity.

⁴⁰ In *civ. Dei XIX*, Augustine concludes that the cardinal virtues of classical philosophy are not true virtues, since they do not direct us toward God, our ultimate good (see §7 above). Thomas grants Augustine's point; the essence of the moral life is faith working through love (Gal 5:6). However, Aquinas maintains that the grace of the theological virtues perfects the natural perfections of the cardinal virtues, thus integrating the Theologian with the Philosopher to write the *Secunda Secundae* as an account of seven virtues, integrating the theological and cardinal.

known, which is the formal ratio of the object.” If in faith, Thomas explains, “we consider the formal ratio of the object, it is nothing else than the First Truth; for the faith of which we speak does not assent to anything but because it is revealed by God (*a Deo revelatum*); whence it relies on the divine truth itself (*ipsi veritati divinae*) as a medium.” The First Truth is the divine Truth, which is revealed to us by means of itself. Materially, the object of faith includes many things besides God. However, these things only come under the assent of faith, “except insofar as they have some order to God (*ordinem ad Deum*), insofar as the human is helped by some effects of divinity to tend to the enjoyment of God. And, therefore, even in this respect the object of faith is, in a way, the First Truth, inasmuch as nothing falls under faith except in order to God.”⁴¹ In this way, faith understands our universe as theocentric—all things as turning on True Love itself.

Next, Thomas asks whether this object of faith is something complex by the mode of a proposition. He answers with the principle, “the things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower. However, it is the proper mode of the human intellect to know (*cognoscat*) the truth by composing and dividing.” Hence, “the human intellect knows those things which are simple in themselves according to a certain complexity, just as conversely the divine intellect knows in a simple manner those things which are complex in themselves.” The First Truth can be considered in two ways. In one mode, “on the part of the thing believed itself,” the object of faith “is something simple, namely, the thing itself of which faith is held.” In the other, “on the part of the believer,” the object of faith “is something complex in the mode of a proposition.”⁴² This proposition is the Creed, the symbol of the Church’s faith. However, “the act of a believer is not determined to a proposition, but to the thing; for we do not form propositions except that we

⁴¹ *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 1. In his reply to the 3rd objection, Thomas points out that the object of charity (*caritas*), which loves the neighbor for God’s sake is, properly speaking, *ipse Deus*. He refers his answer in II-II Q. 25, art. 1.

⁴² *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 2. Thomas cites his answer in I Q. 85, art. 5, which is discussed in §8 above. The 2 modes of belief are referred to as the *fides qua* (“faith by which”) & *fides quae* (“faith which”); see §4.2, n. 65 above.

may have cognition of things through them, as in science, and so in faith.”⁴³ The articles of the Creed are signs ordered in faith to the First Truth. But, “by faith we do not apprehend the First Truth as it is itself,” which is the vision of our *Patria* by the mode of simple understanding.⁴⁴ Faith is how the First Truth comes to be present to us, by making a home for itself in ourselves.

In art. 4, Aquinas discusses whether the object of faith can be something seen. He states that, “Faith implies the assent of the intellect to what is believed.” This assent is twofold. First, “it is moved by the object itself, which is known either by itself, as is clear from first principles, of which the intellect is; or it is known through another, as is clear from conclusions, of which science is.” Second, “the intellect assents to something, not because it is sufficiently moved by its proper object, but by a certain choice, voluntarily turning to one side more than to another.” If this choice is made with doubt and fear of the other side, it is opinion. But, “if it is made with certainty, without such fear, it will be faith.” The things which are said to be seen, “by their very nature move our intellect or our senses to the cognition of themselves.” Thus, Thomas concludes, “neither faith nor opinion can be of things seen, either by the senses or by the intellect.”⁴⁵ When the things which are subject to faith are considered specifically, they cannot be seen and believed at the same time. But in general, “under the common ratio of the credible,” they are “seen by him who believes; for he would not believe unless he saw that it was to be believed, either on account of the evidence of signs or on account of the like.”⁴⁶ In this way, “the light of faith causes them to see the things that are believed.” A human “sees through other habits of the virtues that which is befitting to him according to that habit, so also by the habit of faith the human mind is inclined

⁴³ *ST II-II* Q. 1, art. 2, ad 2.

⁴⁴ *ST II-II* Q. 1, art. 2, ad 3. Thomas cites 1Jn 3:2: “when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and we shall see him as he is.” For further discussion of this passage, and on 1Jn as a whole, see §2.3 above for Augustine’s homilies on the Epistle. *Patria* is Latin for “homeland” (literally, and most fittingly here, “fatherland”).

⁴⁵ *ST II-II* Q. 1, art. 4.

⁴⁶ *ST II-II* Q. 1, art. 4, ad 2.

to assent to those things which belong to the right faith, and not to others.”⁴⁷ Unable to see the Unseen on our own, in faith the First Truth gives us the power to see by means of itself.

To develop this insight, Thomas asks next whether the things of faith can be the object of science. According to the Philosopher, science is certain knowledge demonstrated by syllogism. Aquinas answers that, “All science is possessed through some principles known by themselves (*principia per se nota*) and, as a consequence, seen. Therefore, whatever things are known must have been seen in some mode.” He makes clear: “it is impossible that the same thing be known and believed by the same person.” However, “it may happen that what is seen or known by one man, even as a wayfarer, may be believed by another, who does not know this demonstratively.” But, what “is proposed in common to all humans to be believed is not known commonly,” i.e., by science. These things, he concludes, “are subject simply to faith. Therefore, faith and science are not of the same object.”⁴⁸ The ratios which the saints have brought forward to prove things of faith are not demonstrative scientifically, but rather “they manifest certain persuasions that what is proposed in faith is not impossible; or they proceed from the principles of faith, namely, from the texts of sacred Scripture.” Nevertheless, “from these principles something is proven among the faithful, just as something is proven by natural principles known to all. Whence also theology is a science.”⁴⁹ As the science of faith, the first principle of theology is the revelation of God.

Thomas devotes the remainder of Q. 1 to the articulation of faith in a symbol: the Creed. In art. 6, he discusses how the things of faith are distinguished into certain articles. He gives an etymology of article (*articuli*) as derived from *arthron* in the Greek which, “signifies a fitting together of distinct parts.” One major difference between Greek and Latin is that the former uses

⁴⁷ *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 4, ad 3.

⁴⁸ *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 5. Literally “in the state of the way” (*in statu viae*), wayfarer is our pilgrim state in this life.

⁴⁹ *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 5, ad 2. On the principles of faith in Scripture, Thomas cites *Divine Names* II. On theology as a science, he cites his answer in I Q. 1, art. 2; see §9 above. On what is proven, see the end of §8 above.

the definite article, affixing it to words to show their gender, number, or case, while the latter does not. When used in rhetoric, “articles are said to fit together certain parts.” Thomas cites Cicero’s *Rhetoric* IV: “an article is said to be when each word is distinguished by intervals of speech.” Likewise, “the beliefs of the Christian faith are said to be distinguished by their articles, inasmuch as they are divided into certain parts, having some fit together with each other.”⁵⁰ In art. 7, Aquinas asks whether these articles of faith have increased over time. Thomas answers,

the situation of the articles of faith in the teaching of faith is just as the self-evident principles are in the teaching which is had by natural ratio. In these principles, a certain order is found, that some things may be contained implicitly in others, just as all the principles are reduced to this as to the first: ‘it is impossible to affirm and deny at the same time,’ as is clear from the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* [IV.9]. And, similarly, all the articles are contained implicitly in some of the first principles of belief, namely, that one believes God exists, and that God has providence about the salvation of humans, according to Hebrews [11:2]: “One that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him.”⁵¹

In this regard, the substance of the articles of faith does not change—the faith of those who come before in time implicitly contains the faith those who come after. However, “with respect to the explication, the number of articles increased, because some were known explicitly by the latter, which were not known explicitly by the former.”⁵² Thomas tells us, “The progress of knowledge occurs in two ways.” First, “on the part of the teacher, whether one or many, who advances in knowledge, through the succession of times; and this is the ratio for the increase in the sciences discovered through human reason (*per rationem humanam*).” Second, “on the part of the learner, as a teacher who knows the whole art does not from the beginning impart it to the disciple, because he could not grasp it, but gradually condescends to his capacity. And in this way humans

⁵⁰ *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 6. Here is Thomas’ synopsis of the systematic nature of theology, which is also an overview of the structure of the *ST* itself, explaining how the project operates by its division of the things of faith into articles. For further discussion of the Latin school of rhetoric, including Cicero’s influence on Augustine, see §5.2 above.

⁵¹ *ST* II-II Q. 1, art. 7. The first principle of Aristotle’s philosophy is this principle of non-contradiction, i.e., the essential unity of all truth. Though not underlined, the translation of the passage is my own.

⁵² *Ibid.* The first work Newman published upon becoming Catholic is his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), which builds upon this exact point: what the Church teaches expands over time.

have made progress in the knowledge of the faith through the succession of times.”⁵³ There are “two causes required (*praeexiguntur*) for natural generation, namely, the agent and the matter.” In the order of the active cause, “that which is more perfect is naturally prior, and thus nature takes its beginning from the perfect, because imperfect things are not led to perfection except through something perfect pre-existing (*praeexistentia*).” But in the order of the material cause, “that which is more imperfect is first, and in this respect, nature proceeds from the imperfect to the perfect.” From this Thomas concludes, “in the manifestation of faith, God is like an agent who has perfect knowledge from eternity; while the human is like matter receiving the influx of God acting. Therefore, it was necessary that the knowledge of faith in humans should proceed from imperfect to perfect.”⁵⁴ As the Church expands across time, the articulation of its teachings must likewise expand to be faithful to the fullness of God’s action in those who believe.

Thomas goes on in art. 8 to ask whether the articles of faith are suitably enumerated. He explains that, “these belong to faith as such, whose vision we will enjoy (*perfruemur*) in eternal life, and by which we shall be led into eternal life.” There, two things are set forth for us to be seen: “the hidden divinity, whose vision makes us happy (*beatos*); and the mystery of Christ’s humanity, ‘through whom we have access to the glory of the sons of God.’”⁵⁵ Aquinas explains how the articles of faith enumerate this reality. He tells us, “The very name of the divinity (*ipsum nomen divinitatis*) implies a kind of provision.” For, “power in those who have intellect does not operate except according to the will and cognition (*voluntatem et cognitionem*).” Therefore, the divine omnipotence includes, “in a certain sense, the science and providence of all things; for he could not do all that he wished to do in these inferior regions, unless he knew (*cognosceret*) them

⁵³ ST II-II Q. 1, art. 7, ad 2. Thomas cites the Apostle in Gal 3:24, but consider the larger context (3:23-29).

⁵⁴ ST II-II Q. 1, art. 7, ad 3.

⁵⁵ ST II-II Q. 1, art. 8. The quote is from Rom 5:2: because our Redeemer suffered, suffering can be redemptive. Echoing Augustine, Thomas describes the beatific vision in terms of enjoyment (*frui*), see §2.2 above.

and had their providence.”⁵⁶ To call God Almighty, as in the Creed, is thus to affirm God as both all-knowing (omniscient) and all-provident as well: One God, our Father.

Next, Thomas asks whether it is fitting for the articles of faith to be placed in a symbol. Citing Heb 11:6, he answers, “no one can believe unless the truth which he believes is presented to him. And, therefore, it was necessary for the truth of faith to be collected into one, so that it could more easily be proposed to all.” It is “from this collection of sentences of faith the name of the creed is accepted.”⁵⁷ In the fullest sense, the truth of faith is contained in sacred Scripture, however diffusely and sometimes obscurely. To elicit the truth of faith from Scripture requires onerous study, of which only a few are capable. And so, Thomas concludes, it was necessary for a clear summary to be collected from the sentences of sacred Scripture, to be presented to all to believe, not as something added to Scripture, but rather distilled from it. As corporate statement, “the confession of faith is handed down in the symbol as if from the person of the whole Church, united by faith.”⁵⁸ The Creed is the form of the Church’s faith, uniting its parts into one whole. Aquinas concludes Q. 1 in art. 10 by asking whether it belongs to the authority of the sovereign pontiff (*summus pontifex*) to order this symbol of faith. He cites Lk 22:32, 1Cor 1:10, and the Decretals: the unity of the Church depends on the exercise of legitimate spiritual authority in order to resolve disputed questions about matters of faith under an apostolic *signatura*.⁵⁹

Aquinas proceeds to explore the internal act of faith in Q. 2. He interrogates Augustine’s definition of “to believe” (*credere*) as “to think with assent” (*cogitare cum assensione*) in art. 1.

⁵⁶ ST II-II Q. 1, art. 8, ad 2. Thomas references the answer he gives in I Q. 13, art. 8. The Latin *providentia* means provision, which has the double sense of giving (to provide) as well as foresight (pro-vision).

⁵⁷ ST II-II Q. 1, art. 9. Our word “creed” comes from the Latin *credo* (“I believe”), the Church’s corporate statement of faith. The Greek *symbollein*, from which symbol is derived, means “to throw together.”

⁵⁸ ST II-II Q. 1, art. 9, ad 3.

⁵⁹ We should not interpret this as Thomas’ endorsement of Papo-Cesarism. He makes clear that the authority of the sovereign pontiff is a function of incarnate meaning, i.e., the Pope assuming personal responsibility to act for the unity and good of the entire Church. The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose actions cannot be questioned. As precedent, see Thomas’ *Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, esp. his comments on 2:11-14.

Thomas clarifies that to think can be taken in three ways. First, “it is commonly used for any actual consideration of the intellect, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* [XIV.7]: ‘This I now say is the intelligence, that by which we understand by thinking.’” Second, “to think is more properly named the consideration of the intellect, which is with a certain inquiry before it arrives at the perfection of the intellect through certainty of the vision.” For this sense, he cites *De Trinitate* XV.16.⁶⁰ Thus, “in this way thought (*cogitatio*) is properly called a deliberate movement of the mind not yet perfected by full vision of the truth”—thought is “a deliberate act of the intellect.” Such movement (*motus*), when “of a deliberate mind about universal intentions,” pertains to the intellectual part. When regarding particular intentions, the *motus* pertains to the sensitive part, which is the third sense of to think: “the act of cogitative virtue.” Thomas identifies faith with the second sense, for “in this way is understood the whole ratio of this act which is to believe,” for some acts of the intellect can yield firm assent without the need to think in the first sense, “as when one considers what one knows (*scit*) or understands (*intelligit*), for such consideration has already been formed.” Unlike opinion, “this act which is to believe has a firm adherence to one part, in which the believer agrees with the scientist and the person who understands; and yet his cognition is not perfected by clear vision, in which he agrees with the doubter, suspecting and opining.” Aquinas concludes, “it is proper for the believer to think with assent,” for all other acts of the intellect are about what is true or false.⁶¹ Faith is not “an inquiry into the natural ratio that shows what is believed. It is, however, an inquiry of those things by which the human is induced to believe,” viz. divine revelation.⁶² This act of the believer’s assent “is limited to one thing, not

⁶⁰ *ST* II-II Q. 2, art. 1. Here is Thomas’ full quotation of *Trin.* XI.16 (own translation): “The Son of God is not called thought, but is called the Word of God. For our thought, coming to what we know and formed from it, is our truth. Therefore, the Word of God ought to be understood without thinking, not having something formable that could be formless.” For discussion of the passage in its original context, see §4.3 above.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *ST* II-II Q. 2, art. 1, ad 1. This inquiry into the natural ratio is the syllogism, i.e., a scientific demonstration that causes what is understood to be seen; see §8 above.

by the ratio, but by the will. Therefore, assent is here taken as an act of the intellect insofar as it is determined by the will to one thing."⁶³ Faith is thus my particular intention for universal truth.

In art. 2, Aquinas applies the threefold distinction in the act to the object of faith by citing Augustine's differentiation: to believe God, to believe in God, and to believe *into* God.⁶⁴ Thomas explains, "The act of any power or habit is taken according to the order of a power or habit to its own object." Regarding its material object, the act of faith is to believe in God, since "nothing is proposed to us to believe except insofar as it belongs to God." According to the formal ratio of the object, "which is like a medium because of which it assents to such a belief," the act of faith is to believe God since, "the formal object of faith is the First Truth, to which the human clings, assenting on account of believing it." When the object of faith is considered as being moved by the will, the act of faith is believing into God, "for the First Truth is referred to the will as having the ratio of the end."⁶⁵ In believers' act of faith, all three of these aspects are integrated into one.

Next, in art. 3, Thomas asks whether it is necessary for humans to believe anything which surpasses our natural ratio. He answers, "in all ordered natures, it is found that two things concur in the perfection of an inferior nature: one which is in accordance with its proper movement, and another which is according to the movement of a superior nature." Of all created natures, "only the created rational nature has an immediate order to God, because other creatures do not attain to something universal, but only to something particular." Other creatures participate, "in the divine goodness or in being only, as inanimate objects, or even in living and knowing individual things." However, "the rational nature, insofar as it knows (*cognoscit*) the universal ratio of good and being, has an immediate order to the universal principle of being." Thus, "the perfection of

⁶³ ST II-II Q. 2, art. 1, ad 3.

⁶⁴ ST II-II Q. 2, art. 2. The three in Latin are: *credere Deo*, *credere Deum*, and *credere in Deum*. Thomas cites *Jo. ev. tr.* LXI.29, and *De Verb. Dom.* (a text I am unable to locate in the corpus Augustinianum).

⁶⁵ Ibid. As we shall see later in this section, believing into God entails the formation of *fides* by *caritas*.

the rational creature consists not only in that which belongs to it according to its nature, but also in that which is attributed to it by supernatural participation in the divine goodness.” In this way, we can reach our ultimate happiness—the supernatural vision of God—only by “the mode of a learner from God the teacher, according to John 6.” Humans become partakers of this discipline, not immediately, but successively, according to the mode of our nature. Therefore, “every such learner must believe in order to attain perfect knowledge, as the Philosopher also says that, ‘the learner must believe.’” For the human to attain the perfect vision of happiness, “it is prerequisite (*praeexigitur*) that one should believe in God as a disciple of the teacher who is teaching.”⁶⁶ So, Thomas concludes, “just as man assents to principles by the natural light of his intellect, so a virtuous man, through the habit of virtue, has a right judgment concerning those things which belong with that virtue.” It is in this way, “by the light of faith divinely infused into man, man assents to those things which belong to faith, but not to the contrary.”⁶⁷ Through faith, human beings come to be enlightened by the Truth itself in the person of Christ Jesus.

Article 6 is a discussion of whether all are bound equally to have explicit faith. Thomas explains, “The explication of what is to be believed is effected by divine revelation, for things believed exceed natural ratio. Moreover, divine revelation comes to the inferior in a certain order through the superior,” and so, “superior humans, to whom it belongs to instruct others, are bound to have a fuller knowledge of what is to be believed and to believe more explicitly.” However, faith does not depend on the learned, for “human cognition is not the rule (*regula*) of faith, but the divine truth.”⁶⁸ To be a greater learner is to depend on faith all the more. Aquinas makes

⁶⁶ *ST II-II* Q. 2, art. 3. Thomas quotes Jn 6:45: “Whoever hears from the Father and learns, comes to me.” The context of the discourse, Jesus as the bread from heaven, has clear Eucharistic overtones, and which identifies the teacher and the lesson. The reference for the quote from Aristotle is to *Sophistical Refutations* I.2.

⁶⁷ *ST II-II* Q. 2, art. 3, ad 2. Aquinas references the Apostle, “Therefore there is no danger or condemnation in those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).

⁶⁸ *ST II-II* Q. 2, art. 6, ad 3. Aquinas cites 1Cor 4:16: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” The rule of faith is ultimately the person of the Word of God, Jesus Christ.

clear: “the way of coming to happiness among humans is the mystery of Christ’s Incarnation and Passion.”⁶⁹ Faith in the mystery of Christ includes faith in the Trinity, “because it is contained in the mystery of Christ that the Son of God assumed flesh, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit he renewed the world, and again that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁰ For, “the highest goodness of God (*summa bonitas Dei*), according to the mode in which it is now understood by effects, can be understood without the Trinity of Persons. But insofar as it is understood in itself, as seen by the blessed, it cannot be understood without the Trinity,” since “the mission itself of the divine Persons leads us into happiness.”⁷¹ As revealed in faith, the Divine is triune.

The final two articles of Q. 2 concern the question of merit. In art. 9, Thomas asks if to believe is meritorious. His answer is that, “every human act which is subject to free will, if it be related to God, can be meritorious. And to believe itself is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine Truth through the command of the will moved by God through grace, and thus is subject to free will in order to God.”⁷² As a free choice to love God, the act of faith can be meritorious. Aquinas explains: “Nature is compared to charity, which is the principle of meriting, as matter is compared to form; whereas faith is compared to charity as a disposition preceding the ultimate form.” The subject is actualized in the advent of the form, for “both the subject and the preceding disposition act in virtue of the form, which is the principal principle of action.” When **this** form, **love**, “comes on (*superveniente*), the act of faith becomes meritorious through charity, just as the act of nature and the natural free will.”⁷³ Love is the lesson that faith teaches. But does knowing

⁶⁹ ST II-II Q. 2, art. 7. Aquinas cites Acts 4:12: “There is no other name given to humans by which we ought to be saved.” However, Thomas goes on to clarify that, for those to whom the grace of Christ is not revealed explicitly, faith can be implicit (cf. Job 19:25). To love in the way Jesus would implies a certain belief in goodness. Cf. Karl Rahner’s postulate of the anonymous Christian.

⁷⁰ ST II-II Q. 2, art. 8.

⁷¹ ST II-II Q. 2, art. 8, ad 3.

⁷² ST II-II Q. 2, art. 9. The subject of merit will be developed further in the next section (§11) on grace.

⁷³ ST II-II Q. 2, art. 9, ad 1. In ad 2, Thomas adds that scientific endeavor itself can be meritorious, “if it be referred to the end of charity, i.e., to the honor of God or the welfare of our neighbor.”

this ratio diminish the merit of faith? This is the question of art. 10. He clarifies, “human reason, led to the things which are of faith, may be related to the will of the believer in two ways.” First, the reason to believe could induce the will to do it, “and so induced human reason diminishes the merit of faith, just as it has been said above that the passion preceding the choice among the moral virtues diminishes the praise of a virtuous act.” Second, *ratio humana* “may be consequent to the will of the believer. For when the human has a willingness to believe, he loves the truth believed (*diligit veritatem creditam*), and thinks up (*excogitat*) and embraces it, above all if he can find any ratios for this.” Thus, Thomas concludes, human reason “does not exclude the merit of faith, but is a sign of greater merit, just as the passion resulting in the moral virtues is a sign of a more ready will.”⁷⁴ Faith is a verb, a human action, by which we say yes to the divine love.

Having considered the interior act of faith, Aquinas discusses its exterior act, confession, in Q. 3. In his definition, “the exterior acts of that virtue, properly speaking, are the acts to which the ends are related according to its own species.” In this way, “the confession of the things of faith is ordered according to its own species, as an end to that which is of faith,” this is because, “outward speech is ordered to signify that which is conceived in the heart. Hence, just as the interior conception of faith is properly an act of faith, so also is the outward confession.”⁷⁵ As if summarizing Augustine’s *Confessiones*, Thomas explains that the act of confession is threefold. First is confession of faith, which is its proper act, as it is referred to its end. Second is praise, which is “an act of worship [*latreia*], since it is ordered to honor God outwardly.” Third is the confession of sins, which belongs to penance.⁷⁶ Though confession is the act proper to it alone,

⁷⁴ *ST* II-II Q. 2, art. 10. Thomas references his earlier answers: regarding induced reason (I-II Q. 24, art. 3, ad 1 and Q. 77, art. 6, ad 2); and for reason as consequent (I-II Q. 24, art. 3, ad 1). Aquinas believes the latter is signified in Jn 4:42: “where the Samaritans said to the woman, by whom human reason is figured, ‘we believe no longer on account of your speech.’”

⁷⁵ *ST* II-II Q. 3, art. 1. Aquinas cites the Apostle, “Having the same spirit of faith, we believe; because of which, we also speak” (2Cor 4:13).

⁷⁶ *ST* II-II Q. 3, art. 1, ad 1.

ultimately, “Inward faith, by means of love (*mediante dilectione*), causes all the exterior acts of the virtues, by means of the other virtues, by commanding, not by eliciting them.”⁷⁷ Thus, “the end of faith, like the other virtues, should be referred to the end of charity, which is our love of God and neighbor.” For this reason, Thomas concludes, “when the honor of God or the good of our neighbor demands this, man ought not to be content with being connected to the divine Truth itself by his own faith, but he ought to confess his faith outwardly.”⁷⁸ Faith, as being formed by love, is an integral human act, uniting the interior life of my mind with the world outside.

Aquinas proceeds in Q. 4 to consider the virtue of faith itself. Article 1 seeks a definition in Heb 11:1. Thomas clarifies: “it must be considered that, since habits are known by their acts, and actions by their objects, faith, since it is a habit, ought to be defined by its proper act in comparison (*comparatione*) to its proper object.” The act of *fides*, which is *credere*, “is an act of the intellect determined to one thing by the command of the will.” Thus, “the act of faith has its order to the object of the will, which is the good and the end; and to the object of the intellect, which is the true.” Since faith, as a theological virtue, “has the same thing as its object and end, it is necessary that the object of faith and the end correspond proportionally to it.” The First Truth is the object of faith, “inasmuch as it is not seen in itself, and that to which it clings for its own sake.” Accordingly, it is necessary that, “the First Truth itself be related to the act of faith by way of an end according to the ratio of a thing not seen. This pertains to the ratio of a thing hoped for, according to the saying of the Apostle [Rom 8:25], ‘We hope for what we see not,’ for to see the truth is to have it.” Therefore, “the habit of the act of faith to the end, which is the object of the will, is signified in what is said, ‘Faith is the substance of the things hoped for.’” *Substantia* is “the first beginning of any thing, and especially when the whole subsequent thing is contained in

⁷⁷ *ST* II-II Q. 3, art. 1, ad 3. Faith instructs charity through revealing the good upon which love desires to act.

⁷⁸ *ST* II-II Q. 3, art. 2, ad 1.

virtue of the first principle,” thus the first principles of science are indemonstrable, since “the first thing of science that exists in us are these principles and, in virtue of them, the whole of science is contained.” Thus, the first beginnings of things hoped for are in us through the assent of faith, “which virtue contains all things to be hoped for. For in this we hope to be made happy, because we will see an unveiled vision of the truth to which we adhere through faith.” The act of faith as related to the object of the intellect is designated by “the argument of things not visible.” For *argumentum*, “is taken for the effect of argument, since through argument the intellect is induced to adhere to something true, hence the firm adherence of the intellect to the truth of faith that is not visible is called argument.” Thomas thus reduces Heb 11:1 to the form of a definition: “faith is a habit of the mind (*habitus mentis*), by which eternal life begins in us, causing the intellect to assent to things not seen.”⁷⁹ This definition differentiates faith: as argument—from opinion; by things not seen—from science and understanding; as substance of things hoped for—from faith commonly so-called, but not ordered to our hoped-for happiness in God.

In art. 2, the Angelic Doctor integrates this definition of faith with the Philosopher and the Theologian by asking whether faith is in the intellect as its subject. He answers that, as a virtue, the act of faith must be perfect, and “for the perfection of an act which proceeds from two active principles, it is required that each of the active principles be perfect.” Therefore, “it is necessary that the act proceeding from two such powers be perfect by some habit preexisting in both.” Thomas concludes, “there must be a habit both in the will and in the intellect, if the act of faith ought to be perfect.” However, “to believe is immediately an act of the intellect, because the object of this act is the true, which belongs properly to the intellect. Therefore, it is necessary that faith, which is the proper principle of this act, be in the intellect as in its subject.”⁸⁰ The will

⁷⁹ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 1. *Substantia* comes from the Greek *hypostasis*—a word with much doctrinal significance!

⁸⁰ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 2.

needs to be ready to obey *and* the intellect must also be inclined to follow the command of the will to give consent. That faith resides in the speculative intellect is manifest by its object, since the First Truth “is the end of all our desires and actions, as is clear from Augustine.” It follows that faith works by love, “just as the speculative intellect becomes practical by extension,” as Aristotle says.⁸¹ Love thus extends from faith by willing that which we believe to be true.

Aquinas clarifies how *caritas* is the form of *fides* in art. 3. He explains, “Voluntary acts derive their species from the end, which is the object of the will. But that from which a thing receives its species has the mode of a form in natural things.” Thus, “the form of any voluntary act is, in a way, the end to which it is ordered, both because it receives the species from it, and also, because the mode of action must correspond proportionally to the end.” The act of faith “is ordered to the object of the will, which is the good, as to the end.” **This Good**, “which is the end of faith, namely, the divine Good, is the proper object of charity.” Therefore, *caritas* “is called the form of faith, insofar as the act of faith is perfected and formed by charity.”⁸² In this way, the act of faith is formed in the act of giving oneself in order that good might come about for all.

This love is the basis for the distinction in art. 4 between formed and formless faith. In dialogue with other Scholastics, Thomas contends the two belong to the same habit, under the ratio “that a habit is diversified according to that which pertains to the habit as such,” viz. the intellect. Since the distinction between *fides formata* and *informis* “is based on what pertains to the will, i.e., according to charity,” the two are not different habits.⁸³ The first objection cites 1Cor 13:10, which Aquinas takes as referring to that which is imperfect essentially, which will be excluded with the advent of the perfect. Thus, Thomas believes, “faith is excluded with the

⁸¹ *ST II-II* Q. 4, art. 2, ad 3. Thomas cites *Trin.* I.8 and *On the Soul* III.10, with Gal 5:6 in the objection itself.

⁸² *ST II-II* Q. 4, art. 3.

⁸³ *ST II-II* Q. 4, art. 4. In his answer, Thomas first describes the arguments of both William of Auxerre (*Summa Aurea* III.15) and the Franciscan, Alexander of Hales (*Summa universis theologiae* III.64), for the counter position.

advent of unveiled vision, and this is the ratio: that it is not visible.” But, on the other hand, “when imperfection is not of the ratio of an imperfect thing, then that same thing which was counted imperfect becomes perfect,” as when a child becomes an adult.⁸⁴ The difference is not in the virtue itself, or in its object, but faith’s place in the life of the subject.

The remainder of Q. 4 discusses the properties of faith as a virtue. Thomas fits faith into the Philosopher’s *Ethics* in art. 5. Its *Sed contra* links *Ethics* V.1, “justice is all virtue,” with the Apostle’s account of faith as justification (Rom 5:1).⁸⁵ Aquinas states, “human virtue is that by which a human act is rendered good. Hence, whatever habit is always the principle of a good act can be called a human virtue,” which is true of *fides formata*. He explains, “since to believe is an act of the assenting intellect, but from the command of the will, two things are required in order that this act be perfect. One of these is that the intellect tends infallibly to its own good, which is the true, and the other is that it is infallibly directed to the ultimate end, for which the will assents to the truth. And both are found in the act of formed faith.” Crucially, “it is from the ratio itself of faith that the intellect is always borne into the truth,” and by *caritas*, “which forms faith, the soul now has the will infallibly ordered to a good end.”⁸⁶ He clarifies, “The true itself (*ipsum verum*) is the good of the intellect, since it is its perfection. Therefore, insofar as the intellect is determined by faith to the true, faith has an order into **certain good**.”⁸⁷ Aristotle talks of faith,

⁸⁴ *ST II-II* Q. 4, art. 4, ad 1. Thomas’ argument that faith is excluded when we see God face to face is difficult to reconcile with the Apostle in 1Cor 13:13, in which faith, hope, and love all remain (*menei*), with love the greatest. In Paul’s discussion, all other gifts of the Spirit, which perfect our natural potential, come to an end with the advent of the Perfect (*to telion*). But what is given in the theological virtues is the divine Itself, which ultimately will be given to believers perfectly. The object of faith, the First Truth, is not essentially unseen, but **true**. For us, God is unseen due to our essential ratio in *this* life, which will be transformed in resurrection. In life eternal, believers say **Yes!** to God’s Truth forever, amen (Greek: “truly”). Faith’s demonstration is perfected, not done away with, in the beatific vision. Cf. Karl Rahner’s interpretation of *menei* and development of Aquinas’ argument in “On the Theology of Hope,” *Theological Investigations* X, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), 242-59.

⁸⁵ Aristotle and Paul both use the same word: *dikaiosynē*. With the former it is translated as “justice,” but most English Bibles render it “righteousness.” But the meaning is the same; to be just *is* to be one who does what is right.

⁸⁶ *ST II-II* Q. 4, art. 5. Thomas explains that formless faith cannot be not a virtue since, although it is a perfection on the part of the intellect, *fides informis* does not perfect the subject’s will through *caritas* (cf. *Ethics* II.6).

⁸⁷ *ST II-II* Q. 4, art. 5, ad 1.

but he does not include it among the acquired intellectual virtues. This is so because the kind of faith of which the Philosopher speaks, “is based on human reason, which does not conclude from necessity, to which it is able to be under (*subesse*) the false.” However, the faith which Thomas speaks of, “is based on the divine Truth, which is infallible, and thus the false is not able to be under it.”⁸⁸ That which faith believes is the Truth itself, to which it adheres as our certain Good.

Nevertheless, Thomas contends in art. 6 that faith is one (*una fides*). The *Sed contra* cites Eph 4:5: “One Lord, one faith.” Considered in its formal object, the First Truth, “to which by adhering we believe whatever is contained under faith,” it is one. However, on the part of the subject, “faith is diversified according as it belongs to different things. Now it is clear that faith, like any other habit, has its species from the formal ratio of its object, but is individualized from its subject.” Thus, “faith is one by species and differs by number in different persons.” Regarding the content of faith, what is believed is one also, since “what is believed by all is the same thing, and if there are diverse beliefs which all believe in common, still all are reduced to one.”⁸⁹ He explains that, “the temporal things proposed in faith do not belong to the object of faith except in

⁸⁸ ST II-II Q. 4, art. 5, ad 2. The objection cites *Ethics* VI.3. It is on this point, at the end of Ch. 4 on Religion in *Method* (122-124), that Lonergan departs decisively from Thomas by distinguishing faith from religious beliefs. He begins by citing the maxim with which we began Ch. 1, *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*. Lonergan considers it true only in the sense that operations on the 4th level of intentional consciousness (decision) presuppose and complement the corresponding operations of experiencing, understanding, and judging. However, he also posits a realm in which love precedes knowledge. He holds that human falling in love is essentially irrational, “an exercise of vertical liberty in which one’s world undergoes a new organization.” (But when the subject falls in love, what changes is the will of the subject, not the world!) He considers the primary exception to the maxim to be the gift of God’s love flooding our hearts (Rom 5:5) concluding, “that in religious matters love precedes knowledge.” However, his interpretation of this verse ignores Paul’s entire argument in Rom 5: justification comes through Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. We have seen how Aquinas integrates faith with belief in Q. 2 above. It seems incongruous to claim, “We are not departing from the older doctrine, but only from the older manner of speech,” while also asserting, “The modern fact is that culture has to be conceived empirically, that there are many cultures,” in keeping with Lockean empiricism and cultural relativism. For both Augustine and Thomas, faith in God is specified by Scripture and, above all, by the person of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-31). By neglecting the Word (1Jn 4:10), Lonergan’s *Method* sees incompatible with *sacra doctrina* as described by Aquinas in ST I Q. 1 (§9 above). Cf. Karl Rahner: “Lonergan’s theological methodology seems to me to be *so generic that it really fits every science*, and hence is not the methodology of theology as such, but only a very general methodology of science,” from “Some Critical Thoughts on ‘Functional Specialties in Theology,’” in Philip McShane, ed., *Foundations of Theology* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1971), 194.

⁸⁹ ST II-II Q. 4, art. 6. The content of faith, that which is believed, is traditionally termed the *fides quae creditur*. The personal appropriation of faith by the subject is referred to as the *fides qua creditur*, see n. 42 above.

order to something eternal, which is the First Truth. Therefore, faith is one of things temporal and eternal. It is different from wisdom and knowledge, which consider temporal and eternal things according to the proper ratios of both.”⁹⁰ Thomas thus demonstrates that, as one, faith is the mean of the ratios of *scientia* and *sapientia*—the total integration of our understanding.

In art. 7, Aquinas asks whether faith is the first of the virtues. He answers that, “a thing may be prior to another in two ways: one mode, by itself (*per se*); the other mode, by accident. By itself, indeed, of all the virtues faith is the first.” “Since the end is the principle of things in action,” Thomas contends, “the theological virtues, of which the object is the ultimate End, must necessarily be prior to the other virtues.” Further, “the ultimate End itself must be in the intellect before it is in the will, because the will is not directed to anything except as it is apprehended in the intellect.” While the ultimate End is in the will by *caritas* and *spes*, it must be in the intellect by *fides* first since, “natural cognition cannot reach to God as the object of happiness,” without it. However, according to the Philosopher, that which removes an obstacle is a kind of accidental cause. Thus, virtues which remove obstacles to faith can precede it accidentally, as “humility removes pride, by which the intellect refuses to submit to the truth of faith.” Indeed, “the same may be said of some other virtues, although there are no true virtues unless faith be presupposed, as is clear from Augustine.”⁹¹ For *Doctor Angelicus*, faith is the foundation of the virtues; and, “to the ratio of a foundation is required not only that it be first, but also that it be connected to other parts of the building; for there would be no foundation unless the other parts of the building were attached to it,” through *caritas*, which is the edifice’s spiritual connection.⁹² The act of the will is indeed “a prerequisite for faith, but not the act of the will informed by charity, but such an

⁹⁰ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 6, ad 1.

⁹¹ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 7. Thomas cites *Physics* VIII.4 and *Contra Julian*. IV.3 respectively. While he integrates the cardinal virtues into his moral theology, Aquinas sides with Augustine on faith in God as necessary for the virtues.

⁹² *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 7, ad 4. He cites Col 3:14. Cf. “Faith is the knowledge born of religious love,” *Method*, 115.

act presupposes faith, because the will cannot tend to God with perfect love unless the intellect has right faith about itself.”⁹³ Aquinas thus affirms the maxim: *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*.

The final article of Q. 4 will argue that *fides* is more certain than *scientia* and the other intellectual virtues. Thomas explains that two of the intellectual virtues, *prudentia* and art, are about the contingent, to which faith is more certain, “by ratio of its matter, because it is of the eternal, which the contingent is not otherwise able itself to have.” The other three are about the necessary: wisdom (*sapientia*), knowledge (*scientia*), and understanding (*intellectus*). However, he points out, these can be spoken of in two ways. The Philosopher says they are intellectual virtues (*Ethics* VI.2-3). But they are also reckoned as gifts of the Holy Spirit. On the part of the cause of faith, its formal object (the First Truth) is more certain than the other virtues, which are based on our human ratio. But precisely because faith transcends the human intellect, it is less certain on the part of human subjects by virtue of our ratio. Thus, “it is that faith is more certain simply; but others are more certain in a certain respect, namely, as regards us.”⁹⁴ Therefore, “the perfection of *intellectus* and *scientia* exceeds the cognition of faith with regard to greater clarity, but not with regard to more certain adhesion. For the whole certitude of *intellectus* or *scientia*, insofar as they are gifts, proceeds from the certainty of faith, just as the certainty of the cognition of conclusions proceeds from the certainty of principles.” And so, the intellectual virtues, “are based on the natural light of reason (*naturali lumini rationis*), which falls short of the certainty of the Word of God, on which faith is based.”⁹⁵ Of all our understanding, faith is the foundation.

This leads to the subject of Q. 5: those who have faith. In the first article, Thomas asks whether there was faith in angels, or human beings, in their first state, i.e., as originally created.

⁹³ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 7, ad 5. The difference between this and *Method* 122-24 is far more than mere terminology.

⁹⁴ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 8. *Prudentia* is a translation of the Greek *phronesis*, the moral wisdom which Aristotle holds to be the head of the cardinal virtues.

⁹⁵ *ST* II-II Q. 4, art. 8, ad 3.

Citing Heb 11:1 and the Theologian, he answers, “This manifestation alone excludes the ratio of faith, by which is rendered apparent or seen that of which faith is the principle. The principal object of faith is the First Truth, the vision of Whom makes people happy, and succeeds faith.” But this Essence is seen at the end of creation. In the beginning, “human and angel were created with the gift of grace,” and by this “grace received and not yet consummated, there was in them a certain beginning of hoped-for happiness,” i.e., the theological virtues. Aquinas clarifies, “in the object of faith there is something as if formal (*quasi formale*), namely, the First Truth existing above all natural cognition of the creature; and something material, as that to which we assent by adhering to the First Truth.” Regarding the first, “faith is common in all who have knowledge of God, and have not yet attained future happiness by adhering to the First Truth. But as regards those things which are proposed to be believed materially, certain things have been believed by one person, which are manifestly known (*scita*) by another,” some teach and others learn.⁹⁶ Yet the Creator is the ultimate Teacher of all, for there is “a certain natural obscurity in the intellect of human and angel, inasmuch as every creature is darkness compared to the immensity of the divine Light. And such obscurity suffices for the ratio of faith.”⁹⁷ Light diffuses itself infinitely; but matter absorbs light, leaving shadow in its wake—so it is with all creatures.

In art. 2, Thomas asks whether demons have faith. He answers, “that the will moves the intellect to assent can happen in two ways.” First, “from the order of the will to the good, and thus to believe is a praiseworthy act.” Second, “because the intellect is convinced to this it judges

⁹⁶ ST II-II Q. 5, art. 1. Thomas cites Augustine in *Jo. ev. tr.* XL and *Questiones Evangeliorum* II Q. 39. On creation with the gift of grace (*dono gratiae*), see I Q. 62, art. 3; Q. 95, art. 1. On teaching, see the end of §8 above.

⁹⁷ ST II-II Q. 5, art. 1, ad 2. The obscurity in question appears to be finitude. The divine Light itself is infinitely intelligible, and thus beyond the capacity of any finite creature to understand. God is *super*-intelligible to our nature. Therefore, the necessity of faith: the minds of creatures must be enlightened by the divine Agent Intellect in order to understand the things of God which transcend our nature, viz. revelation. But how is this done away with in the *visio beatifica*? It seems, rather, that such faith would be perfected. In our natural understanding, the role of agent intellect terminates in a definition that gives the essence of a finite species. But God is infinitely intelligible, and thus beyond any definition. If faith is our movement toward the First Truth, then it is a movement whose term is infinity.

that those things said are to be believed, although it is not proven by the evidence of the matter.”

Believers have faith in the first sense, while demons have faith only in the second, seeing many clear indications, “they do not see the things themselves which the Church teaches.”⁹⁸ Demons’ nature blinds them to goodness; but the faith, “which is the gift of grace, inclines a person to believe according to some affection for the good, even if it is formless.”⁹⁹ To have faith in something entails believing not only that it is true, but at least implicitly that it is also good.

The next article deals with those who explicitly deny any of the articles of faith: heretics. Thomas states plainly at the outset, “A heretic who disbelieves one article of faith does not have the habit of faith, neither formed nor formless.” The reason he gives is that, “the species of any habit depends on the formal ratio of the object, and if taken away, the species of the habit cannot remain.” Of faith, the “formal object is the First Truth, according to what is manifested in the sacred Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.” Thus, one “who adheres to the teaching of the Church as an infallible rule, assents to all the things that the Church teaches,” and such is faith. On the other hand, “if, of the things the Church teaches, one holds what one wills, and does not hold what one wills, one no longer adheres to the doctrine of the Church as an infallible rule, but to one’s own will (*propriae voluntati*).”¹⁰⁰ I should want what I believe, not believe what I want. Aquinas concludes, “faith adheres to all the articles of faith because of one medium, namely, on account of the First Truth proposed to us in the Scriptures, understood according to the teaching of the Church,” to fall away from this medium is to be totally without faith.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *ST* II-II Q. 5, art. 2. Thomas refers to his answers in Q. 1, art. 4 and Q. 2, art. 1, see above.

⁹⁹ *ST* II-II Q. 5, art. 2, ad 2.

¹⁰⁰ *ST* II-II Q. 5, art. 3. Of all the articles we cover in the *ST*, this is perhaps the most problematic, as Thomas’ Dominican Order would play a leading role in the Inquisition. The mistreatment of those seen as heretics is not something I can defend. My purpose in discussing the article is to show how, for Thomas, faith is a matter of total commitment. The faith of the Church and accusations of heresy are both matters of utmost seriousness for theology.

¹⁰¹ *ST* II-II Q. 5, art. 3, ad 2. On this point, Augustine’s hermeneutic of *caritas* is imperative. Faith is diversified as it comes to be individuated in different subjects. As faith is multiplied, so are beliefs—the faithful do not have the same interpretation of what they all believe. Love is their rule and mean (1Jn 4); see §§1.3, 2.1, & esp. 2.3 above.

Thomas concludes Q. 5 by asking whether faith can be greater in one than in another. The formal object of faith, the First Truth, is one and simple; not differentiated among believers, “it is one species in all.” Yet, the “things which are proposed to be believed materially are many, and can be taken either more or less explicitly. Accordingly, one human can believe more explicitly than another. Thus, there can be greater faith in one according to a greater explication of faith.” In terms of the subject’s participation, “faith in something can be said to be greater in one way on the part of the intellect, on account of greater certainty and firmness, in another way on the part of the will, on account of greater readiness, devotion, and confidence.”¹⁰² By the light of our ratio, “The understanding of principles follows from human nature itself, which is found equally in all.” However, as one might naturally have greater intellectual capacity, so “one knows the virtue of principles more than another.”¹⁰³ Similarly, the gift of faith is not given equally to all.

Question 6 addresses the cause of faith. In art. 1, Aquinas asks whether faith is infused into human beings by God. He answers that two things are required for faith. The first is that “beliefs be proposed to humans, which is required in order for a human to believe something explicitly.” The other is “the assent of the believer to the things proposed.” Regarding the first, “it is necessary that faith is from God. For those things which are of faith exceed human ratio. Hence, they do not fall in human contemplation, but the revelation of God.” And the second, human assent, Thomas holds to have a twofold cause. The first of these, external inducement, is insufficient, since of those who hear the same sermon, some believe, and some do not. Therefore, “there must be another, interior cause, which moves the human inwardly to assent to those things which belong to faith.” Pelagians hold this to be human free will alone (*solum liberum arbitrium hominis*), on account of which they say, “that the beginning of faith is from us, inasmuch as it is

¹⁰² ST II-II Q. 5, art. 4.

¹⁰³ ST II-II Q. 5, art. 4, ad 3. The Latin is *unus magis cognoscit virtutem principiorum quam alius*.

from us that we are ready to assent to the things of faith, but that the consummation of faith is from God.” Thomas explains this is false, “since the human, by assenting to those things of faith, is raised above his nature (*elevetur supra naturam suam*), it must be in him that he is inwardly moving from a supernatural principle, which is God.” Thus, assent, “which is the principal act of faith, is inwardly moved by God through grace.”¹⁰⁴ In the mode of external persuasion, “through science, faith is begotten and nourished.” However, he maintains, “the principal and proper cause of faith is that which moves inwardly to assent.”¹⁰⁵ To believe is to accept God’s Self as **this** gift.

The next article asks if formless faith is a gift from God as well. Aquinas answers that, “formlessness is a certain privation.” He notes, “privation sometimes pertains to the ratio of a species, and sometimes not, but supervenes on a thing already having its proper species.” “The cause of a thing is assigned,” Thomas says, “according as it exists in its proper species; therefore, what is not the cause of privation cannot be said to be the cause of that thing to which privation belongs as existing in the ratio of the species itself.” Since the cause of faith is God, even *fides informis* is a gift from God.¹⁰⁶ Aquinas clarifies, “The deformity of an act is of the ratio of the species of the act itself, according as it is a moral act.” Thus, “an act is said to be deformed by the privation of its intrinsic form, which is the required commensuration of the circumstances of the act.”¹⁰⁷ Unformed faith still belongs to the species of faith—but it lacks the self-giving love needed to realize it proportionately through our actions in this present embodied existence.

¹⁰⁴ ST II-II Q. 6, art. 1. Thomas’ description here will serve as a definition of Pelagianism going forward in our discussion. In Lonergan’s account, intellectual conversion seems to be a matter of the subject’s will to see reality in a different light: “to discover the self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know, is to break often long-engrained habits of thought and speech. It is to acquire the mastery in one’s own house that is to be had only when one knows precisely what one is doing when one is knowing,” *Method*, 239-40.

¹⁰⁵ ST II-II Q. 6, art. 1, ad 1.

¹⁰⁶ ST II-II Q. 6, art. 2. This realization is central to *Conf.*, framing the narrative from I.1 onwards. The infinite longing of the human subject is our longing for the Infinite. The restlessness of the *cor inquietus* is thus an unformed faith in the God who makes us, the signature of our Creator; see the discussion of Q. 5, art. 1 above.

¹⁰⁷ ST II-II Q. 6, art. 2, ad 2. Aquinas cites his answers in I Q. 48, art. 1, ad 2 & I-II Q. 18, art. 5. Concupiscence is Augustine’s term for this disproportionate love. Discovering love’s proper ratio by the interpretation of Scripture is the stated goal of *doc. Chr.*; see §2.1 above.

Thomas' discussion of *fides* proper ends with Q. 7 on the effects of faith, identifying two. The first is fear (*timor*), which he considers "a movement of the appetitive power." In addition, "the principle of all the movements of the appetite is good or bad apprehended; hence, there must be some principle of which fear and all the movements of the appetite are an apprehension." As "an apprehension in us concerning certain penal evils which are inflicted according to the divine judgment," faith is "the cause of the fear by which one fears to be punished by God, which is a servile fear." However, "it is also the cause of filial fear, by which one fears to be separated from God, or by which one flees (*refugit*) from comparing oneself to God by revering oneself, insofar as through faith we have this estimate of God, Who is the infinite and highest Good, from which to be separated is the worst and to wish to be equal is evil." *Fides informis* is the cause of servile fear; and *fides formata* is the cause of filial fear, "which through charity makes the human adhere to and submit to God."¹⁰⁸ The latter leads to the fear of reverence, "from which it follows further that man submits his intellect to God to believe all that has been promised *a Deo*," strengthening believers' bond with God.¹⁰⁹ But how can faith cause both fear and hope? Aquinas clarifies, "the same thing in respect of contraries can be the cause of contraries, but not the same thing in the same respect." By giving "an estimate of the rewards God has given to the just," faith generates hope, while also causing of fear, inasmuch as it gives us an estimate of the penalty for sinners.¹¹⁰ In hope, we hold on to what we believe to be good, in part because we fear to lose it.

The second effect of faith is the purification of the heart (*purificatio cordis*). Thomas explains how with the passage quoted at the beginning of this section. As rational creatures, human beings are composite: material *corpus* ordered by intelligible *anima*. In the movement

¹⁰⁸ *ST II-II* Q. 7, art. 1. *Servus* is Latin for "slave," while *filius* is "son." Filial fear is akin to what the Apostle calls the "spirit of adoption" in Rom 8:14-17.

¹⁰⁹ *ST II-II* Q. 7, art. 1, ad 1.

¹¹⁰ *ST II-II* Q. 7, art. 1, ad 2. To treasure something is to delight in having it, and fear having to lose it (Mt 6:21).

Augustine calls *concupiscentia*, humans subject themselves to temporal things by loving them, becoming impure by uniting themselves to what is inferior, like alloying silver with lead. The opposite movement, toward what is superior to the self (*supra se*)—God—is purification. But purification by grace is more than the removal of what is impure, it is union with something even more precious, like alloying silver with gold. Thomas affirms, “the first principle of purification of the heart is faith which, if perfected by the form of charity, causes perfect purification.” citing Heb 11:6.¹¹¹ In the proper ratio, “things that are in the intellect are the principles of those things that are in the affect, insofar as good-understood (*bonum intellectum*) moves the affections.”¹¹² But formless faith also, “excludes a certain impurity opposed to it, namely, the impurity of error, which occurs from the fact that the human intellect inordinately adheres to lower things, namely, when it desires to measure the Divine according to the ratios of sensible things.”¹¹³ And so, to understand entails wanting to be united with *veritas* itself as our ultimate good.

Our exploration of faith concludes with the two spiritual gifts which Thomas describes as responding to the virtue of faith: *intellectus* (Q. 8) and *scientia* (Q. 9). Aquinas begins by asking whether understanding is a gift of the Holy Spirit. To which he answers, “the term *intellectus* implies a certain intimate cognition; for to understand is said as if to read within (*quasi intus legere*). This is clear to those who consider the difference between intellect and sense, for sensitive cognition is concerned with exterior sensible qualities. But intellectual cognition penetrates into the very essence of a thing; for the object of the intellect is *what it is*.”¹¹⁴ There

¹¹¹ ST II-II Q. 7, art. 2. Thomas cites Peter’s statement to the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:9) in the *Sed contra*, but see also v. 8. Hebrews 11 is the basis for Aquinas’ definition of faith; see the discussion of Q. 4, art. 1 above.

¹¹² ST II-II Q. 7, art. 2, ad 1.

¹¹³ ST II-II Q. 7, art. 2, ad 2. The vice Thomas describes here can be called intellectual pride. It is a graver error than what Augustine calls *curiositas*, by which the intellect is diverted to material things; see §6.2 above. Pride of the intellect is the desire to judge God the same way we judge material things, as if we were superior to our Creator.

¹¹⁴ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 1. Thomas quotes Aristotle, *On the Soul* III.6 here (in Latin: *quod quid est*). The distinction between intellect and sense is the essence of Lonergan’s intellectual conversion. But the conversion of the intellect is twofold for Aquinas. First is the natural conversion of the intellect into images of the essences of sensible things;

are “many genera of things which lie hidden within, to which it is necessary for human cognition to penetrate as if inwardly (*quasi intrinsecus*).” Thus, under accidents, “lies the substantial nature of things, under words lie the significations of the words, under similitudes and figures lie the figurative truth.” Therefore, “intelligible things are, in a way, more inward in respect to sensible things which are sensed externally, and in causes are hidden the effects, and the converse.” So, “since human cognition begins from the senses, as if from without, it is manifest that the stronger the light of the intellect, the more can it penetrate to the inmost things.” However, “the natural light of our intellect is of a limited power, from which it can reach up to a certain limit.” And so, “the human needs supernatural light to penetrate further to know certain things which he is not able to know (*cognoscere*) by natural light. And that supernatural light given to man is called the gift of understanding.”¹¹⁵ Thomas clarifies, “By the natural light imparted to us, certain common principles are immediately known (*statim cognoscuntur*) which are naturally familiar (*nota*).” But since **this** love (what we call human being) is ordered to a happiness that transcends material nature, we must “reach for higher certainties,” which requires the gift of understanding.¹¹⁶ For, “the discourse of ratio always begins from an understanding and terminates in an understanding, for we ratiocinate by proceeding from certain things understood, and then the discourse of ratio is perfected when we arrive at **this** in order to understand that which previously was unknown.” Thus, “what we ratiocinate proceeds from some preceding understanding.” However, “the gift of grace does not proceed from the light of nature, but is added (*superadditur*) to it, as if perfecting itself (*quasi perficiens ipsum*).” Aquinas concludes, this *superadditio* “is not called ratio, but

see §8 above. Second is the conversion of the intellect by grace into the image of the Intelligible itself, the Word of God, Christ Jesus (Phil 2:2-5). Lonergan’s intellectual conversion is the perfection of the first of these. While the second perfects the first, the perfection of the first is not necessary for the perfection of the second. Scientists can have faith in God, but it is not necessary to be a scientist in order to become a believer. But believers must love.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 1, ad 1. *Nota* literally means “mark,” as in someone’s signature (e.g., a maker’s mark), with which one can be personally acquainted. For our supernatural happiness, see Q. 2, art. 3 above.

rather understanding, because superadded light is related to those things which are supernaturally known (*innotescent*) to us, just as natural light is related to things which we know (*cognoscimus*) primordially.”¹¹⁷ This gift is named more fittingly for the intellect, since “will simply names the movement of the appetite, without a determination of some excellence. But understanding names a certain excellence in the cognition of penetrating to the inmost things (*ad intima*).”¹¹⁸ By grace, God—the Truth itself—is given to us in order to perfect the power of our active intellect.

Thomas explains how this gift of understanding is had simultaneously with faith in art. 2. He makes a twofold distinction. On faith’s side, “we must distinguish what is certain by itself and directly falls under faith, things that exceed natural ratio,” like the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, from what falls “under faith, as if ordered to it in some manner, as all things which are contained in divine Scripture.” On the part of true understanding, “there are two ways which we can be said to understand.” The first mode is perfectly, “namely when we arrive at the knowledge of the essence of the thing understood and the truth itself of a proposition understood according as it is in itself (*quod in se est*).” In this mode, “we cannot understand those things which fall directly under faith, as the state of faith endures. But certain other things ordered to faith can also be understood in this mode.” The other mode is imperfectly, when “the essence of a thing itself, or the truth of a proposition—what it is or how it is—is not known; but it is known (*cognoscitur*) that which appears outwardly is not contrary to the truth.” Imperfect understanding is knowing things by signs; to understand perfectly is to know things by themselves.¹¹⁹

In art. 3-6, Thomas integrates the Philosopher and the Theologian, along with Gregory the Great. He asks in art. 3 whether the gift of understanding is speculative only, or practical as

¹¹⁷ *ST II-II Q. 8, art. 1, ad 2.*

¹¹⁸ *ST II-II Q. 8, art. 1, ad 3.* Cf. Augustine’s description of God as *interior intimo meo*; see §1.2 above.

¹¹⁹ *ST II-II Q. 8, art. 2.* But the Infinite is not a destination to which we can definitively arrive. As a movement to Truth itself, faith is a line—invisible and everlasting—beginning in this life of finitude and extending to infinity.

well. Clarifying the previous article, “the gift of understanding not only applies to those things which, first and principally, fall under faith, but also to all things which are ordered to faith.” He cites Gal 5:6 to argue that, “good actions have a **certain order** to faith, since faith works through love.” Therefore, “the gift of understanding extends itself to certain actions, not so much as it revolves principally about them; but insofar as we are ruled (*regulamur*) in our actions by the eternal ratios by which we are contemplating and consulting.” As Augustine says, “the superior ratio adheres, which is perfected by the gift of understanding.”¹²⁰ Aquinas declares, “This itself pertains to the dignity of the gift of understanding, that it considers the eternal or necessary intelligibles, not only insofar as they exist in themselves, but also insofar as they are the certain rules of human actions, because the greater a cognitive virtue extends itself, the more noble it is.”¹²¹ He concludes, “This rule of human action is also the human ratio and the eternal law.” But the latter exceeds the former, our natural ratio. Therefore, “the cognition of human acts, insofar as they are ruled by the eternal law, exceeds natural reason, and needs the supernatural light of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”¹²² We need God helping us in order to know how to act rightly.

Article 4 asks whether the gift of understanding is in all who have grace. Thomas answers that, “In all who have grace, there must necessarily be a rectitude of the will, because by grace the human will is prepared for good, as Augustine says.” However, “the will cannot be rightly ordered into good except by some preexisting cognition of the truth, because the object of the will is good understood,” as Aristotle says. And so, “just as the Holy Spirit orders the human will through the gift of charity to be moved directly into **certain** supernatural **good**, so also by the gift of understanding does [the Spirit] enlighten the human mind to know **certain** supernatural **truth**,

¹²⁰ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 3. Thomas cites *Trin.* XII.7; see §4.2 above. To adhere is to cling or cleave to something.

¹²¹ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 3, ad 2. This True Order of God is *regulae quaedam humanorum actuum* in Thomas’ Latin.

¹²² ST II-II Q. 8, art. 3, ad 3. Aquinas cites his affirmation of Augustine’s definition of sin as “a word, deed, or desire contrary to the eternal law” (*Contra Faust.* XXII.27) in I-II Q. 71, art 6.

into which the right will must tend.” Therefore, Thomas concludes, “as there is the gift of charity in all who have sanctifying grace, so is the gift of understanding.”¹²³ While some with this grace, “may suffer dullness in regard to certain things besides those necessary for salvation,” they are “sufficiently instructed by the Holy Spirit concerning those things necessary for salvation.”¹²⁴ For by grace, God comes to us as both *caritas* and *intellectus*, **our True Good-Understood.**

In the next article, Thomas asks whether the gift of understanding is present in those who do not have sanctifying grace. He answers, “gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect the soul inasmuch as it is well-movable by the Holy Spirit.” Thus, “the intellectual light of grace (*intellectuale lumen gratiae*) is reckoned the gift of understanding inasmuch as a man’s intellect is well-movable by the Holy Spirit. The consideration of this movement is that the human apprehends the truth about the end.” And so, “unless the human intellect is moved all the way to this end by the Holy Spirit, that it may have a right estimate of its end, it has not yet attained the gift of understanding.” This means a human, “has no right estimate of the ultimate end except **this** one, he who does not err about the end, but firmly adheres to it as the greatest good.” Aquinas concludes this is true, “only for the one who has sanctifying grace, just as in moral matters also man has a right estimate of his end through the habit of virtue.”¹²⁵ But he makes the distinction: “Faith implies only assent to what is proposed. But understanding implies a certain perception of the truth, which is able to be about the end only in one who has sanctifying grace.” While the natural “ratio of understanding and faith is not similar,” as each is a distinct approach to truth, by grace God perfects both.¹²⁶

And so, the Spirit empowers believers to be able to say, “Yes, God’s Love is **our True Good!**”

¹²³ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 4. Thomas cites Augustine, *Contra Julian*. IV.3; and Aristotle, *On the Soul* III.7. For further discussion of sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), see the next section (§11).

¹²⁴ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 4, ad 1. Thomas cites 1Jn 2:27, “his anointing teaches you about all things.” This is the key point of Newman’s *Grammar*: any ordinary human being (such as a holy old woman) *as such* is potentially able to respond to God with a certain **Yes!**

¹²⁵ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 5.

¹²⁶ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 5, ad 3.

This leads to art. 6, which considers whether the gift of *intellectus* is distinct from the other spiritual gifts. Aquinas identifies four gifts ordered to supernatural cognition, “which is founded in us by faith”: wisdom (*sapientia*), knowledge (*scientia*), counsel (*consilium*), along with understanding. They are differentiated because, “two things are required on our part about the things of faith proposed to be believed.” First, “that they may be penetrated or grasped by the intellect; and this belongs to the gift of understanding.” Second, “it is necessary that the human should have right judgment (*iudicium*) about them, so one may think that they ought to adhere to them, and must depart from their opposites.” This judgment, regarding things divine, “belongs to the gift of wisdom.” Regarding things temporal, “it belongs to the gift of knowledge.” Applied to individual works, “it belongs to the gift of counsel.”¹²⁷ He clarifies, “The gift of understanding is about the first principles of the cognition of grace, but otherwise than faith. For it pertains to faith to give assent to them, and to the gift of the understanding it pertains to penetrate with the mind into those things which are said.”¹²⁸ By grasping what is said, the gift of understanding pertains to speculative and practical knowledge, “not as regards judgment, but apprehension.”¹²⁹ Faith is not what is understood, but the affirmation of the judgment of wisdom in our decisions.

Thomas asks whether the Sixth Beatitude, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8), refers to the gift of understanding. He explains that each Beatitude contains two things: “one by mode of merit: purity of heart (*munditia cordis*); another by mode of reward: the vision of God.” Both belong to the gift of understanding. Aquinas clarifies that purity is twofold. The first is “a preamble and disposition to the vision of God, which is a purification of the affect

¹²⁷ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 6. With his distinction between the 2nd & 3rd levels of intentional consciousness, Lonergan affirms Aquinas on this point. However, by defining faith as “the knowledge born of religious love” (*Method*, 115), the former obliterates the former’s distinctions here, locating faith on all 4 levels. For Thomas, faith is the perfection of our knowing by affirming it in a certain decision, saying **Yes!** to the proposition of God’s love as ultimate truth. As perfections, virtues properly belong to the 4th level of Lonergan’s structure, as decision sublates the other three.

¹²⁸ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 6, ad 2.

¹²⁹ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 6, ad 3.

from disordered affections; and this purity of the heart is effected by the virtues and gifts which pertain to the appetitive power.” The second purity of heart is “complementary with respect to the divine vision; and this is purity of the mind, purified from phantasms and errors, so that those things which are proposed of God should not be taken by the mode of corporeal phantasms, nor according to heretical perversions,” that which the gift of understanding builds. Thomas contends the vision of God is similarly duplex: the perfect, “through which the essence of God is seen,” and the imperfect, “through which, although we do not see what God is, yet we see what He is not; and in this life, *the more perfectly we know God, the more we understand that He exceeds whatever is comprehended by understanding. And each vision of God pertains to the gift of understanding.*”¹³⁰ The first, the gift of consummated understanding, will be in our divine *Patria*; the other, the gift of inchoate understanding, is given to us *in via*, as wayfarers in this life.

Question 8 concludes by asking whether faith, as one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), responds to the gift of understanding. Citing his earlier discussion, Thomas explains, “the fruits of the Spirit are said to be certain ultimate and delightful things that come forth (*proveniunt*) into us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Now the ultimate delight has the ratio of the end, which is the proper object of the will. Therefore, it is necessary that what is ultimate and delightful in the will is, in a way, the fruit of all other things which pertain to the other powers.” Accordingly, “a twofold fruit may be taken as a gift or a power that perfects some power: one pertaining to its own power; the other, as if the ultimate (*quasi ultimus*), pertaining to the will.” And so, Thomas concludes, “that which corresponds to the gift of understanding as its proper fruit is faith, i.e., the

¹³⁰ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 7. In Latin, the italicized formula is: *Deum perfectius cognoscimus quanto magis intelligimus eum excedere*. This is what Jean-Luc Marion means by the saturated phenomenon. It can also be read as developing Anselm’s contemplation of God’s existence as “being than which no greater can be conceived” (*Proslogion* II). In refuting what he calls the ontological proof for the existence of God, Kant argues, “existence is not a predicate.” However, the relevant predicate for Aquinas here is not “existence” *per se*, but *magis*: “**MORE!**” The love of God is not intelligible in the same way we know things in this life. It is *superintelligible*, as the Truth itself by which we know all things, which Kant himself alludes to at the end of his *Critique of Pure Reason* as the Ideal of Pure Reason.

certitude of faith.” In addition, “the ultimate fruit corresponding to it is joy, which pertains to the will.”¹³¹ He distinguishes “the understanding which is the fruit of faith, which is a virtue,” from faith as a fruit, which refers to “the certain certitude (*quadam certitudine*) of faith, to which the human arrives through the gift of understanding.”¹³² Aquinas deduces, “Faith cannot universally precede understanding, for the human could not assent by believing some propositions, unless he understood them in some way. But the perfection of understanding follows (*consequitur*) faith, which is a virtue; to which perfection of understanding follows the certain certitude of faith.”¹³³ As for the other gifts, Thomas explains, “The fruit of practical cognition cannot be in itself,” as it is for the sake of something else, viz. the end. However, “speculative cognition has fruit in itself, namely, the certitude of which it is.”¹³⁴ The fruit of faith is confidence that what I believe is **true**.

Our treatment of faith concludes with Q. 9, on the gift of knowledge. In art. 1, Aquinas asks whether *scientia* is a gift. He answers, “Grace is more perfect than nature; and hence it is not deficient in those things in which the human can be perfected by nature.” Thomas clarifies, “when the human assents to any truth by natural ratio according to his understanding, it is perfected around that truth in two ways: first, because he comprehends it; secondly, because he has a certain judgment about it.” Therefore, “two things are required for the human intellect to assent perfectly to the truth of faith.” One, “that it includes those things which are proposed, which pertain to the gift of understanding.” The other is, “a certain and right judgment about them, namely, by discerning what to believe from what not to believe,” which necessitates a gift of knowledge.¹³⁵ Aquinas explains, “The certainty of cognition is found in different natures in

¹³¹ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 8. Thomas cites his discussion of the fruits in I-II Q. 70, art. 1.

¹³² ST II-II Q. 8, art. 8, ad 1. As virtue, faith says Yes! As fruit, faith is the confidence that this decision is proper.

¹³³ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 8, ad 2.

¹³⁴ ST II-II Q. 8, art. 8, ad 3. Thus counsel, which pertains to practical cognition, has no corresponding fruit. For the other three gifts (wisdom, understanding, knowledge), which all pertain to speculative cognition of things divine, “there is only one fruit, which is certainty, signified by the name of faith.”

¹³⁵ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 1.

diverse modes, according to the diverse conditions of each nature. For the human obtains a certain judgment about the truth by the discourse of ratio, and therefore human knowledge (*scientia*) is acquired by a demonstrative ratio.” In God, however, “there is certain judgment of truth without any discursive thought by simple intuition,” and therefore “the divine knowledge is not discursive or ratiocinative, but absolute and simple.” This *scientia* is “similar to a gift of the Holy Spirit, since it is a certain participatory likeness of itself.”¹³⁶ Aquinas posits this *scientia* is twofold. The first is that, “through which a man knows (*scit*) what he ought to believe,” through discernment. This knowledge is a gift that belongs to all the saints. The other is “about belief, whereby a man not only knows what ought to be believed, but also knows how to manifest faith and induce others to believe and refute those who contradict him.” This *scientia* is among the graces freely given and, as such, “is not given to all but to some.”¹³⁷ Thomas clarifies how faith, a virtue, can be related to several gifts: “the gifts are more perfect than the moral and intellectual virtues. They are not more perfect than the theological virtues, but rather all the gifts are ordered to the perfection of the theological virtues as to an end.”¹³⁸ To perfect faith, God gives us gifts.

In art. 2, Thomas addresses Augustine’s distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*. He begins, “A certain judgment about something is given chiefly on account of its cause. Therefore, according to the order of causes, there must be an order of judgments: just as the first cause is the cause of the second, so the second cause is judged by the first cause.” And so, “the judgment that is made through the first cause is the first and most perfect.” He makes the following distinction: “in the genus of convertible things, that which signifies what it is, is called by a special name: a

¹³⁶ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 1, ad 1. The discourse of ratio is syllogistic reasoning, and a demonstrative ratio is the middle term therein. The ratio is the proportion of convertibility, e.g., Planck’s constant; see §8, esp. n. 54, above. On the divine knowledge, Thomas cites his answer in I Q. 14, art. 7. In Latin, the italicized is *quaedam participativa similitudo ipsius*.

¹³⁷ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 1, ad 2. This grace, in Latin, is *gratia gratis data*; see §11 below. The objection cites *Trin.* XIV.1, which Thomas overcomes by placing the quote in its larger context, for discussion of which, see §4.3 above.

¹³⁸ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 1, ad 2.

definition; but the convertibles which fall short of this come into being, retaining their common name, namely, what is called proper (*propria*).” In the preceding article, Thomas established that the name *scientia*, “implies a certain certitude of judgment.” If this certitude is made through the highest cause, “it has a special name, which is *sapientia*; for one is said to be wise in every genus who knows the highest cause of that genus, by which one is able to judge of all. One is said to be wise (*sapiens*) simply, who knows (*novit*) the highest cause simply, namely, God.” And so, “the cognition of things divine is called wisdom. The cognition of things human is called knowledge, as if by the common name importing the certitude of judgment appropriated to a judgment which is made by second causes.”¹³⁹ *Doctor Angelicus* explains, “faith is of things which are divine and eternal, yet faith itself is a certain temporal thing in the soul of the believer.” Therefore, “to know (*scire*) what is believed pertains to the gift of *scientia*; and to know the things believed according to themselves through certain union with them pertains to the gift of wisdom.” This *sapientia*, “corresponds more to charity, which unites the mind of the human to God.”¹⁴⁰ Knowledge, in the commonly accepted sense of science, “is restricted to the judgment that is made through created things.”¹⁴¹ Aquinas concludes, “since the human knows (*cognoscit*) God through created things, it seems that this pertains to knowledge, to which it belongs formally, rather than to wisdom, to which it belongs materially. Conversely, when we judge of created things according to divine things, this belongs to wisdom rather than to knowledge.”¹⁴² *Scientia* and *sapientia* both have the same mean, the First Truth (Jn 1:3), with the former as the matter, and the latter as the form.

¹³⁹ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 2. The two belong to the same species, judgment, and are related as perfect (*sapientia*) is to imperfect (*scientia*). Thomas clarifies how Augustine’s distinction is not between two judgments, distinguished by their respective objects (things divine above & things temporal below). Rather, what differentiates knowledge from wisdom is the cause of the judgment: the middle term, i.e., the ratio. *Scientia* makes judgments based on secondary causes, i.e., effects of the first cause. The basis of the judgment of *sapientia* is God, i.e., the First Cause itself.

¹⁴⁰ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 2, ad 1. Thomas discusses *caritas* & the gift of wisdom in II-II Q. 45.

¹⁴¹ ST II-II Q. 9, art. 2, ad 2. That is, in contrast to the special sense of *scientia* as a gift of the Holy Spirit. For many today, science is so identified with natural scientific knowledge that a spiritual science seems oxymoronic.

¹⁴² ST II-II Q. 9, art. 2, ad 3. Thomas here returns to the principle with which he began in Q. 1, art. 1 above.

Next, Thomas asks whether the gift of knowledge is practical. He cites Gal 5:6, along with the answer he gave in Q. 8, art. 3. As the gift of understanding is primarily and principally speculative, but practical by extending to actions as well, so is knowledge. Thus, by the gift of knowledge, “the human knows (*scit*) what he ought to hold by faith,” but this “also extends to operation, insofar as we are directed into action through knowledge of the things believed and of those things which follow (*consequuntur*) the things believed.”¹⁴³ Likewise, just as the gift of understanding is given only to some, so is knowledge. Aquinas concludes, “it is to be understood of the gift of knowledge that those alone have the gift of knowledge who by the infusion of grace have certain judgment about things to be believed and done, which in no way deviates from the rectitude of justice.”¹⁴⁴ This gift freely given is the knowledge that is the science of the saints.

Finally, Aquinas considers whether the Third Beatitude, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Mt 5:4), corresponds to the gift of knowledge. The *Sed contra* cites Augustine, *Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount* IV in support of this connection. Thomas answers, “The right judgment (*rectum iudicium*) of creatures pertains properly to knowledge.” However, “creatures are that through which the human is occasionally turned away from God (*a Deo*).” The unwise are those who have no right judgment about creatures, as “they consider the perfect good to be in them,” in this way, “creatures are made into hatred,” for “by establishing the end in them, they sin and lose the true good.” This error “is made known (*innotescit*) to man through the right judgment of creatures, which is had through the gift of knowledge,” and thus mourning corresponds to the gift of knowledge.¹⁴⁵ Thomas clarifies, “Created goods do not excite spiritual joy, except insofar as they are referred to the divine Good, from which spiritual joy properly

¹⁴³ *ST* II-II Q. 9, art. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *ST* II-II Q. 9, art. 3, ad 3.

¹⁴⁵ *ST* II-II Q. 9, art. 4. Thomas quotes from Wis 14:11 in developing this point. The disorder of improper judgments leads to moral disorder by twisting **this** love into a kind of hatred for itself and all things.

arises. And so spiritual peace and consequent joy directly correspond to the gift of wisdom.” The gift of *scientia*, “corresponds first to mourning about past errors, and consequently consolation, when the human, through right judgment of knowledge, orders creatures to the divine Good.”¹⁴⁶ Insofar as the gift of knowledge is speculative, there is no corresponding beatitude, as “human happiness consists not in the consideration of creatures, but in the contemplation of God.” But in this life, “happiness consists in the due use of creatures and ordered affection about them,” which Thomas calls the “happiness of the way” (*beatitudinem viae*).¹⁴⁷ By transforming the orientation of our mind, knowledge gives us the ability to change direction, and turn toward true happiness.

Faith thus orients human beings toward an unseen God. But this orientation transcends the natural ability of our minds to understand. Thomas demonstrates, however, that faith is not irrational. Human beings are, by nature, a composition of physical matter and intellectual form. The end to which such a creature seems pointed—its perfection—is the complete union of these two. Our proper ratio can be neither purely speculative nor practical; it must integrate them into our good-understood. This middle term is thus like the keystone in a vaulted arch, the crucial element holding the rest of the structure in place. Citing the Apostle, Thomas names our good understood as “faith working through love” (Gal 5:22). Traced back to its ultimate cause, the First Truth itself, this ratio of faith as a theological virtue is the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-22).¹⁴⁸ He is the means by which believers are justified, ordered rightly, “through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand,” the outpouring of God’s love “into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:1-5).

¹⁴⁶ *ST* II-II Q. 9, art. 4, ad 1.

¹⁴⁷ *ST* II-II Q. 9, art. 4, ad 3. Knowledge would not be much of a gift if it *per se* causes us grief, which it does only by exposing sin. It is a gift to know whether or not one is in error, for then it becomes possible to learn what is truly right, a point beautifully developed by James Alison in *The Joy of Being Wrong* (New York: Crossroad, 1998).

¹⁴⁸ Or, to use Lonergan’s terms, in the person of Jesus Christ Meaning itself is incarnate.

§11 *Gratia*: To Give Itself

*Just as the natural light of reason (lumen naturale rationis) is something other than the acquired virtues, which are said to be in relation (ordine) to the natural light itself; so also, the light of grace itself (ipsum lumen gratiae), which is a participation in the divine nature, is something besides the infused virtues, which are derived from that light and are ordered to that light.*¹⁴⁹

For Thomas Aquinas, understanding is not something we do alone. We understand by intelligible likeness—verisimilitude—which judgment ascertains, and decision perfects with the adherence of certitude. But how can we be certain of anything known through a likeness? How does one get from sensible experience to affirming, “Yes, this really is so”? Thomas’ answer is that *intelligere* is a movement toward a term, an end. To understand is to head toward the truth. The similitude of our intellect is judged by its form: the intelligible light itself. Human intellect, as a power, is passive—our minds cannot move themselves. Instead, understanding is perfected by illumination with the light of truth itself. To know with certainty (*cognoscere*) comes to us through this interaction. Human beings do not make truth; it must ultimately be given to us.

The chapter thus concludes by considering grace itself. In the *Summa*, Thomas ends the First Part of the Second Part with his treatise on grace (QQ. 109-114), beginning the Second Part of the Second Part with faith. Our exploration inverts his objective order to show a movement of the human subject toward truth. But if our understanding is by approximation, how can it ever reach its goal and adhere to the truth with certainty? In studying how a changing thing can reach the opposite state in *Physics* VI, Aristotle considers Zeno’s paradoxes. Following Parmenides, Zeno argues that motion is an illusion, devising the paradoxes to show the belief, “that existences are many, if properly followed up, leads to still more absurd results than the hypothesis that they are one.”¹⁵⁰ The Philosopher describes one of them, the Dichotomy, as follows: “That which is in

¹⁴⁹ *ST* I-II Q. 110, art. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Plato, *Parmenides* 128d. The paradoxes attempt to show that motion, change, and multiplicity are illusions.

locomotion must arrive at the half-way stage before it arrives at the goal.”¹⁵¹ An approximation of truth would thus never attain its *telos*, but only approach it asymptotically. If it is based on the input of the senses alone, *intelligere* should not be capable of yielding true certainty.¹⁵²

Aristotle solves this problem with his hypothesis of an agent intellect. As form, the truth moves us to assent to it. Thomas’ solution, however, is twofold. He affirms this natural light of understanding (§8). But, as we have already seen in §9, he posits another light, one transcending our nature: the supernatural light of grace, in which the Truth gives, reveals itself to us. By grace human beings partake of the divine nature through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Aquinas identifies the beginning of this movement in us as *fides* (§10). As a virtue, faith is actually the confidence by which we affirm the light of Truth itself. With the help of the Spirit—our Co-Doer—believers gain the ability to assent to God’s Truth with certainty. We can know God loves us because God gives us the proof, which is God’s own Self. Grace is how we come to know this love is a Deo, the ultimate cause of faith working through *caritas*. In this way, I can learn that my self—who I am—is a present from and by God, meant to be shared in communion with others.

Aquinas begins his study of grace by considering its necessity in dialogue with Augustine in Q. 109. Thomas asks first whether the human can know any truth without grace. He answers, “To know (*cognoscere*) truth is a certain use or act of intellectual light,” citing Eph 5:13, “All that is made manifest is light.” Further, “every use implies a certain movement, by considering movement (*motus*) broadly, inasmuch as to understand (*intelligere*) and to will (*velle*) are said to be a certain movement, as is clear from the Philosopher” (*On the Soul* III.4). Aristotelian motion

¹⁵¹ *Physics* VI.9.239b10.

¹⁵² This is the essence of empiricism, in which judgment is probabilistic, provisional. Locke famously declared that, “Whatever I write, as soon as I discover it not to be true, my hand shall be the forwardest to throw it into the fire.” We see this also with the role of falsifiability in Karl Popper’s philosophy of science, in which the theories of natural science can never be definitively proven empirically, but they can be disproven, i.e., shown to be false. Truth itself would thus appear to be an unattainable goal for human knowledge, in a way not unlike the term of movement according to Zeno’s paradoxes.

is hylomorphic, with the form as the principle of the movement or action. But, also required is the movement of the first mover which, “in the order of corporeal things is the celestial body.” Thus, “it is clear that just as all corporeal movement is reduced to the movement of a celestial body as to the first corporeal mover, so all movement, both corporeal and spiritual, is reduced to the First Mover simply, which is God.” And so, “no matter how much any corporeal or spiritual nature is supposed to be perfect, it cannot proceed to its act unless it is moved by God (*a Deo*).” This movement “is in accordance with the ratio of his providence, not according to the necessity of nature, as the movement of a celestial body.” Therefore, “not only is every movement from God as from the First Mover; but every formal perfection is also from him as from the First Act.” Thomas concludes, “the action of the intellect, and of any created being, depends on God in two respects: first, insofar as it has the form by which it acts; secondly, insofar as it is moved by it to act.” However, “each form imprinted on created things by God has its efficacy with respect to some determinate act, into which it can act according to its own property; but beyond, it is not able, except through some superadded form.” In the passage quoted at the very beginning of this chapter, Aquinas states the form of human understanding is the intelligible light itself, which is perfected by the light of grace. From this, “it must be said that for the cognition of any truth, the human needs divine help such that the intellect may be moved by God to its own act.” However, this “new illustration superadded to the natural illustration,” is not necessary to know all things with certainty, only those exceeding our natural ratio. But divine instruction is not excluded, as God sometimes “does miraculously certain things which nature is able to do.”¹⁵³ Ultimately, “All truth, by whomsoever it is said, is from the Holy Spirit, as by infusing natural light and moving us to understand and speak the truth,” but this is distinct from grace as indwelling and habitual,

¹⁵³ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 1. Luster describes the way that light interacts with a surface. Thus, to refer to a manuscript as illuminated is another way of saying that it is illustrated.

which comes, “only in knowing (*cognoscendis*) and speaking certain truths, and especially in those which pertain to faith.”¹⁵⁴ He gives an illustration: “The corporeal sun shines outwardly; but the intelligible sun, which is God, illuminates the interior. Hence the natural light imparted to the soul is the illustration of God, by which we are illustrated by him to know those things which pertain to natural cognition.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, “We are in need of divine help to think whatsoever always, insofar as he moves the intellect to act; for in act, to understand something is to think, as is clear from Augustine.”¹⁵⁶ There is thus a distinction between God as Truth and God as Grace.

Thomas reiterates this point in art. 2, which asks whether the human can will and do good without grace. He answers, “human nature needs divine help, as the First Mover, to do or to will any good.”¹⁵⁷ Grace is needed in addition, so we may work the good of supernatural virtue, but also, since our present nature is corrupted by sin, for us to be healed. Aquinas contends, “Man is master of his own actions, both of willing and not willing, on account of the deliberation of ratio, which can be bent to one side or to another.” But whether to deliberate or not must be through a previous deliberation. As this cannot go on to infinity, “it must finally come to pass that human free will is moved by some external principle which is above the human mind, namely, by God, as the Philosopher also proves.” Even without sin, the human mind needs to be moved by God. Thomas explains, “To sin is nothing else than to fall short of the good which belongs to a being according to its nature.” Thus, “every created thing, just as it does not have to be (*esse*) except from another, and considered in itself is nothing, so it needs to be conserved in the good of its nature by meeting (*convenienti*) another.” A creature, by its essence, “can by itself fall short of

¹⁵⁴ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 1, ad 1. The objection cites 1Cor 12:3: “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” As Thomas points out, the passage is an example of the assent of faith; see §10 above.

¹⁵⁵ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 1, ad 2.

¹⁵⁶ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 1, ad 3. The concrete act of *intelligere* is *cogitare*. Our act of understanding is by cognition, which is to think, viz. to ratiocinate, proportioning sense experience and imagination with the intelligible to form a ratio uniting the two; see §8 above. The objection and Thomas’ reply both cite *Trin.* XIV.7; see §4.3 above.

¹⁵⁷ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 2.

the good, just as it can by itself fall short into not-to-be (*in non esse*), unless it were divinely conserved.¹⁵⁸ To be creatures is to be moved by the creation of the universe—by our Creator.

Developing this distinction further, Thomas asks in art. 3 whether the human can love (*diligere*) God above all things from natural things alone, without grace. He answers, “to love God above all things is the **certain** connatural to the human, and also to every creature, not only the rational, but also the irrational, and even the inanimate, according to the mode of love which can belong to each creature.” The reason “is because it is natural for everyone to desire and love something, according to what it is apt naturally to be, for everything does according as it is naturally apt, as stated in *Physics* [II.8].” As “the good of the part is for the good of the whole,” Aquinas concludes, “by natural desire or love each particular thing loves its own proper good for the sake of the common good of the whole universe, which is God.” And so, before sin, it was possible to love God above all things naturally. But, “in the state of corrupted nature, the human falls short of this according to the desire of the rational will, which, on account of the corruption of nature, follows the private good, unless it is healed by the grace of God,” and so we sinners need grace.¹⁵⁹ Citing Rom 5:5, the first objection argues that to love God above all things is the proper and principal act of *caritas*. Thomas replies, “*caritas* loves God above all things more eminently than nature. For nature loves God above all things, inasmuch as he is the beginning and end of the natural good; but *caritas* as he is the object of happiness, and according as the human has **certain** spiritual community with God.” He clarifies, “just as every habit of virtue adds to the good act which is done merely by the natural ratio of a human who does not have the habit of virtue.” The key principle for the Angelic Doctor is that grace perfects nature by higher

¹⁵⁸ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 2, ad 1. Thomas cites the chapter on good luck in *Eudemian Ethics* VII.

¹⁵⁹ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 3. Aquinas quotes Dionysius (*Divine Names* IV): “God converts (*convertit*) all things to the love of the divine Itself (*sui ipsius*).” Compare this with Augustine’s account in *Conf.* IX of the vision he shares with his mother Monica at Ostia; see §1.1 above.

integration.¹⁶⁰ Nature is able to transcend itself, as “our intellect is able to know (*cognoscere*) by natural cognition some things which are above itself, as is clear in the natural cognition of God.” Although “it must be understood that nature cannot act exceeding the proportion of its virtue,” to love God is not such an act.¹⁶¹ Thomas concludes, “love (*amor*) is said to be the highest, not only as regards the degree of love, but also as regards the ratio of loving and the mode of love. And thus, the highest degree of love is that by which *caritas* loves God as the maker of happiness.”¹⁶²

If it is possible to love God above all things by our nature, then a further question arises. In art. 4, Aquinas asks whether the human, by nature and without grace, is able to fulfill all of the law. This is Augustine’s characterization of the Pelagian position.¹⁶³ Thomas answers that there are two modes of fulfilling the law. The first “regards the substance of the works, inasmuch as the human works justice and courage and the other works of virtue.” In a state of perfect nature, the human could fulfill all the commandments in this way, or to sin would have been impossible. However, “in the state of corrupted nature the human cannot fulfill all the divine commandments without healing grace.” The other mode “regards the manner of doing things, so that they may be done out of *caritas*.” Thus, in neither state “can the human fulfill the commandments of the law without grace.”¹⁶⁴ But how can God expect us to do what is impossible? Aquinas explains, “what we can do with the divine help is not altogether impossible for us.” For, as the Philosopher states, “What we can do through our friends, in some way, we can do through ourselves.”¹⁶⁵ Friendship

¹⁶⁰ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 3, ad 1. Lonergan describes religious conversion as “other-worldly falling in love,” a “total and permanent surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations,” the conversion “to a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground of all self-transcendence,” *Method*, 240-1. As in the objection, Lonergan identifies this love with the *agape* of the Holy Spirit in Rom 5:5, thus obscuring the nature/grace distinction. Thomas argues in this article that it is perfectly natural and rational for human beings to love God above all things, but that this love needs to be perfected by grace into *caritas*, which he maintains is not irrational, but superrational—the perfect ratio.

¹⁶¹ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 3, ad 2.

¹⁶² ST I-II Q. 109, art. 3, ad 3.

¹⁶³ In the *Sed contra*, Thomas cites *On Heresies* LXXXVIII. The entirety of ad 1 consists in Aquinas quoting the Theologian from *On the Spirit and the Letter* XXVII.

¹⁶⁴ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 4. Aquinas concludes his answer with a quote from Augustine, *On Admonition & Grace* II.

¹⁶⁵ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 4, ad 2. Thomas is quoting from *Ethics* III.3.

with God is impossible *for* us only without God's friendship being given *to* us, viz. grace. Contra Pelagius, every human action—by which **this** love is made manifest—is a cry for God's help.

Article 6 asks whether this external help of grace is necessary even to prepare oneself to receive grace. Thomas begins, “the preparation of the human will for good is twofold.” First, “is that by which one is prepared to act properly and to enjoy God; and this preparation of the will cannot be done without the habitual gift of grace, which is the principle of meritorious works.” For the other way, “it must be presupposed that some gratuitous help of God moves the soul inwardly, or that it inspires the good purpose.” Aquinas explains, “since every agent acts for the sake of an end, it is necessary that every cause converts its effects to its own end. And so, “since there is an order of ends according to the order of agents or movers, it is necessary that man must be converted to the last end by the motion of the first mover, and to his nearest end by the motion of some of the inferior movers.” He gives the example of a soldier obeying the commander's will by following his regiment's standard.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, “since God is the First Mover simply, it is from his movement that all things are converted into Itself (*in ipsum*) according to the common intention of the good, by which each one intends to be likened to God in its own mode.” But God converts some humans, the just, “to Himself (*ad seipsum*) as to a special end which they intend, and to which they desire to adhere to their own good,” as Ps 73:28 says, “It is good for me to adhere to God.”¹⁶⁷ The human can only be converted to God (*ad Deum*) by God converting itself (*ipsum convertente*), “by the gratuitous help of God moving us inwardly.”¹⁶⁸ When applied to the movement of our *cor*, Zeno's paradoxes hold: “the conversion of the human to God is made by

¹⁶⁶ The *vexillum* Thomas mentions here is equivalent to the centurial *signum* discussed in §5.1, n. 102 above.

¹⁶⁷ What Aquinas describes here is known in the Orthodox tradition as divinization (*theosis*). As paradigmatically expressed by Athanasius in *On the Incarnation* 54: the Word (*Logos*) of God “became human (*enēnthrōpēsen*) so that we might be made God (*theopoiēthōmen*); and he manifested himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and he endured the insults of human beings, that we might inherit incorruptibility.”

¹⁶⁸ *ST I-II* Q. 109, art. 6. Thomas explains that to prepare oneself for grace is to turn to God, just as we prepare to receive the sun's light by turning our eyes toward the sun itself. No natural conversion can be a precursor to grace.

free will, and in this way, it is enjoined on the human to convert itself God. But free will is not able to be converted to God unless God Himself converts it.”¹⁶⁹ In this way, “the human can do nothing unless moved by God.”¹⁷⁰ For **this** love, to move toward God is to be moved by God.

The remainder of Q. 109 addresses the problem of sin. In art. 7 Thomas shows how, “in no mode can the human rise from sin by himself without the help of grace,” since “the beauty (decor) of grace comes from the illustration of the divine light, such beauty cannot be restored into the soul except God illuminates anew, hence a habitual gift is required, which is the light of grace.”¹⁷¹ In art. 8 Aquinas asks whether one can avoid sin without grace, explaining “in the state of corrupted nature, the human needs habitual grace to cure nature to abstain from sin altogether. This healing takes place first in the present life, according to the mind, the carnal appetite not yet being completely restored” (Rom 7:25). We are dragged down to sin by the weight of our flesh; the reason “for this is that just as the lower appetite ought to be subject to ratio, so too should the ratio be subject to God, and in itself to place (constituere) the end of his will.” Thus it is, “by the end that all human acts are ruled (regulentur) just as the movement of the inferior appetite should be ruled by judgment of the ratio.” And so, “as the lower appetite is not entirely subject to ratio, there can be no doubt that disordered movements occur in the sensitive appetite; so also, by the ratio of man not being subject to God, it follows that many disorders occur in the acts of reason themselves.” For, “when man does not have his heart fixed (firmatum) in God,” there “occur many things on account of which the human departs from God.” He concludes, “it cannot help occurring that one acts according to a will disordered from God (a Deo), unless it be quickly restored to its due order by grace.”¹⁷² **This** love can be ordered to God only by a gift from God.

¹⁶⁹ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 6, ad 1. Thomas cites both Jer 31:18 and Lam 5:21.

¹⁷⁰ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 6, ad 2. Aquinas quotes Jn 15:5: “Without me, you are able to do nothing.”

¹⁷¹ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 7. In this, he follows the Apostle, citing Gal 2:21 (cf. 3:21) in the *Sed contra*.

¹⁷² ST I-II Q. 109, art. 8. When surprised, humans act on our preconceived end & preexisting habits (*Ethics* III).

In art. 9, Thomas asks whether once one has received grace, it is possible to do good and avoid sin without further help from grace. He answers that, on account of present circumstances, “we do not know (*cognoscimus*) ourselves perfectly, we cannot fully know (*scire*) what might be profitable (*expediat*) for us” (Wis 9:14). Thus, “it is necessary for us to be guided and guarded by God (*a Deo*), who knows all things and can do all things.”¹⁷³ As Aquinas explains, “The gift of habitual grace is not given to us by itself so that we do not need further divine help; for every creature needs to be preserved by God in the good it has received from him.” Therefore, “even in the state of glory, when grace will be completely perfect, the human will need divine help. But here grace is in some way imperfect.”¹⁷⁴ The purpose of grace is for **this love** to need God.

Thomas concludes Q. 109 with the question of perseverance, one of the most painful for any believer. How can it be possible for those who have received grace to later fall away from it? Aquinas answers that perseverance is distinct from the gift of grace itself, a grace freely given by God: “For grace is given to many, to whom it is not given to persevere in grace.”¹⁷⁵ He explains, “the restoration of the grace of Christ, though it be begun in the mind, is not yet consummated as to the flesh. This will be in *Patria*, where the human will not only be able to persevere, but not be able to sin.”¹⁷⁶ Believers must never take *gratia* for granted, but seek it gratefully always.

After considering grace as healing and sanctifying in Q. 109, Thomas proceeds to inquire into the essence of grace using the Philosopher’s categories in Q. 110. He asks in the first article whether grace implies anything in the soul (*in anima*). Citing the Theologian’s analogy of light, the *Sed contra* avers: “Light places something in the thing illuminated. And indeed, grace is a

¹⁷³ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 9. Thomas concludes the *Respondeo* by pointing to the fittingness of what believers are to ask for in the Lord’s Prayer.

¹⁷⁴ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 9, ad 1. On this basis, it should follow that when we ultimately see God face to face, faith will not pass away, but rather remain as perfected (1Cor 13:13)—a true line—one which is invisible and everlasting; see §10, n. 84 above.

¹⁷⁵ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 10.

¹⁷⁶ ST I-II Q. 109, art. 10, ad 3.

certain light of the soul.” Aquinas answers that grace is taken in three ways. First, “for anyone’s love.” Second, “it is taken as a gift freely given.” Third, “it is taken as a reward for the gratuitous benefits given, inasmuch as we are said to give thanks for the benefits.” These three modes are interrelated. The second depends on the first: “from the love with which a person finds another pleasing, he proceeds to give him something freely.” And the third proceeds from the second: “because gratitude arises from benefits freely (*gratis*) bestowed.” Regarding the last two, “it is manifest that grace places something in one who receives grace: first, the gift itself given *gratis*; secondly, the recognition of this gift.” But regarding the first, God’s grace is distinct from that of human beings, “as the creature’s good proceeds from the divine will; therefore, from the love of God by which he wills the good of the creature, some good flows (*profluit*) into the creature.” On the other hand, “human will is moved by the good already existing in things; hence, human love does not wholly cause the goodness of a thing, but presupposes it either in part or in whole.” The Angelic Doctor concludes, “it is clear that every love of God is followed by some good caused in the creature at some time, but not coeternal with the eternal love.” This difference of good thus differentiates God’s love for the creature. The first is common, according to which God loves all things that are (Wis 11:25), and “according to which he bestows natural *esse* to created things.” The other “is special love, according to which he draws the rational creature above the condition of nature to participate in the divine Good; and according to this love someone is said to love simply, because according to this love God wills simply the eternal good of the creature, which he is himself (*est ipse*).” And so, “when the human is said to have the grace of God, it signifies a **certain** supernatural thing coming forth (*proveniens*) in the human from God (*a Deo*).”¹⁷⁷ When one has the grace of a man, “something in another human is presupposed to his love, but what is

¹⁷⁷ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 1. Using Aristotle’s category of substance (i.e., *things*), grace can be understood the divine thing in the human thing.

pleasing (*gratum*) to God in man is caused by the divine love.¹⁷⁸ In terms of causality, “God is the life of the soul after the mode of an efficient cause; but the soul is the life of the body after the mode of a formal cause.” Aquinas clarifies, “there is no middle ground between form and matter, because form by itself informs the matter or subject; but the agent informs the subject, not by its substance, but by the form which it causes in the matter.”¹⁷⁹ Grace is not a medium by which the divine substance comes to be in us—it causes **this love** to become God’s love.

In art. 2, Thomas asks whether this grace is a quality of the soul. Referring to his answer in Q. 109, art. 1, he states that “the human is helped in two ways by the gracious will of God.” First, “inasmuch as the human soul is moved by God to know (*cognoscendum*) something, will, or act; and in this way the gratuitous effect in the human is not a quality, but a certain movement of the soul.” As Aristotle says in *Physics* III, “the act of the mover is in the movement.” Second, “the human is helped by the gracious will of God, insofar as some habitual gift is infused by God (*a Deo*) into the soul.” Therefore, “it is not fitting that God should provide less to those whom he loves to have supernatural good, than to the creatures which he loves to have natural good.” God “provides for natural creatures in such a way that he not only moves them to natural acts, but also grants them certain forms and virtues, which are the principles of acts, so that of themselves they incline to this kind of movement; and thus the movements by which they are moved by God become connatural and easy to creatures.” God imparts “much more (*magis*) to those whom he moves to attain (*consequendum*) eternal supernatural good; he infuses some with supernatural forms or qualities, according to which they are moved by him gently and promptly to attain eternal good.” Thus, “the gift of grace is a quality,” that acts on the soul in the mode of a formal

¹⁷⁸ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 1, ad 1.

¹⁷⁹ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 1, ad 2. According to Aristotle in *Physics* II.3, things have 4 causes: material, formal, efficient, final. The material cause is the matter of which a thing is made; and the formal is the pattern (i.e., species) which defines it. The efficient cause is the agent who patterns the thing; and the final is the end of the agent’s action.

cause.¹⁸⁰ But, according to Aristotle, substance is nobler than quality. Thomas replies, “Every substance is either the nature of a thing itself, of which it is the substance; or it is a part of the nature, according to the mode in which matter or form is called substance.” And since, “grace is above (*supra*) human nature, it cannot be a substance or a substantial form, but it is an accidental form of the soul itself.” In this way, “what is substantially in God is done accidentally in the soul which participates in the divine goodness, as is clear from knowledge (*scientia*).” Accordingly, “because the soul participates in the divine goodness imperfectly, the participation of the divine goodness itself, which is grace, has to be in the soul in a less perfect mode than the soul subsists in itself.” Grace is “more noble than the nature of the soul, inasmuch as it is an expression or participation in the divine goodness, but not as regards its mode of being (*essendi*).”¹⁸¹ Aquinas explains, “every accident is not said to have being (*ens*) as if it were to be itself (*ipsum esse*), but because by it something is (*est*); hence it is said to be more of a being (*entis*) than of being.” So, “because to become (*feri*) or to be corrupted belongs to what is *esse*; thus, properly speaking, no accident becomes nor is corrupted, but is said to become or to be corrupted, insofar as the subject begins or ceases to be in act according to that accident.” And therefore, “grace also is said to be created, from the fact that humans are created according to itself, i.e., they are constituted to be (*esse*) in a new way, out of nothing.”¹⁸² By grace, the divine essence is conceived in **this** love.

Grace’s relationship to virtue is the subject of art. 3. The Theologian says that, “operating grace is faith that works through *caritas*.”¹⁸³ Thomas takes the Master (i.e., the Lombard) to hold in *Sentences* II.D.27 that, “grace and virtue are essentially identical, but differ only according to

¹⁸⁰ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 2 and ad 1. Thomas cites Wis 8:1: “she disposes (*disponit*) all things sweetly.”

¹⁸¹ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 2, ad 2. The *scientia* to which Aquinas refers is the spiritual gift of knowledge, which he discusses in II-II Q. 9; see §10 above.

¹⁸² ST I-II Q. 110, art. 2, ad 3. On being, Thomas cites *Metaphysics* VII.2. He starts his reply by citing Boethius* (attribution subsequently questioned): *accidentis esse est inesse*, “the essence of an accident is to inhere (lit., in-to-be),” that is, the nature of accidents is to adhere in substances.

¹⁸³ *On the Spirit & the Letter* XIV. The scriptural reference is, of course, to Gal 5:6.

ratio.” However, this cannot be reconciled with the Philosopher in *Physics* VII.17: “virtue is the certain disposition of the perfect; and I call perfect what is disposed according to nature.” Thus, “the virtue of each thing is said to be in order to some pre-existing nature, namely, when each thing is disposed in such a way that it befits (*congruit*) its own nature.” The virtues acquired by human acts, “are dispositions by which the human is fittingly disposed in order to the nature in which he is human.” The infused virtues, on the other hand, “dispose the human in a higher way and toward a higher end; hence it is necessary that it be in order to some higher nature, and this is in order to participation in the divine nature,” according to 2Pet 1:4, “that you may become partakers (*consortes*) of the divine nature.” In the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, Thomas distinguishes the natural light of ratio, to which the acquired virtues are ordered, from the light of grace, from which the virtues infused by the Spirit are derived and to which they are ordered. Aquinas explains, “as the acquired virtues perfect the human to walk congruently with the natural light of reason, so the infused virtues perfect the human to walk congruently with the light of grace.”¹⁸⁴ He clarifies Augustine’s meaning: “the act of faith operating through love is the first act in which sanctifying grace is manifested.”¹⁸⁵ The place of the good in the definition of virtue is “according to conformity (*convenientiam*) to some preexisting nature, essential or participated.” But good is attributed to grace, “as to the root of goodness in the human.”¹⁸⁶ Grace and virtue are both qualities of the soul, but they are not the same. According to Aquinas, grace is “a certain habit (*habitus*) which is presupposed to the infused virtues, as their principle and root.”¹⁸⁷ **This** love is enlightened naturally by ratio—but nature is itself illustrated by grace.

¹⁸⁴ *ST* I-II Q. 110, art. 3.

¹⁸⁵ *ST* I-II Q. 110, art. 3, ad 1. In the *Sed contra*, Thomas quotes *On the Gift of Perseverance* XVI, in which Augustine states, “grace precedes charity” (*gratia praevenit caritatem*), clearly distinguishing between the two. This is a good example of Aquinas attempting to clarify Augustine’s terminological imprecision through systematization.

¹⁸⁶ *ST* I-II Q. 110, art. 3, ad 2.

¹⁸⁷ *ST* I-II Q. 110, art. 3, ad 3.

Question 110 concludes in art. 4, asking whether grace is in the essence of the soul as in a subject, or in one of its powers. Aquinas cites his answer in I-II Q. 56, art. 1: “the power of the soul is the proper subject of virtue.” It follows, “that grace, as it is prior to virtue, has a subject prior to the powers of the soul, so that it is in the essence of the soul.” Therefore, “just as the human participates in the divine cognition through his intellectual power through the virtue of faith; and according to the power of the will, divine love, through the virtue of charity; so also, through the nature of the soul, he participates, according to a certain similitude, in the divine nature, through a certain regeneration or recreation.”¹⁸⁸ Thomas explains, “as from its essence flow the powers of the soul, which are the principles of works; so also from grace itself flow the virtues into the powers of the soul, through which the powers are moved to act. And according to this, grace is compared to the will as the mover to the movement.” Thus, “grace is the principle of meritorious works through the medium of the virtues, just as the essence of the soul is the principle of life’s works through the medium of the powers.”¹⁸⁹ He clarifies that, “the soul is the subject of grace insofar as it is in the species of an intellectual or rational nature. But the soul is not constituted in a species by any power, since the powers are natural properties of the soul that follow the species.”¹⁹⁰ The seat of grace is *interior intimo meo*, in the very essence of **this love**.

Thomas’ project in the *Summa* entails distinguishing in order to unite. As such, Q. 111 deals with the division of grace. The first distinction he gives is between grace as sanctifying (*gratia gratum faciens*) and grace as freely given (*gratia gratis data*). Aquinas begins by quoting the Apostle in Rom 13:1: “things which are a Deo are ordered.” He explains, “the order of things consists in this, that certain things are led into God by other means, as Dionysius says” (*Celestial*

¹⁸⁸ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 4.

¹⁸⁹ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 4, ad 1.

¹⁹⁰ ST I-II Q. 110, art. 4, ad 3. As essentially rational, in grace love cannot precede knowledge (contra *Method*, 123). Rather, the two emerge in tandem, as to love God is to know God’s love; see the conclusion of §3.2 above.

Hierarchy IV). Therefore, “since grace is ordered that the human may be led to God, it is done in a certain order, namely, that some may be led by others into God.” In this way, grace is twofold. Through sanctifying grace, “the human itself is united (*coniungitur*) to God.” The other, “is that by which one man cooperates with another in order that he may be led to God.” This grace freely given, “is granted to the human above the faculty of nature and above the merit of the person; but because it is given not that man may himself be justified by it, but rather that he should cooperate in the justification of another.”¹⁹¹ As sanctifying, grace acts as a formal cause (cf. Col 1:21). As freely given, grace rules out God owing a debt to us. Rather, “the creature ought to be subject to God, that in it, the divine ordering may be fulfilled in what is **certain**, in order that such a nature may have such conditions or properties, and that such an operation may attain such things.”¹⁹² As freely given, grace is the means by which God becomes the efficient cause of **this** love.

In art. 2, Thomas discusses the Theologian’s distinction between grace as operating and cooperating. From his answer in Q. 110, art. 2, grace can be understood in two modes: “first, the divine help by which it moves us to will and act well; secondly, a habitual gift given to us by God.” In both modes, Aquinas considers grace fittingly divided into operating and cooperating. He explains, “the operation of an effect is not attributed to the thing moved, but to the mover.” And so, “in that effect in which our mind is moved and not moving, but God alone moves, the operation is attributed to God; and according to this, it is called operating grace.” But, “in that effect in which our mind moves and is moved, the operation is not only attributed to God, but also to the soul; and according to this, it is called cooperating grace.” Aquinas concludes, “there is, in us, a twofold act.” First, “is the interior act of the will; and as regards this act, the will is as

¹⁹¹ *ST* I-II Q. 111, art. 1. See the conclusion of §8 above on I Q. 117, art. 1. Thomas cites 1Cor 12:7 to conclude the *Respondeo*. The Apostle’s Greek makes the point more clearly than the Latin translation: “The manifestation (*phanerōsis*) of the Spirit is given to each for the common good (*to sumpheron*).”

¹⁹² *ST* I-II Q. 111, art. 1, ad 2.

moved, and God as the mover, especially when the will, which before willed evil, begins to will good. Therefore, insofar as God moves the human mind to this act, it is called operating grace."

The other act is exterior, "since it is commanded by the will, as stated above [I-II Q. 17, art. 9], it follows that for this act an operation is attributed to the will. And because God assists us to this act, both inwardly by strengthening the will to reach the act, and outwardly by providing the faculty of action," this act is called cooperating grace. Taken together, the two refer to "the gratuitous movement of God by which he moves us to meritorious good." However, if grace is taken as a habitual gift, "so also the effect of grace is twofold, just like any other form, of which the first is *esse*, the second is operation." And so, habitual grace, "insofar as it heals or justifies the soul, or makes it pleasing to God, is called operating grace; insofar as it is the principle of meritorious works, which also proceeds from free will, is called cooperating."¹⁹³ Since grace perfects nature, "God does not justify us without us because, by the movement of free will, as we are justified, we consent to the justice of God." However, "this movement is not a cause of grace, but an effect; hence the whole operation pertains to grace."¹⁹⁴ Thomas summarizes, "the human, through operating grace, is assisted by God to will the good. And so, having already presupposed the end, it follows that grace cooperates with us."¹⁹⁵ Through grace, God first loves **this love** into being lovable, in order that God might then love *with this love*.

Augustine also distinguishes between grace as preceding (*praeveniens*) and subsequent; this is the subject of art. 3. Thomas affirms, "as grace is divided into operating and cooperating, according to its diverse effects, so also into preceding and subsequent, in whatever way grace is received." Grace has five effects on the soul, in order that it: (1) "is healed," (2) "will the good,"

¹⁹³ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 2.

¹⁹⁴ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 2, ad 2.

¹⁹⁵ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 2, ad 3.

(3) “effectively operates the good it wills,” (4) “perseveres in good,” (5) “comes to glory.” The first effect, sanctifying operating grace, is always prevenient. It then causes the second, which is subsequent to it, “just as one effect is posterior to one effect and prior to another, so grace can be said to be both preceding and subsequent to the same effect in respect of diverse things.”¹⁹⁶ But if God’s love is eternal, how can grace ever be subsequent? Aquinas clarifies, “The love of God names something eternal; and therefore, it can never be said to be anything but prevenient. But grace signifies a temporal effect, which is able to precede one thing and follow another.”¹⁹⁷ The distinction between preceding and subsequent does not divide grace’s essence—there are not two graces—but rather its effects. Thus, “just as the *caritas* of the way is not done away with, but is perfected in *Patria*, so too must we speak of the light of grace, for neither implies imperfection in its own ratio.”¹⁹⁸ Although, “the effects of grace can be infinite in number, just as human acts are infinite; nevertheless, all are led (*reducuntur*) to something determinate in species.”¹⁹⁹ **This love** is multiplied over time; but all these loves are ultimately reduced to One Love.

Thomas concludes his response in art. 1 by quoting 1Cor 12:7. Returning to this passage in art. 4, he asks whether freely given grace is fittingly distinguished by the Apostle in vv. 8-10. The Angelic Doctor reiterates, “gratuitous grace is ordered to this: that the human may cooperate with another that he may be led to God.” He elaborates, “the human cannot work toward this by moving inwardly, for this belongs to God alone; but only outwardly by teaching or persuading them.” Therefore, as freely given, “grace contains within itself those things which the human needs in order to instruct another in divine things, which are above (*supra*) ratio.” Thomas holds

¹⁹⁶ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 3. To conclude his response, Thomas quotes Augustine, *On Nature & Grace* XXXI.

¹⁹⁷ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 3, ad 1.

¹⁹⁸ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 3, ad 2. If the ratio of human *caritas* does not imply imperfection, it is difficult to see how *fides* would, as Thomas contends. Although he will rectify this lacuna in the next article, the assent of faith is clearly one of the effects of grace. Finite created intellect is not imperfect for not knowing everything. Nor is the truth we learn as wayfarers done away with in the vision of God, rather it too is perfected; see §10, esp. n. 97 & 119 above.

¹⁹⁹ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 3, ad 3.

that three things are required for this. First, “that the human has obtained (*sortitus*—as if by lot) the fullness of cognition of divine things, so that from this she might be able to instruct others.” Second, “that she might be able to confirm or prove what she says, otherwise her teaching would not be effective.” Third, “that what she conceives, she may be able to produce fittingly for her hearers.” For the first of these, three things are needed, as in all human teaching (*magisterio*). If one would “instruct another in some *scientia*, it is necessary, first of all, that the principles of the science be most certain to her. In respect to this is placed faith, which is the certitude of invisible things, which are supposed as principles in Catholic teaching.”²⁰⁰ Second, “it is necessary that the teacher herself rightly hold the principal conclusions of the science,” which is the place of “the speech of wisdom, which is the cognition of divine things.” Third, “it is necessary that she may also abound in examples and the cognition of effects, by which she must at times manifest causes,” which is the place of “the speech of science, which is the cognition of human things, since ‘the invisible things of God are clearly seen through the things that are made’” (Rom 1:20). Rational arguments confirm teachings on natural things, “but in those things which are divinely revealed, confirmation is through those things that are proper to the divine virtue.”²⁰¹ Aquinas explains that *sapientia* and *scientia*, reckoned as spiritual gifts, render “the human mind readily movable by the Holy Spirit to the things of wisdom and knowledge.” As gratuitous graces, these two gifts of the Spirit, “imply a certain abundance of knowledge and wisdom, so that the human in itself may not only think (*sapere*) rightly of the Divine, but also instruct others and refute

²⁰⁰ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 4. As shown in §10 above, for Thomas the meaning of faith is threefold. First is common natural faith, acquired certitude in the rationality of first principles which are naturally indemonstrable. Second, faith as a theological virtue is the certain assent (Yes!) to an invisible, superrational First Principle, God. Third, faith as a spiritual gift, is superabundance of certitude empowering believers to share by teaching others, viz. *sacra doctrina*. Faith in the 2nd sense corresponds to the interior act of the will and the 3rd sense to the exterior act. As faith in the 1st sense perfects natural *intelligere*, so by grace the 2nd and 3rd senses mutually perfect the 1st in the fullness of Truth.

²⁰¹ Ibid. Thomas gives an example of such divine confirmation in ad 1 with the person of Peter: “that a fisherman abounds in the speech of wisdom and knowledge.” Thinking of Peter & the Apostles’ teacher, Mary Magdalene, I have taken the liberty of rendering our exemplary teacher as feminine in my translation above.

those who oppose.”²⁰² By its nature, **this love** is both received and given; and so, its perfection in grace must be similarly twofold. Thus, our ability to receive grace is itself also a gift given to us.

To conclude Q. 111, Aquinas will ask whether grace is more noble as freely given or as sanctifying. Having discussed the spiritual gifts, Paul tells of a more excellent way in 1Cor 12:31 and proceeds to speak of love (*agapē*). Thomas answers, “a virtue is more excellent by the higher the good to which it is ordered. And the end is always greater than the means.” It is sanctifying grace that, “orders the human immediately to the union of the last end.” As freely given, “grace orders the human to certain things preparatory to the ultimate end,” by which “human beings are led to be united to the ultimate end.”²⁰³ Sanctifying grace is therefore the more noble. Aquinas explains that, as freely given, “grace is ordered to the common good of the Church, which is ecclesiastical order; but sanctifying grace is ordered to the separate common good, which is *ipse Deus*.”²⁰⁴ In nature, “what is proper to the better is more worthy than what is common to all; as to ratiocinate, which is proper to the human, is more worthy than to feel, which is common to all animals.” In this way, “to feel is ordered into to reason (*ratiocinari*) as to an end, and therefore to reason is nobler.” But grace inverts this: “here it is the other way around, because that which is proper is ordered to that which is common as to an end.”²⁰⁵ For **this love**, the greatest good can only be the highest love, which the Apostle calls *agapē* and Augustine and Aquinas call *caritas*.

Question 112 deals with the cause of grace. Article 1 asks whether the cause of grace is God alone. Thomas answers, “Nothing is able to act beyond its own species, because the cause

²⁰² ST I-II Q. 111, art. 4, ad 4. This is the significance of attaching “speech” (*sermo*) to wisdom and knowledge as gratuitous graces. As exterior words, Thomas explains, the purpose of these gifts is apologetic—communicating the truth of God to others. To this, he cites Augustine in *Trin.* XIV.1; see §4.3 above.

²⁰³ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 5.

²⁰⁴ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 5, ad 1. Thomas affirms Paul’s account of ecclesiastical order in 1Cor 12 as patterned by the spiritual gifts of its members. Through grace, the Spirit gives life to the body, ordering its many parts into one. He also cites *Metaphysics* XII.52 for Aristotle’s example of the twofold good of an army: the good of the army itself (the many), and the good of its commander. The latter is the greater good, since the former is ordered into it.

²⁰⁵ ST I-II Q. 111, art. 5, arg. & ad 3.

must always be more powerful than its effect.” Moreover, “the gift of grace exceeds all ability of created nature, as it is nothing other than certain participation in the divine nature, which exceeds every other nature.” It is impossible for any creature to cause grace. As fire alone kindles, so it is necessary, “that God alone should deify, by communicating the fellowship (*consortium*) of the divine nature through the participation of a certain similitude.”²⁰⁶ Thus, Aquinas explains, it is “in virtue of the divinity attached from which the actions of Christ’s humanity are salvific.”²⁰⁷ As “in the very person of Christ, the humanity causes our salvation by grace, operating principally by the divine virtue; so also in the sacraments of the New Law, which are derived from Christ, grace is caused instrumentally by the sacraments themselves, but chiefly by the virtue of the Holy Spirit working in the sacraments.”²⁰⁸ We do not cause our salvation. Instead, human beings are saved because in the person of Christ Jesus, through his sacraments, the divine nature takes on, assumes, becomes incarnate in **this** love.

The second article asks whether any preparation or disposition for grace is required on the part of the human, which is the Pelagian account of salvation. Thomas answers that even “the good movement of the free will, by which one is prepared to receive the gift of grace, is an act of the free will moved by God (*a Deo*).” In this sense, human will “is prepared by God, and that the steps of the human are directed by the Master (*a Domino*).”²⁰⁹ He explains that God, “as an agent of infinite virtue requires neither matter nor the disposition of matter, as if presupposing from the action of another cause.” However, “it is necessary that, according to the condition of the thing to be caused, in the thing itself it causes both the matter and the disposition due to the form. So, “similarly to this, that God should infuse grace into the soul, no preparation is required which he

²⁰⁶ *ST I-II* Q. 112, art. 1.

²⁰⁷ *ST I-II* Q. 112, art. 1, ad 1.

²⁰⁸ *ST I-II* Q. 112, art. 1, ad 2. Thomas quotes Jn 3:5 to prove this point.

²⁰⁹ *ST I-II* Q. 112, art. 2.

himself does not make.”²¹⁰ Would this not make the human into God’s puppet? Thomas clarifies that when free will is “considered according to how it is moving *a Deo*, then it has a compulsion toward that to which it is ordered by God, not in fact of compulsion, but of infallibility, because the intention of God cannot fail.”²¹¹ By moving **this love** to choose to be true to itself, what grace achieves in us is the perfection of our free will, rather than its obliteration.

In art. 4, Aquinas asks whether grace is greater in one than in another. He explains that, “A habit can have a twofold magnitude: one, on the part of the end or the object, insofar as one virtue is said to be more noble than another insofar as it is ordered to a greater good; the other, on the part of the subject, which participates more or less in an inhering habit.” Regarding the object, union with God, sanctifying grace is binary. But, “on the part of the subject, grace can receive more or less, insofar as one is illustrated by the light of grace more perfectly than the other.” Thomas clarifies, “the certain ratio for this diversity is on the part of whoever prepares oneself for grace, for one who prepares oneself more (*magis*) for grace receives fuller grace.” Yet, “the first cause for this diversity is to be taken on the part of God himself (*ipsius Dei*), who in different modes dispenses the gifts of his grace to this, that beauty and perfection might rise up from the Church, as he institutes diverse degrees of things that the universe might be perfect.”²¹² God’s care (*cura*) for us may be considered in two ways. First, “as regards the divine act itself, which is simple and uniform. Accordingly, his care is equal to all, because by one simple act he dispenses greater and lesser things.” Second, “on the part of those things which arise in creatures from the divine care. Accordingly, inequality is found, inasmuch as God by his care gives greater

²¹⁰ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 2, ad 3.

²¹¹ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 3. This question of free will is memorably put by Melville in the captain’s soliloquy (“Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?”), *Moby-Dick*, Ch. 132, “The Symphony.” The futility of his quest reveals the error in Ahab’s logic: the will of God is life, moving us only toward that which is truly good for ourselves and for others. In formulating his own answer, Thomas quotes Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* XIV. He concludes the *Respondeo* by quoting Jn 6:45.

²¹² ST I-II Q. 112, art. 4. Thomas concludes by quoting from Eph 4:7, 12.

gifts to some, and lesser gifts to others.”²¹³ In the present time, “natural life pertains to human substance, and therefore does not receive more or less. But the human participates in the life of grace accidentally, and therefore the human is able to have it more or less.”²¹⁴ God loves all of us equally in common, but it is possible for **this love** to reflect more of the light of this grace.

The final article of Q. 112 inquires whether it is possible for us to know (*scire*) if we have grace. Thomas answers that, “something can be known (*cognosci*) in three ways.” The first mode is by revelation, which God freely gives to some, e.g., 2Cor 12:9. Secondly, “the human knows something by himself, and **this** with certitude.” Aquinas explains, “For certitude cannot be had of anything unless it can be judged by its proper principle; and thus certitude is obtained from demonstrative conclusions through indemonstrable universal principles.” But **this love** is unable to know that it has grace by this mode, as “no one can know that he has the knowledge of some conclusion if he does not know the principle.” As Thomas has shown, “the principle of grace and its object is God himself, who on account of his excellence is unknown to us.” Thus, “the human cannot judge with certainty whether he himself has grace, according to 1Cor 4:3-4.” Thirdly, “a thing is known conjecturally by signs (*signa*). And in this mode, one may know that he himself has grace, insofar as he perceives himself to delight in God and to despise worldly things,” as it is written in Rev 2:17. Such cognition, however, is imperfect.²¹⁵ He explains, “things that are in the soul through its essence are known (*cognoscuntur*) by experiential cognition, insofar as the human experiences intrinsic principles through his actions; thus we perceive the will in willing, and our life in the works of life.”²¹⁶ But if *scientia* and *gratia* are both gifts of God, it seems as

²¹³ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 4, ad 1.

²¹⁴ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 4, ad 3. The converse, however, will be the case for our life *in Patria*.

²¹⁵ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 5. On our inability to understand God, Thomas cites Job 36:26 & 9:11. On the imperfection of our knowledge, he cites 1Cor 4:4 & Ps 19:12. This is, of course, the question which would so greatly vex Martin Luther. His own longing for certitude is itself proof of what he was seeking all along, albeit indirect and imperfect. Faith says “Yes!” into eternity, and will be made certain in the *visio beatifica*, no longer needing signs to see God.

²¹⁶ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 5, ad 1.

though the two should proceed together. However, the Angelic Doctor clarifies the distinction between scientific knowledge and our knowledge of grace:

It is of the ratio of science that the human should have certitude about those things of which he has knowledge (*scientiam*); and it is likewise of the ratio of faith that the human should be certain of those things which he has of faith, and this, because certitude pertains to the perfection of the intellect in which the aforesaid gifts exist. And therefore, whoever has *scientia* or faith, he is **certain** to have them. However, there is no similar ratio for grace, *caritas*, and others of this kind which perfect the appetitive power.²¹⁷

This love exists in the present life to be a sign of God's love. What is given it by grace does not have the nature of a material thing; the gift is ordering **this** love to be more fully true in *itself*.

Thomas brings his treatise on grace to a close by considering its effects. As operating, the effect of grace is justification, which is the subject of Q. 113. He describes the justification of the ungodly as the remission of sins in art. 1. He explains that, "justification taken passively implies a movement toward justice." Since, "justice of its own ratio implies a certain rectitude of order, it may be taken in two ways." First, "it implies a right order in the human act itself, and according to this, justice is placed as a certain virtue." Second, "justice implies a certain rectitude of order in the interior disposition of the human itself, insofar as the highest of humans is subject to God, and the inferior powers of the soul are subject to the highest, namely, ratio." Justice in the latter sense may be done in us in two ways. First, "by the mode of simple generation, which is from privation to form." Second, "according to the ratio of the movement which is from one contrary to another. According to this, justification implies a certain transmutation from the state of injustice to the aforesaid state of justice" (cf. Rom 4:5). Aquinas clarifies, a movement is named more for its goal, the whereto (*terminus ad quem*) than the start, the wherefrom (*terminus a quo*). Thus, "this mode of transmutation by which someone is transmuted from the state of injustice through the forgiveness of sin, receives (*sortitur*) its name from the term to which, and is called

²¹⁷ ST I-II Q. 112, art. 5, ad 2. Translation mine.

the justification of the ungodly.”²¹⁸ But would this movement not more fittingly be called faith or *caritas*? He states, “faith and *caritas* name the special order of the human mind to God according to the intellect or affection. But justice generally implies the total rectitude of order.”²¹⁹ To show the difference, Thomas cites Rom 8:30, in which “the calling refers to the help of God inwardly moving and exciting the mind to abandon sin. This movement of God is not the forgiveness of sin itself, but its cause.”²²⁰ Justification is the total renovation of **this love** by grace, a movement beginning in the mind and extending outward, through our actions, to corporeal things.

In art. 2, Aquinas asks whether an infusion of grace is necessary for our justification. The offence of sin, he explains, “is forgiven only by this, that the soul of the offended is pacified by the offender. And therefore, according to this, our sin is said to be remitted, because God pacifies us, which certain peace consists in the love by which God loves us.” Thomas clarifies, the love of God, “on the part of the divine act, is eternal and unchangeable; but insofar as the effect which it impresses on us, it is sometimes interrupted—as we sometimes fall short of it (*ab ipso*).” Thus, “the effect of the divine love in us, which is taken away by sin, is the grace by which the human becomes worthy of eternal life, from which it excludes mortal sin. Therefore, remission of sin could not be understood unless there was an infusion of grace.”²²¹ In this way, “the *benevolentia* of God is restored to the human by the gift of grace.”²²² Although disordered by sin, **this love** is transformed through the action of God’s goodwill, namely, the infusion of grace, into an implicit likeness of the divine benevolence itself.

²¹⁸ *ST* I-II Q. 113, art. 1. On the first sense, Aquinas cites *Ethics* V.1, further distinguishing between justice as particular, “which orders the human act according to rightness in comparison to another individual human being,” and legal, “which orders the human act upright in comparison to the common good of the many.” The Philosopher speaks in V.11 of the second sense as “justice metaphorically speaking.” For Thomas on justice, see the chapter by Jean Porter in Stephen J. Pope, ed., *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2002), 272-86.

²¹⁹ *ST* I-II Q. 113, art. 1, ad 2.

²²⁰ *ST* I-II Q. 113, art. 1, ad 3.

²²¹ *ST* I-II Q. 113, art. 2.

²²² *ST* I-II Q. 113, art. 2, ad 1.

Thomas develops this in art. 3 by discussing whether justification requires a movement of the free will. He answers, “justification is effected by God moving the human to justice; for it is he who justifies the ungodly” (Rom 4:5). Further, “God moves all things according to the mode of each.” Thus, God “moves humans to justice according to the condition of human nature. And according to its proper nature, the human has free will. Therefore, in one who has the use of free will, there is no movement by God (*a Deo*) to justice without a movement of free will.” But it is God who “infuses the gift of justifying grace which, at the same time, moves this free will to accept the gift of grace in those who are capable of this movement.”²²³ Aquinas clarifies, “the gift of the grace of justification orders the human to the good, which is the object of the will; and therefore, the human is moved to it by the movement of the will, which is the movement of the free will.” The revelation of wisdom, on the other hand, “perfects the intellect, which precedes the will; so that without the complete movement of free will, the intellect can be illuminated by the gift of wisdom.”²²⁴ Thomas concludes that, “in the infusion of the grace of justification, there is a certain transmutation of the soul; and therefore, the proper movement of the human soul is required, so that the soul may be moved in its own mode.”²²⁵ It is only fitting for **this** love to be transformed by desiring itself to be conformed into the movement of a more excellent Love.

Aquinas explains in art. 4 how faith is required for justification. He states that, “for the justification of the ungodly, a movement of the mind is required, by which it is converted into God.” Citing Heb 11:6, Thomas concludes, “the first conversion into God is made by faith.”²²⁶ But he adds, “the movement of faith is not perfect unless it is informed by *caritas*; hence in the

²²³ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 3.

²²⁴ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 3, ad 2. The first objection cites the case of Augustine’s friend in *Conf.* IV; see §1.1 above. This objection cites the example of Solomon in 1Ki 3, and Thomas’ response closes by quoting Job 33:15-16. For the gift of wisdom (*donum sapientiae*), see §10 above.

²²⁵ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 3, ad 3.

²²⁶ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 4.

justification of the ungodly simultaneously with the movement of faith is also a movement of *caritas*.”²²⁷ **This** love begins its transformation into God’s love with assent: the **Yes!** of faith.

In art. 6, Thomas identifies four things as necessary for justification. He names them as, “the infusion of grace; the movement of the free will in God through faith; the movement of the free will in sin; and the remission of guilt.” Any movement by which one thing is moved by another requires three things: “first, the movement of the mover itself; secondly, the movement of the movable; and thirdly, the consummation of the movement, or the attainment of the end.” The first, Aquinas explains, is the infusion of grace. For the second, on the part of the free will moved, there are two movements, according to the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem*.²²⁸ **This** love is a body in motion—but how can any such corporeal body reach a heavenly destination?

This question brings us back to Zeno’s paradoxes. In art. 7, Thomas asks if justification takes place in an instant, or successively. He answers, “total justification of the ungodly consists originally in the infusion of grace; for by it both free will is moved, and guilt is remitted.” As the impression of a form, “the infusion of grace takes place instantaneously without succession.” If the form, “is not suddenly imprinted (*imprimatur*) on the subject, it is due to this: that the subject is not disposed, and the agent needs time to dispose of the subject.” Since, “the divine power is infinite, it is able suddenly (*subito*) to dispose any created matter to form, and much more the free will of the human, whose movement is able to be instantaneous according to nature.”²²⁹ But can it be possible for our free will to move both toward God and away from sin simultaneously? Aquinas clarifies, “Nothing prohibits from act to understand two at the same time, insofar as they are somehow one, just as we understand subject and predicate at the same time, insofar as they

²²⁷ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 4, ad 1. Thomas will affirm this point in II-II Q. 4, art. 3; see §10 above.

²²⁸ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 6.

²²⁹ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 7.

are united in the order of one affirmation.” In the same mode, “free will can simultaneously be moved in two, insofar as one is ordered to the other.”²³⁰ But if justification is a movement in time, how can it also be simultaneous? Thomas explains, “the succession of two opposites in the same subject must be considered differently in those which are subject to time than those which are above time.” In the former, “there is no last instant in which the form precedes the subject, but there is the last time, and the first instant in which the subsequent form is in the matter or subject.” Here we have Thomas’ solution to Zeno’s paradoxes: “the ratio for this is that, in time, one instant cannot be taken before another instant preceding immediately, because an instant does not itself have a sequence in time, as neither are points in a line, as proven in *Physics* [VI.1].” Like a line, time is not an infinite series of individual points, but a single, continuous movement. However, “time ends in an instant. Therefore, in the whole preceding time, in which something is moved to one form, it is under the opposite form; and in the last instant of that time, which is the first instant of the following time, it has a form, which is the limit of movement.” Time moves by transformation. Aquinas concludes, “the human mind which is justified is itself indeed above time (*supra tempus*), but accidentally is subject to time, inasmuch as it understands with continuity and time according to phantasms, in which it considers intelligible species.” And so, “we must judge according to this, of its change (*mutatione*) according to the condition of the temporal movements, so that we may clearly say that there is no giving the last instant in which the guilt was before, but the last time; and to give the first instant in which *gratia inest*, and in the whole preceding time *inerat culpa*.”²³¹ In relation to exterior things, **this** love moves in time; but, by the inward relation of intelligible things, the movement of **this** love goes beyond time.

²³⁰ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 7, ad 2. Thomas cites his answer in I Q. 85, art. 5; see §8 above.

²³¹ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 7, ad 5. Aquinas refers to his answers in I Q. 85, art. 1 & 2; see §8 above. Cf. T.S. Eliot: “history is a pattern of timeless moments,” from Stanza V of “Little Gidding,” the final of his *Four Quartets*.

Thomas further explains the distinction between these two kinds of movement in art. 8. He states, “the aforesaid four things which are required for the justification of the ungodly are in time indeed simultaneous, because the justification of the ungodly is not successive, as stated above; but in the order of nature one of them is prior to the other.” First is the movement of God, the mover, which is the infusion of grace. Next, “the movement or disposition of the movable is the twofold movement of the free will.” Thus, the second is the movement of the free will into God; and the third is its movement from sin. Aquinas clarifies, “for on account of this, he who is justified detests sin, because it is against God; hence the movement of the free will into God naturally precedes the movement of free will from sin, since it is its cause and ratio.” Fourth, the term of the movement, “is the remission of guilt, to which this whole transformation is ordered as to an end.”²³² To summarize: “it may be said that the *terminus a quo* of justification is guilt, justice is the *terminus ad quem*, and that grace is the cause of the forgiveness of guilt and the attainment of justice.”²³³ He cites the Philosopher, “in movements of the soul, movement wholly precedes into the principle of the speculation, or into the end of the action; but in movements outward, the removal of an obstacle precedes the attainment of the end.”²³⁴ According to the order of nature, **this love** moves toward God as into its end, before removing the fault of sin.

In art. 9, Thomas asks whether justification is God’s greatest work (*maximum opus*). He answers that a work may be said to be great in two ways. The first is “on the part of the mode of action. And thus, the greatest work is creation, in which something is made out of nothing.” Or, “it may be said that a work is great on account of the greatness of the thing made.” Accordingly, justification, “which terminates in the eternal good of divine participation, is a greater work than

²³² ST I-II Q. 113, art. 8.

²³³ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 8, ad 1.

²³⁴ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 8, ad 3. The relevant citation for Aristotle is *Physics* II.9.

the creation of heaven and earth, which terminates in the good of mutable nature.” Similarly, a thing is called great in two ways. First is according to absolute quantity and, “in this way the gift of glory is greater than the gift of grace that justifies the ungodly.” And so, “the glorification of the just is a greater work than the justification of the ungodly.” Or, “something is said to be great in proportion to its quantity,” and “in this way the gift of grace justifying the ungodly is greater than the gift of glory blessing the just.”²³⁵ Ultimately, “the good of the universe is greater than the particular good of one, if we consider both of them in the same genus. But the good of the grace of one is greater than the good of the nature of the whole universe.”²³⁶ In the work of creation, **this** love comes into being as part of the universe. By justification, **this** love comes to be transformed by participation in the divine essence.

Aquinas concludes his treatise on grace in Q. 114 with merit, which is the effect of grace as cooperating. He introduces the topic with a quote from the Theologian near the end of Q. 113: “caritas begun merits increase and, when increased, merits perfection.”²³⁷ Thomas here revisits the position of the Pelagians, who hold that human actions do not need grace in order for them to have merit. In art. 1, Aquinas asks whether human beings can merit anything from their Creator. He identifies merit as an act of justice and cites the Philosopher: “justice is a certain equality. Therefore, justice simply is between those who are simply equal; but of those for whom there is simply no equality, there is no justice simply; but there can be a certain mode of justice, as a certain right of a father or lord” (*Ethics* V.3,6). However, twixt “God and the human there is the greatest inequality; for they are infinitely distant, and the whole of the human good is from God (a Deo). And therefore, “human justice is not able to be toward God according absolute equality,

²³⁵ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 9. In both the *Sed contra* and *Respondeo*, Thomas quotes from the Theologian’s exposition of Jn 14:12 at length.

²³⁶ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 9, ad 2.

²³⁷ ST I-II Q. 113, art. 10. The quote is from *ep. Jo.* V; see §2.3 above.

but according to a certain proportion, insofar as each of them operates according to their mode.”

The Angelic Doctor concludes that,

the mode and measure of human virtue is to the human from God (*a Deo*). Therefore, human merit is able to be with God only according to the presupposition of the divine ordering, so that the human clearly obtains it from God by his operation as a reward, to which God assigned (*deputavit*) him the virtue of acting, just as natural things follow this by their proper movements and operations, to which they are ordered by God; but in a different way, because the rational creature moves itself to act by free will; hence, its action has the ratio of merit, which is not in other creatures.²³⁸

Thus, “the human merits insofar as he does what ought by the proper will (*propria voluntate*),” for the reward to be justified.²³⁹ Aquinas explains, “God does not seek profit from our goods, but glory, that is, the manifestation of his goodness, which he also seeks from his works.” From our worship, nothing accrues to God, but to **this love**. Hence, “we deserve something from God, not as if something accrues to him by our works, but insofar as we work for his glory.”²⁴⁰ However, as, “our action has no ratio of merit except on the presupposition of divine ordering,” God does not owe us a debt, but one “to himself, insofar as it is due that his order be fulfilled.”²⁴¹ For God to love **this love**, it has to mean God sees it as fitting, and necessary to do so, because beautiful.

In art. 2, Thomas asks whether anyone without grace can merit eternal life. If the human really is divinely ordered to this end, it would seem that we would merit it. Aquinas answers, “no act of anything is divinely ordered to something exceeding the proportion of the virtue which is the principle of the act; for this is from the institution of divine providence, that nothing may act beyond its virtue.” Indeed, “eternal life is a certain good that exceeds the proportion of created nature, because it exceeds our cognition and desire” (1Cor 2:9). And so, “no created nature is a sufficient principle of an act meritorious of eternal life, unless some supernatural gift is added to

²³⁸ *ST I-II Q. 114, art. 1.* Translation mine.

²³⁹ *ST I-II Q. 114, art. 1, ad 1.*

²⁴⁰ *ST I-II Q. 114, art. 1, ad 2.*

²⁴¹ *ST I-II Q. 114, art. 1, ad 3.*

it, which is called grace.”²⁴² Therefore, “God has ordered human nature to reach (*consequendum*) the end of eternal life, not by its proper virtue, but by the help of grace. In this mode, his act is able to be meritorious of eternal life.”²⁴³ If **this love** is on its own, then Zeno’s paradoxes hold. But—when moved by God’s Love—**this love** becomes able to reach its ultimate destination.

Next, Thomas inquires whether the human can merit eternal life fittingly (*ex condigno*). He answers, “the meritorious work of the human can be considered in two ways.” The first mode is “insofar as it proceeds from the free will.” The second is “insofar as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Spirit.” Congruity between them is “on account of a certain equality of proportion; for it seems fitting (*congruum*) that God should reward the human who works according to his own virtue, according to the excellence of his virtue.” Aquinas concludes, “the value of a work depends on the dignity of grace, by which the human, becoming a partner in the divine nature, is adopted into a child of God, to whom the inheritance is due by the very right of adoption.”²⁴⁴ As the pattern of the oak tree is present in an acorn, “the Holy Spirit similarly dwells in the human through grace, which is the sufficient cause of eternal life.”²⁴⁵ As grace, the Spirit is the seed of the divine essence, planted in the soil of **this love**.

Fittingly, in art. 4, Aquinas asks whether grace is the principle of merit through *caritas* rather than the other virtues. He recaps, “the human act has the ratio of meriting from two things: first and foremost, from divine ordering, insofar as the act is said to be meritorious for **that good** to which the human is divinely ordered; second, on the part of free will, inasmuch as the human has more than other creatures to act through himself by acting voluntarily.” And to both of them,

²⁴² *ST* I-II Q. 114, art. 2.

²⁴³ *ST* I-II Q. 114, art. 2, ad 1.

²⁴⁴ *ST* I-II Q. 114, art. 3. Thomas concludes by quoting Rom 8:17. Cf. 2Pet 1:4.

²⁴⁵ *ST* I-II Q. 114, art. 3, ad 3. Aquinas cites 2Cor 1:22, which reads: “he also sealed us (*sphragisamenos*) and gave us his Spirit in our hearts as a down-payment (*arrabōna*).” Cf. Rom 5:5.

the principality of merit consists in *caritas*. First, we must consider that eternal life consists in the enjoyment (*fruition*) of God. Now the movement of the human mind to the enjoyment of the divine good is the proper act of *caritas*, by which the acts of all other virtues are ordered to this end, insofar as the other virtues are commanded by *caritas*. Thus, the merit of eternal life primarily pertains to *caritas*, and secondarily to the other virtues, insofar as their acts are commanded by *caritas*. Similarly, it is also manifest that what we do out of love (*ex amore*) we do most voluntarily. Hence, insofar as it is required for the ratio of merit to be voluntary, merit is principally attributed to *caritas*.²⁴⁶

Thomas explains, *caritas*, “insofar as it has an ultimate end for its object, moves the other virtues to action. For the habit to which the end is concerned always commands the habits to which the means belong.”²⁴⁷ But if God is the mover, should that not lessen our merit? Aquinas replies that a work can be laborious in two ways. First, “on account of the greatness of the work. And thus, the greatness of work pertains to the increase of merit. And thus, *caritas* does not diminish the labor, but rather makes one undertake the greatest works.” Second, “from the defection of the worker itself, for what anyone does not do willingly is laborious and difficult. And such labor diminishes merit, and is removed by *caritas*.”²⁴⁸ The proper work **this love** owes is *caritas*.

In art. 5, Aquinas asks whether **this love** can merit the first grace for itself. His answer, in short: “Every human good work proceeds from the first grace as from the principle. But it does not proceed from any human gift. Thus, there is no similar ratio for the gift of grace and human gifts.”²⁴⁹ In art. 6, Thomas proceeds to ask whether **this love** can merit the first grace for another. He explains, “our work has a twofold ratio of merit.” First, “from the force of the divine motion, and thus someone merits from congruence.” Second, work “has the ratio of merit according as it proceeds from free will, insofar as we do something willingly; and from this part merit is fitting, since it is congruous that, while the human makes good use of his own virtue, God should work

²⁴⁶ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 4. In *doc. Chr.*, the Theologian refers to such enjoyment as *frui*; see §2.2 above.

²⁴⁷ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 4, ad 1.

²⁴⁸ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 4, ad 2. On the first mode, Thomas cites Gregory, *Forty Homilies on the Gospels* XXX: where *caritas* exists, “it does great things.”

²⁴⁹ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 5, ad 3.

more excellently according to his *superexcellent* virtue.” Aquinas concludes that only Christ can fittingly merit the first grace for another, “because each of us is moved by God through the gift of grace to attain eternal life, and therefore the fittingness of merit does not extend beyond this movement.” But, “the soul of Christ was moved by God through grace, not only to attain to the glory of eternal life, but also to lead others into it, inasmuch as he is the Head of the Church and the Author of human salvation” (Heb 2:10). However, one “may fittingly merit the first grace for another; since in grace the human establishes (*constitutus*) the will of God, it is fitting, according to the proportion of friendship, that God fulfills the human will in the salvation of another.”²⁵⁰ **This** love carries out God’s will in this world through its desire for sharing itself graciously in communion with others for the common good of all.

Accordingly, Thomas asks in art. 8 whether the human can merit an increase of grace or *caritas*. He states, “**that** thing falls under befitting merit to which the movement of grace extends itself,” explaining that the reason for this is because, “the motion of any mover extends not only to the final end of the movement, but also to the whole progression in the movement. And so, the term of the movement of grace is eternal life, and progress in this movement is according to the increase of *caritas* or grace.”²⁵¹ Aquinas clarifies, “reward is the term of merit. But the terminus of movement is twofold: the last, and the middle, which is both the beginning and the end; and this terminus is the reward of increase.”²⁵² And therefore, “by any meritorious act, the human deserves an increase of grace—and the consummation of grace also, which is eternal life.” Yet, “just as eternal life is not rendered at once, but in its own time; so, grace does not increase at once, but in its own time, namely, when someone is sufficiently disposed toward the increase of

²⁵⁰ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 6.

²⁵¹ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 8. The *Sed contra* cites the same passage in *ep. Jo.* V as Q. 113, art. 10; see above. On the progress of the movement, Thomas cites Prov 4:18. That by which the eternal touches the temporal is itself eternal.

²⁵² ST I-II Q. 114, art. 8, ad 1.

grace.”²⁵³ **This love** comes to be eternal in time. This is because its cause—God’s Love—is itself eternal, but—through the act of creation—unfolds in time.

Next, Aquinas discusses whether we may merit perseverance. He answers that, “since the human naturally has free will to be flexible toward good and evil, one can obtain perseverance in good from God in two ways.” First is, “that free will is determined to the good of the grace of consummation, which will be in glory.” Second is, “on the part of the divine movement, which inclines the human to the good to the end.” As he has made clear in the preceding three articles, “that thing falls under human merit, which is related to the movement of the free will directed by the movement *a Deo* as the terminus, but not to that which is related to the aforesaid movement as a principle.” Thomas concludes, “the perseverance of glory, which is the end of the aforesaid movement, falls under merit; but the perseverance of the way does not fall under merit, because it depends only on the divine movement, which is the principle of all merit. But God grants the good of perseverance freely to whomever he bestows it.”²⁵⁴ Thus, it is only by God’s love that **this love** can hope to hold on in this life and remain on course toward our ultimate goal.

Thomas concludes Q. 114, and with it, his treatise on grace, by asking whether temporal goods fall under merit. He answers, “that which falls under merit is a reward or wage which has the character of some good.” The human good is “twofold: one simply; and the other, relatively” (*secundum quid*). Simply, “the human good is its ultimate end” (Ps 73:28); and “consequently, all those things which are ordered are so as to lead to this end; and such things fall simply under merit.” Relatively, our good is what is good for us here and now. Therefore, Aquinas deduces,

if temporal goods are considered as beneficial to the works of the virtues, through which we are led to eternal life, they fall directly and simply under merit, as also the increase of grace, and all those things by which the human is helped to attain into happiness after the

²⁵³ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 8, ad 3.

²⁵⁴ ST I-II Q. 114, art. 9. Here we have the nucleus of Thomas’ understanding of the theological virtue of hope.

first grace. For God gives so much of temporal goods to humans—the just and even the evil—inasmuch as is expedient for them to arrive at eternal life. And, insofar as temporal goods are of this mode, they are simply good.²⁵⁵

However, “if these temporal goods are considered in themselves, they are not human goods simply, but relatively. And so, they do not fall under merit simply, but according to this: insofar as humans are moved *a Deo* to do things temporally, in which they obtain their purpose, with God’s favor.” Thomas concludes, “just as eternal life is simply the reward of the works of justice in relation to the divine movement...so temporal goods, considered in themselves, have the character of reward, with respect to the divine movement by which human wills are moved to pursue these things,” though humans sometimes do not have the right intention in them.²⁵⁶ For, “all things happen equally to the good and to the bad, as to the very substance of temporal goods or of evils. But not as regards the end, because the good are led to happiness by such means, but not the bad. And these things are said to lay a foundation (*sufficient*) for morality in common.”²⁵⁷ And so, **this** love is meant to love the good for all things—in this way, **this** love becomes *a Deo*.

Merit can be understood in terms of the most prized quality of stained glass, translucence, which is the property of a substance that allows light to be filtered through itself, shining in part. And this brings us back to our pilgrim, standing in awe at the crossing of *Notre-Dame*. Looking up at either end of the transept, he beholds a great circle of light floating high above the darkness below. In each window, the viewer sees the many different colors, shapes, and figures become one within a single pattern as the light of the sun filters through them all from both ends into the

²⁵⁵ *ST I-II* Q. 114, art. 10. Thomas then quotes from Ps 34:10 & 37:25. Cf. Lonergan: “What is good, always is concrete,” *Method*, 27. The latter speaks of the good as a thing, but seems to miss the second sense the former uses here. The good as formal is the ordering that transforms a thing into a sign. In this way, true meaning as informative, though not concrete, can be good in itself; see §5.1 above. But we can **hold on** to the good in anticipation, viz. hope; and this is the literal meaning of Rom 5:5. In this life, every true good is a sign pointing to a fulfillment *not yet* fully realized, our movement toward which is guided by understanding & propelled by love. The good is always an order.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *ST I-II* Q. 114, art. 10, ad 4. With this final sentence, Thomas concludes the First Part of the Second Part, and introduces the Second, discussing the 7 virtues (3 theological + 4 cardinal), beginning with faith (see §10 above).

church.²⁵⁸ At the center of the circle in the north is Our Lady herself, a mother with her child seated on her lap. Looking south, the pilgrim sees her son again at the center of the great circle, this time alone, as man and Savior. Between these two ends is the movement of grace, which belongs to the simple harmonic motion of the divine Act: the *exitus-reditus* of generation and salvation that forms the structure of the *Summa theologiae* itself. We have now come into the heart of the intellectual cathedral of Thomas Aquinas. It is through love and its ultimate form, namely, *caritas*, that human beings can share our life together in communion, incarnating God with the body of believers, the Church—turning **this love** into a translucent piece of the divine illustration by incorporating its unique color into the glorious spectrum of the divine Light.

²⁵⁸ For another artistic example of the principle, consider M.C. Escher's *Circle Limit III*, based on the tessellation of the hyperbolic plane by right triangles with angles of 30°, 45°, & 90°, drawing upon the work of H.S.M. Coxeter.

Conclusion: The Signature of *Communio*

A pilgrim is not a tourist; and today is a holy day. At the crossing of Notre-Dame is an altar; and you have come there in order to receive communion. Unlike other ancient monuments, the Gothic cathedrals are still in use for their original purpose. From the day of their dedication, these churches have served as physical setting for the spiritual drama of the Mass. Magnificent as they are, the structures are designed for a purpose transcending the material: to shelter and guide pilgrims such as yourself on the way to salvation. **This** meaning of Notre-Dame is incarnational. By the work of art, the building was made to point to something beyond itself: the real presence of our Creator. The stone, wood, and glass also testify to the passing of eight centuries. However, as they have learned to say in Paris, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.¹ Although things have indeed changed since Thomas Aquinas celebrated the Eucharist with his contemporaries, they would recognize the loving faith which continues to draw believers to Notre-Dame up into the present.² For those who partake of the body and blood of Christ there today are participating in something eternal: reality itself. The material is subjected to time and change, but the Spirit is not. In this act of communion, the Truth of all that exists comes for us to partake together in love.

Returning to yourself, once again you see Augustine and Thomas there beside each other on the wall before you. In Raphael's fresco, the two Doctors of the Church also stand before the Sacred Host, among a congregation of their peers, discussing the teaching of Transubstantiation. It is their conversation to which you have been listening all this time. You turn back to look at the *School of Athens* and the dialogue of the philosophers of classical antiquity, above all that of the teacher and the student at its center: Plato with his upraised finger and Aristotle with his hand

¹ Formulated by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr in 1849, the epigram declares that, "the more it changes, the more it's the same thing."

² The Mass itself has been reformed twice since Aquinas' time, first at the Council of Trent, then at Vatican II.

outstretched. Inspired by Doctor of Grace and the Angelic Doctor, you realize how they can be brought together. The relationship is analogous to the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*. Gesturing downward, Aristotle thus represents science and its investigation of the natural world, while the elderly figure of Plato pointing to the heavens depicts wisdom. The juxtaposition of the two philosophers can now be integrated with the central axis of the *Disputation*. The Sacred Host emerges from nature as created, but this is perfected in the act of grace. The Eucharist is a sign of the composite nature of our being, as are all sacraments, bringing the material into harmony with the eternal Truth of God's Love as **this love** is moved within to remember **this Word in this act**. In this way, what bread is points us to the meaning of the Divine Itself.³ The matter placed on the altar—**this bread**—broken and offered up, symbolizes the *Logos* of God's Love, Who brings all things into existence, and in Whom we are united together into One: the Alpha and the Omega. Making and eating bread are both types of transformation. By way of generation, the earth brings forth grain which, by way of division, is ground into flour. By way of generation, it is then mixed with other ingredients and baked into bread. By way of division, bread is chewed, then digested. But, by way of generation, it then becomes part of us, giving us life itself. This *Logos* is the logic that illuminates the universe, the Word defining who we are, each and all.

Christian teaching of God as Trinity is formulated in order to account for the event of **this love**, the emergence of human being created in the image and likeness of our Creator. This is the Church's answer to the ultimate question of philosophy: the relationship of the many and the one that defines reality itself. Although theologians would use Platonic and Aristotelian categories to explicate the doctrine of the Trinity, this teaching—that God becomes incarnate in mortal flesh—confounds both philosophers. But, just below their feet and slightly to the left, you see someone

³ That is, the *quod quid est* of bread, its species, which is understood by our minds as the ratio in a formula. In the case of bread, this formula is exemplified by the recipe defining the process by which it comes to be made.

else in the *School of Athens*, sitting by himself, deep in contemplation. The figure, wearing his trademark boots, is that of Michelangelo, whom Raphael uses to depict Heraclitus. The book that he is writing on a block of marble is now lost, known to us only through fragments. But we know that both Plato and Aristotle read and were influenced by this book. We can still read its opening sentence because the latter happens to quote it word for word:

But of this Word's (*logou*) being forever (*aei*) do humans prove to be uncomprehending, both before the first they hear and after they have heard. For, though all things come to be (*ginomenōn*) in accordance with this Word (*logon*), they are like the inexperienced when they experience words and deeds such as I set out, distinguishing each thing according to its nature and showing how it is what it is. But other people know not what they do when awake, just as they forget what they do while asleep.⁴

As Augustine is the first philosopher of the will, Heraclitus is the first philosopher of the *logos*.⁵ Five centuries before the birth of Jesus, he would write, in propositions of epigrammatic brevity, of reality as a dialogue through which all things are both distinguished and ultimately united into one. In another fragment, Heraclitus instructs, "Listening not to me but to the Word (*logou*), it is wise (*sophon*) to confess (*homologeîn*) that all is one (*hen panta*)."⁶ Aristotle would consider this to violate the principle of non-contradiction at the heart of his own philosophy. But it is perhaps better for us to understand Heraclitus' *logos* in terms of analogy, irony, and paradox.

Forms are Plato's theoretical solution to the problem of the one and the many. Universal Ideas in which material things participate are the means by which material things are united, as well as the standards by which they are defined and measured. That which can be differentiated

⁴ Diels-Kranz Fragment B1. Aristotle discusses the first line in *Rhetoric* III.5, which he considers ambiguous, unsure whether *aei* modifies either the being of the *logos* or human incomprehension. The remainder of the fragment is reconstructed from quotations in other sources. My translation renders the ambiguity as deliberate on the author's part, thus applying "forever" to both clauses.

⁵ Among existing classical sources, it is Plato who refers to Heraclitus most extensively. Considering Heraclitus to be obscure and even contradictory, Aristotle instead attributes the origin of dialectics to Zeno of Elea. In addition, the development of modern German philosophy would be profoundly influenced by Heraclitus, above all with Hegel (who regards him as the founder of philosophy), Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

⁶ DK22B50. All translations of the fragments are my own. *Homologeîn* can also mean to claim, acknowledge, grant, agree, assure, praise, or promise; BDAG, 708-9.

ultimately belongs together.⁷ This Platonic insight can be understood in light of the teaching of Heraclitus, who declares, “They do not comprehend how what is unlike (*diapheromenon*) itself agrees (*homologeēi*): a harmony in the bending back (*palintropos*), as in the bow and the lyre.”⁸ Thereby he posits a hidden unity of opposites in tension. In Homeric Greek, the word for bow is *bios*, which is also the word for life. As Heraclitus observes, “in the bow the name is life, though its work is death.”⁹ The meaning—*logos*—which unites these two is that each is the means of the other. When a hunter uses it to kill his prey, or a soldier his enemy, the bow is an instrument that provides for and protects life—to understand this is to grasp the connection of what appears to be unrelated. This hermeneutics of the *logos* thus entails a comprehension in which disparate things are united. It is in turning back in the act Lonergan names as judgment that this *logos* is revealed. **This** is how human beings encounter reality through understanding.¹⁰ Differentiating the creature from the Creator is therefore also simultaneously to relate ourselves to God.

Heraclitus is perhaps best remembered today for his observation that no one can enter the same river twice. The reason for this is the constant nature of change, as everything flows (*panta rhei*). This is how Diogenes Laertius characterizes Heraclitus’ philosophy: “All things come into being (*ginesthai*) by conflict of opposites, and the whole flows like a stream.”¹¹ In his cosmology there are four elements: earth, wind, water, and fire. Of these, Heraclitus regards the fundamental element to be the last of these, *pur*, for he explains, “Fire in its advance will judge (*krinei*) and

⁷ Cf. DK22B10. This is the basis of Plato’s unwritten doctrine identifying the Good (*to agathon*) with the One (*to hen*): the good of the many is that which unites them all. Plotinus would develop this insight into his teaching of the emergence and return of all things to the One, which would in turn inspire both Augustine (as in *Conf.* VII & IX; see §1.1 & §6.1 above) and Thomas Aquinas, viz., the *exitus-reditus* schema of his *Summa theologiae*.

⁸ DK22B51.

⁹ DK22B48. The difference between the two senses of the word is a function of the accent: *bíos* means life, while *biós* means bow; see Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

¹⁰ According to Heidegger, “Heraclitus’s teaching on *logos* is taken as a predecessor of the *logos* mentioned in the New Testament, in the prologue to the Gospel of John. The *logos* is Christ. Now, since Heraclitus already speaks of the *logos*, the Greeks arrived at the very doorstep of absolute truth, namely, the revealed truth of Christianity.” *Introduction to Metaphysics, Second Edition* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2014), 149.

¹¹ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* IX.1.8.

convict all things.”¹² In another fragment, he speaks of “turnings of fire” (*puros tropai*) which are measured (*metreetai*) by the *logos*.¹³ This rational fire is the basis of transformation and also the breath of life. And so, Heraclitus concludes that, “Wisdom is one (*hen to sophon*): to know the thought (*epistasthai gnōmēn*) by which all things are guided through all things (*ekubernēse panta dia pantōn*).”¹⁴ The *logos* is not some static thing; it is the dynamic uniting all things that change into one. This principle of integration is the foundation of all understanding: truth itself.

Once more, you turn to the *Disputation*. Between the Sacred Host on the altar and Christ enthroned in glory above is an image of a dove emerging with light from flame and flanked by the Gospels, a depiction of the Holy Spirit. The end of your intellectual odyssey is finally in sight as you believe you have found the answer to your original question: the relationship of love and understanding. *Logos* and *agapē* become one in the person of Christ Jesus. It is in his body, the Church, that believers remember the meaning of the universe itself in the life they share together. Looking at the Doctor of Grace, you notice the gesture of his hand, palm open, turned toward his *amanuensis*.¹⁵ At last, you espy an answer to the question he would leave unanswered at the end of *De Trinitate*: the differentiation of Word and Gift. In the *Logos*, **this love** must die to be born again. Meaning is revealed analogically. In Greek *analogia* refers to a relationship of proportion, and *anastasis* means resurrection.¹⁶ Love itself, on the other hand, can never die—love gives life.

You remember that you are standing in the *Stanza della Segnatura*. In addition to housing the pope’s personal library this is also the room where the tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura of Grace would meet. This is the *Room of the Signature*, the place of decision. A signature is a seal

¹² DK22B66.

¹³ DK22B31.

¹⁴ DK22B41.

¹⁵ In Latin, the term *amanuensis* originally referred to a slave “within hand’s reach” of the master, i.e., at his personal service. However, it would come to refer specifically to a personal secretary or scribe who would write down words that are dictated, as is the case with Paul’s letters (e.g., Tertius, who identifies himself in Rom 16:22).

¹⁶ In Rom 12:6, Paul uses *analogia* to speak of the gift of prophecy being given in proportion to faith; BDAG, 67.

of meaning. An ancient Roman would make his signature with the impression of his signet ring. The signature of the pontiff is given by his ring, the Ring of the Fisherman, the sign of those who are followers of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:17). As official acts of the *Signatura* receive the apostolic seal, so by our own actions each of us gives our personal signature, the sign of our true self.

Turning to the right, among figures crowned with miters and tiaras, you see one crowned with laurel and clothed in scarlet. You recognize the solemn visage as that of Dante Alighieri, the poet, whom Raphael also locates atop the *Parnassus*—the only historical figure to receive such a double honor in the frescoes of the *Stanza della Segnatura*. This is only fitting, as his epic poem, the *Divine Comedy*, is also a work of theology that draws heavily upon the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, an allegory representing the soul's pilgrimage to God. Divided into three parts, Dante begins with the *Inferno*, in which he travels through Hell guided by his fellow poet, Virgil, whose influence was also formative for the young Augustine. After passing through *Purgatorio*, he comes to *Paradiso*. Guided by Beatrice, who signifies revelation and theology, Dante travels across the celestial spheres. The ultimate sphere of the cosmos, the Ninth, is the *Primum Mobile* ("First Moved"). According to the description of *il Sommo Poeta* ("the Supreme Poet"),

This heaven has no other where than this:
the mind of God, in which are kindled both
the love that turns it and the force it rains.

As in a circle, light and love enclose it,
as it surrounds the rest and that enclosing,
only He who encloses understands.

No other heaven measures this sphere's motion,
but it serves as the measure for the rest,
even as half and fifth determine ten;¹⁷

¹⁷ Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XXVII, lines 109-117, trans. Allen Mandelbaum. The motif of the heavenly spheres originates with the Pythagoreans, who believed that all things in the cosmos, exemplified by the celestial bodies, moved according to a pattern of proportion: the harmony or music of the spheres (*musica universalis*). Pythagoras first discovered that the pitch of a musical note is in inverse proportion to the length of the string that produces it,

Yet Dante ascends still further, into the highest heaven, the Empyrean. There, Beatrice, his guide is transfigured. Her beauty, both spiritual and erotic, encompasses him in light, which first blinds him, then renders him fit to behold the Trinity. Coming face to face with God, Dante sees three coextensive circles, in which he discerns the human form of Jesus Christ, and is transformed:

But already my desire and my will
were being turned like a wheel, all at one speed,
by the Love which moves the sun and the other stars.¹⁸

Originally titled the *Comedia* by its author, this poem would be fittingly rechristened as divine by Boccaccio, whom Raphael also depicts, across the summit of the *Parnassus* from Dante. In between them is Apollo, as the god of *mousikē*, the *maestro* of the muses.

The Greeks also regarded Apollo as the god of prophecy, patron of the Oracle at Delphi. In their enthusiastic devotion, they considered him the most beautiful of the gods.¹⁹ The protector of youth, Apollo was also their god of healing, shepherds and, above all, the Sun. You remember the words of Francis of Assisi from his song, the *Canticle of the Sun*, also known as the *Laudes Creaturarum* (“Praise of the Creatures”):

*Laudato sie, mi Signore cum tucte le Tue creature,
spetialmente messor lo frate Sole,
lo qual è iorno, et allumini noi per lui.
Et ellu è bellu e radiante cum grande splendore:
de Te, Altissimo, porta significatione.*²⁰

Apollo is not God, nor is our Sun. But both are signs pointing us to the true God, around Whom all creation moves. Held by its gravity, all things that orbit the Sun together make up our Solar System. And so, in communion with all things, **this love** is always falling into God Who Is Love.

and that the intervals between harmonious sound frequencies form simple numerical ratios. He also hypothesized that the planets, Sun, and Moon together emit a harmonious vibration based on their orbital revolutions, and that the quality of life here on Earth reverberates the tenor of these celestial sounds, which are imperceptible to our ears.

¹⁸ *Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII, lines 142-145, trans. C.H. Sisson.

¹⁹ Paul would observe the extreme religiosity of the Athenians in Acts 17:22.

²⁰ The *Canticle of the Sun* is one of the first works of Italian literature. Any translation that I could provide would only demean the beauty of Francis’ Umbrian. Go, figure it out for yourselves!

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