

Divine Initiative, Human Response:
A Study of Moral Responsibility in Bernard
Lonergan's Early Works on Operative Grace

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A Thesis

In

The Department

Of

Theological Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Theological Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2007

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ABSTRACT

Divine Initiative, Human Response: A Study of the Ground of Moral Responsibility in Bernard Lonergan's Early Work on Operative Grace

John Mark Hammond

According to Bernard Lonergan being is connatural with intelligibility; the universe is ultimately systematic and intelligible right down to the smallest detail. But what does this mean for freedom, and what does this mean for moral responsibility?

In this thesis we will examine the grounds of moral responsibility in Lonergan's early works on Thomas Aquinas' theory of operative grace. This issue is of fundamental importance to ethics, as it will determine the nature of our ability to act morally, and our limitations. Therefore through this thesis we will see that Lonergan's early works on operative grace are also of fundamental importance to ethics.

We will begin with the Pelagian controversy, where the question first emerged. Then we will examine Lonergan's philosophical and methodological assumptions as he began his "apprenticeship" to Aquinas. And finally, we will examine the actual content of Lonergan's presentation.

What will become evident is that this is a complex question; in fact, it pushes human reason to its limits. Ultimately, it may only be able to be resolved by taking a stand on the nature of the universe, a stand similar to the one in physics, in which one accepts the worldview of classical or quantum physics.

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THESIS STATEMENT

In this thesis I will explore the foundations of moral responsibility in the early works of Bernard Lonergan. My particular focus will be on Grace and Freedom and Gracia Operans.

This study is intended to be a step towards deepening my understanding of Lonergan's philosophical and theological systems, which in turn is a step towards gaining the necessary foundations with which to practice ethics. Through this work I will show that Lonergan's early work on operative grace is of immense importance to ethics.

Due to the complexity and scope of these matters this study is meant to lay the groundwork for a fuller and more conclusive work. My aim is to acquaint myself with the terminological landscape, and to identify the questions and problems at the heart of this subject.

My thesis question is: Does Lonergan's philosophical and theological worldview - which, as the inheritor of the legacy of Augustine and Aquinas, views the universe as connatural with intelligibility - produce a potential dilemma for ethics, in that it denies that human beings have an inherent ability to act as radically free, uncaused, agents?

INTRODUCTION

While this thesis is concerned with very theoretical concepts, and is certainly a step or two removed from any everyday ethical problems, ultimately it is a work in ethics, and my intent is ultimately the very concrete goal of working as an ethicist. I am motivated in the choice of my topic by the knowledge that in the context of moral and cultural pluralism I need to develop strong theoretical foundations that will facilitate ethical deliberation.

The specific focus of this thesis is to better understand the thought of Bernard Lonergan. I ultimately intend to use Lonergan's thought as my ethical foundation. With ethics as my general goal, and Lonergan as the specific goal, I had to find a subject that would combine these ends.

So, why choose the question of the nature of moral responsibility in Lonergan's early works on operative grace?

This question is relevant to my general goal because, as we will see, these works are really a response to the questions that emerged out of the Pelagian controversy, and this controversy is of the highest importance to ethics. This was a controversy about the nature of human freedom, and by enquiring into the nature of human freedom one is also enquiring into human responsibility, and thus examining the very foundations of ethics.

It is perhaps not generally known that Pelagius' real motivation in entering this controversy was ethical. As we will see, Pelagius could almost be considered the patron saint of ethics. Taken to its extreme, the anti-Pelagian position threatens to relieve human beings of their moral responsibility. At least this is what Pelagius feared.

Some may argue that an ethicist is wasting his/her time with this *theological* debate. I would reply that in facing this controversy one is exploring the very foundations of ethics. These inquiries really define the most basic questions in ethics, and the fact that this debate is considered more theological than philosophical is only because ethics commonly takes for granted much of what is at issue in this controversy. And, taking these questions for granted is a grave error, because these questions are steeped in difficulties, which, as we will see, run so deep as to challenge the very limits of rationality.

As to the specific aim of this thesis, I want to use these pages to study Lonergan's earliest works in order to be able to acquaint myself with his philosophical horizon as it was forming. This is because of the complexity of Lonergan's work. After having read Insight and Method I was left tentatively converted, but not just a little frustrated. I felt I needed to get outside of these works in order to get inside them. The way that I have decided to do this is to return to Lonergan's earliest work. I wanted to encounter Lonergan as his theory was forming rather than formed, in the hope that I could gain insight into the later work by familiarizing myself with the concepts and questions that formed the horizon in which they were written. Now by wonderful coincidence Lonergan's earliest work was on operative grace, which, as I have just pointed out, is highly relevant to ethics. And so the decision of what to study was made.

OUTLINE

In chapter one we begin with the Pelagian controversy. Our central task is to show that moral responsibility was at the heart of this controversy. We will do this primarily by examining Pelagius' position. Of course the conclusion will be no big surprise. This controversy put human freedom into question for the first time. It forced theologians to contemplate the nature and limits of this fundamental concept. But the question of freedom is also the question of moral responsibility, for as Lonergan wrote, "the measure of freedom with which (an) act occurs also is the measure of (the) responsibility for it."¹

With moral responsibility proven to be at the heart of this controversy, we need only show that the Pelagian controversy was at the heart of Lonergan's early work on grace in order to prove that this too had moral responsibility at its heart. We will achieve this end in chapter two, where the terms of Lonergan's own methodological framework will be used to make our argument.

With moral responsibility known to be at the heart of Lonergan's early works on grace, we may then enter them in order to understand exactly how he understands moral responsibility. This will be the task of chapter three. Thus, the outline is as follows:

In the first chapter our intention is to introduce ourselves to the problem of moral responsibility. We will do this by examining the Pelagian controversy. Section one will examine Augustine's position, and section two will examine Pelagius'.

In chapter two we will begin our examination of Lonergan's two works on operative grace. Our two tasks will be to show that these works have moral responsibility at their heart, and to examine their content.

¹ Lonergan, B., *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 3, Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1988, p. 642

In section one we will look at Lonergan's methodology in these two works. Methodology is at the heart of Lonergan's unique perspective. It was the title of the last of his great works, and it was already of vital importance to him in his doctoral dissertation. In section two we will examine Lonergan's theory of speculative theology, and the relation between faith and reason. After these two preliminary sections, the argument that moral responsibility is at the heart of Lonergan's work on operative grace will have been made, so that we can turn to the actual content of Lonergan's analysis.

In section three and four we will examine the details of Lonergan's interpretive work on Aquinas' theorem of operative grace. Section three will deal with the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural, and the liberation of speculation on human liberty. Here we will get a look at the historical processes that shaped the development of the concepts of human freedom and moral responsibility. Section four will deal with the synthesis of the general and the specific theories of operative grace, and the difficulties that this created for speculation on human freedom.

In chapter three we will begin our direct analysis of freedom in Lonergan's interpretive work on Aquinas. Unlike chapter two we will no longer be concerned with the overall scene in which this speculation took place, but rather, we will be looking directly at Aquinas' systematics. In section one we will introduce ourselves to Aquinas' theory of the will. Then we will see how sin limits the freedom of the will and makes grace necessary for human freedom. We will look at the special theorem of operative grace in Aquinas' works, the theorem that operative grace rescues the will from its servitude to sin.

In section four of chapter three we will turn from Aquinas, and reflect briefly on the other side of the coin. There we will discover an unexpected insight, or perhaps, “inverse insight,”² which was that as difficult and problematic as Aquinas’ thought seems to be, the foundations of his interlocutors raise as many or even more difficulties.

In section five of chapter three we will finally face the question of the grounds of moral responsibility in Aquinas’ philosophical system.

Our interest is in understanding the ground of moral responsibility, perhaps the most fundamental idea in ethics. This focus will force us to reflect on the nature of freedom, and the relation between faith and reason. It will require that we become well acquainted with Lonergan’s early methodological horizon, and with the historical development of the idea of grace. We will have to ponder the very nature of the human will, and we will find there a philosophical dilemma of universal proportions. And all this is merely a beginning.

² Inverse Insight is a technical concept introduced by Lonergan in Insight. For the specific inverse insight, and what an inverse insight is, see chapter three.

CHAPTER ONE

*Da Quod Iubes, et Iube Quod Vis*³

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the Pelagian controversy. A key focus will be to set out what is at issue, and to get an idea of what will be required in order to claim to have resolved the problem so that the values of both sides have been adequately retained. This is important, because, in my opinion, most “solutions” are rarely true to the values of both sides. It is too easy to operate from only one side of this debate, constructing a conceptual system where one’s opponent’s ideas are forced into the categories created by one’s own viewpoint, thus, emptying them of their true meaning and value. So, what is at stake for each side?

“Give what you command and command what you will.”⁴ To Pelagius, the Christian moralist, these words could provoke nothing but fierce opposition. To him, they threatened an essential aspect of the Christian message. Pelagius was a devout Christian, whose passion for his religion would, ironically, lead him to what was surely the most unbearable of sacrifices. And he would endure it as a Christian, “(fading) out of history with love on his lips, surrounded by abuse and contempt.”⁵

Prior to a course on Augustine and the letter to the Romans, I had never heard of Pelagius. I can remember that I was surprised when I realized just what opponents to Pelagius believed. I can remember wondering how Pelagius could have been excommunicated for his beliefs, when it was clearly the conclusions of his opponents that

³ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Translated by F.J. Sheed, Sheed & Ward Inc. New York, 1943, X – (29-40)

⁴ Translation – Pamela Bright, *Augustine and the Epistle to the Romans*, *Reading Romans*, Eds. Jeffery P. Greenman, and T. Larson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (forthcoming), p. 4

⁵ John Ferguson, *Pelagius*, W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., Cambridge, 1956, p. 114

were un-Christian. I soon realized that within theology there exists a very fundamental debate over the degree to which the human being is proportionate to the divine.

One tradition focuses on the complete transcendence of God. At its extreme, this tradition denies any human proportionality to the divine; its proponents often focus on the fall of mankind, which they view as leaving human beings completely cut off from God. They focus on the complete helplessness and passivity of humankind in relation to the almighty. But perhaps the key is that in denying any natural human proportionality to God, they deny natural human reason any real theological relevance, and insist that it is by faith alone that we know religious truth.

The other tradition views human reason as bestowing a special capacity on mankind. This tradition focuses on man as being made in the image of God, and not on man's fall.

As I set out to examine these issues I perceived Pelagius as a defender of the latter values. I anticipated that what he was defending was human reason, and the great responsibility that it places on humankind. This belief was strengthened by the fact that Augustine's name is so frequently associated with the first view, which, I was surprised to find is very pervasive in orthodox religion.

I believe the pervasiveness of this perspective is due to the nature of orthodoxy when treating controversy. Orthodox religion, when faced with difficult theological distinctions, like the question of the relative powers of God and mankind, will always err on the side of God and tradition. I think that this is why, historically, proponents of the first view have fared better than proponents of the second. But what price do they pay for this undermining of natural human powers?

As a student concerned with ethics, I could not have been anything but sympathetic to the second view. Central to this thinking is the idea that the human being is free before God, not so as to glorify humankind, but to take responsibility for our actions, and our failures. From this perspective ethics is relevant to human life, ethical questions arise naturally in human beings, who have been endowed with the capacity to understand, to judge, and to decide.

Pelagius argued that the human will was, by its essence, free to do or not to do the good, although he stressed that God always aids mankind. Pelagius admitted that God aided the free human will in each and every act, but he insisted that human beings had to have some natural capacity for self-determination which was independent of God. We will come to call this “philosophical”⁶ freedom, and we will come to see that it is a very elusive concept.

Whatever its name, its foundational importance to ethics cannot be questioned. Ethics is based on the belief that human deliberation and reflection about right action is relevant to human life. Pelagius believed we had this potential. In his own words, he sought “to bring to light the power and make up of human nature.”⁷ This thesis is, in some small way, also a continuation of this goal – which, we might add, is also very much Lonergan’s goal.

But, it was also Augustine’s goal, and at one time Augustine too spoke of the human capacity to determine his/her acts freely, to choose between right and wrong. However, his theological development would seem to consist in the gradual elimination of this capacity, in the name of the complete gratuity of grace. Augustine argued that

⁶ As distinguished from *theological* freedom, see below – p.25

⁷ Pelagius, *Epistola ad Demitriadem*, 2 Taken from Ferguson, Pelagius

mankind had nothing it did not receive from God. Eventually, he even argued that the human will had no natural capacity to choose the good, apart from what it received through grace. He would insist that the good works that marked justification were dependant on the will being moved by charity, and this condition could only be produced in the human will by Christ. Augustine writes,

I do not know how it could be said that it is in vain for God to have mercy unless we willingly consent. If God has mercy, we also will, for the power to will is given with the mercy itself. It is God that (works) in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And, he continues,

But because the good will does not precede the calling but calling precedes the good will, the fact that we have a good will is rightly attributed to God who calls us, and the fact that we are called cannot be attributed to ourselves.⁸

Thus, Augustine argued that our will was ultimately in the hands of God. That the first effect of grace was the transformation of the will so that it willed to do the good, and therefore that without grace the will could only sin.

Eventually he would conclude that even faith was a gift of God,⁹ and he would accept that the elect were predestined, regardless of merit on their part. This seemed to Pelagius, and to many since, to turn the individual into a mere marionette of God.¹⁰ It seems to undermine our freedom and our responsibility, and thus to undermine the very meaning of human life.

But to seem to and to do are two different things. Augustine must be encountered with care. His position is complex, dynamic, and has stood the test of time. A millennium after his death, his thought would still be relevant and revolutionary, as it

⁸ Augustine, *To Simplician – On Various Questions*, Augustine: Earlier Writings, John H.S. Burleigh, The Westminster Press, p.394-395

⁹ See below p. 15

¹⁰ Ferguson, Pelagius, p. 47

was at the heart of the protestant reformation. He was a much more sophisticated philosopher than Pelagius. As well, while they were both passionate Christians, I do not think that Pelagius can claim Augustine's profound reflections on the inner life of a Christian. Thus, one has to attempt to reach up to Augustine's position, both theoretically and experientially.

It has been said of Augustine that he was simply truer to philosophy and to Christianity than those who disagreed with him, and that he merely accepted the necessary conclusions to the premises that were held equally by his detractors.¹¹ Yet, while Augustine's arguments have been persuasive, there has always remained within me a reluctance to admit his conclusions, although this thesis has brought me much closer.¹²

John Ferguson, sums up how I feel when he writes, "Thus Augustine lays his stress upon the divine initiative, Pelagius upon the human response. In any real meeting of God and man there must be both."¹³

Section One - Augustine¹⁴

Augustine's mature thought focused on the idea that grace was the elevation, or perfection, of human potencies, and an absolutely unmerited gift. Ultimately Augustine would argue that the human being was naturally in a state of sin due to the fall described

¹¹ See J. Patout Burns for instance, *The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy*, Augustinian Studies, Vol 5, 1974, p. 54

¹² See chapter III

¹³ Ferguson, Pelagius, p.175

¹⁴ I would like to note here that it is very difficult to deal briefly with Augustine's position. This is because he wrote so much over so long a period of time, and because his thought underwent considerable development. In fact, his early thought was, for the most part, not dissimilar to Pelagius'. One is faced, therefore, with a great quantity of material, and a changing perspective. All I hope to achieve is a very rough outline of Augustine's mature position, and to identify what values are at its heart.

in *Genesis*.¹⁵ In this state the human being was incapable of willing or doing the good without the elevation of grace. This idea seems to have developed out of Augustine's careful inner reflection, his very powerful conversion experience, and his readings of the apostle Paul (whose theology is likewise marked by a profound conversion experience).¹⁶

Augustine speculated that there were four stages in the history of human salvation, which were at once historical and lived out in each individual life.

In the first stage, human beings are in a state of nature. In this state they are ignorant of any conception of the law. The only "good" they can perceive is the immediate gratification of their carnal desires. Being unaware of the higher good of law, they experience no inner conflict.

In the second stage human beings are made aware of the law. Through this awareness mankind possesses a perception of, and an inclination to do, the good. However, our lower nature remains dominant, and the force of cupidity and habitual inclination is much too strong to resist, so we fall into sin - unavoidably.

In the third stage we are still divided beings, but in this stage, through faith in Christ, our inclination to do the good is strengthened so that we might actually will and do the good to the point of achieving salvation. Through Christ we receive a new nature, as written in *Ezekiel* 36:26, a heart of flesh to replace our heart of stone.

In the final stage our lower carnal nature is shed, and we experience peace again, only now our souls only desire the higher good.

The importance of these stages to this thesis lies in how Augustine understood the transition from the second to the third stage - the process of justification. Scholars

¹⁵ *Genesis* 3:1-24

¹⁶ One might add here that Augustine's readings of Tyconius were also important. See footnote #135

generally agree that Augustine's understanding of this transition changed as he matured as a theologian. In fact, this change has been referred to as the "Copernican shift"¹⁷ in his thinking, and also as the basis for the view of grace that would so antagonize Pelagius a decade later. So what was this change?

According to William Babcock, Augustine originally conceived of mankind's progress from perceiving the good to willing it and doing it - stage two to stage three - as more or less linear. The potential for mankind to achieve stage three was contained in stage two. That is, through mankind's perception of the law, and a natural ability to know the law as a higher good, mankind had what was essential to reaching the third stage. The linear development meant that Augustine still acknowledged a natural capacity in mankind to choose the good once it had been discovered.¹⁸ Granted, this decision was difficult, and living the choice even more so. But human beings were rational, and proportionate to rational operations. God's role was limited to strengthening and assisting the human being to live a moral life; God respected human autonomy.¹⁹ However, in the decade following his conversion Augustine began rethinking all of this.

This rethinking would ultimately lead Augustine to understand the power giving human beings the potential to do the good as God, rather than human reason or some other natural capacity. At this time "Augustine seems to have discovered that the human will is not entirely at its own disposal, that the dispositions of the self are not fully under the self's control."²⁰ This leads to a radically new understanding of humankind and grace.

¹⁷ Lettieri, *L'Altro Agostino*, as quoted from Bright, *Augustine and the Letter to the Romans*, p. 35

¹⁸ Burns, *The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy*, p. 43

¹⁹ *ibid*, 43

²⁰ William Babcock, *Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396)*, *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 10, 1979, 61

Hereafter, Augustine will conceive of the shift from stage two to three as an instantaneous moment of elevation from without (or perhaps, as we will see, two motions), not as a gradual achievement emerging out of mankind's efforts and God's assistance. This is the birth of what may be described as a theology of conversion.²¹ At the heart of this new theology was the idea that God's call did not persuade or aid the human will, it converted it, changed it. In the words of William Babcock,

Here then is the break in the linear continuum of man's moral progress toward God: the recognition of the good - which comes in the second stage - is no longer the basis for the transition to willing and doing the good- which comes in the third stage. Instead, God's grace must intervene, must enable the will to will the good.²²

The meaning of all this is that Augustine now understands mankind to be unable to live the law even after the law has been revealed. Our natural capacities and our knowledge of the law are no longer a sufficient precondition to reach the third stage. Our wills are naturally governed by our lower natures. In effect, though our reason may permit us to know the law, we lack the natural ability to live morally. Lacking grace, we sin naturally, and constantly. Prior to God's grace there is no way that the law can be lived. This can only be achieved through God's transformation of our very wills. Thus, doing the good is never a question of human powers, and there is no human merit involved in human salvation. Justification is solely due to God's grace, and grace is by definition - an unmerited gift.

Theologically, the key change is in Augustine's conception of a new type of grace. This new grace reflects Augustine's new understanding of human nature. Instead of one grace, cooperating with the antonymous human will, Augustine now conceives of

²¹ Bright, *Augustine and the Letter to the Romans*, 38

²² Babcock, *Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396)*, p.61

a second, prior, “prevenient” grace, operating on the human will. This is then followed by the more familiar “subsequent” grace, so that one might be able to actually do the good. But it is the concept of prevenient grace that is at the heart of the Pelagian controversy.

The two graces are distinct, once one has one, he/she must still pray for the other. Augustine uses the example of Peter to clarify the difference. According to Augustine, Peter had received the first grace, which converted him to Christ, by the time of the last supper. Through the first grace he willed the good, but three times failed to do it. Through the gradual reception of the second grace he was able to live the life of a saint and choose to die as a martyr.

Prevenient grace was a radical idea. Through this concept Augustine was able to assign all credit in justification to God. Previously, God would have been credited with the fact that Peter was capable of becoming a saint. Now, the fact that Peter even decided to follow Christ was due to God.

Ultimately, even faith, the human response to the divine initiative was made the effect of grace. This was first expressed in Augustine’s letter *To Simplician*. (396 C.E.- A significant year for Augustine, as well as marking beginning of the mature period of his thought it was the year of his elevation to Bishop.)²³ The importance of this final step is that with it Augustine has effectively eliminated any human merit in justification, and the human capacity to choose between good and evil independently of grace.

²³ Augustine’s position was refined after *To Simplician*, principally through his dialogues with Pelagius. In this letter there is still the residue of the former position. Note how, for instance, God’s call still must work upon the human will, *Congruenter* or not. {*To Simplician*, book 1, Q. 2, 13} This said, the call’s effect is still guaranteed if God so chooses, and fails to elicit a response if He so chooses. And, God’s prevenient grace is required for any good that the individual is capable of, including the choice to respond to the call. Thus, the essential elements of the mature position are all present in this letter, and the autonomy of the human will is effectively eliminated.

As we have seen previously, Augustine had accepted what was a fairly widely held position among Christians of this period. This understanding was that the human being was unable to achieve justification without the aid of grace, but that the person receiving grace had a role to play as well. At the very least, the human being had to assent to grace in some way. Inherent in this understanding is the idea that the human being had some natural power, some natural capacity, by which he/she could make the choice to assent or not. The extent of this capacity differed with each theologian of the period. These early theologians differed as to the degree to which mankind lost this power due to the effects of sin, but they all generally agreed that faith was a function of this power. Thus faith was the “human response” to God. Even for the most pessimistic among them, and for Augustine prior to 396 C.E., faith was a free choice to be made by the human being. But, once the idea that faith was a free act of this capacity was eliminated, the capacity was effectively eliminated. In effect, the functions of this capacity are replaced by God’s prevenient grace; Augustine now understood the choice of good and evil to be made in man by God. But why would Augustine eliminate this human potential, isn’t the capacity to choose what makes us human?

As I have said, as Augustine developed what would become his mature position, he began to understand the good acts that mark justification as occurring through God, and not man. Instead of conceiving of God’s message as having to coerce the will, Augustine now understood God to change the will. Faith was no longer a free response to God; it arose necessarily from an already changed being, from a changed intellect and will. Augustine now understood faith to be based on the power of the Holy Spirit acting within the human will. The Holy Spirit entered us, and permitted us to believe. It allowed

us to know that which we could never otherwise know, and to act in ways we could never otherwise act. Therefore, faith wasn't an act connatural to our capacities; it arose out of the elevation of our capacities. And all good works are likewise the result of God's effect on us.

J. Patout Burns writes of these new views of grace and divine election,

The love of the good which inspires moral action is not provoked by the manifestation of God's love in Christ as Pelagius implied. It is infused by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

He adds,

... the grace by which the elect are moved to faith is operative, causing human cooperation rather than waiting for it.²⁴

Here we are to understand that grace is constitutive of the human being. Faith, for instance, isn't primarily the act of a human being, a free choice that the human being makes independently; faith arises in the human being through God (the Holy Spirit) informing the human intellect so that it could operate beyond its normal potential.

Augustine writes,

But we say that the human will is so divinely aided towards the doing of righteousness that, besides humanity having being created with the free choice of God's will, and besides the teaching which instructs us how to live, it receives the Holy Spirit, through which there arises in the heart a delight in and a love of that supreme and unchangeable good which is God.

And he continues,

A person's free choice will only serve to lead them to sin, if the way of truth is hidden from them. And when it is plain to them what they should do and to what they should aspire, even unless they feel delight and love in doing so, they will not perform their duty.²⁵

²⁴ J. Patout Burns, *The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy*, p. 51

²⁵ Augustine, *de spiritu et littera*, 5; in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 60 ed. C.F. Urba and Zycha (Vienna: Tempsky, 1913) 157.10-24

Thus, Augustine understands human freedom to be empty unless it is complimented by grace. The freedom that rational beings are proportionate to is dependant on grace in that we can only be rational if our wills have been transformed so that we will the “supreme and unchangeable good which is God.”²⁶

In this way we are to understand any human propensity to the good as resulting from God’s prior action, from His call, and not from the human being. So there can be no potentially meritorious claim in any human act, including faith; for every act of this type is ultimately the result of grace operating on the human faculties responsible for the act. Augustine writes, “If God has mercy, we also will, for the power to will is given with the mercy.”²⁷ And, “But because the good will does not precede the calling, but calling precedes the good will, the fact that we have a good will is rightly attributed to God who calls us.”²⁸

Thus, Augustine now understands grace to operate on the will, effecting its vary nature, and determining its acts, to the point where the freedom that humanity enjoys as a rational creature is ultimately dependent on the will being transformed by grace. Without this prior condition the will could only be sinful, as it could not serve truth and justice, but only self-interest. However, by denying that the human being is free to choose between good and evil, Augustine was left defending some very difficult positions.

Babcock laments,

in keeping with his own conviction that the movement from discerning the good to willing the good depends on divine grace rather than human action, Augustine has, in effect, sacrificed both man’s freedom and God’s justice on the altar of the sheer gratuity of God’s grace, unqualified by even a residual correlation with man’s merit.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Augustine, *To Simplician, On Various Questions*, Book I, Q. 2, 12.

²⁸ Ibid, Book I, Q. 2, 12

²⁹ Babcock, *Augustine’s interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396)*, p. 67

Thus the consequences of Augustine's thought, for Babcock, are that both mankind's freedom and God's justice are put into question.

As for God's justice, Augustine's response was that there was "a certain hidden equity,"³⁰ known only to God that explained His selection of the elect. And, furthermore, he argued that since grace is unmerited, if God chooses to grant it to some, then those lucky few should be grateful for the unmerited gift, but the others can claim no injustice. And finally, he insisted that the very question was faulty, because we can never question God's justice in this way, because God is beyond question.³¹ Still, one might reply, even if the question of God's justice had been answered, there was the question of mankind's freedom, which, we should note, was what really troubled Pelagius.

If the gratuitousness and necessity of grace was central to the Augustinian position, the culpability of the sinner was central to Pelagius'. Pelagius argued that one of the most essential elements of sin is that the agent accused of it be accountable. A sinner had to be blameworthy, and hence able to not sin. But what does Augustine's position say about sin?

In fact, Augustine still placed the root of sin in mankind, and even spoke of blame and guilt. But how could he? If human beings are not able to resist sin on their own, in what way are they to blame for their sins? Can there be sin if there is no choice, no possibility not to sin? For Augustine, sin seems to be a condition of the human

³⁰ Augustine, *To Simplician, On Various Questions*, Book I, Q. 2, 16 (Babcock notes that in this letter a "certain hidden equity" replaced the "most hidden merits of souls" which Augustine had previously used to defend divine justice. Thus, no longer is there any notion of a relevant human act in justification.)

³¹ *To Simplician – On Various Questions*, Trans. David L. Mosher, The Catholic University Press, 1982

species, inherited from Adam and Eve. But then how can guilt be assigned to an individual of the species?

For Pelagius, sin implied guilt; this is because he accepted moral freedom, and therefore assigned moral responsibility to humankind. For Augustine, sin meant privation, a limitation of human powers that occurred due to the fall of mankind in Eden, and which could only be remedied by God's grace. Thus, according to Pelagian biographer, John Ferguson, "...the dispute turns upon the definition of the word *sin*." Does sin imply guilt? If it does, then Pelagius "has the argument all the way, because guilt implies moral choice wrongly made, and that implies the possibility of a right choice."³² However, if sin is more like a barrier between mankind and God, as it seems to be for Augustine, then guilt cannot be attributed to individual sinners, which Augustine nevertheless did. Therefore his weakness was in "seeking to lay moral responsibility on each individual for something for which, in his own terms, there could be no such moral guilt."³³ It was precisely this point that struck at Pelagius, and which moved him to put aside his ministry to take up the impracticalities of theological speculation. For Augustine's ideas, to Pelagius, were un-Christian.

Section Two - Pelagius

Let us now focus a little closer on Pelagius. And let us begin this examination of Pelagius by noting his concern with morality.

Pelagius wanted to remind his fellow Christians of their responsibilities as Christians. Pelagian biographer, John Ferguson, notes that Pelagius' primary concern was

³² Ferguson, *Pelagius*, p. 162

³³ Ferguson, *Pelagius*, 162

practical not dogmatic.³⁴ His mission was to awaken certain Christians from moral complacency. In fact, according to Ferguson, if not for the outspokenness of Caelestius, Pelagius' closest ally, there may never have been a theological controversy at all.³⁵

From what we know of Pelagius he had little time for the luxury of theological controversy, he had the world's work to do. To Ferguson, "Pelagius was a moralist, not a theologian..."³⁶ His concern was the passivity with regard to humankind's ability to resist sin that some Christians seemed to accept. Pelagius deplored the moral indifference that characterized many Christians. To Pelagius, "...the vast majority of professing Christians were taking one of two views. Some argued the inevitability of sin, some that only the grace of God could overcome it."³⁷ Pelagius argued that both positions were unacceptable. The first led to "... acquiescence...and evil living on the grounds that (sin) could not in any case be avoided."³⁸ The latter led to "a complete dependence on God," which, according to Pelagius, almost unavoidably diminished the sense of responsibility in the individual.³⁹

Upon even a brief examination of Pelagius' views, one is struck by their lack of a sense of radicalism. In fact they are just the opposite, they represent the epitome of common sense.⁴⁰ They are the views that we all share instinctually. So it is so very difficult to understand his fate.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid, p. 48

³⁶ Ibid, p. 175

³⁷ Ibid, p. 159

³⁸ Ibid, p. 159

³⁹ Ibid, p. 159

⁴⁰ As we will see, this may be the whole problem.

As we have seen, the idea at the heart of Pelagius' position is simply that for a sin to be a sin it had to be avoidable. Thus, he argued, in order for there to be sin, man must be able to not sin.

In Pelagius' view human beings *co-operate* with God in performing good acts. For Pelagius, "grace resides in the area of exchange between natural endowment, environment, and a providence that strengthens human beings with helps given to all but does not determine their actions."⁴¹

Contrary to what one might have thought, Pelagius "...anathematized those who denied the necessity of the assistance of God's grace in every single action."⁴² In fact, over the course of the controversy he reduced the amount of human responsibility to almost nothing in an effort to satisfy Augustine. As I have said, Pelagius' concern was not to glorify human beings; it was to remind Christians of their responsibilities. However, he could not accept that there was no human merit involved in human salvation. He believed that there had to be some way to understand the necessity of grace in which mankind's freedom was preserved. What Pelagius could not accept was, "prevenient grace in Augustine's sense, an irresistible power, independent of the will, which forced the will."⁴³ Pelagius defended the freedom of the will. He argued that human beings, due to their rational nature, are able to know and choose the good – though, only with the *help* of the grace of God.

Pelagius ultimately proposed a theory of divine concurrence whereby three elements were necessary for human action. The three elements were *posse* (power), *velle* (desire),

⁴¹ Stuben, 473 – taken from Bright, *Augustine and the letter to the Romans*, 39

⁴² Ferguson, *Pelagius*, p. 174

⁴³ *ibid*, 174

and *esse* (realization).⁴⁴ Of these, power came from God, desire came from the free human will, and realization from the result.⁴⁵ One might add that the realization was also dependant on opportunity, and so providence. In this way both God and the human being were co-causes of any act. God gives us the power to think or act well, and the opportunity for good thoughts and actions through providence; that we actually act well is up to us. With this theory Pelagius preserves a divine role in all good deeds, he can now explain to Augustine that he too holds God's role in the highest esteem, that he too knows that with every good deed humankind must praise God - for as much as it is to the credit of the human being that he/she has chosen the good, the being's very existence and the powers by which it acts are God given, so every good deed is directly the act of humankind, but ultimately the act of God. And, he added, on top of granting us this capacity, God is everywhere trying to help us to act rightly. Calling us, aiding us, forgiving us, doing whatever He can do to guide and assist us from without. In these two ways God is directly responsible for all the good that we do, and must be praised accordingly.

Augustine could not accept any of it. He responded to Pelagius with questions such as, if we can avoid sin naturally, then for what do we need God, and, more precisely, for what did Christ die? And if Pelagius had answered, both for assistance and for forgiveness, Augustine would probably have replied, but if we can do it on our own, even potentially, then God is at least theoretically unnecessary, as was Christ's death. Augustine would have argued that according to Pelagius' viewpoint we could be without sin independently of God and therefore not need assistance or forgiveness.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 97

⁴⁵ *ibid*, 97

Pelagius would probably answer, that yes, all sin is avoidable -theoretically- but the nature of man is such that sin is “virtually” unavoidable. Thus, the possibility of sinlessness is only a theoretical possibility; the reality is that sin pervades human action, and that it is only through God that we may find justification - both through forgiveness and through the special assistance of grace.

It is true that Pelagius’ position forced him to accept the possibility of sinlessness, but only theoretically (and, as Pelagius pointed out, the Hebrew bible even seems to document the that this occurrence is possible, and may have even taken place,)⁴⁶ but in practice, Pelagius insisted, sinlessness is either impossible, or there are so few examples as to make them irrelevant to the common experience of humankind. Even for exceptional human beings sin is inevitable, so justification depends upon God who aids and guides our natural capacities, and frees us from the accumulated weight of past sin. In this way Pelagius tries to strike a balance between the necessity of grace and the freedom of the human will.

⁴⁶ Ferguson, *Pelagius*, 165-66 – For example, Abel, Enoch, Melchisedech, Isaac, Jacob, Jesu, Nave, Phinees, Samuel, Nathan, Elias, Joseph, Eliseus, Michaeus, Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, Ezekial, Marochaeus, Simeon, Joseph, Joannes, Deborah, Anna mother of Samuel, Judith, Esther, Anna daughter of Phanuel, Elizabeth, and Mary

CHAPTER TWO

In the preceding chapter we have seen that the Pelagian controversy is essentially a debate centered around two opposing values. On the one hand there is the value of a God centered universe, where Christ's role as savior is absolute, and there can be absolutely no merit earned by humankind that is not ultimately due to God. On the other hand there is the value of the human being, through his/her rational nature, being free to choose between good or evil, and therefore bearing some responsibility for his/her actions, and also earning merit independently from grace for his/her good choices.

With the question of humankind's ability to act morally at the center of this debate, I have shown that the Pelagian controversy is of foundational importance to ethics. My next task is to link Lonergan's early works to this controversy. Thus, the Pelagian controversy will serve the purpose that was outlined in the introduction, that of proving the immense importance of Lonergan's early work to the study of ethics.

Our first goal in this section will be to understand what shapes Lonergan's viewpoint. Lonergan approached Aquinas from a very specific viewpoint - an anticipatory framework that he deduced from the unchanging structures of the human mind. We will see the importance that Lonergan gives to both theoretical understanding, and methodology.

Our second goal will be to understand the place of the Pelagian controversy within Lonergan's framework. This is where we will see that the Pelagian controversy is in fact central to Lonergan's early works on grace. We will see that, in the light of Lonergan's interpretative framework, Aquinas' theorem of operative grace is the final

stage of a historical process of speculative development that began with, and was driven by, the Pelagian controversy.

Our third goal will be to examine the results of Lonergan's analysis. What we will find is that, according to Lonergan, the controversy seemed to be resolved in the days just prior to Aquinas, in a way that Pelagius could never have dreamt of, but which would seem to have been perfectly satisfactory to him. In fact, Aquinas originally affirmed Pelagius' most controversial doctrines, for instance: the theoretical possibility of sinlessness; the necessity of grace for the forgiveness of sins but not for the liberation of the will; and the fallacy of Augustine's theory that original sin incapacitated the will, preventing it from willing the good.

The key to this resolution was the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural. This created a "higher viewpoint"⁴⁷ that allowed for the two seemingly contradictory positions to be conceived as part of a single intelligibility. The end result of this speculative breakthrough was that theologians finally acknowledged the philosophical idea of freedom as legitimate, and consistent with the theological idea of freedom.⁴⁸

However, this was not the end of the story of operative grace. In fact, as Aquinas matured as a theologian he came to adopt a stance much closer to Augustine's (In fact, as we have seen, Augustine himself only came to his more radical conclusions as he matured as a theologian). Aquinas would eventually refute all of the doctrines listed above, and we must therefore ask whether by doing this he didn't simultaneously

⁴⁷ See below, Resolution of dialectical positions, p.33-37

⁴⁸ To define philosophical and theological freedom at this point is difficult, as this is essentially what we are exploring. Lonergan refers to philosophical freedom as a potency, and theological as a form. (OG, p.191) The "general notion" of philosophical freedom is that through reason we have the power to determine our own choices. The "general notion" of the theological idea of freedom is that in order to be free we must be informed by virtues, especially supernatural virtues.

undermine the philosophical understanding of freedom, and therefore moral responsibility.

As we will see, Aquinas' move in this regard is surprising, considering the release that resulted from the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural, and in particular the release that occurred on the subject of freedom. But, Lonergan argues that it was inevitable, and that Aquinas' theology was always advancing towards a more and more complete resolution of the controversy. Whether this is true or not will be a question for chapter three.

Section One – Lonergan's Early Methodological Horizon

As we saw in the introduction to this work, Lonergan's earliest works, beginning with his doctoral dissertation, were focused on the theory of operative grace. We will now begin to examine these works. Our first task will be a general examination of Lonergan's methodological and theoretical horizons.

The theory of operative grace in Aquinas is a very well studied question. However, Lonergan's efforts produced a new take on the matter, and at the center of this new take was Lonergan's emphasis on method, a theme that would become foundational to Lonergan's later work. We must now examine the basics of Lonergan's methodological approach.

Lonergan was no positivist; he argued that all knowledge was based on a two-pronged movement, like a pincher motion. While one movement did indeed rise up from the data, another moved downward from an anticipatory framework, possessed antecedently by the knower, which ordered and gave meaning to the data. He writes

Suffice to say that even historians have intelligence and perform acts of understanding; performing them, they necessarily approach questions from a given point of view; and with equal necessity the limitations of that point of view predetermine the conclusions they reach. From this difficulty positivism offers no escape, for as long as men have intelligence, the problem remains, and were they deprived of intelligence and became mere observers of fact like jellyfish, then they would be truly positivists but their positivism would not be of any service to them.⁴⁹

With this said, Lonergan also found fault with traditional methodologies of speculative interpretation which recognized and adverted to the need for an antecedent, anticipatory framework. Lonergan's criticism was that while these methodologies recognized that knowing involved the twofold motion described above, the frameworks with which they operated lacked an essential quality for doing historical research – historical objectivity.

Any framework required for historical research has to be able to direct study while not introducing anachronisms into the data. This is difficult, because heuristic frameworks are normally formed out of the philosophical and scientific theories of the day. This is a natural occurrence, for as knowledge develops it naturally produces the questions and heuristic structures that will lead to ever more knowledge. But while this is quite satisfactory in the case of philosophical or scientific speculation, it couldn't work for historical research into speculative development because of a profound problem. What framework does one use to direct an enquiry into another framework? If one uses the framework of one's own day, then one gets anachronism, but the historically appropriate framework cannot be used either, because that is the very thing being sought, so what is left? Historical enquiry needed an a-historical heuristic, general enough to be relevant to all speculative historical data without biasing it.

⁴⁹ Lonergan, (GO) Gratia Operans, A study of the Speculative Development in the Writings of St. Thomas of Aquin, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 1, Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1988, p.156

Lonergan reasoned that since what he was seeking was insight into speculative theology, what he needed was a general anticipatory framework of all speculative development that could then be applied to theology. He would find this in the unchanging structure of human intelligence. What he proposed was to abstract the general pattern of any speculative development, based on the premise that there was a common denominator in any and all such speculative development - the human mind. He describes his proposed method in this way,

The procedure provides a true middle course. On the one hand, it does not deny, as does positivism, the exigence of the human mind for some scheme or matrix within which the data are assembled and given their initial correlation. On the other hand, it does not provide a scheme or matrix that prejudices the objectivity of the enquiry. The quantitative sciences are objective simply because they are given by mathematics an a-priori scheme of such generality that there can be no tendency to do violence to the data for the sake of maintaining the scheme. But the same benefit is obtained for the history of speculative theology by an analysis of its development, for the analysis does yield a general scheme but it does so, not from a consideration of particular historical facts (by which I understand him to mean particular historical stances within an ever developing philosophy and/or science), but solely from a consideration of the nature of human speculation on a given subject.⁵⁰

Thus, Lonergan's framework is relevant to any historically specific time or place, to any theoretical or speculative development regardless of where or when. To put it simply, Lonergan developed a method for doing historical research that is based on the observation that all historical data, in so far as they have originated out of human minds, can be understood using an anticipatory framework grounded in an awareness of the nature of the human mind, for, as Lonergan put it, "the human mind is always the human mind."⁵¹

With all this said, one might expect that the next task we should face is that of presenting Lonergan's conclusions about the general form of any speculative

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.157

⁵¹ Ibid, p.157

development. This is important, as it will in fact be the basis of Lonergan's argument that Aquinas' later position, the one that seems to re-establish the full dialectical tension of the Pelagian controversy, is really an advance. However, this will have to wait until section IV. Prior to this we must look more specifically at how Lonergan understood speculative theology, and the elements from which it was formed (section II). For these questions precede the question of the form of a speculative development, as this development is based on these elements. Then we must see how, at least for a time, the controversy seemed resolved (section III). Finally, we can see Lonergan's framework for the development of a speculative theorem, and how this framework explains Aquinas' return to the Augustinian ideas of grace, the will, and sin.

Section II – Speculative Theology

The introductory section of Lonergan's doctoral dissertation begins with Lonergan's presentation of what he understands speculative theology to be. Empty in itself, speculative theology is merely a pure form, filled by the "matter" of the deposit of faith. "It is not something by itself but the intelligible arrangement of something else."⁵² The point that he is making is that in speculating one is not contributing to the deposit of faith that constitutes a religion, but merely trying to understand what is already affirmed through faith.

I understand this distinction to be important because Lonergan is doing two things in these early works on Aquinas. Obviously, for one thing, he is interpreting Aquinas on operative grace. But, his interpretation rests on profound insights into philosophy and theology, and the interrelationship of these two disciplines. Thus, indirectly, Lonergan is

⁵² Ibid. p. 163

also making a much more general contribution to theology. Specifically, he is entering into dialogue with those who would deny human reason a fundamental theological importance, or deny it a place in religious life.⁵³ I must emphasize that a key insight to take from this section is that Lonergan is clearly delineating the very distinct roles for both faith, which affirms religious truth, and reason, which seeks to understand what is affirmed.

The next distinction that Lonergan makes is between common sense understanding and theoretical understanding. As the science of religion, systematic theology operates at a different realm of meaning from everyday understanding. Its goal, like that of science, is theoretical as opposed to “common sense understanding.”⁵⁴ To clarify what he means Lonergan points to the example of acceleration and going faster. Acceleration is a theoretical concept defined mathematically as the second derivative of a continuous velocity function, while going faster expresses only the experience of acceleration, it “apprehends no more than fact, while the scientific concept elaborates (the fact) by understanding it.”⁵⁵

So speculative theology operates at the theoretical level, transforming the pre-systematic, common sense terms that express dogmatic truths, which, as pre-systematic, are latent, vague, implicit notions that are steeped in visual imagery and common sense anticipation, and refines them into definite, explicit, technical concepts whose meaning is fixed by their relation to other concepts within their cognate theorems.⁵⁶ One might say that speculative theology takes the matter of doctrinal truth, and turns it into the terms

⁵³ See above, Introduction

⁵⁴ For a fuller explanation of difference between common sense and theory, see Lonergan, Insight.

⁵⁵ (GO), p.164

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.179

and theorems of a purely theoretical science in roughly the same way the natural science operates on natural phenomena. Regardless, the point is that speculative theology is a special branch of theology, concerned with the scientific understanding of the pre-existing reality of a religion. It is concerned with a mental perspective with which to understand religious truth. It has to be differentiated from the affirmation of the religious truth, which is a separate, and fundamentally different, exercise.⁵⁷

The importance of this point is once again in relation to the interrelationship between faith and reason. But there is another important consequence to this distinction; Lonergan is preparing the reader to understand how dialectical positions are resolved through shifts to higher viewpoints.⁵⁸ These viewpoints are theoretical structures, and are based on the discovery of new relations between things, and not with the discovery of new things.

Unlike science, which has its own method, systematic theology depends for its methodology on philosophy.⁵⁹ Thus, systematic theology is the application of philosophy to the data of religion, or, to break it down further, the application of philosophy to the historical record of mankind's encounter with the transcendent. Therefore, as philosophy goes, so goes speculative theology. Now, because philosophy provides speculative theology with its method, it determines the form of speculative theology, but, according to Lonergan, it also contributes to the content of speculative theology, and it does this in two ways.

⁵⁷ All of this has to do with the very controversial topic of the place of reason within theology and religion. As mentioned above, there are two basic views on this subject. Lonergan is demonstrating that there is a place for reason in theology, but he is careful to place that outside of the basic affirmation of divine revelation.

⁵⁸ See below, p.33-37

⁵⁹ This is important, as much of Lonergan's argument against the scholastics will be based on philosophical distinctions.

First, philosophy provides theology with natural analogies with which to understand things that are beyond human understanding. Lonergan writes, “Nature is a theophany,” and he continues, “So also, on a higher mode, is revelation and the economy of the supernatural order.”⁶⁰ Thus the natural is not completely alien to the supernatural, rather, both have a common ground in God. Now because the content of theology is essentially beyond the proportion of the human intellect, and is known through faith as opposed to reason, there is no possibility of direct understanding of these truths. However, that is not to say that these truths are without any potential for being understood. In fact, understanding of these truths is the primary concern of speculative theology. In order to achieve its goals speculative theology turns to philosophy to provide analogies with which to explain, at least analogically, the truths affirmed through faith.⁶¹ And this is possible, Lonergan argues, because both natural and supernatural truths share a common ground in God on which to base the analogies.

A second (and more important, as far as the Pelagian controversy is concerned) way that philosophy provides the content of theology is that theology, for Lonergan, contains a natural element, which is provided by philosophy. For Lonergan, the natural and the supernatural are not two completely discrete realms, as many before him affirmed. Lonergan understands the two realms to be parts of a unity, where the supernatural incorporates, or subsumes, the natural. In fact, this idea will be foundational to Lonergan’s later work. The important point for this thesis is that Lonergan understands theology to have a legitimate concern with the explanation of the natural world. All

⁶⁰ (GO), p.167

⁶¹ Michael Stebbins suggested this footnote – He writes, “Lonergan frequently refers to Vatican I’s statement about the two goals of theological speculation. The first is to show that there is no contradiction involved in believing any of the church’s doctrines (they contradict neither one another nor any naturally known truth).”

higher orders, or realms, while transcending their lower orders, are also limited by them.⁶² Thus, the supernatural realm's full intelligibility includes the natural orders it subsumes. In fact, as we will see in the next section, a primary goal of speculative theology is to identify and to separate the natural from the supernatural elements of theological truth. As we will see, the differentiation of the natural and supernatural orders is essential to any speculative theological development.

With the relation between philosophy and theology in place, we may now turn to the concept of the "dialectical position," which will be vital to Lonergan's understanding of the Pelagian controversy.

Through the last few paragraphs we have been setting up the discussion of the elements of speculative theology - the things through whose interrelationships will form the heuristic structure with which to approach Aquinas' speculative work. According to Lonergan there are four basic elements of speculative theology, whose interrelations will form the general structure of any speculative development (see below, Sec. IV). They are: terms, theorems, technique, and dialectical position. We have looked at theorems, and noted the difference between theoretical and common sense understanding. Out of this distinction Lonergan defines terms, noting that speculative terms are always theoretical (which is of course anticipating his work in *Verbum*, where the centrality of concepts {terms} is downplayed, in favor of the understanding {theorems} in which they emerge). We have also looked at technique (methodology), so all that remains is to examine the concept of a dialectical position.

Lonergan writes that in any speculative development the dialectical position is the constant, it drives the development through the tension it creates. He adds that the

⁶² See below, footnote #81

dialectical position gives any development its identity.⁶³ Thus, the Pelagian controversy, which was the initial dialectical position in the development of the theorem of actual grace,⁶⁴ provides Lonergan's early work with its identity.

The dialectical position is a situation that anyone concerned with scientific, "theoretical," understanding will be familiar with. It is the event of two apparently contradictory conclusions being affirmed at one time. An example from natural science would be the affirmation of light being a particle and a wave. But, one must realize that by "affirming" Lonergan means more than empty hypotheses. Each theorem is supported by the data, a condition that would normally conclude in judgments of fact. Thus the dilemma of any dialectical position is that two contradictory facts are affirmed, meaning that two realities are affirmed, which is of course irrational. What this signals is that the current viewpoint, or basic heuristic structure, has become inadequate. The concepts (terms) that derive their definitions from the cognate theorems that constitute the viewpoint are not able to adequately represent reality. A higher understanding, a shifting to a higher viewpoint, previously unimaginable, is required.

This process is a natural process of speculative development. Thus, the dialectic is overcome by a radically new "re-conceptualization" of the data, permitting the erroneous parts of each theory to be overcome, while maintaining the valid parts. Obviously there were never two realities, dialectical positions emerge out of speculation about reality, and they indicate that the heuristic framework being used has reached its explanatory limit. They signal that a radical change of viewpoint is needed. In the new viewpoint the things that compose the universe will be understood very differently from the way that they

⁶³ (GO), p. 171-172

⁶⁴ GO, p.188

were previously understood. This new understanding is contained in the “higher viewpoint,” a new conceptual position that transcends the old one.⁶⁵

As we have seen, one might say that speculative theology is the science that studies the data of religion, and as a science it too knows the tension of the dialectical position. But it isn't exactly the same. Due to religion being ultimately concerned with an intelligibility that is beyond the proportion of mankind, the dialectical positions of theology can never be fully resolved - as those in science always are, given enough time. There is simply no moving to a higher viewpoint when one is considering the very highest viewpoint, something that is beyond the capacities of humankind. As we have seen, the supernatural element in speculative theology can only be understood through natural analogies; in itself it must always remain a mystery. Thus, instead of the goal of complete explanation through a higher viewpoint, which is proportionate to science, speculative theology has the much more humble goal of advancing from an initial dialectical position in which what is proportionate to human knowing is mixed up with what is disproportionate, to a final dialectical position where the two are fully differentiated, and what can be explained is explained in full. And, Lonergan adds, as far as supernatural truth is specifically concerned, our limited analogical understanding must strive for the more modest goal of noncontradiction, as opposed to the goal of complete understanding.

So, in summation, the goal of theological speculation is to resolve dialectical positions arising out of religious data. It does this by first differentiating between natural

⁶⁵ This brief presentation of a very complex theorem will have to do. I would only like to add that for Lonergan viewpoints are related and are based one upon the other. The possibility of the higher viewpoint emerging rests in the condition of the previous viewpoint being affirmed. This is unlike Thomas S. Kuhn, who seems to imply that each paradigm shift is a completely new creation, unrelated to the one before. (*The structure of Scientific Revolutions*) For more on Lonergan's theorem, see *Insight*.

and supernatural elements, then by explaining what is proportionate to human reason and resolving contradictions arising in the analogical explanations of what is disproportionate to human reason.

This being so, a key moment in the development of speculative theology, in fact “the” key moment, is the theoretical grasp of the concept of the supernatural. For, as we have seen, the goal of speculative theology is to resolve a dialectical position by distinguishing between what is proportionate to each order. Thus, being able to conceive theoretically of the two orders is the necessary first step towards resolving any theological dialectical position. So, all speculative theology prior to the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural is hopelessly limited, unable to move beyond the initial dialectical position.

Now, as one may have guessed, this was precisely the problem that Augustine and the early scholastics had, according to Lonergan. That is, they did not possess the “theoretical” differentiation of different orders of being. Thus, they could not distinguish between the two orders of being that concern theology, and this was problematic because these two orders had such different qualities. For instance, before the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural theologians did not think to differentiate between what can and can’t be explained, thus they frequently tried to explain the mysteries of revelation or accepted arguments that made mysteries out of natural truth.

To conclude, Lonergan conceives of the Pelagian controversy as being the initial articulation of the dialectical position in the speculative development of the theorem of operative grace. And, Aquinas’ theorem of operative grace is the cognate theorem by which the final dialectical position was obtained. Through this theorem Aquinas made

use of the higher viewpoint supplied by the theorem of the supernatural, so that what was true in each side of the Pelagian controversy was preserved, while what was false was able to be cast away. This required a theoretical shift, meaning that the actual things (data) are unchanged, but our understanding of the things, or even what is or isn't a thing changed.

Thus, we can now see how important the concept of the dialectical position is to this thesis. For through this concept one may understand that Lonergan's work on operative grace responds directly to the Pelagian controversy, and offers a solution to the question at the heart of this thesis, that of moral responsibility.

Our next task is to see how the failure to possess the theorem of the supernatural contributed to the Pelagian controversy, and how the discovery of the theorem liberated speculative theology in the thirteenth century. We will see that this breakthrough enabled theorists to preserve the necessity of grace, while finally being free to consider human freedom. However, in the fourth and final section of this chapter, we will see how Aquinas seems to backtrack, returning to a more Augustinian position. In this final section we will also examine Lonergan's interpretation of why Aquinas did this, because, according to Lonergan, it was simply a natural progression following the form of the development of any compound theorem, and this claim, we will see, is based on his heuristic framework of the general nature of any speculative development.

Section III – The Release of the Philosophical Concept of Freedom Due to the Discovery of the Theorem of the Supernatural

The initial dialectical position of the Pelagian controversy arose out of Augustine's work on grace. To review, Augustine, based on the theological "data" of his conversion experience and his readings of St. Paul, had an insight into the nature of grace, conceiving of it for the first time as the source of all good works, and therefore merit, as opposed to the reward for, or a compliment to, meritorious works. Augustine conceived of grace in two ways: operating on our will, enabling us to will God's law; and cooperating with our will so that we could actually perform the law. Obviously the controversial one was the first. In expressing this understanding of grace Augustine created the initial dialectical position. Thus, as we will see, what begun with Augustine's insistence that the unaided will could not perform the works by which it could be justified, ended with the apparently contradictory conclusion that the will was both always free, and always dependant on grace.

Now according to Lonergan, Augustine never really attempted a theoretical resolution of the controversy that he produced. Lonergan attributes the first full-fledged attempt at resolving the dialectical position to St. Anselm, who lived six hundred years after Augustine. Augustine's only effort at a resolution is little more than an evasion. Augustine was a master of rhetoric. Lonergan calls Augustine a master of "antithetical presentation,"⁶⁶ by which I understand him to mean that Augustine could make the illogical sound logical.

⁶⁶ (GO), p.196

But, even so, Lonergan is sympathetic to Augustine. Lonergan notes that antithetical presentation is precisely all that could have been hoped for at this early stage of speculative theology, and Lonergan points out that in reality Augustine spent most of his efforts at the very modest, and yet foundational, task of assembling the proof for both sides of the dialectic, and not working towards a premature solution. Thus, while his name is associated with one side of the dialectic, and while he was more concerned with establishing the doctrinal truth of this position, in reality he openly accepted the truth of both. And, for the most part, he left it for later generations to develop the mental perspective needed for a resolution. In fact, Lonergan believes that Augustine demonstrated great methodological competence and wisdom, in that he seemed to understand that there was one truth, that both conclusions were grounded in this one truth, that they were nevertheless both true, and that the apparent contradiction merely emerged out of the limitations of the human intellect.

Anselm inherited the question of grace and freedom from Augustine. But whereas Augustine had been more concerned to establish the doctrinal truth of both the necessity of grace and the freedom of the human will, Anselm was the first to really face the question of how to reconcile these claims theoretically. Unfortunately, according to Lonergan, Anselm, like Augustine, lived in a period that lacked the methodological perspective needed to accomplish this. Therefore he couldn't help but follow Augustine in merely restating the dialectic through his work, as opposed to resolving it.

One should note that Lonergan attributes great value to Anselm's work, as he did to Augustine's. According to Lonergan, both thinkers faced virtually impossible tasks. Ironically enough, though methodological deficiency was the root of Anselm's failure, he

demonstrated an innate affinity for speculative thought and method. For instance, Anselm instinctively avoided the goal of complete explanation in theological matters, correctly seeking only non-contradiction.⁶⁷ (Sadly, this included his acceptance of arguments that made a mystery out of human freedom, which was not a supernatural truth.) In addition, it was Anselm who gave speculative theology its primary axiom, “fides quaerens intellectum.” Lonergan writes of Anselm’s legacy, “The exuberance of speculation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries may be the measure of the prestige of his example and the success of his efforts.”⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Anselm’s attempts at resolving the dialectic created by Augustine, although brilliant, are a testament to the importance of the method and technique that he lacked.⁶⁹ Like Augustine, Anselm’s work suffered from the failure to distinguish between the “intricacies of the distinction between faith and reason.”⁷⁰ His error was in turning “a theological dialectical position into the initial premise of a speculative elaboration.”⁷¹ In the end, clarification of this question, beyond the mere restatement of the dialectical position, would have to wait until the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural. We must now begin to examine Lonergan’s analysis more closely.

§ The Theorem of the Supernatural

Prior to the thirteenth century there was no theorem of the supernatural. It is Lonergan’s contention that this philosophical deficiency is at the root of the Pelagian

⁶⁷ (GO), p.206

⁶⁸ B.F. Lonergan, (GF) Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. I. Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, University Of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1988, p.10

⁶⁹ (GF), p.8

⁷⁰ (GO), p.175

⁷¹ (GO), p.175

controversy. As we have seen, a philosophical deficiency can effect theological speculation in two ways. In the first way it can have a methodological, or formal, impact. In the second way it can have a more direct impact on the content of speculative theology. Lonergan claims that the failure to conceive of the theorem of the supernatural contributed in both of these ways to the Pelagian controversy.

The methodological impact is obvious, as we have already seen; theology depends on the distinction between the supernatural and the natural for the resolution of any dialectical tension. Thus, no higher viewpoint could emerge until natural elements were distinguished from supernatural. This is simply because supernatural elements cannot be understood within a humanely attainable higher viewpoint, so until the natural elements were separated, development was held back. Thus, possessing the concept of the supernatural freed speculative theological method. But we must now focus on how the theorem of the supernatural shaped the internal terms and theorems of the Pelagian controversy, and specifically, how it freed speculation on the concept of freedom. We will start this investigation with an examination of the concept of grace prior to the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural.

For the scholastics, grace was that through which we were justified. More specifically, grace was faith arising out of charity, the love of God in our hearts moving us to confess and then live the Christian faith. It was mediated through Christ, and, as we have seen, an essential aspect of grace was that it was unmerited. The early scholastics, beginning with Anselm, inherited the legacy of Augustine. Their task was to formulate systematically that which had only been affirmed dogmatically. Being true to Augustine, the unmeritability of grace was central to their understanding of grace. They conceived of

grace as that by which we were saved, by which we merited salvation. But to make human merit a condition for salvation would seem to necessitate God, it would seem to make God into a mere agent of cause and effect, into a function. We do A, he responds with B. It undermined the gratitude of the experience of grace; it undermined the dependency on God that is experienced by the converted. To speak of merit preceding or leading to grace was therefore unintelligible. Michael Stebbins writes,

The affirmation that grace is a gratuitously bestowed divine gift instead of a reward measured out on the basis of any human work or merit runs like a guiding thread throughout the labyrinthine wonderings of early scholastic speculation on the doctrine of grace.⁷²

This is an important point, as the denial of any merit preceding the bestowal of grace had been a major point of contention in the Pelagian controversy.

With this understanding of grace, one of the first questions that occurred to the early scholastics was how to differentiate grace from all other divine gifts, how to emphasize that grace was unmerited. Grace, caught up as it was in Christology, seemed to require as one of its qualities that it was somehow extraordinary, and separate from all other gifts; it was something that distinguished the elect, and not all of creation. The problem was, all divine gifts are, in a manner of speaking, unmerited. How does one explain that grace is more unmerited than, say, the gift of creation? The gift of creation is absolutely unmerited; I mean prior to creation there is nothing at all that could be said to merit.

But grace, understood as the acts of faith and charity by which we merit eternal life, seemed to be different. For instance, one can perhaps hear Augustine asking us

⁷² J. Michael Stebbins, (DI) The Divine Initiative: Grace World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1995, p.70

rhetorically - For what did Christ die? There had to be some reason why grace was necessary over and above the gifts of creation; a special gift that made the elect more blessed than the *massa damnata*.

The various ways that this notion was formulated, prior to the theorem of the supernatural, are documented in Lonergan's work.⁷³ However, without this theorem the efforts lacked the crucial insight that would release their deliberation. The reason that grace is different than other gifts is that it is a supernatural gift, a gift beyond human proportions. However, the only reason that the early scholastics could see was the one Augustine had seen.

Stebbins points out that the crucial question becomes,

Why was justifying grace, understood as being identical with the virtues (acts)⁷⁴ of faith and charity, thought to be gratuitous, in a way beyond other divine gifts, and necessary for salvation? In other words, how did theologians explain the dogmatic assertion that this grace was beyond all human effort or merit? From what human insufficiency did it arise?⁷⁵

And the answer that they found in Augustine's works was very clear - sin. For, as we have seen, St. Augustine's original insight, the one he came to from reading St. Paul and reflecting on his own conversion, was that sin has a crippling, debilitating effect on the human being. And, it was for this that Christ had to die. According to Stebbins,

Here grace is taken to be essentially something given gratuitously, an unmerited gift of God, and its gratuity seems to lie in the fact that its recipients are undeserving of grace precisely because they are sinners.⁷⁶

⁷³ (GO), see ch. 1

⁷⁴ During these early days of scholasticism the virtues, specifically faith and charity, were understood in a "common sense," non-theoretical way, as being acts. To quote Stebbins, "To possess faith meant actually to believe, to possess charity meant actually to love God above all things." (DI - p.75) The profound importance of the discovery of the Aristotelian concept of the habit is a very interesting and important topic that, unfortunately, will not be examined in this work.

⁷⁵ (GO), p.70

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 70

Thus, sin became an essential element in the scholastic understanding of grace. Grace healed mankind of the debilitation that was caused by sin. Sin darkened the intellect and enslaved the will; grace “freed” both faculties so that they might operate normally.

The early scholastics even adopted, and refined, Augustine’s model of the four states of humankind. Lonergan writes, “Grace, ... is that which makes the difference between the second and the third (stage).”⁷⁷ We have seen how man’s condition in the second stage is what marked Augustine’s mature theology. The early scholastics accepted his conclusions. They described humankind’s “cruel lot”⁷⁸ in the second state with the phrase, “not able not to sin, even to the incurring of damnation.”⁷⁹

Thus, in the second stage we are helpless. We are wretched beings, creatures of passion, unable to better ourselves through our higher powers. Our ability to move to the third stage is dependant on grace. Lonergan names this understanding of grace the “psychological interpretation of grace.” It denotes the understanding of grace as that which heals the mind and the will so that they are proportionate to the performance of the works by which the individual will be saved. And, according to Lonergan’s analysis, during the early period of scholasticism, prior to the theorem of the supernatural, this understanding of grace created the problems that so troubled Pelagius.

According to Lonergan, the problem arises out of the failure to differentiate between nature and grace, and in particular, between two types of good. To paraphrase Lonergan, one may most easily understand the problem by adverting to what is essentially at issue. He argued, as we know, that the subject of the speculative

⁷⁷ (GF), p.12

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.13

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.11

development that begins with the initial dialectical position known to us as the Pelagian controversy, and that ends with the final dialectical position attained through Aquinas' theorem of operative grace, is the understanding of "grace operating the goodness of the will."⁸⁰ However, in the period prior to the elaboration of the theorem of the supernatural there is no explicit distinction between two senses of the word good. This distinction between two different goods is based on Lonergan's argument that theology has both a natural and a supernatural element.⁸¹ There is a good that is known by natural reason, and there is one that is known by faith. The first is the moral good, naturally proportionate to mankind, and which one is therefore always free to will if one so chooses (though we will see one important exception to this freedom in the next section). There is also the goodness of supernatural elevation, the goodness through whose performance we merit eternal life, and for which we are dependant on grace.

In this period, where the two orders of theology are confused,

...there is a twofold consequence. First, since the aspect of moral goodness is the one explicitly understood, the theory of grace tends to a psychological form. Second, since the aspect of supernatural elevation is not grasped by theory, the whole weight of the doctrine of the necessity of grace presses down on liberty: this forces the dialectical position into the concept of liberty itself.⁸²

Let us now unpack this quote a little.

What Lonergan is saying is that there is a confusion regarding orders of being.

The concept of a hierarchy of being is perhaps too complex to deal with in this thesis.⁸³

⁸⁰ (GO.), p.190

⁸¹ See above, Section II

⁸² (GO), p.190

⁸³ Lonergan will spend considerable effort in *Insight*, giving this idea a fully theoretical explanation. To summarize, each level of being makes systematic what is merely random from the explanatory perspective of its preceding order. For instance, the chemical realm subsumes (is above) the physical realm. The natural laws of the physical realm create "things" proportionate to that realm (i.e.: atoms), which organize and make systematic what is otherwise only accidental. However, the interrelations and operations of things at the atomic level possess an element of chance. The chemical realm emerges out of the potential that is created by this chance. New laws emerge, which create new things.

Lonergan will spend considerable effort in *Insight* giving this idea a fully theoretical explanation. And while his theorem was obviously unknown to the scholastics, the theorem of the supernatural is in fact a rudimentary stage of what Lonergan would eventually formulate into his theorem. The important point to grasp for this thesis is that the theorem of the supernatural made it possible to explain how different levels of being had different capacities for acts, or operations. The operations at the rational level of being, where human beings were the sole species, were the operations of the intellect and the will. However, the theorem of the supernatural made it possible for theologians to postulate operations of these two faculties that were beyond the normal proportion of these faculties. For instance, affirming judgments that were beyond the proportion of rational beings.

This argument is based on Aristotelian metaphysics. More specifically, it is based on the idea that our nature (or perhaps soul) is the principle that grounds the operations that we are capable of. Each nature belongs to a specific level of being. Thus, any being capable of rational operations has a rational nature, and it therefore belongs to the rational level of being. It is possible for creatures to participate in levels of being that are beyond their own in various ways.⁸⁴ We cannot go into this in detail, suffice to say that it amounts to performing operations beyond their operative potential. One example might be a chisel making a statue. The form (principle) of the operation of making a statue is beyond the operative potential of a chisel, unless it is an instrument in the hands of an

For instance, chemical laws organize atoms into chemicals. Thus the operations of the atoms, in so far as they are participating in the reality of the chemical realm, become systematic and non-accidental through the chemical realm, while relative the laws of the physical realm they would still appear random – unexplainable. Thus the laws of one realm are distinct from the laws of another, creating discreet levels of being. However, the whole is inter-related, as higher levels transcend but are limited by the levels that precede them. That is, the laws that emerge at the chemical realm are not logical extensions of the physical realm; it is a new creation. However, the laws of the physical realm are not suspended, rather, the chemical realm incorporates them into its own higher being. This is the concept of limitation. Lower orders limit higher orders.

⁸⁴ See *De Ante Supernaturali*, Lonergan, or, *The Divine Initiative* (DI), Stebbins

artist. Intellectual operative potencies permit this kind of “supernatural” operation in a very special way (much more fulfilling than for the chisel).⁸⁵ And it is in this way that grace elevates our rational potencies. Thus, while grace was understood, prior to the theorem of the supernatural, to heal our intellect and will, it became apparent through the theorem of the supernatural that what grace really does is to elevate these potencies. Faith and charity became supernatural operations - knowing and loving by a higher reason.⁸⁶

With this in mind we may now unpack Lonergan’s comment. What he understands to create the initial dialectical position was confusion between the natural and the supernatural. Of course, this is the natural state of any initial dialectical position, but prior to the theorem of the supernatural no dialectic could ever be overcome. Thus, the only way that Anselm and his scholastic followers could relieve the tension of the dialectical position was by discounting one pole of the dialectic. This explains Lonergan’s quote above, that Anselm turned “a theological dialectical position into the initial premise of a speculative elaboration.”⁸⁷ What Lonergan is saying is that Anselm didn’t attempt to remove the dialectic through a higher viewpoint. As we have seen, that would mean a theoretical reconceptualization of all the elements that were involved. This would eventually be achieved through the theorem of the supernatural. Instead, Anselm accepted the state of the speculative viewpoint that he inherited, and all of the concepts that it grounded, even though the failure of those concepts to accurately represent the data was confirmed by the existence of the dialectical position. Then he removed the tension, which should have been removed by the higher viewpoint, by eliminating the other half

⁸⁵ See “Obediential Potency,” (DI), ch. 5

⁸⁶ Once again, how this is possible is beyond the scope of this thesis, but one can trust that it is no mere ungrounded speculation; Lonergan lays out the arguments in his usual highly technical manner.

⁸⁷ (GO), p.175

of the dialectic. The end result is the loss of all the natural elements: natural freedom, natural reason, and the natural good. And these were essential to any accurate account of the data.

We must now examine what Lonergan means by two types of good.⁸⁸ At the rational level there is the moral good, or intellectual good. Lonergan will elsewhere describe the appetite for this good (which is the will) as constituting the human capacity for development and progress through culture.⁸⁹ One should note that Lonergan's understanding of the moral good is very broad, and includes such goods as social structures as much as infrastructure. I say this because the scholastics had a much narrower definition than Lonergan, as they were only just beginning to differentiate natural goods from supernatural ones. They usually referred to the natural good as building houses and cultivating fields - infrastructure.⁹⁰ In any case, this good was proportionate to human beings without grace. Then there was a higher good, and willing this good was charity. Charity meant that the will willed a good that was unknown to natural reason, it was known through faith. This meant that the will could act beyond what was moral, and these acts were what made us meritorious of eternal life.

Prior to the theorem of the supernatural, the two goods were confused. The issue, as we have seen, is divine operation within the human will. Augustine correctly understood that it is through grace that the will wills and performs the good actions by which the individual merits eternal life. But he mistakenly attributed justification to acts attaining the moral good, as this was the only good he understood. Then he applied his

⁸⁸ Note: The rational good is elsewhere referred to as the natural good. It is a good that is proportionate to natural human reason.

⁸⁹ Stebbins, (DI), p.139

⁹⁰ (GO) p.216

observations on grace to this scenario. Lacking a distinction between the two types of good, Augustine concluded that this meant grace somehow preceded moral good, and by affirming this he denied the human will its natural capacity for willing the moral good, which is the essential function of the will. Augustine thus came to deny the will its natural power. Next he needed to explain how this could be, how the will could be understood to lose its ability to will. To explain this, Augustine argued that original sin had robbed us of this capacity. But with grace being conceived in this way, there was no place for human merit or freedom, and Pelagius knew it. As Lonergan writes, “In strict logic there could be hardly any theory of liberty as long as grace was conceived psychologically to the practical neglect of the idea of merit.”⁹¹ Stebbins adds,

From a theological standpoint, the notion of merit implies not only the notion of grace but also the existence of freedom: there is no point in speaking about evil acts as sinful or good acts as meritorious unless those acts are freely undertaken.

And he later concludes,

Whereas the Pelagians had tried to solve the problem of grace and freedom by eliminating the need for grace, the early scholastics exhibited a tendency to solve the problem at the expense of a coherent explanation of human freedom.⁹²

Thus seemingly vindicating Pelagius.

We turn now to an examination of these speculative errors in the actual work of St. Anselm. We have already seen the questions that perplexed the theologians facing the speculative explanation of Augustine’s legacy. In trying to explain why grace is unmerited, and necessary, Augustine was led to the theorem that sin weakened the rational faculties of the intellect and will. Nevertheless, Augustine insisted, the will was

⁹¹ (GF), p.18

⁹² (DI), p.76-77

always free. He argued, “The will of man is always free but not always good: either it is free from justice, and then it is evil; or it is free from sin, and then it is good.”⁹³

Anselm’s goal was to defend this “antithetical” claim. The problem, which anyone could see, was that there are two understandings of freedom implicit in it: freedom from necessity (philosophical freedom, which was renamed for rhetorical purposes), and freedom from sin (theological freedom). Anselm’s tactic would be to eliminate one of the freedoms. Surely, he would argue, freedom cannot be the freedom to sin, or else God would not be free. Putting it this way struck a rhetorical blow against philosophical freedom, and with this doubt fresh in the minds of his readers, Anselm turned to define liberty as the rectitude of the will, which was in turn “put right” by grace. Thus, grace and liberty are correlatives, “with freedom an effect of grace and grace what makes freedom free.”⁹⁴ One may now see that what Anselm is really doing is removing the dialectic tension by eliminating one of the poles (the philosophical), and then redefining the terms contained in the eliminated pole with new definitions grounded in the opposite pole’s terms and theorems. Freedom, defined only theologically, is not opposed to grace, however the philosophical definition of liberty is lost completely. Thus freedom from necessity becomes freedom from justice, implying rhetorically that the only kind of freedom is theological. But, Lonergan writes, “This, as is plain, immediately creates a problem of freedom in sinful acts.”⁹⁵ This was precisely Pelagius’ point. And, if one looks at how Anselm deals with this problem, one cannot help but be sympathetic to Pelagius. Anselm argues that sin never occurs because we are free to sin, but due to our servitude to sin. As we will see, our servitude to sin is a complex subject (Chapter III),

⁹³ Augustine, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, c.4, s. 7, 886

⁹⁴ (GF), p.11

⁹⁵ (GF), p.9

but in essence, once sin “has us,” we have no choice but to continue sinning.

Nonetheless, we are truly free, Anselm argued, because we have the capacity to be made right again by grace. Thus, our freedom to sin or to not sin is likened to that of a man bound and blindfolded in a dungeon, while he cannot see, he is still free to see, in that someone can always remove the blindfold for him.⁹⁶ And to this Pelagius would surely reply, yes, but while he is blindfolded surely he cannot be blamed for his failure to see?

As we conclude this section one should note that there followed a much more general consequence of these errors than the elimination of liberty, and this was the debasement of nature. The reader is reminded here that Lonergan is doing two things with this work. He is unraveling the mysteries at the heart of the Pelagian controversy, and he is setting out a more general theological position. Thus, we have seen how, even today, there is a tendency to deny reason a place within theology. Lonergan argues that the failure to conceive of the theorem of the supernatural is at the root of this misunderstanding as well; interestingly, this too is often traced back to St. Augustine.

To review, the early scholastics were concerned with explaining the nature of grace. We have seen the problem of explaining why grace was more exceptional and unmerited than other divine gifts. The explanation offered by Augustine, and then developed by Anselm and others, was that due to original sin humankind had lost any capacity for the good, and thus grace was unmerited in an exceptional way.

Now one might infer from this that prior to the fall of humankind human beings did not need grace, and this theory was in fact put forward, but perhaps surprisingly, this view wasn't very popular.⁹⁷ According to Lonergan, this would have meant that Adam

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.9

⁹⁷ Lonergan mentions the name Rudolphus Ardens for instance – (GF), p.16

could have merited salvation naturally, but this didn't seem to fit the data, so to speak. The fact was that if one accepted the theorem of original sin, the Angels and Adam were actually free in the Pelagian sense. This was unacceptable, so the scholastics developed explanations to close up this hole in their thinking. But, once again, the scholastics could not help but fail to explain the relevant data, and for the same reasons as before. Being unable to resolve the dialectical position due to the failure to distinguish between the natural and the supernatural, this tension gave rise to the tendency to debase nature itself. In effect, the moral impotency that was being attributed to those in a state of original sin was being extended to all of nature. This was done to justify the necessity of grace. But this speculative avenue tended to create a fundamental division between nature and grace. Nature was conceived of as fundamentally deficient, or "crooked."⁹⁸ So, while this theory created problems, it did do a very nice job of explaining the absolute necessity of grace, and so it was commonly accepted in the days prior to the theorem of the supernatural, and even remains prevalent today.

But now we continue where we left off, and turn now to the changes that resulted from the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural.

It was Phillip the Chancellor of the University of Paris who took the final steps towards the theorem of the supernatural. Fittingly, he was working on the problem of the human will, and the possibility of a natural love of God. Reflecting on this problem, it became apparent to Phillip that the human capacity for reason had been neglected by theology.

The love of God was how the early scholastics defined charity, and as we have seen, charity was thought to be beyond the capacities of humankind's unaided will.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p16

Phillip, influenced by Aristotle, conceived of the will as an appetite, in light of Aristotle's conception of a final cause, and divided appetites into two classes: natural and rational. Natural appetites were self-regarding and completely determined, rational appetites were necessarily objectively oriented, they sought the good in general, rather than any particular good. Then he divided the rational appetite into two: one following reason, and the other faith. This meant that the will could now be understood to be capable of both charity and a natural love of God (truth). This self-discovery of human reason by human reason meant that there were now two orders of being, one consisting of the familiar - faith, grace, and charity – and the other consisting of - reason, nature, and the natural love of God. The real benefit, according to Lonergan, was the intellectual perspective that it created. Now the “things,” that constituted reality for the early scholastics, and which were known to be inadequate representations of reality through the existence of the apparent absurdities of the dialectical position, could be reconceptualized in a new light.

The theorem of the supernatural permitted the necessity of grace, known through revelation and faith, to be reconciled with the experience of freedom and responsibility that we all have. Grace no longer had to be spoken of antithetically, as what liberated liberty. After the speculative framework of the theorem of the supernatural was realized, grace became thought of in terms of human finality.⁹⁹ Grace as *healing* was replaced by grace as *elevating*. The will was free to will the good to which it was proportionate. The will was also capable of acting beyond its natural proportions, in that grace was the principle of supernatural operative potencies in the will and the intellect, just as the human soul was the principle of the natural operations of the human intellect and will.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.19

The first theorist Lonergan singles out as belonging to the post-theorem of the supernatural era is Aquinas' teacher St. Albert. By this time the idea of a state where man was unable to avoid sin was unimaginable. Albert took it as obvious that mankind always could sin or not, indeed, part of the essence of a sin is that it be avoidable. Aquinas would go so far as to argue that because each sin was avoidable, they all were. Thus, one of Pelagius' most controversial arguments finally had support - it was possible, if only theoretically so, for a person to be without sin. However, this new perspective also affirmed Augustine's arguments - grace was necessary for the will to be able to will the works that would merit eternal life. Thus, for a brief period the controversy must have appeared over. But those who know Aquinas know that this was only a brief moment in his development, and one he would later condemn. Thus we must now turn to the final task of this chapter. To see how Aquinas' theorem of operative grace went beyond the initial release provided by the theorem of the supernatural. It seems that there was more to Augustine's argument than met the eye, and we must now begin to understand what this was.

Section IV – The Synthesis of the Special and the General Theorems of Operative Grace

As we have seen, after the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural there was rapid and significant development in speculation on the concept of grace. Theologians working during the dawn of this new discovery were able to develop the idea of human

freedom, which had been neglected in the pre-theorem of the supernatural era. Lonergan writes that these theologians developed a “speculative tendency that (was) antithetical to the tendency of (the early scholastics).”¹⁰⁰ Lonergan points to two illustrations of this difference. The first is the difficulty that St Albert had in understanding Lombard’s attempt to explain why Adam could not merit even though he had not yet been tainted with original sin. With the idea of a supernatural virtue so familiar to St. Albert, he reads Lombard anachronistically, and attempts to comment on the passage as if Lombard understood, and had accounted for, the theorem of the supernatural. The end result is that Albert cannot understand the passage, for he cannot see what is at issue.

The second example is also taken from the thought of St. Albert. It is his difficulty understanding why, in the second stage of humankind’s religious development, the human being could not avoid sin. Theology had no more use for a theory of grace that was based on human moral impotence.¹⁰¹ At least it wouldn’t until Albert’s pupil, Thomas Aquinas, brought it back.

Aquinas originally accepted the conclusions of his mentor, however as he progressed as a theologian, another great master of Christian theology would influence him. And, in light of this influence Aquinas would move away from Albert’s conclusions, and return to the theory that grace operates on the will so that it could will the good – even the moral good. This other master, of course, was Augustine. Lonergan notes that the change in Aquinas’ thinking seems to be the result of his realization that when speaking of justifying grace, Augustine was clearly speaking of two graces.

¹⁰⁰ (GF), p.216

¹⁰¹ (GO), p.217

Grace, at least the specific grace that led to justification, had become understood as being a single thing. As operative it elevated human nature so as to permit supernatural acts. As cooperative the same grace cooperated with the free will to actually act. Thus in actually causing an act to occur, grace was only a partial cause, although the principal one; the free will was the other cause. One analogy held that grace was the form and the free will the matter.¹⁰² While grace operated on the will it did so only to the extent that form perfects matter, grace informed the will, it gave it its operative potency. Lonergan writes,

In this cooperation the respected provinces of the two factors are so beautifully demarcated that a problem of grace and freedom does not arise. This remains true, even though the free choice is the subordinate member of partnership, as long as this subordination has no other basis than the fact of matter's dependence on form. Grace changes the very being of the one in whom it inheres, thus it cannot be said to impede the freedom of the will.¹⁰³

The essential point is that grace was one, and that free will was free.

However, there was a sense among these scholars that there was more to grace. The theology of this period is full of attempts to speak of graces besides justifying grace. Lonergan presents a short history of the terms that emerged to differentiate other graces. The other graces were: 1- our rational natures; 2- Adam's prenatal gifts before the fall; 3- unformed habits, servile fear, imperfect movements towards salvation; 4- inspiration, miracles and the like; 5- the assistance of the angels; 6- the indelible character received in baptism, confirmation and orders; 7- the divine activity, which not only conserves in

¹⁰² See GF, Ch. 2

¹⁰³ I have temporarily lost track of this citation, it is very similar to one in GF, p. 27 – but I think that it is from (OG).

being and in action, but conserves in good being and good action.¹⁰⁴ The reader may note that three, four, and especially seven are of particular interest.

Aquinas wrestles with some of these ideas early in his career, but at some point in the middle of his career he became aware that Augustine spoke of a second grace necessary for salvation. As we saw in chapter one, Augustine wrote that there were two graces, one prevenient, that made the will good, and the other subsequent, which made it strong. And these could not be two effects of the same grace, as other commentators had suggested, because Augustine said that once one had one, one still had to pray for the other.

The idea of a grace that prepared the will launched Aquinas on the road back to the idea of operative grace that had caused the Pelagian controversy. Initially, Aquinas could only conceive of preparatory grace as only external events. Lonergan notes, Aquinas could only conceive of the conversion that prepares for justification as “an admonishing voice, loss of health, or anything of the sort.”¹⁰⁵ He even conceives of the light that blinded Paul on the way to Damascus as a corporeal light.¹⁰⁶ This would however change, and Augustine’s operative grace, which worked “internally,” actually changing the will, would once again rise, putting human freedom into question once more.

What has to be noticed is what is being said about how these theologians conceived of the will, which is expressed by the very fact that prevenient grace was understood to be events external to the will. The will was therefore free, and God converted the sinner by motions outside of the will. The special theorem holds that this

¹⁰⁴ (GF), p.24

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.25

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.25-26

preparatory grace is an internal act, God operating on the will. And thus the will's natural boundaries are potentially threatened by it.

I have already alluded to the fact that this change in Aquinas' thought is explained by Lonergan's interpretive framework. We must now examine this claim.

As we have seen Lonergan based his analysis of Aquinas on a historically sensitive interpretive framework. This framework then directed Lonergan's enquiry into Aquinas' speculation on operative grace. As we have seen, Lonergan believed that all speculative interpretation had to have such an anticipatory framework.

Lonergan read Aquinas as part of an overall historical development. Lonergan therefore understood the concepts that Aquinas worked with, and the questions that he was concerned with to be part of this development. With this assumption Lonergan argued that in order to understand Aquinas one had to go back in time, to pick up the threads of speculation that lead to Aquinas' particular place.

Next Lonergan spells out the general rule of the order of the development of theorems. He writes, "The general law is perfectly simple. The mind begins from the particular and works to the most general; it then returns from the most general through the specific differences to the particular."¹⁰⁷

Next Lonergan states that in the case of the development of the speculative theorem of operative grace, we are dealing with a set of cognate, related, theorems. Thus, we are seeking theorems that are related to one another in a single explanatory unity. The simplest case of such a relation is the correlation of two theorems related as species and genus. By which I understand Lonergan to have been influenced by the example of

¹⁰⁷ (GO), p.179

Einstein, in that he perceives the fully developed theorem of operative grace to contain a “general” theory and a “specific” theory.

Now, based on the first rule, the discovery of the specific theorem is always made first. After the specific theorem is discovered it is generalized, its implications are worked out, and there is his tendency to give it full systematic significance. Next the insufficiency of the specific theorem is discovered, and the general theory is elaborated. This is followed the same stages as with the specific theory, including the tendency to give it full explanatory significance. The limitations of the general theorem are discovered, and the synthesis finally takes place. These elements characterize any speculative development, and, according to Lonergan, give an interpreter a general heuristic with which to locate any specific thinker, so as to be able to pinpoint his/her historically specific place in any such development. Then one just has to go back to the discovery of the specific theorem, and work forward, identifying each stage until one is back at one’s target. Then one is in a position to understand the questions and the concepts that would have formed that thinker’s anticipatory framework, with which one can then interpret the works of that thinker without injecting anachronism.

Our last task in this section is to just point out the stages in the development of the speculative theorem of operative grace. Stage one was the discovery of the specific theorem (Augustine); stage two was the speculative development and generalization of this theorem (Anselm and Lombard); stage three was the attempt to use the specific theorem as the sole explanation of the need for grace (Anselm and Lombard); stage four was the discovery of the general theorem (Phillip the Chancellor); stage five was the generalization of this theorem (St. Albert); stage six was the attempt to use the generic

theorem alone as an explanation of the necessity of grace (early St. Thomas); stage seven was the synthesis (mature St. Thomas). Thus, there are seven stages in the development of a simple compound theorem.

Through this framework, St. Thomas' return to Augustine is necessary, merely akin to Einstein developing the general theory of relativity to complement, not replace, the specific theory. The compound theorem relates to humankind generally, as a creature, and specifically, as a rational creature.

Lonergan notes that what Augustine discovered was that there was a difference between "the need of our first parents before the fall and, on the other hand, our need subsequent to the fall."¹⁰⁸ This wasn't an error; it only appeared as one given the release occurring after the discovery of the general theorem of operative grace. Theology had to turn back to Augustine, to original sin, and to the necessity of God entering our hearts to move us, to operate *internally* on our deficient will, so that it could be free to will as it was meant to.

¹⁰⁸ (GO), p.181

CHAPTER THREE

In the last section we saw that Lonergan conceived of the theorem of operative grace as a complex theorem, and as such, was a compound of two interrelated theorems – one relating to human beings as a species, and the other relating to them simply as creatures. As creatures, human beings needed grace to elevate their operative potencies. But, as rational creatures they still needed grace to assist their natural operative potencies, even though one might have expected that these potencies, as natural, would be naturally proportionate to their operations without the assistance of grace. It is this claim that is problematic, in so far as it is applied to our rational capacities. This is because it seems to deny human beings the ability to act morally on their own, and therefore would seem to relieve them of their moral responsibility. In Lonergan's words, the special theorem of operative grace insists that grace is necessary for the "right" action of the human will.¹⁰⁹ Lonergan sums up the problem that this creates, "But if man is responsible for the wrong he does, then he must be able to do what is right. If he is able to do what is right, then where does grace come in?"¹¹⁰

The answer, we will see, is that the human being is free, but that this freedom has limits, and so it is possible for God to operate beyond the limits without eliminating human freedom. The specific question for this thesis is whether or not this adequately grounds moral responsibility.

We saw in the fourth section of chapter two that Aquinas rejected some of the advances made after the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural, and returned to a

¹⁰⁹ (GO), p.349

¹¹⁰ (GO), p.349

viewpoint closer to that of Augustine. We saw how Lonergan explained that this was simply the result of Aquinas working both the general and the specific theorems of operative grace into a synthesis. However from Aquinas' particular viewpoint (who could not have been aware that what he was doing was working the two theorems into a synthesis) the change was due to his realization that Augustine understood two graces to be necessary for justification, one to prepare (so that we might will the good) and one to justify (so that we might actually do the good that we will).

Most theologians of the thirteenth century thought that Augustine taught that there was one grace for justification, which had multiple effects. When Aquinas read in Augustine's works that having one grace we still had to pray for the other, he realized that the theologians of the thirteenth century had misunderstood Augustine. So Aquinas began the work that would terminate with the complete theorem of operative grace. Aquinas eventually came to accept the special theorem of operative grace, which held that the human being, prior to the reception of grace, could not avoid sin. However, this will mean something slightly different for Aquinas than it did for Augustine.

We now turn to the exploration of this concept of a second grace of justification; a grace that consists in God operating in our will so that we might will the good. The first section of this chapter will examine Aquinas' understanding of the special theorem of operative grace. We will begin by exploring Aquinas' theory of the will, and then turn to see how sin exerts an influence over the will. We will see why Aquinas changed his original view and came to accept that sin is unavoidable without grace.

For Aquinas, actual operative grace corrects the negative influence of sin and prepares the individual for the grace of justification. At this point we are exploring the

limits of human freedom, and how grace is necessary for the human being to attain his/her proper end. As we just mentioned above, Aquinas' central argument is that while the will is free, there are limits to this freedom, and there is room for God to operate beyond these limits, providing a necessary aid, while not impinging on our freedom.

In the first section we will examine Aquinas' theory of the will. In the second section we will turn to examine how sin exerts an influence over the will, limiting the will's freedom. In the third section we will see how grace liberates the will. But before we conclude by examining the question at the heart of this thesis, whether Aquinas' position truly allows for enough human freedom to make human moral responsibility comprehensible, we must first make a subsidiary investigation. This concerns an unexpected event that occurred during the writing of this thesis - an "inverse insight"¹¹¹ that arose out of the work done for this thesis. It is a discovery that there was a problem with the philosophical idea of human freedom, a problem that was very possibly first discovered by Augustine, and could very well explain his position, and those of Aquinas and Lonergan as well.

Section One – The Will

To begin, we should note that Aquinas realized that moral responsibility was grounded in human freedom. For instance, when commenting on the idea that all that was necessary for the will to be free was non-coercion, Lonergan writes that Aquinas repudiated the idea as "heretical, destructive of all merit and demerit, subversive of all

¹¹¹ This is when one's insight is that the very question is wrong, and that there is no intelligibility to be obtained through one's question. See Insight, p.78

morality, alien to scientific and philosophic thought, and the product of either wantonness or incompetence.”¹¹²

Aquinas would eventually make the condition for the will to be free that it be free to move or not move itself.¹¹³ Which would seem to be very satisfactory to the Pelagian side of the debate. Lonergan also writes, “The fundamental thesis from the *Commentary on the Sentences* to the *Pars Prima* inclusively is that the free agent is the cause of its own determination.”¹¹⁴ Although he adds, “The determination in question is not of the will but of the action generally.” What he means by this will become clearer as we proceed.¹¹⁵

For Aquinas the free will emerged out of the relations between the intellect and the will. This may explain why Aquinas spoke of the freedom of the human being and not of the will.¹¹⁶ The will is a rational appetite. All beings, by their natures, are naturally inclined towards certain ends. Material beings act towards their specific ends automatically, and without any awareness. Sentient and rational beings are aware of these inclinations, which they experience as desire or appetite. Sensitive beings have sensitive appetites, by which they know, and desire, particular goods. Rational beings have rational, or spiritual, appetites in addition to sensitive appetites. Through these higher appetites the human being may know and will the good per se. That is, through our intellect we may know more than just the particular good of experience, but the reason that it is a good, not just here and now, but always. And through our will we may act in accordance with this good.

¹¹² (GF), p. 93

¹¹³ (GO), p.320

¹¹⁴ (OG), p.318

¹¹⁵ See section I, The psychological continuity of the will

¹¹⁶ (GF), p.85

While the will desires the rational good, it is not determined by the intellect. For Aristotle it was, which meant that the will was a passive potency, completely determined by the intellect. Aquinas rejected this view. But this rejection created a problem for Aquinas. He accepted that when the will did act it was determined by the intellect. Thus, in rejecting the Aristotelian conception, Aquinas had to explain how, given the dependence of the will on the intellect, the will nevertheless determined itself. In order to solve this problem Aquinas argued that the intellect “specified” the act (formal cause), but that the will was the efficient cause of its own acting. In order to explain this we need to examine exactly how Aquinas conceived of the will.

The interrelationship was as follows. The object presented by the intellect specifies the act of the will. However, the intellect cannot be understood to bring the will to act by itself. If it could, one would have to explain how the object presented by the intellect caused the act to occur. Did it have some natural active potency that caused the event to occur? Why should anything that the intellect could present to me, move me, beyond the fact that I choose to let it move me? One can explain how a lit match causes some wood to burst into flames by the laws of thermodynamics, but what quality in the object presented by the intellect can cause me to act? In fact, Aquinas observed, the will must possess a prior condition that permits it to be moved by the intellect, and this means that the intellect does not move the will into act, but merely specifies that act of the will. Something else moved the will into act, and this, we will see, was the willing of the end.

The will was capable of two operations, willing the end, and willing the means. Willing the end is the first operation of the will. It is not a free act of the will, but rather,

it gives the will the pre-motion that is necessary so that the will can move itself. The willing of the means is the secondary act of the will; it is a free and deliberative act.

The differentiation between willing means and willing ends is a major development in Aquinas' philosophy. Perhaps we should preface further explanation with a word about vital acts, and active potency. Note: I have prepared some background material on classical metaphysics, based on the excellent presentation of these matters by Michael Stebbins, in appendix one.¹¹⁷

The idea of vital act takes up a large part of the subject matter of Lonergan's works on operative grace. Vital acts are acts by living beings, and are different to other acts in that living beings move themselves. Lonergan will argue that even most of Aquinas' closest followers believed that Aquinas accepted that it was possible for living beings in first act to move themselves to second act.¹¹⁸ However, Lonergan argues that Aquinas never would have accepted this premise, as it went against the basic principles of Aristotelian physics.

According to Aristotle an object in first act was in potency to second act, meaning that it was not yet existing or operating, and a thing in potency can never move itself into act, or it would already have to be in act. An object had to be in second act, actually existing or operating, in order to be active potency, a potential cause of some change in another, or in itself as another. Lonergan admitted that Aquinas accepted that there were vital acts, but Lonergan argues that Aquinas would have understood that these potencies were in fact already in second act.

¹¹⁷ Based on (DI), ch. 2

¹¹⁸ For the difference between first act and second act see appendix 1, Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative – Second act added to the potency that was contained in first act an efficient cause. It was the difference between being in potency to acting or operating and that same being actually existing or operating. See Appendix 1*

This understanding of vital act is a very large part of Lonergan's original contribution to the study of Aquinas, and he will build on it in *Verbum*, his first work after the works on operative grace.

Let us now look more closely at what Lonergan is saying. Let's begin with an example from *Verbum*. Consider an act of the intellect. The vital (free) act of the intellect is the production of a *verbum* (inner word), or concept. However, the potency to produce this act is obtained from the co-causes of the agent intellect, and the intelligibility of the object presented by the senses, cooperating to raise the potential intellect into second act by producing some understanding in it. In this first process the potential intellect is a passive potency (an accidental passive potency – first act), and therefore is moved into second act passively. Once the potential intellect is in act it can freely move itself to produce a concept in order to express the understanding. In other words, the vital potency has to be moved to act by something outside of it in order for it to be in second act and proportionate to causing its own “vital” act.

To return to Aquinas' understanding of the will, the will was capable of two types of act, in a manner parallel to that of the intellect. The first was the act of willing an end; this was a non-deliberative and non-free act, which was caused by God, who was the sole agent proportionate to operating internally within the human will. With the will in second act with respect to some end, it could move itself (vital act) to willing the means to that end. To be more specific, it could then move the intellect to deliberate as to the appropriate means, and once the intellect specified some, then the will could move itself into the act of willing the means. But the will could not will any means unless it already willed some end. The act of willing the means was a free act of the will, however, it

received its power from the willing of the end in the same way that an act of the intellect received its power from the intelligibility of the object mediated through the agent intellect. Therefore, while the will was free, this was only in relation to the act of willing means. The will was not free in relation to the act of willing ends, and this act was a necessary precondition for the willing of the means.

With this very basic introduction to Aquinas' theory of the will, we now move on to consider how sin can be said to influence the will.

Section Two - The Effects of Sin on the Will

Lonergan writes, "In estimating human nature St. Thomas was a whole hearted pessimist. With conviction he would repeat, *numerus stultorum infinitus*."¹¹⁹ In the preceding section we saw that human beings were naturally proportionate to rational operations and to the moral good, we must now understand that proportion has a special sense. We are proportionate in so far as we are "imperfect agents." Meaning that while we contain the operative potencies proportionate to rational acts, "as a matter of fact" these operations occur "only *in minori parte*"¹²⁰

For Thomas, human beings were the spiritual equivalent of prime matter. Though we naturally are proportionate to willing and knowing the true and the good, these operations do not emerge in us naturally, as, for example, a bird learns to fly. When we are born we have the potential to know truly and to will justly, but these achievements do not happen necessarily, the operative habits (science, wisdom, and justice) have to be acquired, they do not occur automatically.

¹¹⁹ The number of stupid people in infinite: *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 63, a.9, ob. 2 / (GF), p.45

¹²⁰ (OG), p.350

To understand what Aquinas means, one might imagine a bird that does not instinctively know how to fly, and is not even aware that it has this deficiency. While it has wings, it can't use them. The wings are there, but the operative habits that would permit the wings to function are missing. The adult bird may learn to jump and glide, or even to fly awkwardly, but this development is random, the bird may never learn anything more than to run while flapping.

Of course, in reality, a bird learning to fly is a "perfect agent" of flight. A bird, in general, will be able to fly unless there is some exceptional circumstance that prevents it; its operative habits occur naturally, it learns to fly in the same way that we learn to see. However, our rational accidental potencies are not "pre-programmed" with operative habits, rather, these are merely emerging through our lives and our civilizations.

To turn to another analogy, I think one might compare the emergence of rational operations to learning any skill, for instance, playing hockey.¹²¹ When one is learning to play hockey one must acquire the necessary skills. As one sets out to acquire these skills one is in pure potency to being a perfect hockey player (a "perfect agent" of hockey), one possesses no skills that would permit one to play, but one is up to the task of learning. As one proceeds, the skills that will make one a perfect hockey player are learned one by one, and with each new skill we become capable of more and more differentiated operations.

Furthermore, each skill is considered fully learned once it becomes habitual, able to be performed easily and unconsciously. Habits inform our accidental potencies, they

¹²¹ The big difference is that our ability to operate rationally represents the emergence of operations of a new realm of being in the universe, and the development of these skills are the central occupation of our lives as human beings. Our ability to play hockey is only central to our lives as Canadians. As Canadians we experience a natural exigency to play hockey, as human experience a natural exigency to know and to will.

are the skills through which we do all the things we are capable of doing. They are a type of being, a reality within us, they have a force, a power to shape our actions. Once they are internalized, they inform us, they change us and shape our actions.

However, along with the possibility of good habits there is also the possibility of bad habits. Bad habits are simply (I hesitate to use the word skills) “ways of coping” with particular situations that then become routine and part of us, but which, unlike good habits, limit our operative potential. And like any habit, these bad habits become unconscious, and difficult to correct.

Bad habits occur accidentally, due to the coincidences of our particular life experiences. They always have a purpose, for instance, hanging up at the blue line enables a struggling hockey player to get the odd breakaway and a chance to score. Once it works, enabling a player who would not normally score to score, it is repeated, and soon the player is doing it without thinking, and continues even after the coach begins to protest, often failing to even notice that this is what he/she is doing until the coach screams. While this habit has a purpose, it doesn’t help the player to be a better hockey player. In fact, it severely limits him/her because he/she is neglecting to learn how to play defense.

Our rational accidental potencies are informed in the same way. Not having the operative potencies that we would need to fulfill our rational potential, we must acquire them. But, due to the exigencies of day-to-day life, and our natural deficiencies, we often fail to be attentive to everything that we are doing. Thus, we can pick up bad habits. Any operative habits that limit, rather than perfect our operative potencies, are called vices.

And, as we will see, due to the law of the psychological continuity of the will,¹²² even one such failure, in one brief moment, is enough to create a negative disposition in our will.

The law of psychological continuity is an important concept in understanding how vice exerts an influence over the will. It arises out of Aquinas' understanding of the nature of the will. This understanding is that the will was not free in the sense that it always approaches a decision arbitrarily. Aquinas rejected the common sense understanding that the freedom of the will lies in its ability to move itself to a choice without being necessitated by either of the two choices. While Aquinas agrees that the will determines itself (with respect to means), and is therefore free, this kind of arbitrary determination was unintelligible to him.¹²³ Furthermore, with every act of the will, the will is determined by a certain good, or end, and this determination fixes the will in willing that particular end. Thus, not only is the will not free in the sense that it wills arbitrarily, its freedom is further limited by the fact that its ability to will is partially determined by its past actions.

The key to understanding his point is in considering what causes a change in the will. By a change in the will is meant that the will wills something different at two different times, given no change in the situation.¹²⁴ Aquinas argued that, given the exact same choice, the will cannot will one thing one moment and another thing another, as, one might imagine, some fickle monarch. A change would require a cause, and the will cannot will to change itself, or at least, if it did, this too would require a cause.

¹²² See below – The law of psychological continuity

¹²³ See Below, My second inverse insight

¹²⁴ Perhaps specifying two times confuses the issue, as that could be understood to change the situation. Even the two times should really be considered to be the same. Look at how badly Aquinas put it, “that someone does not will at the same time which earlier he did will.” ??

The will cannot change itself, he wrote, “the angels (who exist beyond time) decide their eternal destiny by a single choice.”¹²⁵ To Aquinas, the idea that the will could change itself, returning to a perfect equilibrium after each decision, and with each ticking of the clock, is the worst kind of common sense, non-theoretical, thinking.¹²⁶ Lonergan writes,

A change of will is motion in the will; that motion must have its proportionate cause; and the ticking of the clock is not a proportionate cause.

And he adds,

a large number, if not all, of the difficulties against God’s operation in the will arise from the assumption that the will perpetually and automatically springs back to perfect poise and equilibrium (after each decision.)¹²⁷

The will is not the power to choose arbitrarily, it is an intellectual appetite. The will cannot change itself, one moment willing one thing one moment another. The will is a spiritual appetite, and it always wills the same thing, the good per se. However, the will can be changed, not per se, but accidentally, as it is a “changeable nature,” which can be corrupted or perfected.

Aquinas writes, it does not belong to the nature of the free will to change its nature,

just as it does not belong to the nature of the visual potency that it sees in different ways, but this happens because of the different disposition of the one seeing, the eye being sometimes pure and sometimes disturbed.¹²⁸

What Aquinas is saying is that it is not necessary in order to consider the will to be free for it to be able to change, to will one thing one moment and another thing

¹²⁵ (GO), p.357

¹²⁶ For the difference between common sense and theoretical thinking, see above, chapter two, section II

¹²⁷ (GO), p.355

¹²⁸ *De Malo*, q. 16, a. 5

another moment. The will always desires a determinate good, and yet is free because it moves itself (determines itself) to will the means to an end.

Furthermore, the will can change, which may contribute to the illusion that the will is free in the sense of being able to will arbitrarily, but this is only due to the fact that it is a changeable nature and that we are imperfect agents.

One must remember that the human being, as an imperfect agent, does not automatically possess the necessary operative forms with which to will as he/she potentially could. In fact, our acts are never fully determined by the good that the will should will, because, as created beings our willingness is always limited.¹²⁹ However, one might say that we are naturally determined by that good to which we are proportionate at the time, and the only way that we can will something different is for our will to be changed, in the sense of being perfected or corrupted, the way that an eye is changed by laser surgery or a disease that destroys its nerve endings.

Therefore the law of psychological continuity states the will always wills a determinate end, but that this good changes depending on the state of the perfection of the will. The will always continues to will as it previously willed, unless something changes it. If the eye is healthy it always sees a certain way, but if it suffers some privation it may perform differently. In this same way, the perfectly functioning will will necessarily will perfect justice.¹³⁰ However, due to any privations it may will something less than perfect justice. The state of the will determines the degree to which the will wills effectively.

¹²⁹ Only by possessing the beautiful vision are we proportionate to sinlessness..

¹³⁰ This of course means that the will, as Aristotle conceived of it, was perfectly free. Aristotle assumed that the will was determined by the intellect, for Aquinas, this was only so if the will was operating perfectly, which as we will see could occur, but only through grace.

But, the point is that based on its level of actualization it always necessarily willed the same end.

Next we turn to the causes of change in the will. There are two types of change in the will - intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic changes are: a change in knowledge, a change in one's passions, and change in one's habits. All of these factors can effect a change in the will so that a will wills differently in the same situation. However, we must keep in mind that all of these factors can have the effect of perfecting or corrupting the will. For instance, developing a good habit perfects the will. To use the example of the bird, every time it develops a good habit, it is closer to being able to fly. However, every time it learns a bad habit, that habit limits the creature's operative potential, its potential to fly.

In fact, the main way that the will is corrupted, made worse than it was, is through sinful habits. When we sin we set ourselves on a course, a course of behaviors that may have some purpose, they may be "skills" of a sort, but as sins these skills reduce our operational range. Learning to build nests on the ground may help the flightless bird to survive, but it is not a good habit specifically in relation to the birds potential to eventually fly. A bad habit in relation to the will is a behavior that limits the operational range of the will, "life-skills" which discourage reflection, and willingness to act rationally.

Along with the intrinsic modes of change, there is also one possible extrinsic cause of change in the will, and that is God causing the will to will an end that had not previously been willed. The will naturally wills the good as its end, but only the good in general. However God can operate on the will to make it will a specific, that is, specified good, as its end. The most important example of this is when God makes the will will the

end of God Himself. And, this act is precisely what we are interested in in this section, for this is prevenient grace.

Section III - The Special Theorem of Operative Grace

As we have seen, Aquinas originally followed the majority who, in the early light of the theorem of the supernatural, denied that early scholastic view that human beings were ever unable to avoid sin. However, as we know, Aquinas would eventually dismiss this idea based on the influence of Augustine. Aquinas would re-work Augustine's theory, incorporating it into his own theories on the psychological continuity of the will, and the two acts of the will. Aquinas would present his understanding of the special theorem of operative grace as follows.

The human being is a pure spiritual potency due to his/her lack of operative forms. This potency is informed randomly through the human being's life. Lacking the operative habits of the intellect by which the good per se is known and willed, merely apparent goods often determine the human being's actions, and once these goods are chosen they create a disposition in the will so that it continues to will these goods unless something prevents it. Thus, while the good per se is always a potential object of choice for the will due to our proportion for rational operations, lacking the operational habits meant that for the most part, lesser goods are chosen.

To will a lesser good in place of a greater good was sin. And, because human beings had the potential to act in accordance with reason, willing a lesser good was sinful. At any time the human being, through their rational nature, could choose to reflect on their actions, and in doing this they had the potential to avoid sin, and to correct a

sinful habit. Having this freedom they were responsible for their actions in a way that non-rational beings were not. However, because they were proportionate as imperfect agents, they couldn't help but sin unless they were constantly deliberating, and this was impossible to maintain. In other words, the human being could will to deliberate about his/her actions, and through this deliberation he/she could correct his/her action if he/she found it to be sinful. However, due to the exigencies of human life, this deliberation was only possible some of the time. The rest of the time the human being had to act habitually, and as we have seen, as an imperfect agent, this meant that we couldn't help but sin.

Thus, for Aquinas, the human being is free in so much as he/she can deliberate and act in accordance with the results of this deliberation. Furthermore, the human being was responsible for sin because he/she could avoid each and every sin, individually, through this deliberation. This was an important difference between Aquinas and Augustine. Augustine merely said that we could not avoid sin; Aquinas specified that we could avoid any sin, just not all.

With this in mind, we may now understand the first way that grace was necessary. Because the human being could not be expected to deliberate before every action, he/she needed habitual grace. Human beings needed the operative forms that would guide them habitually, or automatically, in times where deliberation was not possible. Through the proper operative habits, rational operations would become like flight to a bird, natural and easy.

Now this meant that habitual grace was necessary for justification. But everyone accepted this even prior to Aquinas' retrieval of the special theorem of operative grace.

Even Pelagius would have accepted this. Furthermore, it was no threat to human freedom because this grace just brought a potency to act.¹³¹ It only operated on us in the sense that it perfected our nature; it did not cause us to act against our nature. However, for Aquinas there had to be another grace, the one that Augustine had discovered and articulated through the special theorem of operative grace. Aquinas would now give this grace a fully theoretical treatment. This treatment will be based on what we have just covered - Aquinas' newly discovered differentiation of the two acts of the will, and the psychological continuity of the will, along with an insight that may be best understood by turning at this point to the *Eudemian Ethics*, of Aristotle.

Lonergan writes,

Eudemus had been faced with the difficulty that not only the imprudent sometimes make good out of sheer luck, but also the prudent have to be lucky. For the prudent man in the concrete is prudent because he takes counsel; but even if he takes counsel about taking counsel, one cannot suppose an infinite regress. What accounts for the *initium consiliandi* (the initial counsel)?¹³²

In applying all that we have learned about the will to this philosophical problem raised by Eudemus, one is led to Aquinas' understanding of the specific theorem of operative grace.

When it comes to rational operations we are imperfect agents. This means that we have the potential for rational operations in our nature, but that the operations are not programmed to emerge automatically, like a bird's capacity for flight. Our rational capacities are more like prime matter, in that they lack any form at our birth, they are just raw potential. The forms that would allow these operations can be acquired, but this process does not take place automatically.

¹³¹ See (GF), ch. 2

¹³² (GF), p. 101

In this condition we can acquire the forms necessary for perfecting our rational potencies. As we proceed through life we acquire the habits that inform our accidental potencies. But, as we have seen, as long as this process is occurring randomly, based on the specified ends that we desire in our day to day living, this includes vices as well as virtues. In other words, as we learn the skills that allow us to live our daily lives, we pick up skills that reduce the operational range of our rational potencies.

We have also seen that while we are only imperfect agents of rational operations, we are at least agents, and therefore proportionate to these operations. This means that we may always potentially overcome a sinful habit. To overcome a vice we need to deliberate. But as Eudemus asks, what leads us to this deliberation?

The answer, Aquinas reasoned, is that this type of deliberation is an act of the will. And it is initially caused, as we saw above, by the willing of some end. Once we will an end, we move ourselves to deliberate about the means to that end, and then freely move ourselves to willing those means. So the next question is, how do we come to will this end?

The answer is that it is only through God that we will any end. According to Aquinas, only God is capable of working internally in our wills in this way. Thus, the answer that Aquinas would give to Eudemus is that it is not by fortune that the prudent person is produced, but by God.

God moves our will to will rational operations as its end, and then we freely apply our intellect to specifying the means, and once the will specifies them (as the necessary operative habits) we freely will the means, and go about acquiring the habits. Finally,

Aquinas would add that to will truth and justice as one's end is really to will God as one's end.

Thus, God converts the will to will God as its specific end, and then the newly converted sinner suddenly desires truth and justice over merely apparent goods. What is being suggested is that we cannot really act morally until we will truth and justice, but that willing these things is not automatic, God causes it in us. Prior to God's action we only will the good indeterminately, and are therefore more likely to be determined by apparent goods, which we directly experience, rather than true ones, which we may only know through our reason, and which can therefore only guide us if we will this knowledge in the first place.

To review, God makes everyone will the good in general, but does not give every human being the operative potencies with which to will the good per se. However, God gives humans the potential to will rationally, and then God operates in the will of some people, making them will a specified good, that being God Himself. Once these people will this specific good, they then freely move themselves towards reversing the vices that they have acquired, and obtaining the virtues that they will need. God then sends a further aid in the form of supernatural virtues by which the chosen human beings may effectively will the good per se, and thus avoid further sin. And this "habitual" grace completes the conversion and justification of the sinner.

Perhaps we might turn back to our analogy of a hockey player. Our hockey player had developed a bad habit. But why would a hockey player choose to behave in a way that would make him/her a lesser hockey player? Why would he/she hang at the blue line when that meant that he/she was neglecting defensive play? It is because he/she has failed

to will as the end of his/her action that he/she be the best hockey player that he/she can be. Rather, he/she has, probably unconsciously, willed that he/she score, due to that seeming important at the time and place that he/she is in. Thus he/she is willing an apparent good, instead of the more general good that he/she should be willing.

Just like the hockey player willing to be a good hockey player rather than some good of the moment, the operative potencies, habits, that we acquire will only be the ones appropriate for knowing truth, and willing justice if these things are willed as the end of our learning. If we will other ends, say ends that are tied to the particular places and times that we are in, then the operative habits that we learn will be effective at attaining whatever limited goods we are concerned with at the time, but not with truth and justice.

This gets us back to Eudemus, and the prudent person. The prudent person wills to deliberate about right action. As he/she is concerned with right action, he/she will take the time to identify the operative potencies that he/she will need to be able to act rightly. So what has to happen in order that we might start to set ourselves right is for the will to will the specific good of truth and goodness, or as Aquinas would say, to will God as one's end. Thus, willing God as the end of one's action precedes our acquiring the necessary habits through which we can finally will justly. It moves the will to will to perfect itself, so that it no longer acquires its habits randomly. Thus, in order to become a perfect rational agent, the first step is that the person wills to reach their potential, just as the hockey player has to will the longer term goal of being a good hockey player if he/she is ever going to perfect his/her operational potencies.

Before concluding this section there is something that needs to be mentioned. I have purposely avoided the idea of original sin. But of course, original sin lies at the very

heart of the special theorem of operative grace, as Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan understood it. For these scholars original sin was the cause of humankind's status as an imperfect, deficient agent of rational operations. Why have I therefore not even mentioned so central a concept?

First, one should note that after the development of the theorem of the supernatural there was no longer a need to ground grace in sin. The special unmeritedness of grace could be explained by its supernatural quality, not the debasement of humanity or nature through sin. But there was another reason.

The reason is that in presenting these sections I have been attempting to explain Aquinas' position in a way that is comprehensible to me. In other words, I have come a long way in writing this thesis, and I now accept much of the Augustinian position. However, the theory of original sin remains highly problematic for me. It seems to me, as I currently understand it, to rest on a far too literal reading of scripture.

With this admitted, I believe that what I have been able to accomplish through my presentation is to show that the special theorem of operative grace points to a fact of human experience that can be understood in terms of original sin, but that is not necessarily understood in these terms. In other words, I have been able to come to understand what Augustine was on about; I can now appreciate the phenomenon that he first noticed. And, while I now understand why it would have made perfect sense to him in terms of original sin, it does not necessarily have to be.

What I take from this theorem is that Augustine is trying to explain that human beings are like the bird in my analogy. We have the potential for a new type of operation, the potential to operate spiritually, rationally. This creates the possibility of living moral

lives, and it creates the possibility of sin. However, we do not know how to fly, and learning how will require very specific conditions to be in place. Augustine describes it as our hearts being made into flesh, by which I understand that we must be made to be *willing* to live as spiritual beings, we do not start out that way.

When I think of humanity as a bird that does not know how to fly even though it was born with wings, Augustine's insight becomes very meaningful and true. When I imagine humanity as a bird that cannot fly, such concepts of "fallen," and "deficient nature," are no longer what they were when I began this study. I can now easily recognize the data that Augustine is describing. The bird experiences these wings everyday, every time that it tries to move, but, even though they are always present, they cannot be used until the bird realizes what they are, and wills to learn to fly. This requires sacrifice; the bird has to change its habits, facing the difficulty of acquiring new ones, and of giving up the old ones that make life easy and enjoyable. But prior to either of these things, the bird has to become aware of itself, and its potential. There has to be a change within the bird that results in its self-affirmation, the affirmation that it was meant to fly, and the decision that it wants to reach this lofty potential. But where does this initial impetus come from?

The answer to this question depends on one's perspective. For some it comes randomly, based on the disposition of the person, and the events that shape their experiences. But according to the special theorem of operative grace, it comes from God. Which raises other questions. First, is God necessarily responsible for our desire to operate as spiritual beings, and is this just? And, second, does this truly permit an adequate ground for moral responsibility?

As to the first part of the first question I think that I know how Aquinas would answer. We saw his metaphysical argument above. Only God can cause us to will an end, it is a matter of the will willing antecedently in order to be able to will anything at all. In order to will the means we must necessarily will an end. If the will is not in act, only something outside of it can bring it into act. One of the benefits of this argument is that there can be no claim that God invades our freedom, because we are never free to choose the ends that we will anyway. The will is only ever in second act in so far as God puts it into second act. So when we suddenly begin to will God as our special end, it is God who is at the root of the act, and not the individual person. It is simply a matter of metaphysical necessity.

What does it mean for God to do this? Perhaps anyone who has experienced it, and reflected on it, can identify a feeling, a desire that was just there. A sudden distaste for the means that attain ends which are limited to some time and place, in favor of the means to attain truth and justice. We don't choose this change, it just happens to us.

The second part of the first question is more difficult. Is it just to say that God moves some people, but not all? But one might answer such a question with another question. If not God, then by what means do we come to will these things? For no one can deny Augustine the fact that few of us ever will these ends sufficiently. Why do some of us will these things, and some do not? For Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan, it is because of God, filling their heart, and changing their dispositions. For Pelagius it is the prerogative of the individual, a choice without a cause, except for the cause of the free individual, and the events that shaped his/her disposition.

For Lonergan this explanation was problematic. It seems to leave the fate of the person to chance, to their experiences and their whims. He writes in the very first section of Grace and Freedom that the Pelagians “agreed with the Stoics that man asks the gods not for virtue but only for fortune”¹³³ Meaning the “outside events”¹³⁴ that lead some to arbitrarily choose truth and justice. Even God could not understand how a person might choose, and so He was reduced to coercing the will from the outside. But this makes a mystery out of the human will, and this is likely what Augustine may have first noticed. (I would suggest that he noticed it while reading Tyconius, as he is known to have done just prior to his shift to his mature position.¹³⁵)

For both Aquinas and Augustine this idea, of God coercing the human being through external events was originally accepted. We examined how, for Aquinas, God made “the prudent human being” by external acts of grace, even to the point of St. Paul’s conversion being preceded by a corporeal light. As they matured, I believe that they discovered a problem with this idea, a problem with the philosophical idea of freedom. We will examine this more closely in the next section. However, at this time I would just like to conclude this section with some concluding reflections.

¹³³ GF, p.4

¹³⁴ See above: Sermons, illness, admonishing voices, corporeal lights.

¹³⁵ This statement is merely a hypothesis at this time, but it is an interesting question that has come out of this work. Tyconius believed that grace was necessary for salvation, but that there was some merit on the human side by which God bestowed the grace. According to Tyconius, God looked into the future to see how human beings would act, and thus gave grace according to how He knew human beings would behave. This explained His preference for Jacob. But this creates an image of God struggling to direct the universe, using indirect means to gain insight into human actions; unable to predict human behavior directly He has to peer into the future to see what we will do. This means that God, at some level, cannot understand us, and worse, that at some level we determine God’s actions. It was this image, although as presented by Molina and not Tyconius, that triggered my sudden insight into the problems with the philosophical idea of freedom. See below

The first reaction that I had to Aquinas' theorem is that it seems to make God unjust. For if this motion of the will is necessary, and if it comes from God, then how does one explain why only some individuals receive it?

Then I had my first inverse insight concerning these matters. I asked myself, if God is not the cause, then why is one person moved by truth and justice and another not? I realized that in order to answer this question one has to move in the direction that Aquinas did, that of explaining the nature of the will, which necessarily creates the problem of injustice. Any cause of willing the good, whether it is nature or nurture, immediately creates the problem of why everyone does not receive this cause, and the only other possibility is that there is no cause. But if there is no cause, then the question is meaningless, and furthermore, that does not necessarily seem any more just. There is the appearance of justice, in that the sinner is understood to choose, and take responsibility for his/her sin. But on another level, one may ask why does the sinner fail? Or, what did the elect do right? And the answer to both questions is nothing, it just happened that way. But, is this really any more just that God selecting the elect? How is one to understand the difference between a sinner and a saint? The choice is arbitrary, and therefore free, but is this intelligible? And is this choice from nowhere and out of nothing just, or does it just make the sinner a victim of fate?

What seems to be at the heart of the idea that human beings act as radically free agents is the idea that they move themselves without any reason or cause. But this makes this motion unintelligible, and Aquinas surely could not accept that there was unintelligibility at the heart of freedom. To him, and to Augustine, the universe *was* intelligibility. Lonergan will express this with his metaphysical argument that being is

connatural with intelligibility.¹³⁶ The universe is intelligibility, and God is its source. If one thinks back to Augustine's conversion, his release came along with the insight that sin was privation. But the decision of the will to concern itself with truth and justice, if it has no cause, seems to put a privation, a mystery, at the heart of religious conversion. What Augustine did, was to insist that in fact, in place of a mystery, it was in fact God who was at the center.

Thus, to ask about justice concerning the conversion of the will is a misleading question, which can only be answered by an inverse insight. There is no answer to this question. Why is one person altruistic, and another selfish? One either has to say there is no reason, but that doesn't answer the question. Or one assigns a reason, and that doesn't answer it either, because then the next question becomes, why did they receive that cause? In the end it is a mystery, either way. But the religious person has to believe that it is all part of God's plan – providence, and therefore intelligible at some supernatural level.

In fact, providence is a major concern for Aquinas. It's another place that he diverged from Aristotle's position. Every event in the universe had God as its universal cause, and even the events of the human will had to be explained as fitting this worldview. Stebbins writes,

Lonergan stresses that for Aquinas the human will, no less than any other created cause, is an instrument of divine providence. Indeed, because human choices play such a massive role not only in the course of human affairs but also in the fate of lower beings – animals, plants, soil, water, air, and so on – the divine governance of our particular corner of the created universe would be only partial if God did not govern human wills.

¹³⁶ See Insight

Thus, one understands what Aquinas is up to. The whole theorem of operative grace is based on assigning causation to the motions of the human will. Instead of willing arbitrarily, Aquinas provides a law, a theorem, of the operations of the will. That is what he is doing with the law of psychological continuity, and that is what he is doing when he explains that the free will acts in willing anything in so far as it is *caused* by the willing of the end. Thus the special theorem of operative grace, and therefore the Pelagian controversy, really concerns causation in the human will. Every act of the will must have a cause, or there is unintelligibility and randomness at the heart of the most sacred and profound levels of human life. In addition, and ironically, at this most holy level, God would cease to be God.

We must now move on. But, before I turn to our second question, and try to identify the ground of moral responsibility in Aquinas' framework, we must follow this new insight, or perhaps inverse insight, into human freedom, and the human will.

I propose that there is a fundamental problem at the heart of Pelagius' view, a problem with the philosophical idea of freedom. I believe that Augustine came face to face with it, and discovered God's grace. I believe that Aquinas came face to face with it, and it made him turn to Aristotelian physics, and specifically, into theories of causality. It is the problem that we have just raised above - that the radical human freedom which grounds moral responsibility rest on a radical unintelligibility.

Section Four – Philosophical Freedom

The concept of human freedom is a frequently used concept, however, anyone who has ever spent time trying to gain a theoretical understanding of it will surely agree

that it is actually a very elusive concept. Which is troubling, as it would seem to be the concept on which the field of ethics is grounded. But, isn't this elusiveness perhaps understandable, isn't freedom such that it cannot be understood? If our free will were to be fully understood, wouldn't that destroy its freedom?

According to Godfrey Vesey, former director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, the concept of the free will emerges in philosophy out of the question of moral responsibility.¹³⁷ Having this role it is an important philosophical concept. However, because human understanding emerges out of insight into the causes of things, the free will in itself, understood as a capacity for beginning motion "freely," that is, without a prior cause, is commonly thought to be impenetrable by human understanding. By this I understand him to be saying that while in itself the will is a capacity to produce action spontaneously and without necessity or cause, this capacity, incomprehensible in itself, does have a systematic role to play as a vital part of the system that produces moral responsibility, and in this way it is an intelligible "thing."

According to Versey, Plato identified mind as a distinct form of causality juxtaposed with necessity (by which he seemed to understand physical elements). According to Joel M. Charon, Kant makes a similar distinction.¹³⁸ Kant divides the universe into noumena and phenomena. Phenomena are those aspects of the universe that are accessible to our senses; noumena are those aspects beyond the reach of our senses. Kant argued that human knowing was limited to knowledge of the phenomena. According to Kant, there could be no scientific knowledge of the noumena. Kant, whose

¹³⁷ Godfrey Vesey, *Free Will, Key Themes in Philosophy*, Ed. A. Phillips Griffiths, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.85-86

¹³⁸ Joel M. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism: An introduction, An Interpretation, An Integration*, 8th Ed., Pearson - Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2004, p.14-15

concern was to distinguish what was proportionate to human knowing from what was disproportionate to human knowing, placed things like God, the angels, and the free human will within the domain of the noumena. Charon, who is a social scientist, is interested in Kant's distinction because as a social scientist he must explain how it is that social science is still relevant if Kant is right, and the human being, at the most profound level, is essentially not proportionate to scientific analysis. In a way Charon's interest is like that of Aquinas, who wished to explain human willing as a part of God's providence.

By defining something we assign it a fixed nature that it cannot deviate from if it is to remain itself. Assigning the will a nature, an operative principle from which it could not deviate if it was to remain a will, would seem to reduce the will to a causally determined entity; one that operates systematically in interaction with outside causes. One may easily understand that this is what is at the heart of Aquinas' theorem of operative grace, that is, discovering the laws that govern the will. While this would turn the will into a proper object of scientific enquiry, or, make it intelligible in itself, it would also seem to destroy what is most essential to the will, that it be completely undetermined by any extraneous influence. Can moral responsibility be grounded in a will that operates according to law?

The theory of the will that is being advocated by those conceiving of the will as a radically free potency, lacking any intelligibility in itself, is Voluntarism. Lonergan traces the roots of this theory back to a familiar source – Duns Scotus.¹³⁹

In considering the relation between the will and the intellect in an act of choice Scotus first juxtaposed two theories: the first was that the intellect, by providing an object

¹³⁹Besides being the founder, or rather first great systematic thinker, of voluntarism, Lonergan credits Scotus with being the originator of many counter positions in epistemology and metaphysics as well. As proof of this attribution by Lonergan I would offer p. 686 of *Insight*.

to the will, caused the act of willing in the will; the second, was that the will caused the act of willing in itself independently of the intellect. Aristotle is the name most often associated with the first choice, and Scotus, in his early works, is most often associated with the second. But although the second position was originally Scotus' position, he eventually came to prefer a third, more moderate position. This was the position that there was a concurrence between the intellect and the will in causing the act of the will, which, as we have seen, was also the position of Aquinas.

For Scotus the concurrence was an unequal concurrence, with the will as the principle cause. Scotus writes,

Thus in the proposed case: the will has the nature of one cause, namely of a particular cause in respect to the act of willing, and the soul having the act of knowing the object, has the nature of another partial cause, and both together are the total cause in respect to the act of willing. Yet the will is the more principle cause and the knowing nature the less principle cause, because the will moves freely, to the motion of which it moves the other; hence it determines the other to acting; but the nature knowing object is a natural agent, since on its part it always acts; yet it cannot be sufficient to elicit an act unless the will concurs. And therefore the will is the more principle cause.¹⁴⁰

Let us begin to unpack this.

First of all, Scotus conceived of two types of cause. A natural agent was a cause that acted in a determined or necessary way; a voluntary agent was a cause that acted freely. In accepting two types of cause, Scotus was not breaking new ground, as we have seen, he was following Plato.¹⁴¹ The intellect was a natural agent. This was presumably because its objects were grounded in reason, they were therefore necessary, or, proper objects of science. The intellect presented objects to the will, and the will selected which objects would be willed. In this relationship the intellect was a proper cause of the action

¹⁴⁰ Scotus, *Secundae Additiones*, 195 – taken from Patrick Lee, *The Relation Between Intellect and Free Choice According to Aquinas and Scotus*, *The Thomist*, (TBD) p.325-326

¹⁴¹ see above

of willing. In so far as the object chosen was its product, the intellect caused the act. However the will was a more essential cause since the object could not be understood to necessarily cause the act of willing, it only did so in so far as the will chose it, thus its power to cause the act of the will was, “given to it by the will.”¹⁴² Thus one cannot properly say that the intellect causes that act of willing, but that the intellect causes the act of willing in so far as the will wills it.

The point that needed to be made was that at the heart of Scotus’ thought is the conception of the will as a kind of “free radical,” a capacity to operate without any cause or necessity, and therefore without any intelligibility in itself. Scotus places this concept at the center of every act of human willing, and he argues that this is essential to free choice and moral responsibility.¹⁴³

This conceptualization of the will was fundamental to Scotus’ thought, which is why it has come to be known as voluntarism. To Scotus the will possessed a special kind of determination; he called it an *indeterminatio illuminationis*, as opposed to an *indeterminatio contradictionis*. The difference was that the second indeterminacy refers to passive potency, to mere potential. This is not a sufficient indeterminacy to ground human freedom according to Scotus, because it is only brought to act by an extraneous agent, and once in act it is no longer indeterminate. The first indeterminacy refers to the idea that an agent in act can still possess indeterminacy. Thus it is an indeterminacy that is brought to a determination not by extraneous causes, but rather by the very agent in which it resides. This means that Scotus accepts that there can be a motion without an extraneous cause, something that Aristotle and Aquinas could never accept, for it goes

¹⁴² Lee, *Free Choice According to Aquinas and Scotus*, p.325

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p.326-327

against rationality. But for his part, Scotus could never accept Aquinas' idea that God caused the willing of the end. He argues that Aquinas' argument would mean that the will was ultimately determined, a passive power. He would probably point out that by willing the means one is really willing the end, which, according to Aquinas, was always determined by God. One must ask oneself, does Aquinas reduce human freedom to an *indeterminatio contradictionis*. A strong argument can be made that he does, as the will always wills a determinate end once it is perfected, and it is only through its corruption that it fails to will. Furthermore, the perfection of the will has causes, and God, an extrinsic cause, plays the fundamental role in the will's choices.

The real difference between the two positions is this, for Scotus the intellect is a determined cause, and so the will can never be determined by the intellect and remain free. He will push this principle to its limits when he states that even when faced with the beautiful vision the human being is free to refuse. For Aquinas the will is only truly free when it is fully determined by the intellect, as Aristotle believed that we were by nature. Aquinas does insist that the will is not determined by the intellect, but he denies that the will's ability to dissent from the intellect is freedom at all.

Thus it is true that Aquinas rejected Aristotle's position, but this was only because he realized that Aristotle was too optimistic. Aided by the insights into human nature that he discovered in Augustine, he corrected Aristotle, showing the necessity of grace to be due to the fact the will often fails to be moved by the intellect, but he did not accept that the will was ever free to will arbitrarily. Aquinas is not saying that we are free because we can refuse to operate as rational beings, he is saying that, for some reason (original sin) we are imperfect agents, suffering a privation of our natural proportions, and, since

the will is only fully determined by the intellect if it wills the appropriate ends, and possesses all the necessary operative habits, the will has to be healed so that it can be “free” to function properly, and be determined by the intellect. Once healed we *necessarily* will a spiritual good.

But what does this do to philosophical freedom? We saw above that Aquinas refused to admit that the intellect determined the will, however he also said that the will was like any other operative potency, it functions in some determined way (like seeing, or hearing). Therefore, as long as the will is “free” it wills rationally, not arbitrarily, just as an eye sees necessarily according to the laws of biology and optics. But isn’t this arbitrariness necessary for “philosophical freedom,” and moral responsibility?

To inquire into the technicalities of these questions any further is beyond the scope of this thesis, but what we should take away with us is that Aquinas’ position would probably never have satisfied Pelagius - Scotus’ would have. However, the counter position to that of Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan rests on a fundamental unintelligibility, and therefore has considerable problems of its own.

And through these insights I now understand the Pelagian controversy to be fundamentally parallel to the debate between Einstein and quantum mechanics. Pelagius and Scotus accept that God rolls dice; there is a fundamental randomness in the world. They conceive of the determination of the will as similar to the determination of Schrodinger’s cat. What comes to pass is essentially non-systematic, and even beyond the comprehension of God. Classical scholars, theologians as well as physicists, cannot accept this, and instead seek a fuller explanatory theory. But at what cost is this rationality bought? And what are the consequences for ethics?

We must now turn to the specific question of moral responsibility in Aquinas.

Section Five – The Ground of Moral Responsibility in Aquinas

For Aquinas, sin occurred when the will, in act with respect to some proper end, failed to will the means. Sin was always a failure to act, as opposed to an act. Lonergan writes,

For one sins either against a positive law or a negative law; but one sins against a positive law by not acting in accordance with the law; and one sins against a negative law by not impeding a motion [of the will] prohibited by the law. In each case, sin consists in a defect of action, a privation of required action.¹⁴⁴

Sin had to be conceived in this way because making sin an act of the will would mean that the will would have had to be in act to some sinful end, which was impossible, as it would have made God responsible for sin. However, one may ask, if we do not will sinful ends, how does sin occur? The answer, as we have already seen, is that sin occurs because we choose apparent goods over the greater good that we may know and do through out rational powers. And this failure takes place due to the fact that we are imperfect rational agents, or, as it is otherwise described, due to our natural deficiencies, our “fallenness” (our servitude to sin). But while this explains sin, does it necessarily ground moral responsibility? Granted, as rational beings we are always potentially able to choose the higher good, but as imperfect agents our wills are such that it is natural that they be determined by apparent goods, furthermore, the perfection of our will is not our responsibility because it is the result of grace.

We saw how Augustine used the example of Peter, who willed to live justly, but lacking the operative habits, fell back into his old habits when a crisis forced him to act

¹⁴⁴ Lonergan, *DE Ente Supernaturali*: 129 – Taken From (DI), p.271

spontaneously and deny his relationship with Christ. But by taking Augustine's own example, along with Aquinas' terms, could one argue that Peter's failure might not have been his fault, but due to his lack of operative habits? Keep in mind that in this situation deliberation was impossible because of the spontaneity that was demanded. Therefore wasn't Peter's action, or should I say inaction, caused by his lack of operative habits? Blaming Peter for his failure would be like blaming a novice hockey player for skating on his ankles? And, even if one argued that Peter in fact always had had time to deliberate but failed to, couldn't one then argue that his failure to do so is explained by God not moving his will into act with the appropriate end? And, can his past actions be blamed for disposing his will, when he was born as an imperfect agent? If we are only proportionate to rational acts as imperfect agents, isn't our responsibility eliminated due to the fact that our proportionality to rational acts is like that of a tied and blindfolded person's proportionality to see?

The problem of sin is different from the problem of moral responsibility. It is easier to explain sin than moral responsibility in Thomas' terms. Sin is privation, thus human beings, as imperfect agents, are in a state of privation to the operative forms by which they could will justly. Sin can be understood by imagining our flightless bird one more time. One may notice its wings and be unable to understand why it can't simply fly. One may imagine a cause, a reason it is so wretched, so depraved, as to be tortured like this, being able to fly but not being *able* to fly. Truly this bird is absurd. One may imagine that the bird is being punished, or that it had fallen, but in reality it is just in development, a potentiality that is emerging naturally. Blaming human beings for sin in

this situation is like blaming the bird that cannot fly, its deficiency is simply due to nature, and the nature of nature - which operates by statistical chance and emergence.

Prior to our initial conversion, which we should note we receive without any merit on our part, can we be blamed for our sin? Granted, as potentially rational beings, we always can will properly, and should, but as much as Aquinas argues that merit is impossible without grace, he is also arguing against moral guilt.

For me the big problem can be seen in the theory of the psychological continuity of the will. As many times as I go over it I cannot decide whether it makes any sense to say that our sins create a disposition in the will that limits our operative habits, or if it makes more sense to say that our lack of operative habits causes us to sin. Take the example of the angel that decides its destiny with one act,¹⁴⁵ with what faculty does it decide? If it is the will then the will is in fact free to will arbitrarily. If the failure is due to the limitations of the angel's operative forms, then it cannot be blamed, unless it is to be blamed for its limitations. And while prior sinful acts are often used to justify human deficiencies, the angel determines itself instantly, at the moment of its creation (outside of time and space), so prior acts cannot explain its deficiencies.

The conception of moral guilt seems to imply that the will wills arbitrarily, and arbitrarily chooses evil. But in order to avoid sin, according to Thomas, we need to acquire the right operative habits, and this requires a conversion on our part, orienting us towards the end to which these habits are the means, a conversion that is received from God. Prior to this it is not that we fail to will the good, but that our will is corrupt, and does not will the good. The will is not the capacity to will arbitrarily, to choose between

¹⁴⁵ See above, p. 72

right and wrong, it wills necessarily, but changes due to its condition (being more or less perfected or corrupted).

In addition, one cannot blame this privation on original sin. This won't ground moral responsibility or justice, because it rests on the unjust idea that the father ate the bitter fruit and the children's teeth were set on edge.

Of course, Aquinas and Lonergan try to resolve this by arguing that we are free in willing the means, even to the point of refusing to will the means to an end that we will. Lonergan argues that God wills that we have this freedom, and thereby creates a world where he gives us sufficient grace to not sin, but the permission to sin, thus putting the blame for sin on us. But then how is this different from Scotus' belief that the will can refuse the beautiful vision. Lonergan has to decide if the will is an intellectual appetite, determined by the intellectual good unless corrupted, or a capacity to choose or reject the intellectual good arbitrarily. He seems to say that the will is the first, but that we also have the capacity to act in the second way. But if the will is the first, from what faculty do we receive the second operative potency? Isn't Lonergan just creating a faculty very much inline with voluntarism, which cannot be the will, but some "meta-will," located outside of the will, which governs the will, and determines whether the will acts or not?

Lonergan seems to try and evade this criticism by creating a world where there is "absolute objective falsity,"¹⁴⁶ being with no intelligibility, no cause. It is being in so far as it exists, it takes place, but it has no cause because it occurs from a failure of the will to act as it should, not from an intelligible cause. But isn't this just a concession to Scotus, and the need to ground moral responsibility? Thus all being is intelligible, except for absolute objective falsity. And so God is ultimately responsible for every act, except

¹⁴⁶ GF, p.113-116

sinful ones. This preserves the Augustinian ideal that we do not merit grace, and preserves the ground of moral responsibility. But how are we to understand this concept? Lonergan wants to argue that to obey God's commands is a positive act of the will, and due to grace, but to reject them is a failure to will, an absolute objective falsity. Can he have it both ways? Can he have a fully intelligible world, where everything is ultimately under God's providence, and therefore rational and causal, and at the same time include the unintelligibility that is necessary for moral responsibility? I would argue that this position very likely signifies that the dialectical tension that Lonergan claims Aquinas resolved still remains.

As I can currently conceptualize it, absolute objective falsity is one of two things - an act, or a privation. As a privation, absolute objective falsity is a failure that results from the imperfection of the will. Under this conceptualization the will wills evil because it cannot help it. It wills evil due to our lack of either the antecedent willingness or the necessary operative habits. Both of which are received passively by the human being according to Aquinas and Lonergan, thus there can be no responsibility for sin.

Which brings us to the other possibility. If we actually choose to disobey God's law, even though we have everything required to obey it, then this is entirely another matter with regard to guilt. But, if this is true, then I cannot understand how Aquinas' position is any different from Scotus' conception of the will. For Scotus, the intellect was a natural cause, and so could never determine the will if the will was to remain free. This was the essence of the philosophical idea of freedom. But under Aquinas' conceptualization, the will never has this power, or, if it does, this ability is not freedom it is servitude to sin. That is, the will is never "free" because it can will to rebel against

God; it is free when it becomes a sinless agent of rational operations. The free will for Aquinas is really the Aristotelian idea of a passivity determined by the intellect, although it is never properly passive, but is rather functioning properly when it is wholly given to being determined by the intellect.

Scotus would not accept this precisely for what it meant about sin. But, apparently Aquinas doesn't either, because he grounds moral guilt in the rebellion against justice very similar to Scotus'. This is objective falsity. But, if the human being has this capacity, then one may ask, from what faculty does it arise? It can't be the will, because it is a deliberate undermining of the will, a rebellion against the will, a refusal to will the means to the end that the will wills. Scotus can say that it is the will, because he is not bound by the fact that only God determines the willing of the end. He can attribute sin to an act of the will, whereby the will chooses an evil end. But Aquinas cannot say the same? For Aquinas, the will only wills ends that are rational, but it can sin because it can choose a less rational good over a more rational one, but this sin is then due to a lack of development, and development, as rational and caused, is ultimately due to an extrinsic cause. Or else, there is a meta-will, which chooses freely and arbitrarily between various ends. But this means that "some faculty" is in second act with respect to a sinful end, and determines which level of the good is willed, possessing everything necessary for either good to be willed.

Furthermore, if we have this potential, to *choose* to rebel against God, then how is the choice to not to choose to rebel against God not worthy of merit? We have seen that the denial of human merit was at the very center of this controversy. But in denying human beings any merit, isn't Augustine denying that we make this choice? For Aquinas,

good acts are only possible due to the grace of God, but, if we can dissent without God, then surely we are able to at least “not dissent” without God, and in this way merit. I haven’t yet been able to understand how Lonergan gets around this.

In fact there is some evidence that he accepts Scotus’ position. In an article for the *Phatmass Porum*, G. Sala argues that Lonergan accepted that in sinning the human being “makes himself a primum in the causal order (an underived first), a first that is a defect.”¹⁴⁷ Does this mean that Lonergan ultimately understands human beings to have a capacity to will arbitrarily? What does this mean? In being able to refuse God’s commands by not willing as they should, human beings act as *first causes* in a line of causation. But this seems to go against everything that the entire theorem of operative grace is based upon. It puts unintelligibility at the heart of the operations of the will. Human beings seem to move themselves, and to will in ways that are incommensurable with Aquinas’ own theory of the will. Lonergan would argue that it puts unintelligibility only at the heart of sin, not of positive acts. But, as we have seen, the question then becomes, if we have this capacity to sin, isn’t our resistance against this capacity worthy of merit?

It seems very much like Lonergan is engaged in some “rhetorical presentation” at this point. Thus, we must ask, is the dialectical position that began with the Pelagian controversy truly resolved? It would seem that this has not in fact happened. Rather, the dialectical position that first emerged as the Pelagian controversy has merely been refined. I really feel at this point that the dialectic has merely moved from being about two types of freedom, to being more precisely about two theories of the will. And both

¹⁴⁷Giovanni B. Sala, S.J., *From Thomas Aquinas to Bernard Lonergan: Continuity and Novelty*, Phatmass Porum

apparently contradictory theories of the will exist side by side in different aspects of Lonergan's work, with the "Pelagian will" manifesting itself most clearly when moral guilt is being discussed.

In addition, what I propose is ultimately at the heart of the dialectic is really a stance on the nature of the universe. It is a dialectical tension that has manifested in science as well as in theology. The question is really whether or not one accepts randomness and unintelligibility to be an ultimate condition of the universe. Is it possible for being to act in this way at any level, spiritual or quantum?

I believe this is what Augustine realized. He was the first western scholar to undergo a profound self-analysis. Lonergan will call this self-appropriation. This leads Augustine to realize that the human being was not essentially rational and moral, but only potentially so. What made the difference? For Augustine, it was a conversion to desiring truth and justice above all else. What led to this conversion? He examined the ideas of his day, and realized that there were profound problems with them. If we were not inherently rational, but only rational in so far as we were willing rationality, then "external" events could not explain the change. There had to be an "internal" change in the will, which then permitted the external events to have their proper effect. So again, what caused this conversion? For some, the answer must always be the individual, freely, without any external cause. But then the thing changed is the thing causing the change. But this is absurd, it creates a vicious circle, and ultimately makes the change completely random and without any reason or meaning. Augustine made God the cause of the change; it was the only rational thing to do. And if this meant that moral responsibility was given the appearance of injustice, so be it. Because the only alternative was an

irrational universe where even God could not understand the human nature that He Himself had created. Where the motions of the human will emerge out of nowhere and nothing.

CONCLUSION

Our question has been the nature of moral responsibility in Lonergan's early work on operative grace. We began with the question itself, which arose during the Pelagian controversy. The issue was whether or not human beings were proportionate to doing the good by which they were justified. For Augustine, the human will had to receive a grace prior to it being able to will any good. For Pelagius, the human being was always able to will the good, and only required assistance from God due to the incredible difficulty of sinlessness, and for the forgiveness of sins.

With each side of the controversy introduced, we turned to Lonergan's interpretation of Aquinas' resolution of this problem. We began by carefully examining Lonergan's methodology and his philosophical horizons in these works. We saw how these things shaped his understanding of the questions of grace and freedom, and his understanding of how these concepts evolved through history.

We concluded chapter two by identifying the special theorem of operative grace, the theorem that sin enslaved the will, making it incapable of acting effectively, of willing even the good to which it was naturally proportionate. Grace converted the will so that it willed God (truth and justice) as its special end.

Augustine had noticed that human beings didn't always act morally, and that far from being naturally moral beings, morality seemed to go against the nature of human beings. He speculated that this was due to the fall of human beings, and theorized that restoring the ability to perform meritorious works was the function of grace. This solved all kinds of problems with grace and became an essential part of Christian doctrine and

Christology. But it also created problems, and one of the first was that it led to the Pelagian controversy.

At the heart of this controversy was the idea of God operating on the human will so that the human will could perform meritorious works, and the cognate belief that the will could not merit without grace. And while the development of the theorem of the supernatural partially clarified the issue by distinguishing two types of merit - a natural merit, and a supernatural merit, Aquinas soon realized that a crucial aspect of Augustine's theory of grace had been ignored. Augustine asked, if human beings were not automatically determined by the good that they know through their intellects, then what makes the difference between a human that never wills justice as the end of their actions, and one that does? For Pelagius it was just human fancy, or whim. When speaking of the cause of conversion Pelagius, like the early Aquinas, spoke of the external events that change some human beings. But, the human being was always able to change or not to change, they were in control of this event and responsible for their choice. And while this understanding was good enough for Pelagius, for Augustine it merely raised a more profound question. He reflected on the nature of the human will, and just what ultimately explained why one person could hear a sermon and change, while the person right beside him didn't.

Exposure to any external events doesn't really explain why a person is transformed. Just as the intellect cannot determine the actions of a person unless he/she is antecedently willing, the will has to be disposed to being changed by external events. As

Lonergan wrote in *Gratia Operans*, “for understanding depends on free will, and grace, here as elsewhere, is needed.”¹⁴⁸

So, if not events, what is at the heart of the change of will? Augustine believed that he knew – it was God. Pelagius argued it had to be the human being. But, if the human being is what is changed, how can it also be what changes? This seems to create an unmoved mover at the human level, a radical freedom that couldn’t be conceptualized or understood. Essentially, the problem was that every act had to have a cause, and so even the human capacity to act morally had to be caused. If one reflects on the question of why one does the good, it is either habit or desire. But what accounts for the desire? Is it just fate, or is it providence?

Thus, the special theorem of operative grace, Augustine’s legacy in Aquinas’ hands, is the Christian response to an old dilemma - at least as old as Aristotle. It was the problem of good fortune and the prudent person. Why are some people concerned with justice, while some aren’t? For Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan, the will functions rationally. In willing justice there is a cause, and this cause is God, putting the will into act with regard to willing the end of justice and truth. For Pelagius (presumably), Scotus, Plato, and Kant, the will moved itself, although this meant that there could be no reason or intelligibility why one person wills justice and another doesn’t. They will argue that this preserves justice; we have seen that it doesn’t really.

But Lonergan’s full presentation of these questions seems to contain elements of both conceptions of the will. It comes down to the act of failing to will the means to some end that is willed. Lonergan argues that this is not an act, but a failure to act. But, to me, it is either an *act* of failing to act, in that it is a decision, an act of the will in Scotus’

¹⁴⁸ GO, p.195

sense. Or, it is truly a failure to act, and a privation, due to the corruption of the will. But, while the latter explains sin, it cannot ground moral responsibility. Either one accepts that there is no moral guilt, only sin, or one accepts Pelagius' arguments, and Scotus' theory of the will.

Our conclusion is therefore that John Ferguson was right. As we saw in chapter one, he wrote, "...the dispute turns upon the definition of the word *sin*." Does sin imply guilt? If it does, then Pelagius "has the argument all the way, because guilt implies moral choice wrongly made, and that implies the possibility of a right choice."¹⁴⁹ However, if sin is more like a barrier between mankind and God, as it seems to be for Augustine, then guilt cannot be attributed to individual sinners, which Augustine nevertheless did. Therefore his weakness was in "seeking to lay moral responsibility on each individual for something for which, in his own terms, there could be no such moral guilt."¹⁵⁰

When I began this work Augustine's opinions were unintelligible to me, I could not see what would lead him to these startlingly strange conclusions. Now I find myself agreeing with him for the most part. Augustine was a keen observer of the human condition; his analysis penetrates to the heart of the matter, where he recognized the problem with Pelagius' position. Reinhold Niebuhr once said of Pelagius' position, that, "There is a certain plausibility in the logic of the words, but unfortunately, the facts of human history and the experience of every soul contradict it."¹⁵¹ I would add that the plausibility is perhaps not in the logic as much as in the common sense experience of moral deliberation, and freedom. In fact, logic and rationality lead away from Pelagius' position.

¹⁴⁹ Ferguson, Pelagius, p. 162

¹⁵⁰ Ferguson, Pelagius, 162

¹⁵¹ Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p.128 From Pelagius, Ferguson, p.165

Ironically, at one time I would have argued that this was a debate between faith and reason, with Augustine defending faith and Pelagius defending reason. What was most surprising was to discover that what may be at the very heart of Augustine's position is the desire to preserve intelligibility. I now realize that it is Pelagius that accepts irrationality at the heart of his position.

It is a question of order and intelligibility in the cosmos. Some accept a radical unintelligibility in the name of freedom. Others cannot but conceive of every event of the universe as orderly, intelligible, and systematic. I thought that I was the former, but I have come to realize that I am more fundamentally the latter.

With this said we mustn't fail to heed Pelagius' concerns, especially if we are to be concerned with ethics. Ferguson writes, "A friend told Holman Hunt that his familiar picture *The Light of the World* was unfinished, for the door outside which Jesus stood had no handle. The Painter replied, 'That door is the door to the human heart: it opens from the inside only.'"¹⁵²

To fail to heed Pelagius concerns is to risk robbing human life and history of its meaning, it is to risk fatalism. Thus, one may see how much this is really a question of the nature of the universe, even more than about the nature of the will. Is there irrationality at the heart of the universe? It would seem that in order for there to be moral responsibility there would have to be. But as rational creatures, we cannot help but continue to try and understand and explain this radical unintelligibility.

Finally, we must now return to the reason for undertaking this subject in the first place, ethics. Ethics begins with the assumption that human beings are proportionate to

¹⁵² Ferguson, Pelagius, p.174

rational and therefore moral operations. We have seen that this isn't necessarily so, or, at the very least, that "proportionate" might not have the same meaning for everybody.

The key insight to take away from this thesis, concerning ethics, is that there are faculties "beneath" our rational faculties upon which the proper functioning of our rational capacities are dependent. Lonergan will name the most important one "antecedent willingness," and he will argue that ultimately the nature and functioning of this faculty are more properly theological, as opposed to ethical subjects. Ethics must realize this.

Ethics takes for granted that human beings are rational. In doing so it attributes praise and blame to human beings based on their choices. We have seen that this isn't necessarily right, and that both praise and blame are highly problematic.

Ethics has to be grounded in self-appropriation. It has to acknowledge that our rationality is always limited by our willingness. It has to resist making the common sense judgment that our rational powers exist in a pristine, discrete state, independent of any other factors. In fact, our rational powers emerge out of our biological and sensitive consciousness, and as such we as moral beings are far more complex than ethics commonly takes for granted. Ethical method must acknowledge this, for ethical methodology is not an independently functioning process, simply the application of right reason to issues of contradictory values, it is a process imbedded and limited by the processes in which reason emerges. As long as ethics applies reason to ethical deliberation, ignoring the limitations and sources of human reason, ethical judgments are likely to be incorrect. Ethicists have to include self-appropriation in their training, as it is

not enough to possess the right tool with which to fix a problem, one has to know how to use it.

Appendix: Classical Metaphysics

The Fundamental elements of classical metaphysics are potency, form, and act. These were the fundamental elements in classical times, and they are still the fundamental elements of metaphysics in *Insight*.¹

This claim seems to arise out of the nature of human knowing. Human knowing relies on three distinct operations - experiencing, understanding, and judging, and thus, proportionate being (being proportionate to human knowing) is composed of potency (experience), form (understanding), and act (judging).

Lonergan's retrieval of the "true" Aquinas is based on his close examination of these concepts. It is Lonergan's claim that the misunderstanding of these fundamental metaphysical ideas, along with Aristotle's theory of motion and causality, is what led to the misunderstanding of Aquinas' true intentions concerning more specific issues, like the operation of the will. This abstract is intended to provide a basic introduction to these metaphysical ideas.

Besides potency, form, and act, there are two "lines" of being: the substantial, or being in the strict sense; and the accidental, which is being only in a restricted sense, as it does not exist in itself, but is dependant on substantial being for its existence. These two lines of being, like the elements of classical metaphysics, are grounded in the nature of human knowing.

All human knowledge begins with experience. Because of this limitation we never know the objects of our understanding directly, rather, we know them indirectly through their operations. Every operation is grounded, or limited, by the nature of the thing that

¹See *Insight*, ch. 15

produces it – this is the law of the proportion of nature, or, as Stebbins writes, in common sense language, “... a thing does what it does, and has the properties it has, because of what it is.”² Thus by having insight into the operation we may then have insight into the substance which is its source, which would be otherwise hidden from experience. In other words, the ultimate object of our understanding is substantial being, but it is hidden from us, as we do not possess the ability to know its nature directly. However, by observing its operations we may indirectly have insight into substantial being, which is the source of the operations and which therefore can be said to disclose itself through its activity. Thus, substantial being consists in the “things” of the universe, and accidental being consists in the operations of the things of the universe, by which we know substantial being. Accidental being is considered being (in a restricted sense) because it can be said to have an essence, and is therefore a legitimate object of enquiry.

While both lines of being are valid lines of enquiry. The aim of all enquiries is to understand. One understands something by knowing its cause. There were four causes known to classical metaphysics, but the most important was formal cause. The formal cause was the essence of a thing, its definition, the cause of its intelligibility. There were two kinds of formal cause, or form, corresponding to the two lines of being – substantial form, and accidental form.

Potency and act have a special relation; they are correlative, which means that they can only be understood in relation to each other. Potency is the possibility of act; acts are the realization (classically referred to as the “perfection”) of some potency. There were two sets of potency and act in each line of being. The first set was essential passive potency and first act. The second set was accidental passive potency and second act. The

² Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 47

first kind of potency was the possibility of receiving form; the second kind of potency was the possibility of receiving actuality - existence in the line of substance, and actual operations (moving or being moved) in the line of accident. To refer to essential passive potency was to refer to the potential to receive a form, and the reception of form was first act. To speak of something in accidental passive potency was to refer to its potential to exist or occur, existence or occurrence was second act.

Stebbins offers the following diagram.³

| | In the line of substance | In the line of accident |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Potency (essential passive potency) | matter | accidental potency |
| Form (first act) | substantial form | accidental form (species, habit) |
| (=accidental passive potency) | = substance (essence in the strict sense) | = accidental potency (operative potency, accident, essence in the restricted sense) |
| Act (second act) | act of existence (esse) | operation (accidental act, active potency) |

Stebbins notes that the line in the middle of the diagram serves to remind the reader “not form alone, but potency and form together, constitute the capacity to receive second act.”

³ Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, p. 38

Of the four causes of classical metaphysics, two were intrinsic and two were extrinsic. That is, two contained the immanent intelligibility of a thing, and two contained the intelligibility in so far as it was actually existing or operating. The two intrinsic causes were formal, which I have already defined, and material, which is related to formal cause as potency to act. Matter is the possibility out of which form may emerge. Being the intrinsic causes of being, they naturally contain the complete intelligibility of a substance, in itself. However, in order to possess complete intelligibility of a substance as existing, one would have to consider extrinsic cause, either efficient or final, but in particular, efficient cause.

Any act, including existence, though specifically defined and therefore intelligible through its form, “is not thereby rendered fully intelligible, for all acts are contingent and so also require an efficient cause to account for them.”⁴ To know being in act, either as existing or as operating, one must understand its formal cause which accounts for its inherent intelligibility, and the efficient cause which accounts for its coming to be. The reason for this is that all created being is contingent, and formal intelligibility cannot provide complete knowledge of any contingent being, since it does not specify whether the conditions of that forms existence have been met.

One must keep in mind here that the universe of being proportionate to human knowing is made up of substantial and accidental being, therefore knowledge of events is valid knowledge of being; these events “are.” And since, according to the classical position, being is completely intelligible, anything that is is completely intelligible. Stebbbins writes, “... there are no mere matters of fact, nothing that simply exists or

⁴ Stebbbins, *The Divine Initiative*, p40

occurs without being grounded in some intelligible cause, for whatever is unintelligible is impossible.”⁵

⁵ Ibid, p41-42

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