
The Role of Reason in Aquinas and Calvin

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The following raises two specific questions: what are the basic positions of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin on the status or role of reason in theology and what does this reveal about the nature of their positions? The first two sections deal with the first question. They are interspersed with historical and critical commentary in aid of situating both questions aright. The third section takes up the second question. In it I invoke certain categorical distinctions of philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904–84) as a means of better understanding the nature of Aquinas's and Calvin's respective discourses. Lonergan's contribution to theology and religious studies is, as many who make a habit of reading him agree, complex and wide-ranging. I limit myself here to what I think is his most pertinent, basic concept to a study such as this one committed to securing a comparative grasp of distinctive thought-worlds. The concept is the *differentiations of consciousness*. In my application of it I stress the way in which it provides a context congenial to the insights of both Aquinas and Calvin while respecting their differences. It is a crucial first step rarely taken in the literature I have come across on the subject. Also, it is a hunch of mine that such an analysis contributes an alternative reading of certain basic issues involved in the current debate between Reformed and Catholic epistemologists. However, except for certain sparse suggestions in the conclusion about the shape of such a reading, I leave its development for another occasion. The main objective here is to identify what the role of reason is in Aquinas's and Calvin's theology and how the contours of that role are affected by their distinctive interests and competencies, that is, their differentiations of consciousness.

Reason in Aquinas

Reason is not the subject-matter of Aquinas's work, although he has much to say about its nature and role in theology and philosophy. While sacred doctrine does indeed proceed by argument, the knowledge proper to its manner of inquiry comes through revelation, not through natural reason (*Summa Theologiae* I.1.6.2, I.1.8). This usually comes as a surprise to those living in an age greatly influenced by histories of philosophy that note Aquinas's philosophical acumen (illustrated by or confined to his "five ways") more than they attend to his theological perspicacity. And yet, as Joseph C. McLelland (1996, xxix) points out, "Thomas's famous 'five ways' or arguments for the existence of God occupy only a few pages in his huge work; if philosophers have extracted them for their own purposes, theologians should have more regard for the original context and intention. (Philosophers are always on the lookout for other philosophers; they do not expect to be surprised by prophets.)"

That original context may be characterized appropriately as an age of faith (Durant 1950; Fremantle 1965), but such characterizations lend themselves to, if not presuppose, popular misconceptions of medieval society as one especially given to credulity. While I do not wish to dispute that many of that age were doubtless credulous (as many in ours are), it is no less true that they were as interested in the "truth" as we might happen to be, although the issues and power struggles involved in such interests have shifted, indeed metamorphosized.¹ The technique of the *quaestio* itself, a twelfth-century innovation that "aimed at a logically coherent reconciliation of conflicting authorities,"² indicates that while *fides* was greatly valued *credulitas* was not. Cultivating *credos* involved an enormous amount of intellectual energy that few can summon in our own day, owing no doubt to the demise of the *quaestiones disputatae* (a historical observation rather than a desperate call to revitalize an antiquated form of philosophical theology). Better, then, to include the Anselmian suffix in the historical marker to dispel faulty notions: not an age of faith *per se*, but an age of faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*).

Present-day hard and fast distinctions between philosophy and theology are difficult to find in the ancients. Theology, understood as a specialized branch of knowledge, emerged simultaneously in the West with the love of wisdom or the pursuit of knowledge (*φιλοσοφία*).³ Originally it was a branch of "physics" cultivated, for example, by the Milesian philosophers. Plato identified theology with the poet's craft, which he thought did not involve true dialectic. Aris-

totle for different reasons deemed it the most excellent of the theoretical “sciences” in virtue of its proper object. The Stoics equated it with the proper act of philosophical inquiry itself distinguished from the mythical theology of the poets and the political theology of the state cults.⁴ Christian revelation complicated this relationship. Despite its tendency to borrow from philosophy, especially Platonism, “[Christianity] kept a sharply defined identity; its commitment to the Bible as a sacred book was far more uncompromising than the philosophers’ respect for Plato; and it valued communal experience and tradition in a way which offended students accustomed to accepting the guidance of expert scholars” (Stead 1994, 79). If its theology were thought to be philosophical, it was so only in a qualified sense: its knowledge of God depended on revelation made available by God, not on the reasons put forward or sought by the human mind, however ingeniously.

Wolfhart Pannenberg rightly points out that this classical understanding, namely theology’s constitutive correlation with revelation, “remained intact in the discussion of the High Scholastic period even among the more Aristotelian theologians and notwithstanding the usual differences between the Augustinian-Platonist and Aristotelian camps” (Pannenberg 1991, 1:2). Even the Neoplatonist John Scotus Erigena (810–77), whose identification of philosophy as the way of salvation would make both Augustine and Aquinas blush, understood revelation-based faith as the “beginning” from which the church ascends to “theological reasons” (Pelikan 1978, 3:98–99). Generally speaking, and to borrow Edward Schillebeeckx’s modern analogy, theology functioned as a shuttle service between faith and reason, equal to neither but at home in both. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tendencies to segregate natural theology from revealed or church theology was virtually inconceivable.

This has been brought home recently by Mark D. Jordan who argues against the position that Aquinas took a kindly stance toward philosophy. Such interpretations, he claims, gloss over the fact that “[Aquinas] groups philosophers with heretics as opponents to the faith” (Jordan 1993, 235; *ST* IIaIIae.2.10.3). Jordan imagines the relation of philosophy to theology in Aquinas to be far less congenial than most are ready to admit. He models Aquinas’s stance after that of Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana*, in which the Tagaste-born Saint condones the confiscation of philosophers’ goods by Christian theologians. Whatever truth philosophers have at their disposal “should be taken...as from unjust possessors and converted to [Christian] use.”⁵ Theologians have every right to do this, Jordan understands

Aquinas as saying, since theology is related to philosophy as a whole to its parts. It has “a right to own philosophical truths, a right to correct philosophical errors, and a right to re-direct philosophical motivation” (Jordan 1993, 247). On this account, then, Aquinas merely changes philosophical materials into theology.⁶

While Jordan’s attempt at setting the record straight is laudable, one is hard-pressed to decide whether he under- or overestimates Aquinas’s genius. Certainly one is within one’s hermeneutic rights to be somewhat suspicious of a reading of Aquinas that resonates more with Karl Barth’s agonistics than with the Angelic Doctor’s own arguably mild-mannered approach.⁷ That Aquinas was “no blind worshipper of the Philosopher” most acquiesce (Copleston 1962, 2/2:41). Yet his reliance on the Philosopher suggests that the Theologian, Augustine, could not furnish Aquinas with the conceptual means to effect the synthesis for which he has become famous. Since Aristotle was pre-Christian, on the other hand, he could not provide Aquinas with the ingenious suggestions of an Augustine on matters related to faith. The “changing of materials,” which Jordan softens as unidirectional (probably for purposes of emphasis), was a two-way process for Aquinas. Bernard Lonergan, in his acclaimed study of Aquinas’s philosophy of mind, expresses the matter this way:

Because [Aquinas] conceived theology as in some sense a science, he needed Aristotle, who more than anyone had worked out and applied the implications of the Greek ideal of science. Because his theology was essentially the expression of a traditional faith, he needed Augustine, the Father of the West, whose trinitarian thought was the high-water mark in Christian attempts to reach an understanding of faith. Because Aquinas himself was a genius, he experienced no great difficulty either in adapting Aristotle to his purpose or in reaching a refinement in his account of rational process—the *emanatio intelligibilis*—that made explicit what Augustine could only suggest (Lonergan 1967, 9).

Aquinas’s desire to keep the essence of theology free from contamination did not prevent him from expressing that essence in truly philosophical categories, which brings me to the suspicion of his overestimating Aquinas’s genius.

Commentators on Aquinas usually describe his achievement in terms of “adaptation,” adapting Aristotle to Augustine and vice versa. Such adaptation, it should be noted, has both positive and critical elements. When Aristotle sheds light on some Augustinian problematic or insight, Aquinas readily invokes the Philosopher’s categories as

a means of explicating conceptually what Aquinas deems implicit matter-of-factly in the venerable Latin Father. Moreover, when Augustine gravitates too closely toward the Platonic world-view, Aristotle's hylomorphism is calmly invoked to rectify the matter—though Aquinas does on occasion adopt (i.e., modify) certain Neoplatonic conceptions that accommodate Christian mysteries more than a strict reading of Aristotle allows.⁸ The latter point speaks for the obverse situation when Aquinas feels he must side with Augustine, and thus with Plato through Plotinus, against the so-called better judgment of the Philosopher when Christian truth is at stake.⁹

These tensions in Aquinas's "adaptation" suggest a genius that is far less revolutionary than, say (consistent with my earlier contrast), that implied in Barth's "particularism," which Jordan's analysis sounds, though unwittingly. Contrary to the demands of this motif in Barth, Aquinas does derive generalities from elsewhere and apply them to "a particular event called Jesus Christ."¹⁰ It is not a nominal application but a real one, in which the general is thought to draw out the technical significance of the particular. This allows for an understanding of the reality to which the particular points on a "scientific" plane. Jordan appears to be arguing for a "special conceptualization" on Aquinas's part that goes beyond the harmonization suggested above (Hunsinger 1991, 32). By alleging that Aquinas converts philosophy into theology, Jordan mitigates the philosophical nuances Aquinas brings to bear on Christian dogma; by doing so he overrates Aquinas's ingenuity as if he were espousing a theological particularism comparable to Barth's, which, in George Hunsinger's terms, "does not attempt to apply neutral or generally applicable standards of reality and possibility to our language about God."¹¹

I mention this subtlety as a means of emphasizing the dialectical relation in Aquinas's thought. Theology's constitutive correlation with revelation did not impede its constitutive correlation with philosophy, however much we want to push the "handmaiden" analogy. If anything, Augustine's subjugable view of the relation was softened by Aquinas. Indeed the editors of *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, in which Jordan's article appears, feel compelled, even if discreetly, to relax Jordan's claim. They admit, consonant with Jordan's position, that "if any medieval philosopher's work seems correctly characterized as theology, Aquinas's does," a view that complies with the understanding granted above, that Christian theology in medieval times was thought to be inseparable from the content of revelation. "But," they quickly go on to add, "the modern philosophical reader should understand that although Aquinas's *motivation* may be most readily

described as theological, what he produces in acting on that motivation is thoroughly, interestingly philosophical."¹² Besides acknowledging, in clear opposition to Jordan, that Aquinas's theology is genuinely philosophical in nature, this interpretive move from Aquinas's philosophy as characteristically theological to one that is theologically motivated introduces a subtle distinction into the debate that cuts to the heart of the matter. More specifically, it raises the fundamentally specific question of the role of reason in theology as opposed to the more generic question of philosophy's relation to theology.

Earlier I mentioned how Christian theology complicated Hellenistic forms of theologizing. Christian theologians, unlike their Greek predecessors, dealt with an incontrovertible standard of truth, the revelation of God in the Bible, that determined the parameters within which they felt compelled to reason. A combination of biblical and church tradition claimed their allegiance, serving as the "data" about which they would reason. A paramount notion that figured in discussions about the status of reason or intellect in theology was doubtless that of sin. The reality of sin, which the Apostle Paul thought contributed greatly and negatively to the thinking of God (Rom. 1:21b), is most likely that which left little room in the mind of theologians for the so-called "dispassionate critical study that philosophy requires" (Stead 1994, 80). For early Christian thinkers, the effects of the fall, recounted in Genesis three and developed by the Apostle Paul in relation to the Christ event, could not be quarantined so easily from the doctrines and methods of philosophy. How, then, were Christians to understand reason's place, and her children's, in a fallen world? This touched on the corollary issue of the will's relation to intellect, nature's relation to supernature, and so on. What could "unaided" reason know about the divine? How could it truly know the divine given its inextricable relation to a fallen will, and to a ruptured universe originally at one with the divine life?

Augustine's view of the fall tends to provide for the understanding of a seemingly unbridgeable crevasse between the natural and the divine order.¹³ While reason remains in humanity, it is helpless, as A. M. Fairweather puts it,

since it cannot operate apart from the will, which has lost its freedom through sin. There is consequently a sharp division between the realm of nature and the realm of grace, such as renders it impossible to explain how man can be regenerated through grace without apparently destroying the continuity of his own endeavour, and equally impossible to maintain that he can attain any knowledge of God or

of divine things through knowledge of the created world. Since nature is corrupt, experience of created things, even if we could know them, could present nothing better than distorted images of what things ought to be. Anything learnt through sense would therefore be useless as a clue to the nature of the divine. The “inward way” is consequently the only way to true knowledge. The soul must develop within itself, and it can do so only through grace. True knowledge must be implanted in the mind by God, either gradually or all at once (Fairweather 1954, 22).

Aquinas’s understanding of the effects of original sin, which he wholeheartedly accepts, is not quite so radical and deductive in sweep as it relates to the powers of will and intellect. Sin, he believes, is related first of all to the will, but also to the reason.¹⁴ There is a correlational procession intrinsic to both, “in so far as the reason reasons about willing, and the will wills to reason” (*ST IaIIae.17.1*). As the kinetic principle of the soul, the will is the primary subject of sin, as it is the primary mover commanding an act. Consequently the reason commands, too, when the object is being and truth, but does so secondarily in a presupposed act of the will. In the “intentional” procession, which regards the will as the primary subject, absolving it from sin (which is an act) in this particular instance, the reason is at fault, firstly, when it is in ignorance or error about what it is able and ought¹⁵ to know and, secondarily, when it commands the inordinate movements of the lower (sensory) powers or deliberately fails to check them (*ST IaIIae.74.5*). In the “intelligible” procession, which regards the reason as the primary subject, absolving it from sin, again, in this particular instance, the will is at fault when it desires to do what is contrary to the good which the reason commands.

What this allows for, in short, is “a kindlier view both of man and of nature” (Fairweather 1954, 22). Not only is the will free to choose the good despite sin’s presence, but the intellect is also capable of knowing it, along with being and truth. The fact that “Aquinas is more definite than Augustine that reason itself is impaired by sin” does not take away from the accompanying fact that for Aquinas reason itself may truly know God (and other “things”) through knowledge of the created world—as his correlational processionism shows. “Grace and revelation are aids which do not negate reason.” Therefore, in line with Thomas’s famous dictum, grace ought to be seen as that which perfects and does not destroy nature.

The question of the relationship between reason and revelation, nature and grace—microcosms as we saw of the larger question of philosophy’s relation to theology—pivots for Aquinas on the following

distinction: what reason can and cannot know (on its own). This is brought out quite well in the first few chapters of book one of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, where Aquinas pays close attention to the role of reason in ascertaining a knowledge of God. It is crucial, he notes, in such endeavors to have recourse to the natural reason, to which reasonable persons must finally assent, fully aware that “in divine matters,” or what pertains to sacred doctrine, “the natural reason has its failings” (SCG I.2.3). In accordance with the famous distinction between the “thatness” and “whatness” of God, championed by the medievals but not invented by them, Aquinas posits a twofold mode of truth according to which we reason or theologize about God: the things we can know about God (that God exists, is eternal, immaterial, etc.) and the things we cannot know (what God’s nature is: triune). Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–90) also invokes this distinction in his *Second Theological Oration on God*. He argues, for instance, that since we do not know what God is but only that God is, apophatic knowledge of God must take precedence over cataphatic knowledge. All we can hope for, cataphatically, he posits, is a theology of “the back parts” of God. Not even Scripture, as a higher yet limited form of discourse, can transcend this.¹⁶

Unlike Nazianzen, Aquinas does not take pleasure in affirming that our positive knowledge of God is merely of “the back parts” of God. He does recognize, of course, the ontic/ontological gulf that separates humanity from God—hence the legitimacy of the *via negativa* and the rejection of univocal predication. But he is quick to invoke analogical predication, in opposition to equivocating our limited, cataphatic knowledge of God, the *sine qua non* of which is the likeness of creature to Creator.

Aquinas then proposes a crossover-movement of legitimation within this twofold mode of truth. However, in chapter four of the first book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, which deals with those things fittingly proposed to humanity as an object of belief, Aquinas provides three reasons why, in the light of that which is attainable, the objects of faith are not useless. In other words, it is not so much an argument in aid of the legitimacy of reason as it is in aid of that which is unattainable. In chapter five Aquinas develops this line of thought, namely the usefulness of unattainable knowledge, but as fittingly proposed to humanity by God as objects of faith. The chapter ends with something of a promissory note on faithful reason: “although the human reason cannot grasp fully the truths that are above it, yet, if it somehow holds these truths at least by faith, it acquires great perfection for itself” (SCG I.5.5). In addition to the benefits of an unattain-

able knowledge, theology, as reasonable methodologically as any other *scientia* (see *ST* I.1.2–6), must welcome the dawn of an exacting philosophy. Such a philosophy, when understood properly, is not opposed to the truths of faith. As we are about to see, not everyone was able to share Thomas's optimism regarding such a synthesis.

Reason in Calvin

Between Aquinas and the Protestant reformer John Calvin stand, most notably, John Duns Scotus (1266–1308), William of Ockham (1300–50), and Martin Luther (1483–1546). Scotus, often pegged as the father of “nominalism,” opposed Aquinas's harmonious treatment of faith and reason, arguing instead for the primacy of will over against that of reason with regard to matters of faith. One simply accepts by faith or wills to believe such things as the resurrection and immortality, and not by the mediation of some imagined complex processes of reason—although the so-called *Doctor Subtilis* did himself rely on complex arguments for the existence of God. Ockham, who rallied his energies against both Aquinas and Scotus, directly paved the way for Luther's historically significant rejection of the medieval, scholastic synthesis. With the advent of Ockham, the “artificial” relations intrinsic to the metaphysics of essences (from Aquinas to Scotus) simply collapsed. Consequently in the *via moderna* “there was no more rational basis for belief in God's existence or the immortality of the soul than there was for the existence of intelligible species and common natures. All such things become genuine matters of faith” (Ozment 1980, 61). “All such things become genuine matters of faith”—a phrase indicative of how this turn marked a watershed in spiritual affairs, both creative and anxiety raising.

Luther came on the scene in the midst of this theological and spiritual turmoil. Scotus had undermined Aquinas's tendency to knit the church's system of grace too closely to God, while Ockham, in his rejection of rational/scientific theology, pinched the already sensitive nerve of a possible arbitrariness in God's will (Ozment 1980, 33, 61–62). Luther's reliance on the Bible as the supreme voice of authority in his theology provided another angle from which Christians could oppose scholastic understandings of the faith. Thus he could stand by his “in opposition to” statements in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517). The most provocative for us are theses 43 and 44: “It is an error to say that no man can become a theologian without Aristotle.... Indeed, no one can become a theologian unless he be-

comes one without Aristotle.”¹⁷ Calvin’s attitude toward Aristotle, and thus toward Aquinas, was considerably less acrimonious.

Although Calvin opts for Plato over Aristotle—regardless that he opts for Scripture and Augustine over both—his theology retains Aristotelian elements. A case in point is his incorporation of Aristotle’s notion of causality in his doctrine of election in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*.¹⁸ Calvin probably studied Aristotle’s *Logic* and *Physics* at the Collège de Montaigu, Paris. Unlike other institutions of higher learning in Europe at the time, the Collège remained firmly committed to Aristotelianism (McGrath 1990, 31–39). Its progeny, however, scholastic theology, never really piqued his interest. The fact that humanists like Erasmus and Zwingli made engaging scholastic thought forms near irrelevant doubtless provided for Calvin’s disinterest and subsequent outright disdain. If he evidenced any “intrigue” with regard to scholasticism, it was to show the sheer insipidness that underlies Catholic doctrine rather than any intellectual or scholarly concern on his part to understand its complex philosophical ideas. Calvin was apt to think of scholasticism much like his humanist predecessors and contemporaries did, as “pointless, arid intellectual speculation over trivia” (40).

Renaissance humanism, which did claim the intellectual allegiance of Calvin while in Orléans in the late 1520s, was, as Alister McGrath poignantly observes, “concerned with *how ideas were obtained and expressed*, rather than with the precise nature of the ideas themselves” (McGrath 1990, 54). The dawn of historical investigation had arrived, rupturing the stream of consciousness that appeared to compromise the inspirational vitality of its classical and biblical sources. In order to retrieve and further generate something of that vitality, marred by what appeared to be centuries of impractical—what we today would call “existentially alienating”—questioning, humanists deemed it imperative to return to the sources (*ad fontes*). From the viewpoint of the present discussion, this meant that reason, if reason there must be, had to be seen in the light of biblical revelation, which was far removed from the sort of questioning prized by scholastics, Scotus and Ockham included.

Despite these significant developments Calvin was unable to follow Luther, his ill-tempered colleague in the faith, in calling reason “a whore.”¹⁹ A return to the sources could not entail “the praise of folly” without jeopardizing the expressed aspiration for eloquent reform. More significant theologically, for Calvin, was that Christians accept truth wherever it appears so as not to reject the source of all truth, God (*Inst.* II.2.15). Though metaphysical speculation was to

take a back seat with regard to the more basic theological discipline of biblical exegesis, which the Fathers of the Church cultivated, those who would practice the latter, and do so effectively, required sound reasoning on their side. The catch for Christian humanists like Calvin, however, was that such reasoning be biblically based and focused on the saving deeds of Christ. In other words, Calvin wholeheartedly accepts the position Hans Küng describes as Erasmian, which asserts that questions that have nothing to do with the Bible do not belong in theology (Küng 1988, 23). To express it in terms resembling a motto: Not by argument, but by Scripture.²⁰

Perhaps the best place to turn for Calvin's position on reason is book two, chapter two of the *Institutes*, though the first few chapters of book one are not superfluous. There Calvin treats the effects of the fall on the will with special attention given to the power of the intellect. He begins by tracing the opinions of non-Christian philosophers on the relation of reason to so-called free will (sec. 2–3) and the opinions of Christian theologians on the same issue (sec. 4–9), most of whom Calvin feels “have spoken too much like the philosophers on this subject.”²¹ His opinion on the matter begins with a short intermezzo on the depravity of human nature. He reinforces this with a string of biblical quotations. These quotations, it is implied, bespeak a far humbler view of humanity than that espoused by the philosophers and the theologians. Apparently, the theologians follow the philosophers for fear of being scoffed at by them (sec. 10–11). At the risk of targeting himself for the criticism he levels against the Fathers, namely, that they speak so ambiguously or inconsistently on the subject, Calvin makes the following claim: “since reason, by which man discerns between good and evil, and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift, it could not be entirely destroyed; but being *partly* weakened and *partly* corrupted, a shapeless ruin is *all* that remains” (*Inst.* II.2.12, II.2.4.9; italics mine). He devotes the remainder of the chapter to an explanation of his meaning.

Calvin considers as repugnant the view that considers the intellect to be blighted by “perpetual blindness” (*Inst.* II.2.13). So few believe this or can *argue* for it consistently that one would be within one's epistemic rights to believe that that mental landscape is virtually uninhabited, if not uninhabitable. Calvin then affirms the Aristotelian doctrine that the human mind is endowed with a natural desire to know, to which Aquinas affixes the little yet larger horizon implied in the word “God.”²² As expected, Calvin is not altogether sanguine about the abilities of human reason. However, this does not keep him from rating it “one of the essential properties of our nature”

(II.2.17), which is “adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator” (II.2.15). He follows Augustine in the belief that the fall resulted in a kind of paring down of God’s gratuitous gifts to those viewed as natural, so that what was corrupted after the fall were the natural gifts that remained once the gratuitous ones were withdrawn (II.2.16). Calvin does this presumably to acquit God (i.e., God’s gifts) of any corruption. The gifts themselves are unchanging, pure; it is fallen humanity, functioning naturally, that is ontologically predisposed *not* to see this. Arguing otherwise smacks of Pelagianism, which, as is well known, neither Augustine nor Calvin could tolerate. For by grace you have come to know through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (cf. Eph. 2:8).

What, then, can humanity see? Regarding “earthly things” Calvin is fairly optimistic. He points to an evidently innate propensity to preserve the well being of society through the setting up of laws. This, he states, is “implanted in the breasts of all without a teacher or law-giver” (*Inst.* II.2.13). Next he turns to what presumably is manual labour and the liberal arts as endeavours that display “the full force of human acuteness” (II.2.14). Still, since Calvin (and Aquinas for that matter) does not hold to what Hans Küng (1978, 522) describes as a “two-level reality, consisting of a ‘natural’ substructure of truths of pure reason and a ‘supernatural’ superstructure of truths of pure faith,” he cannot imagine these or any other natural endowments as existing somehow apart from grace or non-supernaturally: “[W]hile these proofs openly attest the fact of an universal reason and intelligence naturally implanted, this universality is of a kind which should lead *every individual for himself* to recognise it as a special gift of God” (*Inst.* II.2.14; italics mine). That which is natural naturally reveals a supernatural hand at work in the order of things.

This ties in well with what Calvin says in the early chapters of book one of the *Institutes*, especially chapter three, that not even the fall has obliterated the “sense of deity” inscribed by God on the hearts of men and women everywhere. Indeed, according to Calvin, even the effects of the fall like idolatry support this contention. As for his understanding of the inextricable unity of a so-called natural and supernatural order, Calvin’s statements in chapter one, book one, concerning what he calls “our wisdom,” cannot be viewed as incidental. He divides this wisdom into two parts, knowledge of God and of ourselves, adding the striking element that “it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes, and gives birth to the other.”²³ The relation is in fact so close that when we turn our thoughts toward ourselves we can hardly avoid turning them simultaneously toward

the God of our being, and vice versa. That Calvin takes the muddling effects of original sin terribly seriously does not change for him the fact that such a close but conceptually distorted relation exists. As mentioned earlier, our fallen condition itself teaches us that we are made “to turn our eyes upwards” (*Inst.* I.1.1).

Turning now to the issue of what reason may know about “heavenly things,” which the preceding paragraph has already touched on. Here Calvin is less confident, although his comments regarding our apprehension of “earthly things” cannot be said to be wholly sanguine either.²⁴ What is being discussed here relates to the first two of the three aspects Calvin includes in his category of heavenly things: knowledge of God and God’s salvific love toward humanity. The third, “the method of regulating of our conduct in accordance with Divine Law,” relates to what Calvin calls knowledge of righteousness, which takes him back full circle to the issue that sparked his discussion: free will. However, since theological ethics lies outside the scope of the present discussion this aspect is left for another occasion.

Calvin is especially negative about reason’s ability to comprehend the salvific knowledge of God, the second of the three aspects. In book three, chapter two, he is quite clear that such knowledge surpasses all understanding, coinciding as it does with things that completely transcend human perception, by which he means sense perception (*Inst.* III.2.14; cf. Aquinas, *SCG* I.3.3). Concerning the first aspect, specifically “general” knowledge of God attained or developed discursively, he is more accommodating, regardless that he considers the shrewd remarks of the philosophers to be somewhat giddy (*Inst.* II.2.18). In any case, however accommodating Calvin may be, he is so because he cannot help but see natural reason and the insights it attains about the divine nature as supernaturally given, save for its errors. As Calvin puts it, “the Lord has bestowed on [the philosophers] some slight perception of his Godhead” (II.2.18). In such a context rigid contrasts between the “natural” and the “super-” or “supra-natural” simply collapse. While it is true that the natural light of reason naturally reveals something of the supernatural—if we are permitted the use of such abstractions—it does so, argues Calvin, only because it is a wavelength of the latter’s greater light.

In a way that foreshadows the twentieth-century disappointment over “[t]he abstract, quasi-Aristotelian, ambiguous, iridescent *categories of ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’*,” desirous instead of the concrete talk of humanity and of God (see Küng 1978, 522), Calvin turns to the concrete terms of Scripture; it is the blueprint, as it were, for the

kind of "reason" that may penetrate the heavenly veil. In short, the intellect that grasps things of heavenly worth is one given by God. To paraphrase John 3:27, to which Calvin himself refers, a person can receive nothing of divine truth, unless it is given her from heaven. The Apostle Peter was made aware of this in his famous Caesarea-Philippi confession, which doubtless appeared to him (wrongly according to Christ) a most natural utterance (see Mt. 16:13-23 and pars.; *Inst.* II.2.19). Evidently, apprehending the deity of Jesus, the Christ of the living God, is not commensurate with identifying the voice of a friend in pitch darkness. It transcends the discerning powers of sense and intellect, though not had without them. In book two, chapter two, of the *Institutes* Calvin speaks of this knowledge as a "special illumination" of the Holy Spirit, without which the human mind remains in the dark with regard to the mysteries of God (II.2.20-22). Moreover, he seems to be discussing apprehension in relation to the content of faith—the mysteries as confessed, if you like—whereas in book three, chapter two, he is more focused on the inner disposition of spiritual apprehension, the act of faith *per se*. The latter "consists more of certainty than discernment" (II.2.14). Whatever the case, special illumination for Calvin is clearly the condition of the possibility of apprehending both the content and act of faith, for "whatever is not illuminated by his Spirit is wholly darkness."²⁵

Calvin's concluding remarks on the will, which follow naturally from his discussion of the knowledge of righteousness (sec. 22-25), imply an acceptance on his part of the Schoolmen's basic understanding of the correlational processions of intellect and will, that "the reason reasons about willing, and the will wills to reason" (*ST* IaIae.17.1; see *Inst.* II.2.4). Where he parts company with them, however, is their understanding of the effects of sin on these powers. He acknowledges that among ecclesiastical writers no one denies "that sound reason in man was seriously injured by sin, and the will greatly entangled by vicious desires." But he feels that this reality has been downplayed by certain Fathers and the Schoolmen for fear of the philosophers. Such cowardice, he explains, has given rise to the "common dogma" that only the sensual part of human nature has suffered corruption, leaving reason whole and the will barely impaired.²⁶ If we have not already encountered Calvin's expressed opinion on the subject, we should have readily guessed it based on what has gone before: "[A]lthough there is still some residue of intelligence and judgment as well as will, we cannot call a mind sound and entire which is both weak and immersed in darkness" (*Inst.* II.2.12).

Before turning to the issue of rational choice *per se* (in relation to heavenly things) Calvin wants to insure that we identify the issue aright, that is, whether “natural desire of good,” assumed to be a movement of the will, actually proves freedom of choice. Calvin argues that it proves nothing of the sort. For what we often pass off as a movement of the will toward good is really only natural inclination toward comfort or, in Aristotle’s terms, natural ends (τέλε). The latter inclination is one shared by all so-called lower levels of existence, from metals and stones to brute beasts, of which it can hardly be said that they exercise choice at the level of mental deliberation.²⁷ Nothing binds them but the dictates of their being, which does not figure into the question of “freedom.” Freedom of the will, on the other hand, demands subjects exercising deliberate, rational choice. The relevant question, then, for Calvin is whether subjects, after determining by right reason what is good, choose what they know to be thus and as a result act accordingly (*Inst.* II.2.26).

Calvin points to the experience of the regenerate heart as expressed in Scripture to show that even in the most promising of moral specimens, as it were, “the will is so utterly vitiated and corrupted in every part as to produce nothing but evil” (*Inst.* II.2.26). That nothing good dwells in the regenerate, as careful exegesis of Romans 7:15–24 shows; that they typically choose that which they know to be unlawful, is reason enough for Calvin to reject notions of a naturally uncorrupt will, claimed to be so either in whole (by the philosophers) or in part (by ecclesiastical writers), that precedes or prepares for divine grace. As with reason, so with will. The movement of the latter toward good has its source in the movement of divine grace toward better or more authentic willing. And so the will is free to choose that which right reason presents only in so far as God makes it (the will) free to do so.

Reason in Aquinas and Calvin: A Comparison

Tonal differences in the works of Aquinas and Calvin seem to suggest radically disparate views. Where Aquinas carries a mood similar to that of a gleeful Mozartian symphony, complex yet graceful, celebrating the potentials of the human spirit, Calvin conveys the ominous thunderclaps of Beethoven’s Fifth, equally celebratory but cautious, sounding something of the tragic in life.²⁸ Differences in style, however, do not necessarily entail irreconcilable differences of opinion. Both Mozart and Beethoven exult in the wonders of life; both are aware of the tragic though they express it differently. That expression reveals something fundamental and personal about one’s stance in

and toward the world, but it often admits of overlap with the viewpoints of others. The same may be said about Aquinas and Calvin. With respect to the role of reason in theology, the differences are essentially of degree, of expression, not ideational as such, engendered by the accidents of history, that is, different cultural contexts and concerns. Aquinas's world experienced what David Knowles (1962, 221–34) has described as a “philosophical revolution,” from Platonism to Aristotelianism, enamored with the systematization of the inner principles of things. System was a major concern for thirteenth-century theologians aspiring after a theological science. Outlining Calvin's concern along these lines is simply confused, a point McGrath and others have belaboured. “To speak of Calvin as a theological systematizer is to imply a degree of affinity with medieval scholasticism which contradicts his known attitudes. It is also to suggest a significant dislocation between Calvin and his culture, which neither possessed the intellectual resources nor perceived any particular reason for producing works of a ‘systematic theology’.”²⁹ While one cannot make too much of the loci method's contribution to Calvin's tone, about which more will be said momentarily, one should not underestimate the probable effects of this method on Calvin's particular slant on issues like reason.

The loci method refers to the scholarly arrangement of theological topics. How this differs from the *summa* approach is significant from the point of view of the present discussion. *Summae* do treat of topics, but their examination is determined in large by the philosophical principles that unite them as a system, a coherent whole. Each proposition flows logically from the other based on theoretical assumptions developed in some measure at the outset of a system's conception. Thus we see Aquinas's *summae* gaining momentum with each passing proposition.³⁰ Propositions of the loci method lack this type of formal organization; under its sway system plays a subservient role, “directed by the choice as to what comes first and last—and how things are arranged in between” (McLelland 1987, 156). If a tidy symmetry of ideas is what one is looking for, the loci method is bound to disappoint. Whether we view this as a boon for theology, an antidote to “stuffy” theological reflection, is really quite immaterial. The point being that differences in method, let alone the psychological-social constitution of persons, greatly influence the manner in which topics are treated and/or voiced. Even if “Aquinas is more definite than Augustine that reason itself is impaired by sin” (Fairweather 1954, 22), his affinity for system requires a certain degree of diplomacy toward reason that one is hard-pressed to find in Calvin. Why

that is probably centers on the inextricable relation of system to reason, which the loci method does not seem to share—at least at a formal level. Much, then, can be made or perhaps should be made of the claim that Calvin is not “the rigidly consistent theological thinker and writer which generations of Calvin scholars have made him out to be” (Klempa 1987, 346).

Aquinas begins his *summae* with fairly extensive discussions of methodological import: whether theology is a science; whether its subject-matter is God; whether it is argumentative; whether truth about God is rational; whether it is naturally or supernaturally acquired; and so on. When one turns to Calvin’s *Institutes* one discovers considerably less methodological considerations which tend to be more assertive in character: “Our wisdom...consists almost entirely of two parts....”³¹ Except for a few hints dropped in the initial chapters of the *Institutes*, Calvin leaves the issue of reason for later sections where he discusses questions of the will.³² More specifically, he discusses reason as a sub-issue of the will under the topic of redemption, which book two is all about. Seen in this light, it is surprising that Calvin is as affirming of reason as he is, given his treatment of it in what many would consider the doleful context of original sin, the depravity of the will, and the corruption of human nature—the first three chapters of book two. Aquinas, too, examines reason in this connection, but supersedes it with elaborate philosophical discussions about the subject’s apperception of the divine and of its own essence, the so-called act of understanding (*ST* I.12, I.84–88). Surely this must figure into discussions about Aquinas’s and Calvin’s opinions on given subjects.

Calvin, it seems to me, mirrors what Lonergan (1972, 305) calls a *scholarly differentiation of consciousness*, a development of consciousness that aims at understanding the thought-world, the common sense, of another place and time through linguistic, exegetical, and historical means. In point of fact, it is the biblical world Calvin is after in the hopes of correcting consequent faulty theological expressions of it. Aquinas, not surprisingly, represents a *systematic differentiation of consciousness* which, unlike the scholarly incarnation, aims at constructing a system, a set of universal principles and laws, through “scientific” means of investigation. While the former differentiation is concerned with the scholarly acquisition of the particular, the concrete expressions of a distant past, the latter has as its aim the general, the conceptual significance implied in or occasioned by, for example, the thought-world of a former time. Both differentiations are sophisticated, though their subjects have a tendency to view them as incon-

gruous. This is the case more with Calvin than Aquinas who shares Themistius's pessimism over generalist endeavors, which score high as regards essences but low as regards particulars (see *Inst.* II.2.23).

How this bears on our discussion requires something of a detour. Calvin's concern with the particular orients him in a certain way toward the general. According to Lonergan, emphasis on the particular amounts to a "common-sense" concern for the concrete. By common sense Lonergan means something quite specific.

The realm of common sense is the realm of persons and things in their relations to us.... We come to know it, not by applying some scientific method, but by a self-correcting process of learning, in which insights gradually accumulate, coalesce, qualify and correct one another, until a point is reached where we are able to meet situations as they arise, size them up by adding a few more insights to the acquired store, and so deal with them in an appropriate fashion. Of the objects in this realm we speak in everyday language, in which words have the function, not of naming the intrinsic properties of things, but of completing the focusing of our conscious intentionality on the things, of crystallizing our attitudes, expectations, intentions, of guiding all our actions (Lonergan 1972, 81).

As for the usual adverse predilection of common sense toward anything theoretical, Lonergan says this: "[T]he supreme canon of common sense is the restriction of further questions to the realm of the concrete and particular, the immediate and practical. To advance in common sense is to restrain the omnivorous drive of inquiring intelligence and to brush aside as irrelevant, if not silly, any question whose answer would not make an immediately palpable difference" (Lonergan 1992, 3:201).

Scholarly differentiated consciousness achieves, of course, a higher tolerance level for the theoretical. After all, it employs technical—one might even venture to say theoretical—skills to achieve desired ends. And yet commonalities persist. Like the commonsensical consciousness, the scholarly is a specialization of intelligence in the particular and the concrete. It also, though more temperedly, tends to view with suspicion the abstractions of systematicians and their admiration of clear and distinct ideas, namely definitions and postulates. How the scholarly consciousness comes to deal with such abstractive knowledge is clearly more astute, but the concerns that propel it are of the same order, that of common sense, the world inhabited by human and divine beings whose decisions, conduct, and ideas affect us in often unprecedented ways. "The understanding [the scholar] reaches is itself of the same style and manner as his own

original common sense. But its content is not the content of his own common sense but rather the content of the common sense of some distant land or some former time" (Lonerger 1972, 305).

Despite the peculiarities that may surface in a more detailed analysis of their thought, I think this framework adequately captures the spirit of Aquinas's and Calvin's individual efforts. The *Zeitgeist* of Aquinas's time dictated the need for a systematic approach to the content of revelation expressed commonsensically (in the sense used here) in the Bible. "Because he conceived theology as in some sense a science, he needed Aristotle, who more than anyone had worked out and applied the implications of the Greek ideal of science" (Lonerger 1997, 9). He needed a systematic thinker, in other words, to help him forge a properly systematic theology. Neither the Bible nor Augustine could provide him with the tools, the technical-philosophical language, to accomplish such a feat. Calvin worked at it from the opposite end. His feeling was that systematic intelligence was no longer—if ever—hearing the voice of the Bible, overlooking or, as the case may be, neglecting or misinterpreting Augustine's authentic gesturing toward it. Only a return to the Bible, its original meaning, could rectify the situation, a prophetic task for which the skills Calvin acquired at Orléans armed him well. Putting it in Lonerger's terms, Calvin speaks commonsensically about the authoritative common sense of the Bible, which he attains through his linguistic and exegetical know-how. This gives him a basis upon which to choose or reject insights, got from a systematic viewpoint, that happen to accord well with or depart from what he perceives to be biblical truth. Aquinas speaks systematically about the propositions and viewpoints of Church Fathers based on what he perceives to be the designata of biblical revelation and a systematically accurate rendering of Augustinian thought, which is to say a largely Aristotelian recasting of Augustinian thought.

All of these elements, cultural and methodological, contribute to the varying dispositions of Calvin and Aquinas. If one views them as presenting an impasse, perhaps Lonerger's notion of an integrated multi-dimensional *differentiated consciousness* may serve as a solution to the problem.³³ We need not concern ourselves here with developing or critically engaging such a notion, let alone that some would be unwilling to view this as a problem requiring overcoming. What is important to note is that differences in Aquinas and Calvin regarding the role or status of reason in theology basically amount to differences in "tone" rather than substance. These tones sound the different concerns of subjects functioning in different realms of meaning,

which account for variations in emphasis and proficiency in biblical, theological or extra-theological topics.

While all of the preceding pertains to what Princeton philosopher Jeffrey Stout deems a clearing of the throat to speak, we are all the better for having cleared it. Without such consideration, temptation rages high to evaluate Calvin's position on reason as more biblical than Aquinas's, which in Reformed circles is to say better than Aquinas's; or to evaluate Aquinas's position as theologically more satisfying, which in Catholic circles is to say better than Calvin's. Emphasis on the different realms of meaning in which individual concerns are brought to term may help to quell the overbearing psychological need for dialectics of superiority. The problem is at its worst when the two languages are confused as if they were speaking equivalently about the same objects. In a sense, they are speaking about the same objects, but from different perspectives. Calvin treats of reason in relation to our existential situation, how, though dignified ontologically, it is incapable of comprehending God's salvific love toward us. He often invokes the Bible as providing definitive proof of this. Aquinas also regards our existential situation, but aims at understanding the inner workings of reason in that situation, in relation to itself and the objects it may or may not come to know. He rarely invokes the Bible, except as a seal of divine approval of his argument.³⁴ In this sense, they may just as well be speaking about different objects.

Still more relevant to our discussion, if not simply more intriguing, is the fact that Calvin *and* Aquinas are "prophets" of the same faith, if we accept McLelland's loose designation.³⁵ Hence they share certain things in common. For instance, they share a love for the truth which they both regard as rationally unattainable and uncaused, even if as I have argued they do so differently. They, like their predecessors, have an uncompromising commitment to the Bible that does not allow them, as it were, to accept extra-biblical reflection wholesale. The influence of Augustine on them is also significant in this regard: both have an ambivalent relationship with Aristotelianism, Calvin significantly more than Aquinas, though for different reasons.³⁶ Moreover, both acknowledge the correlations of intellect and will, not to mention their mutual fallenness. The dynamics of this correlation Aquinas spends more time charting than Calvin is compelled to.³⁷ Finally, both agree that reason is important, though not all-important—something Calvin takes pains to emphasize. What is all-important for both is the love of God that has been poured into our hearts through the gift and inward residence of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). This is something Aquinas felt hotly toward the end of his ca-

reer, so much so that he regarded his theologically well-reasoned writings rather Calvinistically as works of straw.

Concluding Remarks

Comparatively less has been said about Aquinas than Calvin in this study. His presence, however, has doubtless been felt in my treatment of Calvin. Indeed, there is a sense in which Aquinas serves as the backdrop against which I pursue an understanding of Calvin. The reason for this is simple. Calvin's attitude toward reason is far more susceptible to confusion than is Aquinas's. Aquinas thought explicitly, systematically, about the role of reason in theology. His stance does not require nearly as much interpretation as Calvin's does, whose ruminations are strongly influenced by the particularities, the compact expressions, of revelatory truth and the consciousness fixated on expositing it. A "cantankerous" tone, as McGrath says of Calvin, is easily misunderstood.³⁸ My suggestion has been that this is due more to Calvin's methodological and epistemological presuppositions than to any substantial disagreement between him and the angelic doctor on the subject of reason. Besides the loci method, which contributes to Calvin's particular colouring of issues on account of their treatment under theological topics, is his predilection to guard and develop scholarly-commonsensically the commonsensically expressed truths of the Bible.³⁹

With a little bit of hindsight we can see how this might affect the debate currently raging in North America between Reformed and Catholic epistemologists. If my "cartography" is sound, the lines from Calvin's understanding of what reason can know about heavenly things (earlier referred to as the "general" knowledge of God attained or developed discursively) to, say, Alvin Plantinga's particularism are no so clearly drawn by the latter, irrespective of his rejection of so-called methodism (see Lee 1993, 140–67). Can statements that are made within the realm of common sense really be taken as supplying a philosophically precise position? Is this not to commit a category mistake? Does not their systematic restatement call for a language-game—dare I say method—different from and unprecedented by the context and concerns of their original utterer?⁴⁰ Having said that, Catholic epistemologists, making too much of the "deliverances of reason," would do well to heed Plantinga's call (1983, 63–90) to a "moderate fideism," which marks Aquinas's theology as much as Calvin's. This, however, is not the place to substantiate these claims.⁴¹

Endnotes

1. One might also add that the medieval concern with truth as comprehensive, though flexible, is less valued today, owing to contemporary concerns with the irreducibility of difference. On the medieval tendency to unite yet respect differences, see Dupré 1993, 29.

2. Lonergan 1974, 49, 46, 200. For details on the technique of the *quaestio* see, in addition to prior references, Lonergan 1996, 43, 92, 149; see also Aertsen 1993, 14–19.

3. If we are to understand “theology” loosely as divinely inspired teaching of divine truth, one could argue that the biblical tradition (especially the prophets) antedates this development as theology. Few, however, are willing to make this argument, which tends to equivocate the λόγος implied in philosophical reflection on θεός with the ρηδ implied in biblical teaching on hwhy. That, Adolf Harnack never tired of saying, is a development that took place at the beginning of the second century when Christian apologists fine-tuned the Johannine equation: καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (see Jn. 1:1).

4. See Pannenberg 1991, 1:1; Plato, *Republic*, 379a; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1064^b 1–5.

5. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.40.60. Augustine legitimates this move by appealing to the despoliation of Egyptians by the Jews on the basis of God’s commandment (Ex. 3:22, 12:35). One could also on these grounds appeal to 2 Corinthians 10:5, where Christians are counseled to “take every thought captive to Christ.”

6. See Jordan 1993, 241, a claim he justifies in relation to examples from Aquinas’s sacramental theology.

7. For Karl Barth’s mature view on the relation of philosophy to theology see Barth 1986, 79–85.

8. A case in point is Aquinas’s view of finality, that all things emerge from and tend toward a non-created substance, namely God. This corresponds, not to Aristotle’s view, which one might describe gingerly as “naturalistic,” but to the Neoplatonic doctrine of the circular motion of reality, the *exitus-reditus* take on things. See Aertsen 1993, 30–32, 33. For an insightful investigation of the evolution of this doctrine in “modern” thinkers see Clegg 1994.

9. For discussions of the relation of Aquinas to Aristotle see Copleston 1962, 2/2:144–55, and more recently Owens 1993, 38–59.

10. Hunsinger 1991, 4. The following contrast relies heavily for its meaning on Hunsinger’s excellent elucidation of the “particularist” motif in Barth (32–35).

11. See Hunsinger 1991, 33. Hunsinger adds (rather mildly I think) that Barth's "hesitation" about espousing philosophical systems should be understood in this light.

12. Kretzmann and Stump 1993, 8–9, italics mine. While Jordan's position may seem a little forced here, he is clearly aware that he is not simply bringing a nuance to the standard view of Aquinas's relation to philosophy, described as one that is largely congenial, having substantially affected the Saint's understanding of the content of faith. See, for instance, Jordan 1993, 249 n. 23, where Aersten's article is referenced as espousing "a different view," namely the standard view just mentioned.

13. I say "provides for" since there is a danger in ontologizing what Copleston describes as Augustine's concern "for man in the concrete," that is, "in his actual relation to God." It is too facile an approach to systematize an author's apparent intentions whose manner of expression is rather fluid. "The result is that it is not infrequently difficult to say precisely what Augustine meant by this or that idea or statement, how precisely he understood it" (Copleston 1962, 2/1:63–65).

14. *Summa Theologiae* Iallae.74.5, 83.3. This contrary to the opinion of popular Reformed apologist Francis A. Schaeffer, who traces what he calls the "divided field of knowledge"—a dubious conceptual construct organized around his notion of "the rational/logical" (= unified field of knowledge) and "the nonrational/nonlogical" (= divided field of knowledge)—back to Aquinas (Schaeffer 1982, 1:43). "In Aquinas's view," he erroneously states, "the will of man was fallen, but the intellect was not" (1:211). Norman L. Geisler (1991, 12, 15, 61), himself a conservative evangelical apologist, has recently noted, to his credit, the deficiency of Schaeffer's understanding of Aquinas, but without reference to this particular, major oversight; nor does the more moderate Reformed apologist Thomas V. Morris (1987) in his appraisal of Schaeffer's thought. Arvin Vos (1985, 42, 94–95, 126), however, serves as the Protestant exception to this rule.

15. "Ability" and "obligation" relate, as principles of movement, to the will, namely what the will commands. It is no accident that Anthony Kenny (1993, 155–59) refers to intentionality as an "ability" or "power."

16. See Gregory of Nazianzen, *The Second Theological Oration on God* §§3–7. Regardless of this, apophaticism does affirm something; it affirms the negations that it predicates of God. This is implicit in Gregory's remark that an apophatic theologian is one "who states what God is not" (*The Second Theological Oration on God* §9 [italics mine]). The theologian does so in the (un)name(ability) of God's supraessential nature. In this way, one could argue that the function of apophaticism is "affirmatively negative." Indeed, it is Jacques Derrida who, in the most eloquent fashion, has taught us that the *via negativa* remains, contrary to the intentions of some of its most radical adher-

ents, a speaking/writing (i.e., affirming/negating) program. God is still to be seen, as it were, behind the erasure, which signifies a "something more," a "hyper-essentiality," of that which is constantly being denied. See Derrida 1992, 73–142.

17. Luther, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* §§43–4. Other objects of Luther's disputation, besides Aristotle, include John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly (1350–1420), and Gabriel Biel (1425?–95), the "last of the scholastics."

18. McLelland 1965, 46. See also Partee 1977, 59, where Calvin sides with Aristotle over Plato on the question of the parts of the soul: "If one chooses to focus attention exclusively on this aspect of Calvin, he could maintain that Calvin was 'fundamentally Aristotelian'." Partee goes on to note, however, that Calvin prefers to leave such discussions to the philosophers. "Pious readers need not torture themselves in these trivial, useless and obscure matters."

19. Luther's rather rustic outbursts against reason were prompted by intense formal study of scholastic notions, which he, too, viewed as useless and irrelevant. Also, his initial desire to reform the theological curriculum of the University of Wittenberg had a great deal to do with his tempestuous attitude toward reason. At the end of the day, however, one could find Luther agreeing that rationality was actually something divine. See Ebeling 1970, 92.

20. See Calvin, *Institutes* II.2.19. Inserting the word "alone" in the first part of the motto would be more accurate of course, since Calvin does rely on argument. However, Scripture is often invoked by Calvin as "the best course" to establish facts.

21. *Institutes* II.2.4. Evidently Augustine is blameless in this regard. See II.2.4 and 9.

22. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 980^b23: "All men by nature desire to know." For Thomas's theological extension of Aristotle's naturalistic view of "the desire," see his *Summa Contra Gentiles* III.25–63, especially chapters 25, 48, 50, 63; *Summa Theologiae* I.12.1 and 8; Iallae.3.8. Lonergan develops Aquinas's intentionality analysis in more modern terms in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957; rpt. in Lonergan 1992, v.3).

23. *Institutes* I.1.1. Calvin is, of course, quick to point out that by "our wisdom" he means a "true and solid wisdom"; but it is *our* wisdom nonetheless. Evidently he does not feel it incumbent upon him to initiate his version of "der Große Katechismus" from above, that is, with the authority of some divine word reaching down to us, confronting us, even though this plays a major, if not all-encompassing, role in his theology.

24. Calvin's somber opinion about the nature of human being in general doubtless reflects the "prophetic" dimension of religiously converted consciousness

(see Gen. 6:5; Ps. 94:11; Isa. 55:8–9; Mt. 7:11; Lk. 11:13; 2 Cor. 4:4). It also reflects the spiritual *elan* of the Reformation.

25. *Institutes* II.2.21. While Calvin reserves his austerity mainly for reason's abilities in relation to heavenly things, he tends to be equally austere, though not as unequivocal, about its relation to earthly things.

26. See *Institutes* II.2.4. Perhaps this is the source of Schaeffer's misinterpretation of Aquinas (see n. 14 above). Calvin does not, however, to his credit, name names. He speaks of the dogma as a common one, the natural outcome of the enthusiasm of "succeeding writers" (presumably after the Greek Fathers and Augustine). Whether Calvin believed that Aquinas played a significant role in the evolution of the dogma is hard to tell, since Aquinas's distinctions, through coming from a Schoolman and a Catholic, are cited as throwing light on an issue, not obscuring it.

27. Calvin, like Plato before him and thinkers of the Enlightenment after him, held to the view that the universe is made up of a hierarchy of beings whose every possible form is realized or actualized.

28. McGrath (1990, 146) too notes a disparity in tone in the writings of Calvin and Aquinas. He blames the "irritable tone" of the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, "occasionally verging on the cantankerous," on Calvin's deteriorating health. See also pp. 16–19 of the same work.

29. McGrath (1990, 148) accredits Bouwsma (1988) with the insight. See also McLelland 1987.

30. Indications of this surface regularly in Aquinas by way of formulaic phrases like "as we have said above," "as is clear from what has been said," "as will be shown hereafter," "because we pointed out above that," "from what has already been proved," and so on and so forth.

31. *Institutes* I.1.1 Chapter three of the same book, "The Knowledge of God Naturally Implanted in the Human Mind," is an exception as a preambular consideration which parallels but lacks the differentiation of options offered in chapters 3–8 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

32. The "sense of deity" covered in the first few chapters of the *Institutes* relates more properly to the universality of religious consciousness, its reality and its faults, than to the question of reason *per se*.

33. Incidentally, a differentiated consciousness is not limited to the scholarly and systematic differentiations. Considering only the mathematically possible combinations, Lonergan believes one can list some thirty-one different types of differentiated consciousness (1972, 272). Needless to say, no one person can integrate all these differentiations. It is a collective effort in Lonergan. See Lonergan 1992, 263–67.

34. "Description" and "explanation" are Lonergan's terms to describe the difference between a commonsensical and systematic apprehension of things. The former deals with a quality or type of event defined by reference to experience; the latter with a quality or type of event defined by reference to established laws and theories.

35. See p. 38 above. Lonergan would say "religiously converted."

36. Those reasons, outlined in sections one and two, also display the different realms of meaning in which Aquinas and Calvin think.

37. As an exegete, Calvin is affixed on the significance of the correlations in relation to the particular teachings of Scripture (e.g., Rom. 1:20–23; Mt. 16:13–23 and pars., etc.), another indication of his differentiated concerns.

38. As noted above (n. 28), McGrath blames Calvin's irritable tone on his deteriorating health. While I have no reason to believe McGrath is wrong, I do believe it goes deeper than that.

39. It is clear, I hope, that by common sense Lonergan does not intend anything negative as such, except of course for the individual *biases* common sense is always in danger of generating (see Lonergan 1992, 214–20, 244–59). It simply refers to the life-stage on which we all play out our individual roles, the drama of living in what Martin Heidegger describes as the region of the four-fold (*das Geviert*).

40. "As one may approach theoretical objects from a commonsense starting-point, so too one can invoke common sense to correct theory. But the correction will not be effected in commonsense language but in theoretical language, and its implications will be the consequences, not of the commonsense facts that were invoked, but of the theoretical correction that was made" (Lonergan 1972, 82).

41. I wish to thank William Klempa and James Sauer for their remarks on an earlier draft of this article. The opinions expressed here, however, are my own.

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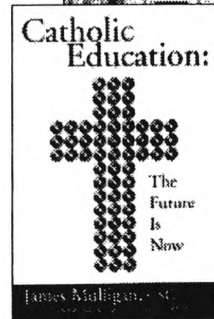
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