

WAITING AND BEING: CREATION, GRACE, AND AGENCY

By

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FOR MY LOVE, DANIELLE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Unity of Creation and Grace as a Doctrinal Problem	2
Concerns in Roman Catholic Theology	2
Neo-Scholasticism	5
The New Theology	6
Transcendental Thomism.....	8
Protestant Intersections	11
Common Concerns.....	17
Method of Analysis.....	19
Summary of the Argument.....	28
The Problem of the Will	30
The Question of the Appropriate Reference to Being	34
Chapter Summary	39
The Purpose of the Inquiry	45
 Chapter II. NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL: A ROMAN CATHOLIC PARADIGM	48
Introduction.....	48
Nature, the Supernatural, and the Natural Desire to See God	49
Henri de Lubac.....	54
Karl Rahner	66
A Metaphysical Ontology	73
The Nature of the Will and Its Transformation	83
Uniting Creation and Grace in a Metaphysical Ontology.....	87
 Chapter III. SIN AND GRACE: A PROTESTANT PARADIGM	93
Introduction.....	93
Justification, Election, and Covenant.....	94
Friedrich Schleiermacher	103
Karl Barth.....	119
An Ontology of Encounter.....	129
The Nature of the Will, Dialectics, and Redemption.....	146
 Chapter IV. THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF A PROBLEMATIC: THE ROLE OF AUGUSTINE.....	152
Introduction.....	152
The Grammar of Augustine’s Theology of Creation.....	157
<i>Creatio ex nihilo</i> : Sovereignty, Goodness, and Immutability.....	157

The Will	163
Divine Immutability	171
An Ontology of Encounter: The Event of Grace	177
A Metaphysical Ontology: A Speculative Theology of Creation.....	190
Conclusion: Augustine’s Dual Ontologies.....	199
 Chapter V. A CONTINUED IMPASSE.....	 204
Introduction.....	204
Nature and the Supernatural: Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Will.....	205
Sin and Grace: The Social Dimension of Grace	219
Conclusion	236
 Chapter VI. CONCLUSION AND RECONSTRUCTION	 239
Introduction.....	239
Recapitulation: A Chronological Presentation of the Analysis	240
Metaphysics and the Will, Sociality and Being	253
Ontology, Recollection, and Mediation	253
Creation: Metaphysics, Being, and Otherness	264
Grace: Encounter, Ethics, and the Other.....	279
Attendance: Union of Creation and Grace—	
Intellect, Will, Being and Act	293
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 305

In short, if you do not guard your intellect you cannot attain purity of heart, so as to be counted worthy to see God (cf. Matt. 5: 18). Without such watchfulness you cannot become poor in spirit, or grieve, or hunger and thirst after righteousness, or be truly merciful, or pure in heart, or a peacemaker, or be persecuted for the sake of justice (cf. Matt. 5: 3-10). To speak generally, it is impossible to acquire all the other virtues except through watchfulness. For this reason you must pursue it more diligently than anything else, so as to learn from experience these things, unknown to others....

—attributed to St. Symeon the New Theologian¹

Love for our neighbor, being made of creative attention, is analogous to genius.
Creative attention means really giving our attention to what does not exist.

—Simone Weil²

I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer.... How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?

—C. S. Lewis³

¹ Nicodemus et al., eds., *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. IV (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979), 72.

² Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: Putnam, 1951), 112.

³ C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces; a Myth Retold* (New York: Harcourt, 1957), 252.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Whatever one generation learns from another, it can never learn from a predecessor the genuinely human factor. In this respect, every generation begins afresh, has no task other than that of any previous generation, and comes no further, provided the latter didn't shirk its task and deceive itself.

—Johannes de Silentio¹

The present dissertation isolates and analyzes the different historical approaches to the systematic theological problem of the union of the doctrines of creation and grace. In offering that analysis, I also advance my own proposal for how the different ways of relating these doctrines can guide us to a renewed answer to that problem, one that avoids the difficulties of the past. I advance that proposal, first, by looking through the history of engagement with the issues surrounding this problem so as to distill a set of themes and patterns of relating those themes. Second, I develop the insights gleaned from this survey to argue for a genuinely coherent approach to the issues bound up with this problem of unity. Both my way of framing this problem as one of the unity of the doctrines of creation and grace and the conclusions of my analysis are rather idiosyncratic in relation to the present theological conversation surrounding these issues. Therefore, further explanation of this approach and its justification is in order.

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling; Repetition*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 121.

The Unity of Creation and Grace as a Doctrinal Problem

Concerns in Roman Catholic Theology

The problem of the unity of the doctrines of creation and grace, as a distinct systematic theological problem, is first raised in twentieth century Roman Catholic theology. It is not that the problem appears there in precisely these terms, but rather that the arguments in contemporary Roman Catholic theology serve to clarify the stakes of what is in fact a perennial problem for Western systematic theology. Though the dispute in question has its roots in post-Enlightenment European Roman Catholic thought, the issue of this unity finally comes to a head in the twentieth century in the dispute with post-Tridentine Neo-Scholastic thought regarding the natural desire for the supernatural. The specific details of the disagreement between Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac will be analyzed in some detail in Chapter Two. Presently, I would like to frame that dispute so as to set it within a larger context, where its intersection with similar issues in contemporary Protestant thought can come into relief.

First, contemporary Roman Catholic engagement with the question of the unity of creation and grace is shaped by the legacy of three distinct schools of Thomism: Neo-Scholasticism, the New Theology, and Transcendental Thomism. As Gerald McCool has convincingly argued, these three schools are the result of different reactions to a unique convergence in nineteenth-century Roman Catholic thought up to Vatican II.² The

² The reader should consult Gerald A. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 216-40, Gerald A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 5-38, Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, Marquette Studies in Philosophy (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press : Association of Jesuit University Presses, 1994), 25-42. For a summary of the intellectual background and

unique convergence McCool isolates is the combined influence of the issuance of *Dei Filius* (1870) by the ecumenical council of Vatican I under Pius IX and the disciplinary document, *Aeterni Patris* (1879), by Leo XIII. McCool insists that it is not the issuance of either one of these decrees that is significant, but the peculiarity of their combined influence that makes the difference.³ As the Apostolic Constitution on Faith, *Dei Filius* established the gratuitous and supernatural character of faith and defined its relationship to natural reason. *Aeterni Patris*, a document with the juridical authority of the Bishop of Rome, declared that Thomism would be the philosophical education seminarians were to receive. McCool notes how together these two documents, while *de jure* distinct, were read together in such a way as *de facto* mandating a rejection of modernity in general as it pertained to the relation of faith and reason, and the specification of Thomism as the church's official response.⁴ The result was that the various experiments with post-Kantian thought that had appeared earlier in France (e.g., de Maistre, de Bonald, Lamennais, and Bautin)⁵ and Germany (e.g., Hermes, von Drey, and Günther)⁶ were quashed, while the so-called Aristotelian synthesis of Aquinas was construed as the sole salve for the wounds of modernity.⁷ What is important here for my purposes is to highlight the effect this had not of settling modern questions, but of displacing them into the field of Thomist interpretation.

This displacement runs in tandem with a second point. Such apparent rejection of modernity and this positive valuation of Thomism gave rise in some quarters to a

aftermath of these developments, see McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 1-36 and 241-67.

³ McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 216-40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 228-36.

⁵ See *Ibid.*, 37-58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 59-88.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 228-36.

peculiar, quasi-Heideggerian narrative of the *Destruktion* of the history of modern, secular metaphysics. But rather than Heidegger's story, which situates subjectivity at the apex of the metaphysical forgetfulness of Being, this narrative tells of a fall from the unity of nature and grace as conceived by Aquinas' original understanding of the ontological difference. Gustav Siewerth appears to be the progenitor of this approach in his *The Fate of Metaphysics From Thomas to Heidegger*,⁸ and it was further popularized by von Balthasar, who later adopted it in v. III of *The Glory of the Lord*.⁹ Variations of its basic claims have since been developed by Louis Dupré, Michael J. Buckley, and John Milbank, among others. Not only do such narratives embody the suspicion of modernity and reliance on Aquinas discussed above, but they move beyond this to claim that a proper Thomism is capable of evading these modern questions altogether.

I have called attention to these points because I believe that together they have set the terms for the current discussion of nature and grace in three ways. First, that discussion tends to begin with the notion that modernity represents an essential challenge to the inherent meaningfulness of worldly experience. This is perhaps clear from the fact that the response to *Dei Filius* and *Aeterni Patris* (including the genealogical approach) was to limit significantly or evade altogether Kantian and post-Kantian influences on theology. Second, on the basis primarily of the genealogical approach, the nature/grace problematic has become the idiom in which not only to reaffirm the inherent meaningfulness of experience, but also to specify (in largely Thomist terms) its proper locus in one of three domains of experience: namely, objectivity, subjectivity, or

⁸ See Gustav Siewerth, *Das Schicksal Der Metaphysik Von Thomas Zu Heidegger*, Gesammelte Werke (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1987).

⁹ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, *The Glory of the Lord*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983).

ontology. This has the effect of dividing the responses between those who understand this meaning to be principally an epistemological (objectivity vs. subjectivity) question, and those who see it as an ontological one. And, finally, the different accounts of the nature/grace relation formulated by the three schools of Thomist interpretation (Neo-Scholasticism, Transcendental Thomism, and the New Theology) can be understood to directly correlate to these three loci of objectivity, subjectivity, or ontology. I will turn my attention in what follows to bearing out this claim.

Neo-Scholasticism. In the present nature/grace discussion, Neo-Scholasticism is often styled as the reactionary element of twentieth-century Roman Catholic thought. It is important to bear in mind, though, that this group of thinkers was only attempting to be faithful to *Dei Filius* and *Aeterni Patris*. As they understood it, adhering both to Thomism and the positive natural knowledge of God required a staunch defense of epistemological realism over against Enlightenment rationalism and Kant's transcendental idealism. Securing the objectivity of truth was the only conceivable way to maintain the inherent meaningfulness of the world, which demanded an absolute rejection of subjectivity *tout court*.

This bears on questions of nature and grace. Because *Dei Filius'* insisted on the supernatural character of faith, Neo-Scholasticism thus invoked a second, revealed order of knowing that transcended what was objectively given to natural reason alone. It was gratuitous and *superadded*: the order of redemption, which had been, again, objectively entrusted to the Church and was wholly dependent on God's grace. This second order made the necessarily qualification that whatever meaning was "naturally" available, it

was not itself saving. This functioned as an extension of their rejection of subjectivity: not only is natural meaning objectively given, but salvation itself has its objective basis in the offices and sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰

This, as we know, engendered the most disputed point in the nature/grace discussion as we now have it. If there is a natural domain of meaning, then there must be a corresponding natural *telos* to which reason is ordered, quite apart from its order to and reception of supernatural grace. There must be a ‘pure nature’ apart from grace, and there must also be a twofold end for human being—one in proportion to the natural operation of the intellect, and the other gratuitously added.¹¹

The New Theology. Two schools stood in conflict with this approach: the so-called *nouvelle théologie* and Transcendental Thomism. The two schools emerged from a common root: the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century work of Maréchal, Rousselot, and Blondel, each of whom had insisted on the integrity of natural reason and the supernatural character of faith, but as a dual appropriation and destabilization of post-Kantian philosophy.¹² While they insisted that this did not contradict Aquinas (Blondel

¹⁰ This interpretation of Neo-Scholasticism as concerned, principally, with the objectivity of truth in opposition to (largely Kantian) subjectivity is indebted to McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 1-36. His discussion of “ontologism” (pp.113-28) and his overarching thesis regarding doctrinal pluralism (pp.1-16 and 241-67) have also influenced my discussion of the following categories. I am also grateful to Sean Hayden for the tenacity with which he has interjected the question of subjectivity into our theological conversations. Despite our disagreements, that tenacity has aided my interpretation of what is at stake between these three schools.

¹¹ Representatives would be French Dominicans, who followed in the footsteps of the Dominican commentators, Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, and Bañez. These were Gardeil, Garrigou-LaGrange, and Maritain. See McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, 16-95. One can also see this same emphasis on objectivity, as I have been able to ascertain, in Reinhard Hütter’s understanding of the Spirit’s incarnation in the practices of the Church. See Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

¹² On this heritage, the reader should consult McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism*.

much less so), they did dispute the Neo-Scholastic insistence on objectivity and a twofold *telos* for human being. Where the New Theology and Transcendental Thomism parted ways was in their conception of the locus of the experience of meaning.

Although each began with the subjective starting point that Blondel referred to as the “method of immanence,” they sought to show an irreducible dynamism in the constitution of subjectivity. As Henri de Lubac put it in *The Discovery of God*, clearly repeating Maréchal (and agreeing with Rahner), God is implicitly known – or prethematically known – in every act of knowing. As Lubac later argued in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, this dynamic orientation disclosed the *ontological* fact of our creaturehood, associating the inherent meaningfulness of reality directly with the integral unity of nature with the supernatural.¹³

As I said above, the common perception is that Neo-Scholasticism and the New Theology stand at polar opposites of a continuum on the nature/grace question, with Transcendental Thomism as a mediating idea. While this is partly true, it obscures the sense in which this notion of the ontological integrity of nature and the supernatural is, in fact, a radical application of the anti-modernist, anti-subjectivist impulse behind Neo-Scholasticism’s epistemological realism. As both *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* and his essay “The Internal Causes of the Weakening and the Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred” demonstrate, from very early on Lubac agreed with Neo-Scholasticism that the modern view of the world was diseased. The difference, however, is the New

¹³ It is important to note that this association of the New Theology with the dynamism of subjectivity is actually more prominent in *Surmounturel*, despite the common assumption to the contrary. There his reliance on an analysis of subjectivity as the basis for the understanding of the image of God is the key to understanding his ideas. It is later, in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, that the ontological register comes most fully into view, because his disagreement with Rahner’s “transcendental approach appeared to force this on him. A more detailed argument is made for this reading in Chapter Two.

Theology prescribed a stronger treatment than epistemological and institutional objectivity could deliver. The communion ecclesiology for which Lubac laid the groundwork in *Corpus Mysticum*, having expressed it earlier in *Catholicism*, was perhaps the fullest expression of this. Indeed, Lubac roundly indicted the objectivism of the Neo-Scholastic ecclesiology for perpetuating the Enlightenment rationalism it purported to oppose. What was really needed, he insisted, was a kind of Heideggerian reduction of subjectivity to ontology, within which to reunite the objective and the subjective poles of experience in an account of created being as God's gratuitous self-expression. This is a different diagnosis of the problem of meaning: namely, one in which the only proper way to restore it is through a recovery of an ontological vision that can restore the integral relation of grace to nature.

Transcendental Thomism. Despite their common origin in the Neo-Thomism of Maréchal and Rousselot, this was not Transcendental Thomism's conclusion. Transcendental Thomism always sought to retain a role for subjectivity in all knowing. This is apparent in Rahner's *Spirit in the World*, where the human person is described as a *Schwebe*, a tensed "hovering," within and above, matter and spirit. Similarly, the other great Transcendental Thomist, Bernard Lonergan, argued in *Verbum* that the act of knowing is not the same as simply looking, but always demands a moment of self-appropriation.¹⁴ As he notes, the significance of Aquinas' emphasis on the inner word requires the meaning given in manifestation be bound up with the subject's active

¹⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 2, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

engagement with the world. That is, although reality is inherently meaningful, there is always something for the subject to do in apprehending it.

This has important implications for its understanding of nature and grace. Transcendental Thomism agrees with the New Theology that this dynamic structure displays a fundamental orientation to God. But, like Neo-Scholasticism, they regard the notion of “pure nature” as a necessary hypothesis. Rahner’s term is that the idea of a pure nature is a “remainder concept,” a *Restbegriff*. While there is no worldly experience in which grace is absent, this does not mean that human experience as such (i.e., ontologically) is grace. But if one is to maintain that difference while insisting on the graced status of all experience, then one must “transcendentally” conceive something like “pure nature” in order to say how this is so. Grace is experienced as grace in the very self-transcendence displayed in the subject’s active engagement of knowing the world. In this way, the union of nature and grace is intimately bound up with an affirmation of a transcendental subjectivity. It is just this pattern of thinking that unites both Neo-Scholasticism and the New Theology against Transcendental Thomism—a position that the unfortunate aftermath of Vatican II, as well as the *Communio-Concilium* divide, has framed too much in terms of modernity and secularity.

Each perspective offers some account of the inherent meaningfulness of experience, and that perspective is intimately bound up with some account of the nature/grace relation. Different conceptions of that relation result from where a given perspective locates this meaning. For Neo-Scholastic objectivity, nature and grace are separate spheres; for the New Theology’s ontology, nature and grace are integrally

united; and, for Transcendental Thomism's subjectivity, nature and grace are united in the event of self-transcendence.

Neo-Scholasticism and Transcendental Thomism offer epistemological accounts. But because Neo-Scholastics are epistemological realists, their emphasis on the distinction of nature and grace reflects a corresponding reality of distinct ontological planes. Transcendental Thomism's greater sensitivity to the dynamic and historical quality of knowledge leads it to affirm an orientation toward transcendence in every act of knowledge. This displays a basic continuity of grace with nature, rather than two distinct ontological planes. The Neo-Scholastic position represents a negative stance toward modernity, and Transcendental Thomism offers a nuanced positive assessment.

The New Theology, like Neo-Scholasticism, also represents a negative assessment of modernity—and one focused on a rejection of subjectivity. But, just as Transcendental Thomism offers a more nuanced (positive) assessment of modernity than Neo-Scholasticism, the New Theology represents a more nuanced (negative) account of subjectivity. Agreeing with Transcendental Thomism that the structure of subjective knowing displays the continuity of nature and the supernatural and the fundamental integrity of nature and grace, the New Theology nonetheless contends that this unity is only properly conceived in ontological rather than epistemological terms.

Because Neo-Scholasticism and Transcendental Thomism agree that the nature/grace distinction is first decided epistemologically, it is their disagreement over subjectivity that lies at the heart of their different visions of the nature/grace relationship. Further, while Neo-Scholasticism and the New Theology both seek to evade subjectivity, their different conclusions regarding the nature/grace relation are finally decided with

respect to their different epistemologies, giving the question of subjectivity priority over ontology in that distinction. Finally, Transcendental Thomism and the New Theology agree on the nature/grace distinction because of an epistemological agreement. Their differences pertain only to the value of subjectivity—whether what it preserves with regard to doctrinal distinctions is outweighed by perceived concessions to modernity.

The decisive factor in that discussion appears to be that of specifying the nature and role of the human being as an agent in her own right: how it is that she can be said to be self-determining and what role that has in relationship to the divine determination. What remains throughout this approach is the notion that the unity of the two doctrines, of nature and grace, must be conceived *metaphysically*.¹⁵ This metaphysical emphasis is in keeping with the Thomist orientation of *Aeterni Patris*.

Protestant Intersections

But beyond this internecine dispute among Roman Catholics, the question of the role of the human agent is repeated in different terms among Protestants. The issues here repeat this basic line of differentiation between objectivity, subjectivity, and ontology. Perhaps the most salient contemporary manifestation of this tension has been the disputes over the *analogia entis* and the point of contact for revelation (*Anknüpfungspunkt*). The former has received more recent focused attention, but their concerns are essentially the same, as they pertain to different aspects of a common problem. It is not an accident that Karl Barth stands at the center of both. Barth's own actualist theological vision was in

¹⁵ It will be helpful at this point to direct to the reader to the specific use of the terms “metaphysics” and “ontology” as they are deployed in this dissertation at pp. 36-39 and 75-78.

most respects much more consistent with the transcendentalist approach of post-Kantian thought in that it remained bound up with some notion of the irreducible freedom of human self-determination.¹⁶ This set him in opposition to Erich Przywara's vision, which sought out a kind of harmonious ontological union of the analogical and dialectical points of view.¹⁷ Such is the perspective characteristic of Siewerth and von Balthasar, as well. Yet, the proximity to Barth was recognized by von Balthasar and Barth himself—and this is displayed in his rejection of Brunner, whose emphasis on the transcendental starting point he resolutely rejected in “*Nein!*”¹⁸ The ontological aspect of his thought, which had been so largely underdeveloped in the early work, later emerged and was explicitly acknowledged (with direct reference to von Balthasar) in *The Humanity of God*.¹⁹

It is the young Dieterich Bonhoeffer, however, who has made the most helpful contribution to an understanding of these larger issues in contemporary theology. His two dissertations, *Communio Sanctorum* and *Act and Being*, formulate a response to the issues surrounding these questions in terms of classical metaphysical categories of being and becoming/act, the one and the many, time and eternity, and/or form and matter. The issue in question is how to think the active appearance of something new in relationship

¹⁶ This point will be developed in more detail in Chapter Three. On the somewhat idiosyncratic use of the term “actualist” in relationship to Barth's work, which stands in contrast with the use of the same term in relationship to Aquinas, see George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ The definitive text is Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysik* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1962). The reader should also consult Erich Przywara, *Logos: Logos, Abendland, Reich, Commercium* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1964).; Erich Przywara, *In Und Gegen: Stellungnahmen Zur Zeit* (Nürnberg: Glock und Lutz, 1955).; Erich Przywara, *Gott: Fünf Vorträge Über Das Religionsphilosophische Problem, Der Katholische Gedanke; Veröffentlichungen Des Verbandes Der Vereine Katholischer Akademiker Zur Pflege Der Katholischen Weltanschauung* (München: Oratoriums-Verlag, 1926). The standard English translation of an admittedly early, and therefore limited, work is Erich Przywara, *Polarity: A German Catholic's Interpretation of Religion*, trans. Alan Coates Bouquet (London: Oxford University Press 1935).

¹⁸ See Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace"* (London: The Centenary Press, 1946).

¹⁹ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 44.

to the existence of what already is, but in such a way that this appearing is not already accounted for in terms of what is. Bonhoeffer's concerns are focused principally on the question of revelation, rather than grace as such. In this regard, Bonhoeffer begins where the Roman Catholic dispute ends: namely, with the attempt to "overcome the difference between a transcendental and ontological starting point of theology."²⁰ Bonhoeffer's work is so significant precisely because of the manner in which he understands this problem in terms of a transcendental and anthropological question of activity and becoming *in its intersection with* the ontological question of form and stability. For Bonhoeffer, as a Protestant thinker, this is not primarily a matter of "nature and grace," but that of the proper starting point for theology: namely, revelation. And this required some account of the relationship of the appearance of something new within the given.

Bonhoeffer's proposal is extraordinary, and my work in the present study owes much to his vision. Bonhoeffer's unique response to these difficulties is to focus on the significance of ethics and to argue that act and being can only be truly united in the church as the continued manifestation of the person of Christ.²¹ As Bonhoeffer makes clear, such an understanding is only possible when the church is primarily—indeed, *only*—understood as the assembly of believers (*Gemeinde*) and not as an institution (*Kirche*). Only as such is the church—in fact, *only as* the church—are human beings authentically acting (becoming) such that difference (matter, time, multiplicity,

²⁰ Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Martin Rumscheidt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 10. Ernst Feil, *Die Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers. Hermeneutik, Christologie, Weltverständnis*, Gesellschaft Und Theologie: Abteilung Systematische Beiträge (München: Matthias-Grünewald-Verl, 1971). The reader should note Bonhoeffer's early appreciation of and engagement with Przywara in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*, trans. Hans-Richard Reuter, Wayne W. Floyd, and Martin Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 59-80.

²¹ Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 10.

particularity) and being (unity, form, eternity, unity, universality) are one.²² In this way, Bonhoeffer proposed what can be called a uniquely Protestant response to this problem in that he insists that the issues in question are only understood and resolved with primary reference to redemption, which he understands (following his teacher, Seeberg) in largely ethical terms.²³ The unity of act and being occurs, that is, only insofar as God's action is seen as coextensive with the church's orientation toward recognition of the neighbor. In this relation, a mutuality is established wherein we exist as individuals-together (church) as a collective-individual (Jesus.) *Being* is here revealed as *relational*. The work is an extraordinary achievement, and yet it is precisely where it succeeds that its failures are most apparent. Enumerating these will help me to further isolate the problem of the dissertation as a whole.

First, Bonhoeffer encounters the problem in question as a matter of a transcendental or ontological starting point for revelation, and seeks out what Dumas rightly recognizes is an ontology without metaphysics.²⁴ He seeks to articulate the absolute priority of revelation, but in a manner that unites the transcendental and ontological starting points as opposed to falling decisively into either one. However, this is itself a *metaphysical* position, and it is shown to be such by virtue of Bonhoeffer's own way of framing the question in terms of the classical categories. This is a strange mistake to make for the kind of Lutheran theologian Bonhoeffer is, as it frames the question of

²² Ibid.

²³ Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, trans. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

²⁴ André Dumas, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality*, trans. Robert McAfee Brown (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 97-117. It is in this way, despite his proximity to Levinas, Bonhoeffer is to be distinguished from him. Bonhoeffer remains almost strictly Heideggerian in this regard, and his reference to ethics remains personalist in orientation, in the manner of Edith Stein, and does not achieve the strong critique of ontology developed later in Levinas.

the priority of revelation in terms of the very philosophical categories he seeks to overturn. As a result, he occludes the central *doctrinal* content that revelation discloses, opting instead for a particularly formal (though unique) instance of this more general metaphysical problematic. Even if one asserts with Bonhoeffer that the proclamation and reception of the Word of God in the church is the *only* resolution of that problematic, it is necessary to recognize this distinctively metaphysical orientation.²⁵ As I will suggest later in the dissertation, it is an entirely different matter to say that the questions posed here demand metaphysical answers than to argue that they are essentially metaphysical questions. The final value of Bonhoeffer's proposal is decided on this point.

Second, there is the added complication that Bonhoeffer's interpretation of these metaphysical problems is largely Idealist.²⁶ This fact is particularly recognizable in that he uses the Hegelian terms, *Aufheben* and *Aufhebung*, to describe his procedure for uniting act and being. Bonhoeffer begins with the dialectical separation of thought into being and action, and then attempts to mediate their union in the church. Beyond merely orienting the question of revelation philosophically, he has thus conceived the relationship of being to act in terms of a separation. This fact gives his treatment of revelation an overridingly Hegelian hue in that it renders the substantial content of being something only realized in and through an *Aufhebung* that is achieved in and through one's relation to an historical event. Bonhoeffer absorbed this Hegelianism from his teacher, Reinhold Seeberg, as well as from the philosopher Eberhard Grisebach.²⁷ But,

²⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 31, especially n. 20.

²⁶ I mean to point to a central confusion in the Idealist tradition over the nature of the determinate content of being—a confusion that, Chapter Four notes, is essentially Gnostic and Manichaeic in its orientation.

²⁷ See James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 114.

insofar as he makes this a problem specifically of relation and not *knowledge*, Bonhoeffer develops his answer in terms of what Heidegger will refer to as a fundamental ontology rather than metaphysics.²⁸

Finally, this last point leads immediately to the most salient insight of the resultant ontology, which concerns its focus on the ethical structure of human relations within being. As such, Bonhoeffer's fundamental ontology is essentially personalist in the mode of Martin Buber, Ferdinand Schiller, Gabriel Marcel, and Edith Stein.²⁹ This personalist influence is most likely also due in part to the tradition of Ritschlian liberalism he learned under the tutelage from Reinhold Seeberg.³⁰ This way of framing the question of revelation, in contrast to the problems presented by the transcendental and ontological analysis and toward that of ethics and human personhood, has the effect of rendering the question of act and being a matter of authentic and effective human agency. Much like John Zizioulas, Bonhoeffer resituates the traditional metaphysical problem of the One and the Many around personhood and the structures of thought necessary for its genuine affirmation. When he concludes that Being-itself is personal, even communal, he nonetheless allows the metaphysical cast of the problem to overrun his own ethical orientation. That is, he articulates the problem of personhood as a particular instance of

²⁸ See Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 26, n. 20.

²⁹ Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 114.

³⁰ On this point, specifically as an interpretation of Luther, the reader should consult the fine discussion of Seeberg in Sammeli Juntunen, *Der Begriff Des Nichts Bei Luther in Den Jahren Von 1510 Bis 1523*, *Schriften Der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft*. A 36 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1996). The readers should also consult the discussion of Luther interpretation in Antti Raunio, *Summe Des Christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" Als Gesetz Der Liebe in Der Theologie Martin Luthers Von 1510-1527* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 13-52.

the more general problem of unity and multiplicity. The fact that his answer is not itself metaphysical but ontological is not pertinent.³¹

As I will show below, Bonhoeffer's particular way of framing this matter in terms of a fundamental ontological relation is largely characteristic of the Protestant formulation of the unity of creation and grace. This approach begins with the concrete reality of division and alienation, not so as to ontologize this division, but in order to refer that division to a deeper unity—one disclosed in and through the event of personal encounter. It is in this encounter that truth of being is revealed to be relational. This truth is not apprehensible, he maintains, apart from this relation, and the presumption of doing so is only an expression of the *cor curvem in se* of speculative (i.e., sinful) reason.³² He makes this claim in continuity with Martin Luther, but it is also ultimately derived, as we will see, from Augustine.

Common Concerns

From out of these problems in both contemporary Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, three predominant questions emerge, all of which pivot on the question of human agency. The first is whether the problem of human agency can be avoided by appeal to a kind of “naïve” or dogmatic—one might even say, positivist—realism.³³

Representatives of this approach adopt a decidedly metaphysical approach to the problem

³¹ Indeed, I will suggest below that Levinas helps us see how Heidegger's procedure is also guilty of this.

³² See the discussion in Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 7, 16, 41-46, 58, 80, 89.

³³ This phrase is Bernard Lonergan's. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). He distinguishes between a naïve realism (72), a dogmatic realism (192-93), and his own critical realism, which is expounded as Aquinas' own and is the thesis of the work.

in question, and stand in the tradition (or basic assumptions) of Neo-Scholasticism. Presently, thinkers taking this route take up the mantle of Garrigou-Lagrange, Gilson, and/or Maritain. Though Protestant, it is appropriate to include Wolfhart Pannenberg here as well. Their thought emphasizes the divisions between the orders of nature and grace by locating the fulfillment of the former wholly in an objective order of grace that is coextensive with ecclesiastical structure. As such, the order of grace *fulfills* the order of nature, but is decisively distinct from it. The second question is whether it is possible to reduce this agency to ontology, as we see in Lubac. The third question is whether it is possible to develop a successful mediation of the personal agency and universal determination in the mode of Bonhoeffer.

However, there is the possibility of a fourth option, which I have sought to set out in this dissertation. That fourth possibility would avoid being lost in the thicket of the act/being problematic on the one hand, and thrashing about in the stale water of modernity, on the other, by insisting on gaining clarity first at the level of Christian doctrine. Something of this point has already been noted in relation to Bonhoeffer's approach to these questions. Indeed, it is stunning the extent to which it goes unnoticed that the "nature/grace" pairing in Roman Catholic theology places a speculative concept (nature) together with a doctrine (grace). The common assumption seems to be that "nature" is somehow synonymous with "creation." But, as I will show, the term "nature" developed in Scholastic theology as a discretely transcendental concept that mediated the unity and differentiation of two doctrines, creation and grace. Further, as already noted in relation to Bonhoeffer, the issues at stake in the theology of revelation are not resolved by showing a unique theological resolution to a metaphysical problem. That is,

revelation is not the proper mediating category to resolve the problem of unity (being) and differentiation (act). Nor is this difficulty overcome by framing this question of unity and differentiation in terms of a dialectic of alienation (sin) and authenticity (grace).

Again, the issue is not primarily oriented by a metaphysical difficulty, but by a concern to articulate the proper unity of the claims entailed by two doctrines. In each case, the stakes are greatly clarified once the doctrinal register is recovered over against strictly metaphysical concerns. Framed as a matter of doctrine (“creation and grace”) rather than speculation (“nature and grace”), this discussion becomes less about the securing of meaning for worldly experience, and more about properly understanding and relating God’s acts of creating and redeeming. And, it is just here, where we are led to conceive the intersection of divine and human actions, that the question of agency can appear once again in a fresh way, outside of (even if coincident with) metaphysical concerns.

Method of Analysis: Archaeological Record of the Present

My method of analyzing this problem of the unity of creation and grace is fundamentally archaeological in the sense deployed by Michel Foucault and as adopted by Edward Farley in *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method*. I say my method is “archaeological” in order to distinguish it from the kind of genealogical surveys characteristic of post-Nietzschean and post-Heideggerian thought noted above in Siewerth, von Balthasar, and Dupré. I have in mind, as Foucault notes in reference to the Annales School, an analysis that can unlock the depths within a network of ideas, rather

than the mere historical succession of those ideas as such. Noting his own reliance on Foucault, Farley describes his procedure:

Positively, the term archaeology suggests an investigation of the strata which underlie beliefs, symbols, actions, and institutions. I would not do justice to the metaphor if I restricted it to strata analysis. The science of archaeology works with strata in order to reconstruct the events and process of the prehistorical past. Likewise, this archaeology... will have a sequential or developmental reference... The primary effort, however, is to expose the strata themselves, the various levels of presupposed symbols and axioms taken for granted....³⁴

My own process is very similar in relationship to the doctrines in question. Unlike Foucault, however, my goal is neither latently structuralist nor overtly historicist. What I am tracing is not the manner in which a discourse generates its object from out of the discontinuities within the discursive field (its excess, as it were), but rather the manner in which these questions of Christian theology give differentiated discursive expression to a central metaphysical truth that has yet to be articulated adequately. Indeed, my work here is premised on the assumption that this metaphysical insight has not been clearly stated, and my archaeological survey is intended to bring it into relief. In this way, I am essentially using Foucault's procedure in the opposite direction: not tracing the historical construction of the metaphysical concepts that cover over the failures in a discourse, but investigating the failures in the discourse that disclose the metaphysical reality they presume and seek to express. In this regard, my assumptions are thoroughly realist, and, as I have already suggested, are tied to a peculiar construal of human agency.

In beginning this archaeological investigation, it is necessary to first eschew all metaphysical and ontological interpretations of the problem in question, and to treat the question in strictly doctrinal terms. This allows the problem of nature and the

³⁴ Edward Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 4.

supernatural and sin and grace to appear as a dispute concerning the proper relationship of the two doctrines, creation and grace. In this respect, I follow Kathryn Tanner's work *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* in conceiving the pertinent issues in terms of the fundamental "grammar" of Christian theology.³⁵ If there are metaphysical issues to be confronted (as I insist there are), those issues arrive subsequent to this doctrinal investigation and must not serve as its basis. It is for this reason that conceiving this question, on the one hand, solely in terms of the nature/supernatural is essentially to predetermine the analysis in favor of a metaphysical architecture of *ontological* identity. Conversely, to view the matter solely in terms of the doctrine of redemption, wherein creation is the identifying term that unites the differentiations of existence in a dialectic of harmony (grace) and alienation (sin), is to predetermine the analysis in favor of a fundamental ontology of mediated social relation. To frame matters in this way, then, is not only to fail to achieve a real conversation between the different perspectives, but a mystification of the problem.

It is not only the fact that this is a problem of uniting the doctrines of creation and grace that is thereby mystified, but so also is the extent to which that peculiar set of issues sits at the heart of Christian theology. Indeed, some decisive punctuation of this union directs the focus of every theological vision, and can generally be associated, stylistically, more with Irenaeus or Augustine.³⁶ On the one hand, there is an approach that sees a continuous order of growth from creation to redemption (Irenaeus and Origen) and, on

³⁵ Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

³⁶ I am grateful to conversations with J. Patout Burns for this insight. See J. Patout Burns, "From Persuasion to Predestination: Augustine on Freedom in Rational Creatures" in Paul M. Blowers et al., eds., *In Dominico Eloquio--in Lordly Eloquence : Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 294-316.

the other, that of a devastating corruption of one order and the introduction of another (Augustine.) Such issues run, as Augustine himself realized upon reading Paul, into the very heart of the apostolic witness of scripture, and continue to affect its reading in the present. The answers one gives to such questions inevitably determine the ‘style’ of thought one adopts. It is my concern with the problems and insights that result from this Western heritage that have led me to exempt Eastern Christianity from my study, as their perspective has always been essentially an elaboration on Irenaeus and Origen. But within Western Christianity, genuine insight into the demand of the newness introduced by the order of redemption has made the problem of continuity and harmony of order particularly acute. And the basic decisions made on this question of unity is and remains in some sense definitive for all theological visions.³⁷

In addition, what I am speaking of here as the “problem of the union of the doctrines of creation and grace” already presupposes aspects of the study itself, and many of these presumed elements have already begun to appear. My use of this phrase refers to what is traditionally thought of as the relationship of the order of creation to the order of redemption.³⁸ This traditional concern emphasizes the doctrinal frame and allows them to define the question and its answer, while recognizing the extent to which those answers reach well beyond the propriety of the doctrinal register itself. The question is how systematic theology should understand the order of existence in creation in its coherent relation to the order by which God redeems it. The emphasis is not only on the fact that these doctrines do actually imply a specific *order*, but also on the fact that there

³⁷ One can for example see this difference punctuated in a number of different ways: intellectualism/voluntarism, realism/nominalism, Dominican/Franciscan, Balthasar/Barth, and more recently within Barthian circles, Hunsinger/McCormack.

³⁸ See the discussion of Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), 208-33.

are *two distinct orders* that are nonetheless *related*. It is this aspect of the question that renders this matter of the *unity* of the two doctrines a unique status in systematic theology. This uniqueness is related to two factors.

First, the suggestion that the doctrines of creation and grace imply an *order* is to say that the theological truth affirmed in the claims that the world is created and graced has as its corollary a distinct rationale, coherence, and intelligibility in its application to reality. In most cases in the history of Christian theology, this order is associated with some understanding of natural law, as it pertains to the doctrine of creation, or some idea of ecclesiastical or sacramental relations resulting from God's work of redemption.³⁹ In each instance that order is conditioned by and integral to God's purposes for each. This "second-order" matter of the specific kind of order implied by a "first-order" doctrine is particularly idiosyncratic in systematic theology as it refers to what Lonergan called a distinctively "speculative" moment in the doctrinal task, but which is probably better thought of simply as metaphysical (or abstractive.)⁴⁰ This assertion underscores the sense in which certain doctrines (e.g., the hypostatic union or the Trinity) are not simply the elaboration and specification of scriptural teaching, but also involve the articulation of certain clear conclusions about reality that are to be drawn from those teachings in their application to reality. In the case of the doctrines of creation and grace, there is a distinctively metaphysical component that has an immediate experiential referent for the

³⁹ Examples would be marriage or certain orders of ecclesiastical office.

⁴⁰ This is how Lonergan describes the difference between dogma and speculation in his various writings, beginning with his articles on operative grace and extending to *Method and Theology*. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, Robert M. Doran, and Lonergan Research Institute, vol. 1, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: Published by University of Toronto Press for Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, 2000), 1-2, 4-5, 14, 16. See also the discussion of Lonergan's procedure in J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan*, *Lonergan Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 3-34.

reality of the claims made. What is the order, or rationale, for reality implied by the doctrine of creation? What is the order, or rationale, for reality specified by the doctrine of grace? Extrapolation to that order is necessarily an abstraction from the doctrine in question.⁴¹

Second, however, is the fact that these orders are understood in some sense to be at least formally discrete. The order of reality abstracted from the doctrine of creation is not necessarily the same order as that abstracted from the doctrine of grace. Insofar as the question of reality is specifically raised by this abstraction, the problem of distinction between the doctrines is particularly formidable. That question pertains to what extent the differentiation of the doctrines applies to the reality of order specified by the abstraction. Is the order specified by the doctrine of redemption the same reality as the order specified by the doctrine of creation? If so, then are the orders also identical? And if they are, then the nature of the distinction must be specified. If they are not identical, then some account must be given of how these two distinct orders refer to a common reality. But the option also remains that the realities specified by the orders are in fact different. If this route is taken, it is how the *reality* of creation is related to the *reality* of redemption that must be stated. The fact that the two are argued to be distinct realities does not alleviate the theological burden of relating them.

By framing the discussion in this way, I am then in a position to analyze the two distinct ways of answering these questions, the Roman Catholic and Protestant

⁴¹ In this regard, it is not clear what difference from von Balthasar Bruce McCormack intends to underscore when he notes with agreement von Balthasar's statement that Christology implies an ontological order, but disagrees over where it is situated. Indeed, as this study hopes to show, insofar as von Balthasar is representative of the Roman Catholic paradigm and McCormack the Protestant, these positions as articulated are finally no different at all. See Bruce L. McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 183-200.

paradigms, respectively. A word must be said, before proceeding, about my use of this term “paradigm.” I intend this use of the term in more of a Platonic sense than its more common use inspired by Thomas Kuhn.⁴² Yet, my use here shares much with Kuhn and is intended to include his notion that a paradigm orders an entire frame of reference for interpreting data. Despite wanting to retain this sense, when I suggest that there are different “Roman Catholic” and “Protestant” paradigms for uniting creation and grace, I want to call to mind simultaneously the more comprehensive sense maintained by Plato’s *paradeigma*.

As Kuhn uses the term, “paradigm” is closer to what Plato understood as an “image,” which Eric D. Perl has defined as “a mode in which reality itself is presented and apprehended.”⁴³ As a result, for Kuhn, a paradigm is something like a conceptual architecture in and through which reality is ordered.⁴⁴ Sallie McFague has further elaborated on this connection, noting that a paradigm functions as “a set of basic assumptions or commitments in a field of study or tradition which defines the issues considered, the methods used, the answers allowed.”⁴⁵ But, what I have in mind here refers to the sense in which the paradigm is not simply a “model,”⁴⁶ but functions also as a “plan, pattern, or design” that is “prior to, independent of and irreducible to” its particular images.⁴⁷ In this case, specific paradigms are not simply ways of ordering data

⁴² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-34.

⁴³ Eric D. Perl, “The Presence of the Paradigm: Immanence and Transcendence in Plato’s Theory of Forms,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 53, no. December (1999): 355.

⁴⁴ See *Ibid.*: 355-59.

⁴⁵ Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 83.

⁴⁶ Compare *Ibid.*, 67-102. with Perl, “The Presence of the Paradigm,” 357-59.

⁴⁷ Perl, “The Presence of the Paradigm,” 357. This is not the case with McFague’s use, which assumes that, as a model, the construction that organizes the theological field is entirely immanent to that field.

but are also manifestations of a plan, pattern, and design, which is itself present in the images, and is not reducible to the image.⁴⁸ As Perl states, Plato's paradigms are "at once immanent universals and transcendent paradigms—or, since we have overcome their opposition, we can equally well say that they are at once transcendent universals and immanent paradigms."⁴⁹

This dual use of the term, when applied, as I do here, to distinctively "Roman Catholic" and "Protestant" patterns of organization, has a twofold effect.⁵⁰ On the one hand, I intend my reference to distinctively "Roman Catholic" and "Protestant" paradigms in precisely Kuhn's sense of a set of basic assumptions determining the field of inquiry. And within each of these paradigms, so understood, I offer two definitive Platonic "images" of that paradigm within which to apprehend it. Such examples are intended to represent the most definitive contemporary articulations of and engagements with the question of this unity within the paradigm. In the Roman Catholic, the figures are Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner, and in the Protestant, these figures are Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth. On the other hand, I wish these paradigms to be understood as manifestations of a more fundamental truth, which each manifest and have a share. In this way, I hope to open up a way for conversation that transcends the otherwise confessional impasses upon which dialogue falters.

When this matter is confined to these confessional differences, the question of the union of creation and grace is reduced to a matter of tracing out the dissonance between two different ways of organizing the field of data. The result is that one paradigm is

⁴⁸ As for example, it is in McFague's understanding of "metaphor."

⁴⁹ Perl, "The Presence of the Paradigm," 359.

⁵⁰ My distinction between a "Roman Catholic and a "Protestant" paradigms is influenced by David Tracy and Robert Scharlemann. Regarding Tracy's influence, see the discussion on p. 45 and n. 68. Regarding Scharlemann's influence, see n. 15 on p. 99.

always judged according to its failure to correspond to the presuppositions of the other. Most commonly, this entails an advocate of the Roman Catholic paradigm accusing an adherent to the Protestant perspective of deploying a dialectic that violates the metaphysical assumptions upon which the Roman Catholic position is based. And this claim is made in spite of the fact that the Protestant dialectic is specifically formulated on quite different assumptions than the Roman Catholic. Or, conversely, an advocate of the Protestant paradigm accuses an adherent of the Roman Catholic position of subordinating revelation to a more general metaphysics, based on natural reason. And this is done in spite of the fact that the Roman Catholic position insists that its metaphysics is nothing more than an elaboration of the truths disclosed by revelation. Genuine dialogue does not take place in such circumstances. But, as I hope, when the questions that animate each paradigm are resituated in terms of doctrine—and more specifically in terms of the unity of two distinct doctrines—then how it is that each approach is a particular manifestation of a more fundamental and commonly shared set of assumptions can be seen with greater clarity.

By staging this conversation as I have in this dissertation, I am also attempting to evoke recognition of an *aporia* between the two. I intend this term “*aporia*” to refer here in the classical Socratic sense (in contrast to the Derridian interpolation).⁵¹ That is, I am concerned to show that, in each instance, what is taken as definitive for the question at hand is, in fact, only a particular instance—in Plato’s terms, *doxa* rather than *episteme*.⁵²

⁵¹ This Socratic aspect of my approach, specifically in its emphasis on dialogue, presupposes the work of Julia Lamm’s distinction between “dialogical-dialectic” and “speculative-dialectic” in Julia A. Lamm, “Reading Plato’s Dialectics: Schleiermacher’s Insistence on Dialectics as Dialogical,” *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologieggeschichte/Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 10, no. 1 (2003). The reader should also consult n. 15 on p. 99, for further discussion of Lamm’s influence.

⁵² See Plato, *Republic*, 509d-510c.

As such, at just the moment this impasse is encountered, just as Socrates instructs Meno, we are obliged to press forward to greater understanding.⁵³ The procedure is not to identify the harmony of the two approaches, nor is it to attempt to reveal the conceptual content that is apprehensible from out of the opposition of the two approaches. On the contrary, the procedure is to show how the two “paradigms” are themselves instances, images, of a “pattern” or “design” that is much more fundamental to each.

I show three things with this procedure. First, with reference to a given paradigm, I illuminate the nature of the dispute in question by lifting out the assumptions that guide that paradigm. Thus, clarity will be gained on the issues that divide and unite Lubac and Rahner, as well as Barth and Schleiermacher. Second, I isolate the ways in which the representative thinkers’ attempts to unite creation and grace in that paradigm are at odds with key assumptions of that paradigm. Finally, I note that this paradigmatic incoherence results because a key paradigmatic assumption has not only been excluded, but actually displaced into the opposite paradigm. In each case, this mutual determination is the result of the failure to perceive the central insight of the doctrines in question. Because of this, my archaeological investigation is oriented not toward isolating the object generated by this discursive failure, but toward bringing into relief the presuppositions of the doctrines to which each paradigmatic discourse is failing to attend.

Summary of the Argument

At just this point, discussion of method begins to overlap directly with the concerns of my argument. Because my argument may appear circuitous, I feel obliged to

⁵³ See Plato, *Meno*, lines 80-81.

note that my claim is quite simple and direct: the history of Western theology's grappling with the doctrines of creation and grace is oriented by the unique status of the will as distinct from the intellect and desire, and ordered toward the positive, ethical affirmation of otherness. I further argue that it is only with a clear apprehension of the nature of this distinction and its irreducible orientation to the positive affirmation of otherness that the unity of creation and grace can be coherently thought and thus the conversation should be reconstructed in this light.

I advance this argument in four distinct phases. The first analyzes the Roman Catholic paradigm of uniting creation and grace, and the contemporary debates occurring within that it. The second analyzes the Protestant paradigm and the contemporary debates within it. The third traces each of these paradigms and their attendant problems to the divergent metaphysical and relational trajectories developed in Augustine's doctrines of creation and grace, respectively. Finally, the fourth phase draws the various elements from the two paradigms together in a manner that harmonizes them and avoids the previous mistakes engendered by the failure to recognize the significance of the category of *otherness* for each doctrine. As my analysis in each of these phases develops archaeologically and is ordered according to the paradigms, it will be helpful to identify and discuss in some detail two overarching themes that structure the whole of my investigation, present at each stage of the argument. These are the problem of the will and that of ontology.

The Problem of the Will

The problem of the will is the centerpiece of the dissertation. In dealing with this matter, my concerns are focused on lifting out the significance for the Western understanding of creation and grace of distinguishing the role of the will from the intellect and desire.⁵⁴ In this regard, my reflections are directly influenced by a series of thinkers beginning with Artur Landgraf and Odo Lottin, in the early twentieth century. I follow their work as interpreted and applied by Bernard Lonergan, and I have been particularly influenced by J. Patout Burns, who notes Lonergan's influence.⁵⁵ In addition to these thinkers, I understand my claims on the will to stand in continuity with a number of developments in the history of classical philosophy. The most important of these is the work of Albrecht Dihle, which has been criticized and elaborated upon by Charles Kahn. Richard Sorabji has recently made even further elaboration on Dihle's original claim, and James Wetzel's analysis should be read in continuity with each of these developments. Other than Wetzel, whose thesis is quite nuanced, each of these thinkers contends that Augustine is responsible for first formulating a notion of the will, as distinct from the intellect and desire.⁵⁶ I do not intend my own analysis to contribute to the conversations among these scholars by taking a specific position on the questions that concerns them. Rather, I have sought merely to agree with the basic assumptions they share, which pivot around the significance of Augustine, even as they differ on the details. However, what Landgraf and Lottin contribute to this discussion that the others do not is the intimate

⁵⁴ I specify "Western" here because I recognize that Eastern Christianity's engagements with these matters, while very much connected, are also quite different in many important respects. I wish to emphasize, in this study, that what I am developing here is an analysis of trends in Western theology.

⁵⁵ See J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1980), 13.

⁵⁶ For bibliographic citations of this material, see Chapter Four, p. 156, n. 5.

connection of the complete formulation of the will by Aquinas in the thirteenth century in connection with the solution to the dogmatic problem of the theology of grace. This is a development beyond but in continuity with Augustine.

I bring this scholarship to bear on my discussion of the two paradigms throughout the dissertation. In both the discussion of the metaphysics of the nature/supernatural paradigm as well as in that of the ontology of the sin/grace paradigm, my concern is to note the doctrinal consequences that result from failing to relate the will to the intellect and desire in the manner achieved by Aquinas. In this regard, I note that when Aquinas' insight is not retained—or, as is the case with Augustine, not yet recognized—two ways of invoking the will inevitably emerge. The first retains a largely Platonic theory of the will as the soul's capacity for free self-determination in relationship to knowledge. This way of thinking of the will is consistent with the parable of the chariot in *The Phaedrus* and of the body in *The Republic*.⁵⁷ The problems related to this concept of the will are discussed in Chapters Two and Four, but it will suffice here to note that this approach stumbles on its inability to account for the fact that knowledge of the good does not imply the capacity to perform it. Though this notion is intimately related to the problem of *akrasia*, this problem is different in relation to the theological question of creation and grace. *Akrasia* was widely recognized in the ancient world as a problem regarding why the good that is known is not performed, being important for Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine. Yet, as Chapter Two shows, Aquinas was able to recognize that the intellect could have as its object a good that exceeded the natural capacities of the will to produce. In this regard, Aquinas elaborates upon the work of Augustine, who centuries earlier had

⁵⁷ See Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c-257b and *Republic*, 446b-443d.

begun to expand the discussion of the nature of the will well beyond the classical engagement with *akrasia*. Indeed, this very distinction became the basis for the natural/supernatural distinction that has become characteristic of the “Roman Catholic” paradigm.

Just as the first misunderstanding of the will is characteristic of the Roman Catholic pattern of thought, so the second, as the obverse of the first, is characteristic of Protestant thought. Where the problem of the first lay with the assumption that knowledge was coextensive with capacity, the problem with the second lay with the assumption that desire itself has an infinite capacity for self-determination. In this case, the intellect does not direct an active self-determination, but rather determines an otherwise formally empty potentiality. The difference is best captured by pointing to the difference between Plato and Descartes.⁵⁸ Where Plato saw the intellect as the charioteer guiding an obedient horse of virtue and an unruly horse of sensuous desires (and thus the will as an essentially intellectual operation), Descartes understood the will as an essentially irrational capacity for infinite self-determination that must be properly specified by the intellectual apprehension of truth.⁵⁹ The problems related to this approach are discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Once again, the problem here is an

⁵⁸ This difference is really much more than that between Aquinas and Scotus on knowledge. Where Aquinas understood that the will was always passive with respect to the intellect, which actualized its potency, Scotus viewed potency as self-determining in a Platonic manner. This had the effect of rendering the potency of the will in terms of infinite capacity for self-determination. Thus, where Scotus, unlike Aquinas, did not think of the will as an intellectual potency at all, but rather understood its freedom to reside in its status as a self-determining potency, it was only a short time to Descartes, who would insist that the will was actually an irrational potency. On this point, see the discussion at Vernon J. Bourke, *Will in Western Thought: An Historico-Critical Survey* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 84-89. An important supplement to this idea, and one which is immensely influential on the present study is found in Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 39, and n. 126.

⁵⁹ See *Phaedrus* 245c-257b and “Meditation Four” of René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

inadequate account of the will, and pivots specifically around the failure to recognize and acknowledge the will's proper operational limits. But, beyond this, this particular way of framing the question of the will puts its status as an intellectual affection into relief in a marked way. Again, it is the metaphysical analysis of Aquinas that is most important here.

In the case of each paradigm, the dominant understanding of the will is shown to generate a specific set of confusions that result in the failure to achieve a genuine unity of creation and grace. Chapter Four as a whole argues that this is due to an impasse between the metaphysics of Augustine's theology of creation and the content of his mature theology of grace. This chapter shows that Augustine's metaphysics of creation sets the stage for a distinct conception of the will, and that his mature theology of grace elaborates upon the meaning of the will as a discretely social, relational, and intentional operation. Nonetheless, I show that Augustine was unable to draw the metaphysical and relational dimensions of this analysis together coherently. Chapter Five shows how it is that Aquinas successfully resolves the metaphysical difficulties posed by Augustine's insights only to obviate the specific relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace. These dimensions were then reasserted by Luther, specifically as a critique of the speculative metaphysics of Scholasticism, in his doctrine of justification by faith alone. But, yet again, Luther himself fails to recognize the real force of these insights as his conception of Christ as the form of faith is specifically conceived in ontological terms such that this social dimension of grace is thought in terms of a "principle" of being. The active, intentional and ethical dimension of Augustine's thoughts on these matters is once again occluded, even as the priority of the affective dimension is conceived in decidedly

relational rather than metaphysical terms. This observation leads directly to the second major theme guiding the study, the question of the appropriate reference for the category of Being.

The Question of Appropriate Reference to Being

My treatment of the will is directly related to a discussion of the category of “being.” I argue that how the will is conceived in each of the paradigms is directly coordinate with the way the category of being is used in the that paradigm. In the Roman Catholic paradigm, where the will tends to be reduced to the intellect, being is thought in terms of a speculative metaphysics. And in the Protestant paradigm, where the will is conceived of in terms of the specification of desire, being is thought in terms of the category of encounter, where interpersonal relation is given priority over metaphysics. The burden of my argument is to show that a distinct conception of the will also makes possible a reference to the category of being that is irreducible to either what I call the “metaphysical ontology” of the Roman Catholic paradigm or the “ontology of encounter” of the Protestant paradigm. Such reference would not understand that union, first, in terms of an overarching ontology in which the identity and difference of creation and grace is mediated, but rather as the manifestation of the reality of the acts of creation and grace. This argument differs from the traditional metaphysical understanding of the act of existence (*esse*) only in how it conceives of the relationship of the ethical reality of being. My explication of this particular reference to Being is given in Chapter Six.

Throughout the dissertation, I use the term “ontology” to designate that use of reason that seeks to apprehend the most basic truth of reality in and through the

representations of discursive thought.⁶⁰ I insist that there is a distinction to be made between this “ontological” use of reason and simply the thoughtful and responsible engagement with the question of Being. Indeed, as I am suggesting with my claim that the proper union of creation and grace can yield an appropriate reference to the category of being, I do not think ontological reasoning itself is adequate to the reality of the actuality of being. However, making the case for this claim involves three important claims.

First, I reject Heidegger’s *Destruktion* of the history of Western philosophy in which the question of the Being of Being is uncovered from beneath centuries of “metaphysical” occlusion. As Heidegger noted, this metaphysical trajectory of Western thought begins with Plato’s doctrine of the forms, which sought some stable point of reference within Being, and ended with Nietzsche’s metaphysics of the will, in which the Platonic gesture is realized (and affirmed) as sheer self-assertion. There is much to take issue with in this narrative, but my claim here is simply that Heidegger has misidentified the problem. I follow Levinas, on this point, noting that Heidegger’s own ontology does not escape the problems he has identified with metaphysics, but has rather only revealed the more fundamental problem of the category of “being” as a “neutral” and “indifferent” discourse of “totality.”⁶¹ As Edith Wyschogrod has argued, this critique of Heidegger set Levinas on the path of distinguishing metaphysics, as a discursive reflection on the whole of reality, from ontology, as the discursive representation of its truth in terms of “being.” Instead, Levinas sought to formulate an “ethical metaphysics” in which the Platonic

⁶⁰ This can take the form of actual conceptual representations of being, or may simply be, as with the later Heidegger, an orientation toward displaying the truth of being in and through language.

⁶¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979).

priority of the good is maintained over every ontological representation.⁶² My own distinction of the appropriate reference to the question of being stands in continuity with this search for an ethical metaphysics, even as it departs from Levinas in refusing to understand being as necessarily violent (i.e., ontological). Nonetheless, I insist that an appropriately ethical account of being cannot be confused with the claim that being itself is personal. As my critique of the Protestant paradigm of an ontology of encounter argues, I do not believe the ethical reality of being can be accounted for at all in ontological terms. For reasons given in the conclusion, I believe only the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, together with its correlative conception of grace, adequately presents a metaphysics of the irreducibly ethical reality of being, and that this metaphysics absolutely resists reduction to ontological representation.

Second, this distinction of ontology from an ethical metaphysics, as well as my argument that the unity of the doctrines of creation and grace entails a non-ontological reference to being, is further advanced by demonstrating that the attempts to produce an ontological union of the doctrines always involves prioritizing of identity, intellection, and participation in that account.⁶³ Once again inspired by Levinas, I argue that this is problematic, principally, because it disallows any account of *otherness* except in terms of a “difference” that is simply a modality of identity.⁶⁴ This privileging of identity is, simultaneously, bound up with an intellectualism in which reality is understood to be apprehended only by way of abstraction from and reduction to a common participation in

⁶² Edith Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), especially xxx-xxxi.

⁶³ This way of framing matters is inspired by the discussion of participation in Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.

⁶⁴ See Derrida’s critique of Levinas’ claims in *Totality and Infinity*, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas” in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79-153.

being.⁶⁵ Though this point is inseparable from the claim that ontology is a “neutral” and “indifferent” discourse of “totality,” it is not the same. As Chapters Four and Five show, what is principally at stake is the fact that the demands of the doctrines of creation and grace cannot be met in these terms of identity, intellection, and participation. Whenever the unity of creation and grace is sought in these terms, one of the doctrines must be accounted for wholly in terms of the other.

Finally, I argue that the inability to avoid the reduction of these doctrines is due to the fact that ontology proceeds according to a logic of negative determination that is fundamentally at odds with the central affirmations of the doctrines of creation and grace. Because ontology must think unity according to a scheme of identity, intellect, and participation, reality is necessarily understood in terms of becoming (i.e., *fieri*) or production (i.e., *factum*) rather than creation. To conceive reality as a product is to claim that it only receives its determination through a dialectical negation in which identity is always the negation of difference and difference the negation of identity. This procedure is identical to that formulated in Hegel’s *Logic*, and, as Chapter Four argues, the metaphysics of *creatio ex nihilo* is explicitly developed in order to contest the form of that logic as overtly and unavoidably Gnostic.

In making this claim, I am elaborating upon an observation made by Bernard Lonergan in a footnote in *Verbum*. Lonergan ties this notion of production to Scotus’ theory of intellection, which categorically rejects the affective dimension of the first act of potency in favor of an immediate spontaneity.⁶⁶ The significance of this point for

⁶⁵ A fine study on intellectualism in Christian theology is A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁶⁶ See n. 58 above.

Lonerger's work is far reaching, stretching back to his account of the basic flaw in the late-Scholastic *de Auxiliis* controversy, and forward into the flaw of Arianism.⁶⁷ I have developed the point here, however, in relationship to ontological discourse itself, and recognize in it a basic assumption of all Christian doctrine, the deviation from which can be identifiably designated as heretical.⁶⁸ But my concern is to show the continuity between confusion as to the proper reference to the will and this ontology of production.

Indeed, if reality is conceived in such a way that its determinate content is always only produced through a negative relation to actuality, then this is directly related to the question of the distinction of the will from the intellect and desire. As I noted in the previous section, the Platonic trajectory of thought, which sees the will as an aspect of the self-determination of the intellect, must ground that self-determination in a spontaneous motion (i.e., *fieri*) by which an intellectually apprehended ideal is produced in reality. Because that ideal is not taken as actual and real apart from that production, but only a formal possibility, the realization of the ideal must proceed according to negative determination in which its otherwise empty formality is negated and thereby realized. Such a notion lies at the heart of both Neoplatonic and Manichean metaphysics. In the Scotist trajectory of thought, where the will is understood as an infinite spontaneous potentiality that is merely specified by the intellect, the operation is exactly the same. I

⁶⁷ This basic confusion is that which Lonergan recognizes as that between form and act. On this point, see Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 39 n. 126 and 16-21. I have previously elaborated on this point in relationship to the work of John Milbank in Joshua Davis, "A Critique of the Metaphysics of Ontological Poesis: Responding to *Theology and the Political*," *Political Theology* 10, no. 1 (2009). The relation to Arianism was elaborated in Nicholas Lash, "Where Does Holy Teaching Leave Philosophy? Questions on Milbank's Aquinas," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 4 (2002): 436.

⁶⁸ Perhaps it does not go too far to say that this is the basic heretical assumption. It is present in Manichaeism, Arianism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. In this regard, it would seem that what I am indicting here as the discourse of ontology could be a structure of thought that Christian orthodoxy always rejects. In this regard, the whole of this dissertation can be interpreted, in fact, as an attempt to elaborate upon the consequences of the Donatist element of this association.

trace out the consequences of this association in Chapter Five, and throughout I am laying the groundwork for an altogether different conception of being that is not grounded in the dialectical oppositions that result from a confused notion of the will. That different conception is programmatically sketched in Chapter Six.

Chapter Summary

Having specified the dominant themes of the dissertation and their guiding function within it, I now offer a brief summary of the stages of the argument. The concerns laid out in this Introduction are taken up in Chapter Two in an exposition and analysis of the Roman Catholic paradigm of nature/supernatural for uniting creation and grace. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the origins and purpose of the paradigm, situating the Lubac/Rahner dispute in relationship to it, and to bring evaded aspects of that paradigm to bear on that dispute. The hope is that this chapter will advance the discussion surrounding that debate and further clarify the significance of the claims made in the Roman Catholic approach to uniting creation and grace.

This chapter opens with a discussion of the Scholastic origins of the paradigm, and the centrality of the work of Thomas Aquinas as interpreted by Landgraf and Lonergan. It is here that the importance of the will as a distinct faculty first appears in relationship to Philip the Chancellor's recognition of a distinction between natural and acquired habits. It is on the basis of this distinction that the will is first recognized as having a distinct "nature," apart from both intellection and desire. And it is upon this distinction of the will from the intellect and desire that Aquinas can further resolve two problems. The first was the problem of the freedom of the will as received from

Augustine. A distinct, natural operation for the will could specify how it was that the will could be absolutely determined with regard to the origin and goal, but be free with respect to the choice of the means to fulfill that goal. This was only possible inasmuch as the will was genuinely distinct from the intellect and desire. Second, this idea simultaneously resolved the relationship between the gratuity of creation and the gratuity of grace, which medieval theology had no clear way of distinguishing. A distinct idea of the nature of the will resolved this problem by specifying those actions that a given nature could acquire by means of its own voluntary activity. Thus, the difference between the gratuity of creation and the gratuity of grace was that between those actions occurring naturally and which could be naturally acquired, and those actions that were supernatural in the sense of exceeding the potential operations of a given nature to even acquire.

This history of this approach is then brought to bear on the dispute between Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner. The analysis is oriented toward showing the manner in which the two thinkers are divided from one another according to their assessments of the proper division between the natural and the supernatural. It is noted that both thinkers are motivated by the desire to overcome what they perceive to be the sharp division of the supernatural from the natural in post-Vatican I Neo-Scholasticism by appealing instead to a natural desire for the supernatural. Each is seeking a more humanist, personalist, and organicist vision in contrast to what they understand to be the overly rationalist approaches of Neoscholasticism. They differ only over whether the distinction should be made as a transcendental distinction of ideas (Rahner) or as a concrete determination of existence (Lubac.) It is shown that, insofar as both thinkers seek to articulate what I call

a metaphysical ontology in which to unite creation and redemption according to the speculative dynamism of the intellect, they are not to be too sharply distinguished. But it is this very dynamism of union that leads them to revert to the pre-Scholastic position in which the will is conflated, in Platonic fashion, with the fundamental operations of the intellect. In this way the distinction Aquinas was able to maintain by having clear distinction of intellect and will is lost, and grace essentially collapsed back into creation.

Chapter Three takes up the question of the Protestant paradigm for uniting creation and grace. This paradigm, it is noted, is formulated explicitly as a critique of the speculative intellectual structure of the Roman Catholic paradigm as correlative with a structure of negative determination and sinful self-preservation. In contrast to this, the Protestant paradigm does not seek to articulate a distinction within an already constituted unity, but to start with the concrete experience of division. It is within such division that redemption comes to disclose the unity of truth that the speculative intellect can only supply as a mode of self-assertion. The supposition here is that of dogmatic, intratextual reflection, rather than speculative metaphysics. The dogmatic categories deployed are those of election, sin, and grace. The world of experience is not then the naturally graced world experienced by Lubac and Rahner, but a world conditioned by a dialectical shuttle between sin and grace, where the Christian knows herself as *simul justus et peccator*. Election, however, expresses God's *a priori* determination of her on which all her attempts of self-determination are finally thwarted. It is only in the rupture of this self-determination that the truth of her existence is disclosed through the event of encounter with the revelation of the electing God.

Within this paradigm, the two most important theological forms of uniting creation and grace are those of Schleiermacher and Barth, and their differences parallel in their own paradigm the differences between Lubac and Rahner. Much as Lubac insisted on the priority of the concrete experience of grace rather than the theoretical differentiation, Barth insisted that the only possibility of knowing the world as the creation of God was on the basis of the prior encounter with Jesus Christ, in whom alone creation and grace were united. This was formulated in contrast to Schleiermacher whose position is like Rahner's in his insistence that creation is itself is a theoretical extrapolation of the experience of the world as refracted through the event of the encounter of redemption. The differences here are as minimal as those between Lubac and Rahner in that both thinkers rely not on a metaphysical ontology to mediate the unity of creation and grace, but on an ontology of encounter in which the truth of being is disclosed as relational only in the encounter with Christ. But it is at this very moment of relational disclosure that the metaphysics of the Roman Catholic position is shown to be necessary, for both Schleiermacher and Barth presuppose the indeterminacy of the will. This assumption causes them not to privilege the intellect in the Platonic manner of Lubac and Rahner, but in a distinctively Scotist manner in which the intellect specifies the self-determination of an otherwise infinite spontaneity. The result is the obverse of the problems attending the contemporary attempts to unite creation and grace according to the Roman Catholic paradigm. What had been achieved in terms of the priority of relation, which the Roman Catholic perspective could not achieve, had come once again at the expense of the will, which made the distinction of doctrines possible. The result is not the collapse of grace into creation, but creation into grace.

Chapter Four traces the origin of this conflict in Western Christianity back to its origin in the work of Augustine. There, it is noted that Augustine formulates a grammar for the doctrine of creation against the Manichees in which he shows the necessary interrelationship between divine sovereignty, goodness, will, and divine immutability. In this model, grace is understood in terms largely consonant with nature, and free will is understood in the strictly Platonic terms of self-determination. This is the model recovered by both Lubac and Rahner. Subsequently, however, Augustine begins to develop his theology of grace independently of the doctrine of creation. He does this upon his reading of Paul at the request of Simplician. This leads Augustine through a series of developments that unfold the logic of encounter and relation, which culminates in his recognition that grace must precede self-determination and absolutely condition its operation. When he finally returns to the question of creation again in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, he finds himself unable to articulate the new insights of his mature theology of grace in terms consonant with his prior grammar for creation. The difficulty resides in the absence of a discrete conception of the will. He had begun to formulate this idea with his doctrine of creation, but he had been unable to articulate the nature of its distinction from the intellect and desire. In the absence of this notion, he can only speak of God's being as an absolute act of self-determination. Such an act must stand in competition with the finite will, if both are conceived in terms of self-determination. The result is a double-bind in which the goodness of creation is compromised by sacrificing the divine sovereignty to which it is indelibly tied, or the freedom of creation is lost altogether to an absolute divine sovereignty, but this appears to compromise created goodness as it renders God responsible for evil. The result is that

Augustine bequeaths to medieval Christianity the apparently incoherent position that the will is free and absolutely determined; he was incapable of drawing these two paradigms, the metaphysical and the relational, together into a singular, unified whole.

In Chapter Five, we come full circle by returning to the metaphysical position of Aquinas, which resolved this conflict in Augustine. I note here the importance not simply of Aquinas's doctrine of the will, which has already been discussed, but assert that this insight is intimately bound to his understanding of the act of existence, which can resolve the difficulties in Augustine's reflections. However, I note how this resolution, once more, comes at the expense of the relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace. It is here that Luther's doctrine of justification, taken up as an elaboration upon Aquinas's insight into the affective dimension of the will, is shown to be a necessary supplement, which in Luther's own formulation also sets the stage for the problems of the ontology of encounter. Yet having come at just this point to the source of the conflict as before, we can now readily see that the resolution of the conflict lies with the recognition of the integral aspect of the will in the act of existence, whereby the unity of God's being is shown to perfectly correspond to the constitution of and fidelity to the world as God's other.

Chapter Six concludes my argument by showing how, with these various elements in place, the unity of creation and grace can be reformulated in terms consonant with the demands of each paradigm, but without the assumptions that result in their conflict. This chapter specifies the programmatic outline for what this reformulation should entail, arguing that human agency can be understood as a cooperation with God's creative act of positively affirming the very constitution of otherness itself. Such cooperation is

grounded in and determined by God's prior action, and is genuinely creative insofar as it is carried out in cooperation with the orientation of the divine life in creation. Included here is a schematic outline for how such action can be conceived and recognized as harmoniously related to the understanding of Being that has been developed.

The Purpose of the Inquiry

Beyond these introductory concerns, I would like to specify my motivations for undertaking this study. The basic organizational scheme for my analysis was originally suggested by the intriguing remarks of David Tracy in his "Afterword: A Reflection on *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*" to the collection, *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*.⁶⁹ There, he stated that work yet needed to be done on the Augustinian origins of the "nature/grace" and "sin/grace" approaches of Roman Catholic and Protestant thinking, respectively. This remark gave me a framework to structure what was then my growing suspicion that the problem of the unity of creation and grace sits at the heart of systematic theological inquiry. The results of this study have only served to change that suspicion into conviction, and left me with a deep and abiding admiration of the Transcendental Thomists, the Dominicans of Saulchoir, and the Jesuits of Lyon-Fourviere who are responsible for reviving this question in twentieth-century theology. It is their great gift to the universal church. However, that their insights were and remain stunted in both their articulation and in their reception is my point of departure and my guiding concern. I am most certainly committed to carrying forward their work to re-pristiniate this theological theme.

⁶⁹ Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard, *Mystics: Presence and Aporia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 239-44.

From this perspective, I am confident that, though the conclusions of my analysis may appear somewhat novel, their foundation is, in fact, ancient. Though perhaps not always obvious, I am consciously writing within the mystical tradition of ascetic theology, and particularly that of the *Wesenmystik*.⁷⁰ But I also draw spiritual inspiration directly from figures like the Caroline Divines, in addition to the academic theologians cited in this work. Of particular inspiration is Richard Hooker, whose ferocious commitment to the exceedingly concrete demands of charity is far too often mistaken, especially in our own time, as an expression of facile compromise. Readings of Hooker like John Henry Newman's, whose notion of a *via media* makes his predecessor seem too ameliorating, cannot obscure the unbending character of Hooker's resolve to force confrontation with the reality of the command to love. In many ways the precursor to what Hans Frei once called a "generous orthodoxy," Hooker seems to have perceived and articulated the concrete ethical obligations inherent in this idea. I offer this dissertation in solidarity with his vision, and do so at a time when that commitment is not, sadly, *en vogue*. But my commitment to this uncompromising resolve is the inspiration for this work. I give Hooker the final word on my intentions:

Far more comfort it were for us (so small is the joy we take in these strifes) to labour under the same yoke, as men that look for the same eternal reward of their labours, to be joined with you in bands of indissoluble love and amity, to live as if our persons being many our souls were but one, rather than in much dismembered sort to spend our few and wretched days in a tedious prosecuting of wearisome contentions: the end whereof, if they have not some speedy end, will be heavy even on both sides...But our trust in the Almighty is, that with us contentions are now at their highest float, and that the day will come (for what cause of despair is there?) when the passions of former enmity being allayed, we shall with ten times redoubled tokens of our unfeignedly reconciled love, shew ourselves each toward other the same which Joseph and the brethren of Joseph were at the time of their interview in Egypt. Our comfortable expectation and most thirsty desire whereof what man soever amongst you shall any way help to satisfy...the

⁷⁰See Oliver Davies, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

blessings of the God of peace, both in this world and the world to come, be upon him more than the stars of the firmament in number.⁷¹

⁷¹ Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. John Keble, 3 vols., vol. 1, *The Works of the Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaar Walton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1885), 194-96 [3-4].

CHAPTER II

NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL: A ROMAN CATHOLIC PARADIGM

Introduction

This chapter begins my analysis of the two predominant patterns of uniting creation and redemption in Western Christian theology. My topic here is the largely Roman Catholic paradigm of “nature and the supernatural.” I have three goals in my analysis. First, after a brief survey of the landscape regarding the meaning, development, and use of the terms “nature” and the “supernatural,” I will look closely at the two most influential twentieth-century interpreters of this paradigm, Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner. Although these two thinkers could hardly be said to represent the full scope of the nature/supernatural paradigm, their different approaches are representative of contemporary Roman Catholic attempts to unite creation and grace according to this standard. My goal is not simply to rehearse the differences of their opinions. Rather, as regards my second goal, the purpose is to lift out their common assumptions. As I will show, these pivot around the attempt to unite the theologies of creation and redemption according to the perspective of metaphysical ontology, as well as an ambiguous invocation of human freedom and the will. The precise meanings of each of these claims will become clear as the analysis proceeds. I will conclude the chapter with a critique of these assumptions, emphasizing their inability to ground the unity sought.

Nature, the Supernatural, and the Natural Desire to See God

Nature loves to hide.

—Heraclitus¹

Henri de Lubac's study, *Surnaturel*, is famous for reconstructing the history of the decline of the meaning of the term "supernatural" in Christian theology. He was especially keen to point to the ways this category ceased to designate what joined God and the world, and came to designate what separated them. Many of the details of Lubac's argument will be discussed below. But, my present concerns lie more with specifying the rationale for positing this category at all, especially as it was understood to solve very particular theological problems inherited from patristic theology. In this regard, it is the work of Artur Landgraf, especially as interpreted and appropriated by Bernard Lonergan, who has made the most important – though far too overlooked – contribution to our understanding of this.² As Lonergan notes, the history of the idea of the supernatural begins with the vindication of Augustine against Pelagius at the synods

¹ Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Hadot begins his work with a reflection on the mysterious quality of this quote from Heraclitus.

² All but one of the relevant articles by Landgraf were collected, often with significant revisions in Artur Michael Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte Der Frühscholastik, Band I* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1952). The following supplies the original journal citations for the articles, followed by the *Dogmengeschichte* page numbers in brackets. See also, by Landgraf, Artur Michael Landgraf, "Grundlagen Für Ein Verständnis Der Bußlehre Der Früh- Und Hochscholastik," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 51 (1927): 161-94. Artur Michael Landgraf, "Die Erkenntnis Der Heiligmachenden Gnade in Der Frühscholastik," *Scholastik* 3 (1928): 28-64 [202-14]. Artur Michael Landgraf, "Studien Zur Erkenntnis Des Übernatürlichen in Der Frühscholastik," *Scholastik* 4 (1929): 1-37, 189-220, 352-89 [141-201]. Artur Michael Landgraf, "Die Erkenntnis Der Helfenden Gnade in Der Frühscholastik," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 55 (1931): 177-238, 407-37, 562-91 [51-140]. And Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 1-20, 162-92. Additionally, the work of Odo Lottin is equally significant as the questions pertain to the question of human liberty. See Odo Lottin, "Les Définitions Du Libre Arbitre Au Douzième Siècle," *Revue Thomiste* 10 (1927): 104-20, 214-30. Odo Lottin, "La Théorie Du Libre Arbitre Pendant Le Premier Tiers Du XIIIe Siècle," *Revue Thomiste* 10 (1927): 350-82. Odo Lottin, "Le Traité Du Libre Arbitre Depuis Le Chancelier Philippe Jusqu'à Saint Thomas D'aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 10 (1927). Odo Lottin, "Liberté Humaine Et Motion Divine," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 7 (1935): 52-69, 156-73.

of Carthage (412, 416, and 418 CE), and with the second Council of Orange's (529 CE) sanctioning of his positions on original sin, the necessity of grace, the vitiation of the will, and the prior operation of grace in faith, justification, and merit. Together, these affirmations established the Western church's dogma on grace, but supplied no speculative paradigm as to how these various affirmations cohered. As Lonergan put it:

To know and unequivocally state the doctrine of grace is one thing; it is quite another to ask what precisely is grace, whether it is one or many, if many, what are its parts and their correlation, what is its reconciliation with liberty, what is the nature of its necessity. These speculative issues St. Augustine did not offer to treat, and it is a question without meaning to ask his position on them.³

As we will see in Chapter Four, it is not completely accurate to say that Augustine did not offer to treat such questions. But, it is correct to recognize that his missteps on this matter were the result of his inability to make more than a formal division between the doctrines of creation and grace.⁴ And, in his wake, theologians up to the early medieval period would continue to think of grace as a kind of 'moment' of God's one act of creating and sustaining.⁵ "The difficulty," Lonergan says, "was to explain why everything was not grace; after all, what is there that is not a free gift of God?"⁶ The category of the supernatural was the culmination of the various attempts to wrestle with this issue, and it offered a very specific, very metaphysical, way of conceptualizing a solution.

However, the problem was not solely related to an inability to separate creation from grace. It was also related to the theology of sin. Just as theologians of early scholasticism had difficulty distinguishing between the gifts of creation and grace, they

³Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 44-45. Quoted from Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 68.

⁴Landgraf, "Studien Zur Erkenntnis Des Übernatürlichen in Der Frühscholastik," 14-15 and n. 1 [150-51].

⁵*Ibid.*, 41. Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 69-74.

⁶Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 15.

also struggled to abstract the goodness of human nature in itself from its corruption by sin.⁷ A similar problem appears in the Protestant paradigm of “sin and grace,” which will be discussed in the following chapter. Yet, the concerns of early scholasticism were not the same. Attempting to be faithful to Augustine’s teachings on grace, early scholastics could see no way of connecting his insistence on the extent of sin’s corruption of humanity with his understanding of the soul’s intrinsic desire for union with God.⁸ They could only understand that orientation in terms of God’s overcoming of sin in the work of redemption and justification. Once again, the problem here was metaphysical, namely, that of distinguishing the reality of the world from its appearance to the empirical observation of a theologically-informed mind.⁹

The major advance beyond this occurred, Landgraf and Lonergan assert, in the twelfth century¹⁰ when Philip the Chancellor solidified the legitimacy of “a line of reference termed nature.”¹¹ He did so by recognizing a division between a “purely natural appetite” (*appetitus pure naturalis*) and an “appetite that follows knowledge” (*appetitus sequens cognitionem*).¹² The former conceived of nature in terms of the Stoic idea of the reflexive impulse that creatures exhibit to preserve themselves in a specified order. This differentiated between self-preservation in the world and the moral problem of the *in curvitas se* of sin.¹³ The latter pointed to the desire elicited by a conceptual apprehension of the good that a thing is in itself – pursuing it not for the gratification or

⁷ Landgraf, “Das Übernatürliche,” 374 n. 3, 352-89 [194, 183-201]

⁸ Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 70-71.

⁹ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 181-91.. See Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 67-78.

¹⁰ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*.17. See Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 71-72.

¹¹ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*., 14-20. “Das Übernatürliche,” 214, 374, 377, 381-84 [180, 194, 197, 197-99]

¹² See “Das Übernatürlich,” 381-82. See Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 78.

¹³ See Landgraf, “Das Übernatürlich,” 374 [194], and Lonergan, 185. On the Stoic origins of this idea, see Dieter Henrich, “The Basic Structure of Modern Philosophy,” *Cultural Hermeneutics* 22 (1974): 1-18.

preservation of the self, but simply for its own sake.¹⁴ It is this latter desire that is subject to being ‘curved in upon itself’ inasmuch as it can fail, as *cupiditas*, to transcend natural limitations. The metaphysical category “nature” was the common differential between creation, sin, and grace. This gave rise to the designation “nature and grace” as a way of relating creation and redemption: nature being that which stipulates the creature’s role in the order of creation, and grace being that which both heals a wounded world and produces transcendent desires.

This claim immediately pointed to a further distinction between a “natural” act and one that was “supernatural.” According to Philip, every cognitional desire conforms to the mode of knowledge that elicited it.¹⁵ There is a difference between a desire for God produced by knowledge attained by the light of natural reason, and a desire for God elicited by God’s self-communication in the work of redemption. The first is delimited by natural capacities, while the second can produce a charitable desire that exceeds them. Both can be said to find their fulfillment in God, but there is an “entitative disproportion” between them.¹⁶ Only the second arises out of and leads to participation in God’s life.¹⁷ The “supernatural,” then, designated the quality of the creature’s act (i.e., habits) according to its capacities and in relation to this goal. Grace was the divine gift that enabled the attainment of that goal.¹⁸ It is in this sense that Aquinas will speak of grace “perfecting” nature by producing supernatural habit.¹⁹

¹⁴ Landgraf, “Das Übernatürlich,” 381-82 [197-99.] See Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 78-79..

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 79.

¹⁷ This points to the distinction between uncreated and created grace, which will be important in our discussion of Rahner below. That is, uncreated grace is participation in God’s own life, while created grace effects an entitative transformation of the creature that makes possible this participation.

¹⁸ It was specified according to its effects as healing (*sanans*), elevating (*elevans*), habitual and actual. Both actual and habitual graces must have an operative (in which God alone is working) and cooperative

In summary, the nature/supernatural paradigm is rooted in the categories of traditional metaphysics. It conceives the unity of the orders of creation and redemption according to a twofold distinction. The first differentiates between the network of operations that make up what a creature is as a participant in the world order (i.e., nature) and that creature's reception of and participation in an operation not proper to itself or that order (i.e., grace.) This idea of a 'proper' operation tied to a 'nature' underscores the sense in which grace is not necessary for the creature to maintain its place in the world. The second distinction points out that, despite not adhering to the nature in itself, grace is internal to the creature in that it enables it to act in ways that exceed its natural capacities.

Since the notion of the supernatural arose by analysis of a distinct form of desire elicited by a distinct form of knowledge, and was further formulated in terms consonant with this emphasis, it is important to recognize that it is the intellect that is understood to mediate between these two disproportionate orders.²⁰ And it is precisely on this point regarding the status and role of the intellect that the many difficulties in the twentieth-century interpretation of the nature/supernatural paradigm come into view, particularly as reflected in the work of Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner. This point will become clearer in the following section. Presently, I will continue my discussion of this paradigm in conversation with each of these thinkers in the following two subsections.

(in which God and the creature are working) aspect. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II.111. All citations to the *Summa Theologiae* are taken from *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd and Revised Edition (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics), 1981. Henceforth cited as *ST*.

¹⁹ See *ST* I.62.5 and I-II.111.1-2

²⁰ See Stebbins' full discussion of Lonergan's assessment of Philip the Chancellor's achievement: Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 73-83.

Henri de Lubac

The longing that surges forth from this “depth” of the soul is a longing “born of a lack,” and not arising from the “beginnings of possession.”

—Henri de Lubac²¹

For Aquinas, the nature of intellection is to pursue an understanding of the cause of things. This is its natural appetite, and it is not the result of a habit it has learned.

Because of this, Aquinas claims, the intellect can only be satisfied by apprehending the absolute cause of all things, which implicitly orients it to the beatific vision. Two passages in his work are representative of this. The first is taken from *Summa Contra*

Gentiles:

...every intellect naturally desires the vision of the divine substance, but natural desire cannot be incapable of fulfillment. Therefore, any created intellect whatever can attain to the vision of the divine substance, and the inferiority of its nature is no impediment.²²

The second is from the *Summa Theologiae*:

For as the ultimate beatitude of man consists in the use of his highest function, which is the operation of his intellect; if we suppose that the created intellect could never see God it would either never attain to beatitude, or its beatitude would consist in something else beside God; which is opposed to faith. For the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the principle of its being; since a thing is perfect so far as it attains to its principle... For there resides in every man a natural desire to know the cause of any effect which he sees; and thence arises wonder in men. But if the intellect of the rational creature could not reach so far as the first cause of things, the natural desire would remain void.

Hence it must be absolutely granted that the blessed see the essence of God.²³

²¹ “Le désir qui jaillit de ce <<fond>> de l’âme est un désir <<par privation>> et non par <<commencement de possession>>”: Lubac is here citing Auguste-Joseph-Alphonse Gratry, *De la connaissance de Dieu*, t. 2 (2nd ed., 1854), 310-11. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed, Milestones in Catholic Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 84. The French edition is Henri de Lubac, *Le Mystère Du Surnaturel*, Oeuvres Complètes (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 116. Henceforth cited as *Mystery*, with page numbers of French in brackets.

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), III.57.4.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.12.1. See also *De Veritate* VIII.3.12, XX.11.7, XVIII.1.5

These passages mark the most important way in which Aquinas appropriated Philip the Chancellor's designation of "natural appetite." He uses it to point to the intellect's natural desire for God (*desiderium naturale videndi Deum*) as the mediating term between the two distinct orders of nature and grace, thereby establishing an intrinsic connection between the two. But, despite this, he insists that the desire itself is inefficacious without the acquired habit elicited by the second form of desire that follows from knowledge. Since the divine essence exceeds finite limits, the intellect is only proportionate to receive such knowledge, not produce it. It is his ability to hold these two elements of desire and limitation together that enable Aquinas to speak both of the intellect's natural orientation to God, as well as its inefficacy for reaching that goal.

Henri de Lubac makes this natural desire the centerpiece of his discussion of nature and the supernatural. Yet, in doing so, he simultaneously levies a critique of virtually the whole of post-Tridentine Roman Catholic theology, especially as practiced in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.²⁴ He claims that the Neo-Scholasticism of the period had, despite its explicit opposition to modern rationalism, allowed the spirit of modernity to insinuate itself into its theology. His article, "Internal

²⁴ These components were discussed in more detail in the previous chapter, but the reader should consult McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 1-36. His discussion of the background for nineteenth-century Roman Catholic theology, together with the combined influence of *Dei Filius* and *Aeterni Patris* for Neo-Scholasticism, is invaluable for properly understanding what Lubac was rejecting and affirming in the theology of his day. This is especially significant with regard to his attitude to modernity, as will be shown below. Stephen Duffy also makes significant points concerning Lubac's critique of post-Tridentine Roman Catholic theology. See Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 50-84. See also the discussion in Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology*. My reading of Lubac is informed by both these texts.

Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sacred” (1942), captures the impulse behind this assessment rather well.²⁵ A particularly important passage reads:

If our people of France – and by that I do not mean only what are termed the working classes, or the masses – have lost in so large a proportion the sense of the Sacred, is it not first of all because we have not known how to maintain it in them, to protect it against other influences? Much more, is it not because we have more or less lost this sense ourselves? For the demarcation here is not absolutely to be made between “believers” and “unbelievers” in the common sense of those words. This “frightful lack of the sacred” in which Péguy saw the mark of our modern world (at times with an excess in expressions that is in keeping with the laws of prophetic language) also prevails within the “believing” and “practicing” world, within the ecclesiastical world as well.²⁶

This pathos is characteristic of Lubac’s thought in general.²⁷ He sees secular modernity as the perverse expression of the natural desire for God, which ecclesiastical leaders have failed to properly “maintain.”²⁸ It is the “wholly modern” notion of “a duality going so far as to be a kind of separation between nature and the supernatural” that he believes has led to the absence of the sacred and opened the door to modern secularism.²⁹ According

²⁵ The specific elements of that project, such as the *Sources Chrétiens*, and the volumes on medieval exegesis ought to be seen as his attempt to cultivate a renewed sense of these lost elements. See Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, Ressourcement (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998). The French is Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale; Les Quatre Sens De L’écriture*, Théologie (Paris: Aubier, 1959).

²⁶ Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 224-25. The French is Henri de Lubac, *Théologie Dans L’histoire Ii: Questiones Disputes Et Résistance Au Nazisme* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1990).

²⁷ Reflected in Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism* (New York,: Sheed & Ward, 1950). The French is Henri de Lubac, *Le Drame De L’humanisme Athée*, Œuvres Complètes (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1998). Another translation is Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, Anne Englund Nash, and Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995.) This should be linked to McCool’s analysis of Romantic French Traditionalism in McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 37-58. Together, these elements help us to see why his critics often accused Lubac and his allies of “modernism,” even despite his shared distaste for modernity. In this respect, as I will argue below, Lubac’s is a more “radical” conservative reaction inasmuch as it represents a rejection of modernity *tout court*. Lubac significantly expands the traditionalist critique of rationalism to show how theologians themselves were at least partially responsible. On this point, see Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Enlightenment and the Construction of Roman Catholicism,” *Annual of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs* (1985): 31-59.

²⁸ See also Lubac, *Theology in History*, 224-34. There, Lubac notes that ecclesiastical leadership is culpable for this as well. This is also, in part, the argument of *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 230. Lubac is in essential agreement with Neo-Scholasticism in claiming that rationalism is to blame for the alienation of religion and spirituality from modern culture. He makes this clear in his essay, in which he isolates four such causes, each of which is due to a fundamental theological failure. They are the contrast between secular knowledge and religious instruction, the fact that post-Reformation Roman Catholic theology was defined by its opposition to heresies and errors, the separation of nature from the

to him, whereas the supernatural had originally referred, in the ways specified above, to a perfection of nature, it came to be thought of as a merely extrinsic addition (*superadditum*) to an otherwise self-sufficient and “pure” nature.

This idea of a “pure nature,” he insists, is a complete fabrication and a distortion of the theological tradition. His targets are the inheritors of the Thomist commentators, Cajetan and Suarez, who disallowed the notion of a natural “desire” for the beatific vision. Their claim was that the creature only possessed a passive “obediential potency” (*potentia obedientialis*), not a dynamic orientation. This perspective was in keeping with the Aristotelian maxim, “nature does nothing in vain,” which they insisted required all natural desires to have corresponding natural *teloi*.³⁰ If a desire for what is supernatural were to arise, it would be because grace had actualized the obediential potency, elevating the creature above its natural capacities. Thus, claimed Lubac, was born a “purely” natural frame of reference that betrays the true teaching of Thomas.

De Lubac notes several times in his memoirs that his opposition to this interpretation was inspired by Maurice Blondel, Joseph Maréchal, and Pierre Rousselot.³¹

supernatural, and the predominance of a rationalistic spirit in ecclesial and broader culture. Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire Sur L'occasion De Mes Écrits*, ed. Georges Chantraine and Fabienne Clinquart, Œuvres Complètes (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 188-89.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a8. The context is the discussion of nature.

³¹ See Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri De Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Communio Books, 1993), 18-21, 35, 64-65. Henceforth cited as *At the Service*. The French is Lubac, *Mémoire Sur L'occasion De Mes Écrits*. Also see Bruno Forte, "Nature and Grace in Henri De Lubac: From Supernatural to Le Mystère Du Supernaturel," *Communio* 23, no. 4 (1996). Forte notes the significance of Antonio Russo, *Henri De Lubac: Teologia E Dogma Nella Storia. L'influsso Di Blondel* (Rome: Studium, 1990). See also Henri de Lubac, *Theological Fragments* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 377-404. The French is Henri de Lubac, *Théologies D'occasion* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984). Lubac was exposed to the conversations surrounding their work as a student in the 1920's and 1930's. As I will argue below, Lubac learned from these three (especially Rousselot and Maréchal) to emphasize a theological *a priori* in human intellection and the dynamism of subjectivity. This anthropological emphasis is his framework for conceiving the coincidence of human nature and the supernatural as the *imago Dei*. But, beyond this, Blondel's "method of immanence" was clearly important in helping him to seize upon the importance of concrete, historical

They taught him to recognize a dynamic thrust toward transcendence in human beings that only God could fulfill – a dynamism that Maréchal and Rousselot linked directly to the above passages from Aquinas.³² After exposure to the conversations surrounding their work, Lubac began to make his own historical contributions in the mid-1930's when he published a series of articles on the origin, meaning, and development of the idea of the supernatural and the natural desire for God.³³ These were eventually collected and modified in 1946, with the addition of a preface and conclusion, as the now-famous *Surnaturel*.³⁴ The great stir that this volume caused was not primarily related to the content of the essays, but rather, as Bernard Lonergan has observed, to its concluding reflection, “*Exigence Divine et Désir Naturel* [Divine Demand and Natural Desire],” in which Lubac offered his own theological interpretation of the meaning of his historical work.³⁵

This brief, eleven-page reflection is written in a baroque style that was evocative of his claims regarding the paradoxical constitution of human nature, and which most likely increased the confusion surrounding the piece.³⁶ He asserts that, simply by virtue

human being in Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études Historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946). Henceforth cited as *S*.

³² See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri De Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51, no. 4 (1990): 579-602.

³³ These essays are, chronologically: Henri de Lubac, "Apologetic Et Théologie," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 57 (1930): 361-78. Henri de Lubac, "Deux Augustiniens Fourvoyés: Baius Et Jansenius," *Recherches des Science Religieuse* 21 (1931): 422-33, 513-40. Henri de Lubac, "Remarques Sur L'histoire Du Mot 'Surnaturel'," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 61 (1934): 350-70. It is significant to note that Lubac only mentions the prior publication of the first three chapters on Baius and Jansenius in his memoirs. See Lubac, *At the Service*, 35-36. See also Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century," 579-81.

³⁴The conclusion occurs at Lubac, *S*, 483-94.

³⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Philip McShane, vol. 18, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 350. I am indebted to Dr. Paul DeHart for calling this passage to my attention.

³⁶ Lubac appears to have recognized this. Three years later he published the independent essay, “La mystère du Surnaturel,” which he says was “not a repetition or refinement, but a complement to the book.” For this reference, see Henri de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, Denus Books (Glen Rock, N.J.,

of being intelligent, the human spirit “demands” [*exigence*] union with God, but in such a way that it “requires” [*exigence*] grace to fulfill that demand. Spiritual nature, he says, exists simply as openness to transcendence, and the natural desire for the vision of God is its expression: “Before thus loving God, and in order to be capable of loving God, it [the spirit] desires.”³⁷ That desire is not “like that of an animal for its prey”; it is “the desire for a gift,” for the “free communication and gratuity of a personal Being.”³⁸ As such, the wistful dreamings of a velleity or the unactualized possibility of a *potentia obedientialis* are not adequate explanations of this drive. Citing Nicholas of Cusa, in contrast, he states that the desire for the vision is “the most absolute of all desires”; it is “necessarily” and “absolutely” willed.³⁹ This is, he says, the traditional interpretation of the meaning of the *imago Dei* in patristic theology and Aquinas.

Of particular importance in the conclusion is his anticipation that he will be charged with compromising the gratuity of grace. The “monster of exigence,” he responds, was simply a “phantom of the imagination” – not worthy of the attention lavished on it. It is a problem arising from an incomplete understanding of the doctrine of creation, which alone makes clear that the creature has no rights before God.⁴⁰ Grace is “demanded” only inasmuch as this desire is the natural expression of a spiritual creature. He elaborates on the point:

If this desire demands, in the sense that we have said, to be filled, it is already Godself that is at its source, as “anonymous.” Natural desire for the supernatural: it is the permanent action of God in us which created our nature, as the grace is in us as the permanent action of God which created the moral order. The order of “nature” and the

Paulist Press, 1963), 62. The essay, “The Mystery of the Supernatural,” contains none of the paradoxical language of *Surnaturel*, but makes its argument quite clearly. It is collected in Lubac, *Theology in History*, 281-316.

³⁷ “Avant donc d’aimer Dieu, et pour pouvoir l’aimer, il desire” (Lubac, *S*, 483.)

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 490.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 485.

order of “morality,” these two orders contain every condition – the one essential and necessary, the other personal and free – proper to our attending to our supernatural end, and both are contained at the interior of the same world, of a unique world, which we can even call, although it contains some completely natural elements, a supernatural world.⁴¹

The fear of a natural exigence for grace, then, arises only from an essentially anthropocentric viewpoint.⁴² It sees the matter as something we demand of God, rather than something God demands of us. De Lubac maintains that “from the point of view of God,” we can claim grace as something we “require” not because it “pleases us,” but because God has created us such that “we cannot not will it” [*nous l’exigeons parce que nous ne pouvons pas ne pas le vouloir.*]⁴³ It is the natural expression of humanity’s obligation to God, and this is “exactly the inverse of what it [*exigence*] was first imagined as being.”⁴⁴ Here, “beatitude is service, vision is adoration, freedom is dependence, possession is ecstasy.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ On peut raisonner de meme au sujet du désir de voir Dieu. Si ce désir exige, au sens que nous avons dit, d’être comblé, c’est que déjà Dieu meme est à sa source, bien qu’encore <<anonyme>>. Désir naturel du surnaturel: c’est en nous l’action permanente du Dieu qui crée notre nature, comme la grace est en nous l’action permanente du Dieu qui crée l’ordre moral. Ordre de la <<nature>> et ordre de la <<moralité>>, ces deux ordres contiennent toutes les conditions – les unes essentielles et nécessaires, les autres personnelles et libres, – propres à nous faire atteindre notre fin surnaturelle, et tous deux sont continus à l’intérieur d’un meme monde, d’un monde unique, qu’on peut appeler pour cela meme, quoiqu’il contienne des elements tout naturels, monde surnaturel (Ibid., 487.)

⁴²Ibid., 490 and 92. The quote refers to Maréchal’s statement that God is known implicitly in every act of knowing, placing him also here in agreement with Rahner on this point. See Henri de Lubac, *De La Connaissance De Dieu*, 2e. éd., augmentée. ed. (Paris: Editions du Témoignage Chrétien, 1948). This is repeated in its expanded version, Henri de Lubac, Georges Chantaine, and Emmanuel Tourpe, *Sur Les Chemins De Dieu*, (Œuvres Complètes / Henri De Lubac ; (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 44-45 and 273 n.1. This is what Lubac means when he invokes the patristic tradition in order to link the natural desire for God directly to the fact that human beings are the image of God in salvation history. It is clear that Lubac’s thinking at this point remains tied to Maréchal’s transcendental analysis of the dynamism of human intellection. He has simply made the very important move here of associating this desire directly with the idea of the image of God in patristic theology as a way of attempting to pry the notion loose from the restrictions placed on it by Aristotelian Thomism, linking it to an account of salvation history. On this point, see the discussion at Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri De Lubac: An Overview* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991).

⁴³ Lubac, S, 490.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 492.

This argument certainly did not dispel the fears of his detractors. Instead, it sparked fierce debate in Roman Catholic journals.⁴⁶ These conflicts eventually culminated in the issuance of *Humani Generis* in 1950 by Pius XII, which insisted that the gratuity of grace could not be compromised.⁴⁷ Duffy has noted, following Rahner, the question that what Lubac singlehandedly placed at the forefront of the debate over the meaning of nature and the supernatural was whether it was “still possible to conceive of grace as unexacted if the theologian presupposes an unconditional reference to grace, and if grace is so constitutive of historical humanity’s makeup that it is unthinkable without it.”⁴⁸ De Lubac’s purpose in the conclusion to *Surnaturel* was to show that humanity did not have a rightful claim over grace. However, in making his case, he had overlooked the importance of showing how this was not tantamount to asserting that grace is coextensive with creation, or that intelligent human nature must necessarily possess a supernatural orientation.⁴⁹ To his detractors, it appeared that Lubac was suggesting that God could not create an intellectual creature without bestowing upon it a supernatural end, and in such a way that this creature possessed by nature all that was required to respond to God’s offer of grace.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ This was particularly the case in that these claims were made explicit by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in his now famous essay, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “La Nouvelle Théologie Où Va-T-Elle?,” *Angelicum* 23 (1946): 126-45.

⁴⁷ See Stephen J. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 59-65. The reader should also consult the discussion of Rahner in Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology*.

⁴⁸ Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 62. See also Karl Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace,” in *Theological Investigations V. 1: God, Christ, Mary, Grace*, ed. Cornelius Ernst (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 304. Henceforth, references to the different volumes of Rahner’s *Theological Investigations* will be abbreviated as *TI*, followed by the volume in Roman numerals and page number.

⁴⁹ See Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 59-65.

⁵⁰ This later point will be the subject of my critique of both Lubac and Rahner: namely, their attempt to evade the necessity of an entitative transformation of human being prior to the acceptance of the offer of grace.

The nineteen intervening years between the publication of *Surnaturel* (1946) and *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* and *Le mystère du surnaturel* (1965) show that Lubac significantly refined the details of his position on just these points.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the differences between the proposals should not be overemphasized.⁵² In fact, it is striking the degree to which Lubac's basic position is not altered despite presenting it in a considerably different mode. Guy Mansini's summary of the basic theses of Lubac's position on the supernatural is quite helpful for seeing this.⁵³ Mansini notes three distinct but interrelated claims regarding the supernatural that appear across Lubac's writings on the subject. The first is that the natural desire for the beatific vision is the proper category within which to unite the orders of redemption and creation. As he states, for Lubac, the desire mediates between "philosophical and theological anthropology, between reason and revelation, knowledge and faith, between philosophy and theology generally."⁵⁴ And he emphasizes that Lubac insists that this is only recognizable from a theological perspective.⁵⁵ The second is that, beyond its mediatory role between distinct orders, the natural desire to see God displays the truth that human beings, as they actually exist, are ordered to no other end than the supernatural vision of

⁵¹ I have already noted the important essay, "La mystère du surnaturel," which appeared in 1949; but, the most important are the publication of: Henri de Lubac, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Capel Sheppard (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000). The French is Henri de Lubac, *Augustinisme Et Théologie Moderne*, Théologie ([Paris]: Aubier, 1965). And Lubac, *Mystery*. The French is Lubac, *Le Mystère Du Surnaturel*.

⁵² John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri De Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). Milbank significantly misinterprets both the history of the events of Lubac's biography, as well as the nature of the argument of the conclusion of *Surnaturel*. The irony of this lies with the fact that Lubac's earlier argument is more closely tied to transcendental Thomism – a school of thinking for which Milbank has been anything but supportive in print.

⁵³ Guy Mansini O.S.B., "Henri De Lubac, the Natural Desire to See God, and Pure Nature," *Gregorianum* 83, no. 1 (2002): 89-109.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 91. This kind of claim is what will attract von Balthasar to Lubac, against Rahner, whom he thinks treats the desire as anthropologically recognizable.

God. For Lubac, this is the most important claim, and he believes it to be logically grounded in the prior point. Because the desire for union with God is what mediates between the orders of creation and redemption, it is human beings as we actually encounter them – in history, as the benefactors of God’s work of redemption and recipients of God’s self-revelation – that specifies their nature. His final assertion, offered in light of both claims, is that this desire must therefore be expressed, solely on the basis of what has been revealed in salvation history, as an unconditional orientation toward God as the proper goal of human nature, understood in such a way that the gratuity of grace is not compromised.

Each of these elements is present in both the earlier and later accounts. It is his treatment of what is entailed in advancing the third which changes. And this is no minor point since it is here that he most clearly displays his fidelity to *Humani Generis*.⁵⁶ Yet, it is imperative to recognize that he does so not by retracting, but intensifying his earlier position. What is significant is how he does this. Upon close reading of the arguments, it is as if Lubac is asserting that his only error in *Surnaturel* was in relying on too abstract and formalized an account of human nature, rather than the factuality of concrete human beings as participants in salvation history.⁵⁷ That is, he was too imprecise in his application of the second premise. Because the only human nature we know is one that

⁵⁶ For discussion of the impact of *Humani Generis* on Lubac’s argument see Ibid. See also the discussion in Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology*, 59-65.

⁵⁷ See Lubac, *Mystery*, 54-56 [80-83] This marks an attempt to move away from the transcendentalized analysis of the human person in the earlier work. The critique of Rahner becomes, as it were, an unstated critique of his own earlier position. As McCool notes in relationship to Rahner, the tendency to associate the dynamism of human being with the natural desire for God was a result of the combined influence of Maréchal and Augustinian themes. This, indeed, appears to be the case with the early Lubac, who subsequently altered those assumptions after his engagement with Rahner and the issuance of *Humani Generis*. See Gerald A. McCool, *The Theology of Karl Rahner* (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1961), 14. Note also Lubac’s claims regarding the knowledge of the desire only in light of revelation in chapter 11 (207-221 [257-272.])

has been historically called to union with God, we must insist that human fulfillment lies in this alone.⁵⁸

The implications of this are quite radical. It shifts Lubac's claims from an anthropological to an ontological register, such that human being is no longer analyzed strictly as *imago Dei*, but as ontologically constituted as "called" by God.⁵⁹ Lubac makes this point on theological grounds, rather than, as before, on the basis of a general anthropology; but, in doing so, he makes an explicitly ontological point.⁶⁰ It puts into relief the ontological implications of the claim that revelation reveals the desire for God to be *constitutive* of human nature.⁶¹ This is less related to a phenomenological analysis of anthropology and is more about what the doctrine of creation displays concerning the truth regarding the ontological constitution of human being as "called" by God.

This does not mean that God's act of creation requires bestowing a supernatural end on a spiritual creature. Lubac is only arguing that the history of salvation shows that the desire for God coincides with human nature itself. He does this according to a twofold blessing.⁶² Creation itself is a gratuity because God is not compelled to do it. But, even upon acting to create, God is not obliged to endow any part of that creature,

⁵⁸ Mansini's summary brings out that the most important aspects of *Mystery* is that its fundamental claims about the natural desire to see God are not significantly different than *Surnaturel*. What has changed is that, after *Humani Generis*, Lubac no longer held that an intellectual creature could only be understood to have a supernatural end. Indeed, Mansini notes, along with Knasas (see below), that the more nuanced position of *Mystery* appears to be not that there could not have been an intellectual creature without a supernatural end, but that it was only possible to conceive of an intellectual creature without such an end as a transcendentalized abstraction. Lubac continued to maintain was that the natural desire for the supernatural was itself unconditional and absolute, and he did so in a much more forceful fashion than in *Surnaturel* by emphasizing the concrete history of salvation much more in his later work. See Mansini O.S.B., "Henri De Lubac, the Natural Desire to See God, and Pure Nature," 94 n.14. Reference above is to J.F.X. Knasas, "The Liberationist Critique of Maritain's New Christendom," *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 254 n.19, 254 n. 19.

⁵⁹ See Lubac, *Mystery*, 62, 183 [90, 227-28].

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 82-82 [113-14].

⁶¹ See his argument for the rejection of essential and existential orders (*Ibid.*, 64-67 [92-96].)

⁶² *Ibid.*, 76-77 [106-08]. He also refers to a "twofold call inscribed by God in the very make-up of these creatures..." (Lubac, *Mystery*, 130 [68].)

including an intellectual creature, with a supernatural destiny.⁶³ However, if God does both, then the two must be inextricably conjoined.⁶⁴ Lubac thus isolates three moments of that manifestation: the creation of the world, the calling of the spiritual creature, and the offer of the means to fulfill that call.⁶⁵ All of history is the unfolding of this call as God's providence.⁶⁶ However, he is insistent that the responsibility for actualizing the call lies with the freedom of human beings to accept or reject God's offer.⁶⁷

De Lubac consistently maintained, throughout his career, that the most appropriate way to unite the orders of creation and redemption was to emphasize the natural desire for the vision of God as the mediating term between them. His later work proposes a more coherent account of his early claim that the most intelligible way to conceive this unity is to emphasize the coincidence of God's acts of creating and calling in historical human nature. This means moving away from an abstract analysis of human

⁶³ Lubac, *Mystery*, 62, 72 [90,103].

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 64-67 [92-96].

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 80-81 [112-13].

⁶⁶ See *Ibid.*, 119-39 [55-77].

⁶⁷ On this point, it is imperative that the reader recognize the distinction that Lubac draws, in both his early and late work, between "nature" as the ontological principle of necessity within which God's call is expressed, and "morality" as the domain of freedom within which the offer of grace is received and accepted. As he says in *Ibid.*, 183 [227-28]: "Though one cannot reduce everything to the clarity of a simple vision free of all mystery, one can at least advance dialectically to the harmony which lies beyond the apparent opposition. And this will be easier if, taking the notion of God's transcendence with total seriousness, we stop seeing the call to the supernatural and the offer of grace in a chronological series, as though the second is governed by the first: as though God were bound by his own call once uttered, and could not then recall his offer. The offer of grace expresses, in the sphere of moral liberty, the same act of divine loving kindness that the call to the supernatural expresses in the ontological sphere. Thus there is nothing in the former to diminish beforehand in any way the gratuitousness of the latter. Neither is exterior to the other, and therefore neither comes before the other. There is always the same unique sovereign initiative at work in both, and the only difference lies in relation to us, because we are at once nature and liberty, and ontological tendency and a spiritual will." This passage should be compared with the block quote above and note 41. Note the same association of ontology with necessity, desire, and call, as well as morality with freedom, will, and response. He also links these two orders (without naming him) to Philip the Chancellor's distinction between natural and elicited appetites (*Lubac, Mystery*, 182 [226].) Note the tendency in both passages to insist that these are but two facets of the same experience of the one divine act. As he says above, the ontological and moral orders "contain every condition...proper to attending to our supernatural end, and both are contained at the interior of the same world, of a unique world, which we can even call...a supernatural world" (*Lubac, S*, 487.)

subjectivity, and emphasizing the concrete experience of salvation in history. Lubac is insistent that this approach is capable of overcoming the residue of rationalism that clings to post-Tridentine theology, thereby opening the door to a renewed sense of the sacred for modern culture. This movement away from transcendental analysis of the human subject is very different from the expression of the same impulse in Karl Rahner, to whom I now turn my attention.

Karl Rahner

God desires to communicate himself, to lavish his love. This is the first and last consideration of his actual plans, and, therefore, of his actual world.

—Karl Rahner⁶⁸

When Karl Rahner's *Geist in Welt* appeared in 1939, the text marked his entrance into the same theological conversations concerning post-Kantian Thomism that had sparked the production of the essays that eventually became Lubac's *Surnaturel*. Rahner's *Hörer des Wortes* (1941) also contained material relevant to those discussions, yet he offered no formal position on the relationship of nature and the supernatural until 1950. In the midst of the controversy over *Surnaturel*, and after the appearance of *Humani Generis*, Rahner wrote the article "Ein Weg zur Bestimmung des Verhältnisses von Natur und Grade," which showed him to be deeply sympathetic to the position associated with Lubac, but also established a considerable distance between them.⁶⁹ That difference would fall precisely on the question of the viability of an approach that privileged a transcendental analysis of human subjectivity.

⁶⁸ *TI*, 310.

⁶⁹ *TI*, 297-31

Rahner's approach, as laid out in this article, is often interpreted as a mediating position between Neo-Scholasticism and Lubac. This is far too simplistic an account of the complex relationship of ideas unfolding during the period. Karen Kilby has done much to question the viability of von Balthasar's charge that, in *Geist in Welt* and *Hörers des Wortes*, Rahner set himself ineluctably down the path of foundationalism.⁷⁰ As evidence of this, she points to striking inconsistencies in his earlier and later thought, as well as his own contention to have never deployed a specific "method" in theological reflection. Though Kilby's arguments are largely convincing, it is important to insist that the arguments of *Geist in Welt* and *Hörers des Wortes* are essential to Rahner's understanding of nature and the supernatural. For this reason, it is necessary to have a grasp of his argument.

Geist in Welt is presented as a commentary on *Summa Theologiae* I.84.7 addressing the question of whether the intellect can know anything through concepts without depending on empirical data from the senses. Such a question situates the work squarely in the trajectory of transcendental Thomism as it had taken shape after Maréchal, which means that Rahner's concern is, principally, to offer a response to Kant as to how we can know the transcendent if all knowledge begins with the data from the senses.⁷¹ In order to do this, he establishes a framework within which to discuss how a knowing subject comes to apprehend Being. He argues that, since sensual perception is

⁷⁰ Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 70-99.

⁷¹ The point is made by Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology*, 262-75. Also see the discussion of Rahner in Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*. As with Lubac, my discussion of Rahner is marked by my reading of Duffy's excellent accounts. The same point is also made by Francis P. Fiorenza, "Introduction: Karl Rahner and the Kantian Problematic" in Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych (New York: Continuum, 1994), xxvii-xlv.

receptive,⁷² all subjective knowledge begins with an experience of material reality as ‘other’ to that subject.⁷³ This fundamental receptivity, he says, is what Aquinas means when he speaks of “conversion to the phantasm,” and this means that every engagement with the world starts with self-abandonment, an away-from-self-with-the-other (*Weg-von-sich-beim-andern-Sein*).⁷⁴ It is because of this self-abandonment that we are capable of relating to ourselves as knowers. That is, it is because we return from our self-abandonment only to recognize ourselves as present to ourselves that knowledge of the world is a real possibility.⁷⁵ For this reason, Rahner insists that all knowledge is grounded in an *a priori* self-transcendence wherein the self is tensed, hovering (*Schwebe*) between matter and spirit, marking it as “spirit in the world.”⁷⁶

In pressing toward the immediate grasp of Being, however, Rahner develops a Heideggerian gloss⁷⁷ on Aquinas’ claim regarding the natural desire to know by interpreting it as the basic orientation to ask the question of the significance of existence.⁷⁸ This questioning begins in the moment of self-abandonment, but is coextensive with the subject’s self-presence in experiencing the world. As a result, Rahner insists that Being and knowing converge at precisely this moment of abstraction where the self knows itself as a knower. It is here that self can be recognized as identical

⁷²Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 92-97. German taken from Karl Rahner, “*Geist in Welt*,” in *Sämtliche Werke Band 2*, ed. Karl-Rahner-Stiftung and Karl Lehmann (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1995), 79-83.

⁷³Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 78-82 [69-72].

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 81 [71].

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 81, 406-08 [71, 298-300]

⁷⁷For this point, see Carmichael C. Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading of Karl Rahner's Theology of Grace and Freedom* (Lanham: Catholic Scholars Press, 2000), 285-91 and 99-306.

⁷⁸Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 57-77 [54-68]. See also the quotations from Aquinas on pp. 54-55 above.

with yet different from the world.⁷⁹ It is because of this co-originary status of being and knowing that we must also speak of a “preapprehension of Being” (*Vorgriff auf esse*).⁸⁰

The preapprehension of Being is vital to Rahner’s discussion of nature and the supernatural. This is because Rahner argues that every act of knowing involves a simultaneous thrust toward Absolute Being.⁸¹ His point is exactly the same as that made by Aquinas regarding the perfection of the intellect. It is the fullness of Absolute Being as it is displayed in the relativity of finite beings that the intellect seeks to attain. No “purely” finite object is adequate to human questioning. Otherwise, the self-presence attained in the moment of abstraction would be enough.⁸² With this, Rahner shows, against Kant, that reason cannot be restricted to finite objects, while also demonstrating against Heidegger that the ontological difference is not confined to its manifestation in *Dasein*.⁸³ All knowledge is fundamentally a drive toward the reception of the Absolute. In an interesting moment of simultaneous convergence and divergence from Lubac, Rahner insists that this is the appropriate way to understand the *potentia obedientialis*: the human being is pure receptivity to absolute Being’s self-communication.⁸⁴

Rahner’s key difference from Lubac is that he did not believe the latter’s position could ultimately preserve the gratuity of grace. Rahner did not wish to dispute that we experience human nature as ordered toward a supernatural end. But he did not think the problem of the gratuity of grace had been adequately conceived if it was understood as

⁷⁹ Ibid., 68-71 [62-64].

⁸⁰ Ibid., 135-45, 54-56, 202-36 [111-18, 24-25, 57-80].

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 393-408 [290-300].

⁸³ On this point, see Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, 299-306.

⁸⁴ See Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 387-408 [286-300]. Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Andrew Tallon (New York: Continuum, 1994), 1-9 [9-29]. Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 309-11, 15-17.

constitutive of human nature.⁸⁵ The result was not so much a union of creation and grace, but their conflation.⁸⁶ Rahner's point was that, even though the only human nature we experience is always already presented with the offer of grace, this cannot be interpreted to mean that grace is a constitutive aspect of it. Nature must, instead, be a "remainder concept" (*Restbegriff*), which is only available when the orientation to God is bracketed from consideration.⁸⁷

Rahner's point here is made against Lubac's early writings in which the anthropological analysis of the *imago dei* appeared to collapse grace into nature. Yet, it holds, in the main, for the later writings as well inasmuch as Lubac's ontological reduction of subjectivity means that there can be no historical separation of God's act of creating and bestowal of the call. By contrast, Rahner claims that only a transcendental analysis of human subjectivity is capable of preserving the difference between creation and grace while simultaneously linking nature to the supernatural. The problem here is with the way Lubac wants to see the natural desire for God to be an essential component of human nature, even if it is shown to be gratuitous in itself.

In order to properly grasp what this means for Rahner, it is necessary to appreciate his attempt to conceive the supernatural in terms of a transcendental *a priori*, as opposed to a an *a posteriori* transformation within human nature. He does this by attempting to overcome the Neo-Scholastic separation of nature and the supernatural by prioritizing the supernatural rather than so-called "pure" nature.⁸⁸ What he is concerned

⁸⁵ Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 304. See Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 89-91.

⁸⁶ See Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 303-10. See Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 89-91.

⁸⁷ Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 313.

⁸⁸ This is the thesis of Karl Rahner, "Zur Scholastischen Begrifflichkeit Der Ungeschaffenen Gnade," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 63 (1939): 137-56. The English is Karl Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," in *Theological Investigations V. 1: God, Christ, Mary*,

to retain from Neo-Scholasticism is what he took to be its proper emphasis on the gratuity of grace. Yet his concern is to show that this can be done without making a complete separation between nature and the supernatural. The key to this, he says, is to reconsider the relationship between habitual grace and the supernatural. "Habitual" grace is the name Scholastic theology gives to the accidental and created transformation the creature undergoes prior to coming to share in the divine life.⁸⁹ In the terms of Philip the Chancellor, it refers not to a desire for charity that was natural to human beings, but to an acquired knowledge – in this case, a supernatural habit, which has been immediately infused by God.⁹⁰ Rahner critiques this idea under the more general term of "created," as opposed to "uncreated," grace, taking issue with the notion that grace must effect (i.e., creates) an accidental, qualitative alteration of human nature before one can receive a share in the divine life.

Rahner argues in the essay "Zur scholastischen Begrifflichkeit der ungeschaffenen Gnade" that this way of conceiving the matter is not faithful to the biblical witness.⁹¹ The writings of the New Testament, especially Acts and the Pauline epistles, consistently speak of the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit preceding any alteration of human life. For Rahner, this attests to the fact that grace is nothing less than the bestowal of Godself. There is no need to posit a change in the human being prior to the reception of God's gift of Godself. This has the effect of reversing the priority of

Grace, ed. Cornelius Ernst (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 297-346. He does this by emphasizing the priority of the divine self-communication over any entitative transformation prior to the reception of the Holy Spirit. He thus makes this transformation the effect of the Holy Spirit's presence, and not the prerequisite for that presence.

⁸⁹ See Thomas Aquinas, *ST I-II*.109.

⁹⁰ This was not an acquired but an infused habit, and it is the reason that Aquinas insisted on an operative habitual grace and not simply an operative actual grace or a merely cooperative habitual grace. See Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*.

⁹¹ Rahner, "Some Implications," 320-24.

uncreated and created graces. God's gracious self-bestowal to the world always precedes and generates any transformation of the creature that follows from its presence. This also means that God's self-communication is neither punctuated nor exceptional, as Neo-Scholasticism tended to view it. Rather, God's self-communication is universal, a constitutive element of human experience.

It is important to recognize that, in developing his own account of grace as constitutive of human existence, Rahner distinguishes between the ontological qualities of humanity and its existential experience.⁹² De Lubac developed in his later work an ontological account of the essence of human nature as gratuitously oriented to seeing God. By contrast, Rahner holds to a transcendental analysis in which the essence of human nature is abstracted from its existential structures, in such a way that grace is not a necessary element. A "pure" human nature is, then, a "remainder concept" (*Restbegriff*).⁹³ One must presuppose 'nature' as that upon which grace is bestowed. Yet, in the concrete, historical experience of humanity, grace is everywhere displayed. In fact, there is no actual human experience in which grace is absent. This leads Rahner to use Heidegger's language to speak of God's presence in grace as an integral, but non-essential determination of human being, a "supernatural existential" (*das übernatürliche Existential*).⁹⁴ By this he means that grace is always communicated along with all human experience, but cannot because of that be considered an ontological (or essential) aspect of humanity.⁹⁵ Elsewhere, in a similar vein, he speaks of the experience of God's self-

⁹² See Stephen J. Duffy, "Experience of Grace," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines, *Cambridge Companions to Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48.

⁹³ Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 313-15.

⁹⁴ Rahner, "Some Implications," 303, 12-17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19-26 and 51-52.

communication (uncreated grace) as a “quasi-formal cause” of human nature. It is not that grace and creation are one and the same: in fact, they are transcendently separable. It is only that they are always given together, side by side, in human experience. And this is precisely why it is so important to retain “pure nature” as a remainder concept. Otherwise, the two categories would collapse into one another.

A Metaphysical Ontology

It will be helpful here to recall that both Lubac’s and Rahner’s positions are, despite their important differences, illustrative of attempts to unite the doctrines of creation and grace according to the paradigm of nature and the supernatural. As I stated above, I am not taking these two positions as exhaustive of the nature/supernatural paradigm as a whole, but only of contemporary attempts to unite these two doctrines within that paradigm. A brief recounting of their differences here will set the stage for a closer analysis.

Lubac and Rahner differ in their assessments of the final value of transcendental analysis. As we have seen, Lubac’s position moves from one that is more indebted to an abstract analysis of the dynamic orientation of the human being, which he interprets in line with the traditional understanding of the *imago Dei*, to a position more strictly tied to theology. In doing so, he does not leave transcendental analysis behind so much as transfer its register from anthropology to ontology. This allows him to distinguish, within the doctrine of creation itself, a twofold gratuity according to the act of creating and the bestowal of a supernatural end. Conversely, while Rahner can hardly be said to eschew ontology, his position is more intimately tied to the anthropological perspective

that Lubac later abandoned. From this perspective, he is able to distinguish creation and grace according to a transcendental analysis of the structures of human experience in which God's gift of Godself to the creature functions as something like what he calls "quasi-formal causality."⁹⁶ Like Lubac, the two are differentiated 'moments' in one single divine act of ontological creativity. For Rahner, the natural desire to see God is a constitutive aspect of the existential structure of human being. There is no human experience that does not include this element, even though it is possible in transcendental analysis to distinguish the creature's nature from its existential structure. The difference is that, by linking the desire directly to the doctrine of creation, Lubac makes the desire for God an ontological determination of the creature. For Rahner, by contrast, consideration of the ontological constitution of the creature is the real abstraction; what is concretely actual is the natural desire for God in all experience, which prioritizes the concrete actuality of human life as it is lived and experienced in its fundamental orientation to God.

According to Rahner, this is the reason that Lubac cannot finally achieve a real distinction between the orders of creation and grace. If the natural desire for God is considered an ontological determination of human being in the way Lubac has conceived it, and not simply a factual reality of the structure of human experience, then there is no way to affirm the unexactedness of grace.⁹⁷ Lubac wants to insist that the logical distinction between the act of creating and the inscription of an end can preserve this. In

⁹⁶Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 121. See the discussion of Rahner's deployment of uncreated grace in Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, 320-29. Carmichael C. Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading of Karl Rahner's Theology of Grace and Freedom* (Lanham, MD: Catholic Scholastic Press, 2000), 320-29. See also Karl Rahner, in *Sacramentum mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).

⁹⁷ Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 304-10.

both the early and later texts, Lubac points to the fact that a proper understanding of the doctrine of creation would be theocentric, rather than anthropocentric, such that the creature's desire for God would be understood to be an expression of its obligation to God, and not its demand or rights before God.⁹⁸ He offers this argument to show how it would be conceivable that human nature could have been created differently. It is difficult to see how Rahner's early assessment of Lubac – namely, that he *de facto* collapsed grace into creation – is wrong, especially in light of Lubac's later defense of himself in *The Mystery of the Supernatural* and his incorporation there of a of "elevation" in the providential distribution of grace within time.⁹⁹

By contrast, Rahner wants to insist that the only appropriate way to overcome a sharp separation between nature and the supernatural is to understand their union as occurring within the existential structure of human being. Human nature is itself nothing more than a transcendental category of reason, abstracted from the concrete actuality of human existence as graced. This allows Rahner to say that the human essence is not ontologically determined to desire God of necessity, but does in fact experience itself as so called. Thus, grace is an fact of human experience, but not an ontological constituent of humanity. Rahner plainly insists that the coherence of doctrinal theology requires maintaining transcendental analysis. In doing so, he is resisting Lubac's desire to move seamlessly from the theology of creation to an ontological vision.

⁹⁸ It is the fact that this is a minor claim in the conclusion of *Supernaturel* but becomes the centerpiece of *The Mystery of the Supernatural* that is most important for my argument.

⁹⁹ Lubac, *Mystery*, 119-39. Yet, Lubac never offers any explanation of the meaning of this moment or its mechanics. It is the incomprehensibility of this moment that Milbank has sought to exploit in his own attempt to demonstrate the paradoxical coincidence of grace and creation. See Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*.

My concerns here are less with the differences between these positions, than with how understanding these differences can help us to see what these two positions share in their appropriation of the nature/supernatural paradigm. I propose to show that they share two assumptions regarding the role of the category of Being and the will that finally unite them beyond these differences. Together, these assumptions reveal that the unity of creation and grace within the nature/supernatural paradigm must be conceived in terms of a *metaphysical ontology*. By “metaphysical ontology” I mean a pattern of thought that seeks to give an account of the whole of reality, and to isolate what is ultimately real, in terms consonant with the philosophical category of Being. Inasmuch as the nature/supernatural paradigm is rooted in the categories of traditional metaphysics, this should come as no surprise. It would be helpful here to recall, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that ‘ontology’ as it is used here designates a pattern of thinking that not only emphasizes Being, but interprets reality such that identity, intellection, and participation are granted priority. Thus, a metaphysical ontology attempts to provide an account of the whole of reality, as well as what is ultimately real, according to such terms. In what follows, I will treat each of these characteristics in turn, focusing on their roles in the work of Lubac and Rahner as they attempt to unite creation and grace according to the terms of nature and the supernatural.

In that it is the most general, it will be appropriate to take up the question of Being first. My previous analysis of Lubac and Rahner has underscored the role of Being in their respective positions, especially as they are divided according to whether the desire for the vision of God is best thought as an ontological or simply a factually reality of intellectual experience. It is important, though, to recognize the manner in which

Being plays a central role for both thinkers according as a matter of privileging notions of identity and participation. I have already noted that Lubac's position displays a tendency to essentialize the natural desire for the supernatural. Not only does this paradoxically make creation, grace, and the desire for God different expressions of one ontological reality, but it also reduces the desiring human subject to its most general characteristic, namely, participation in Being.¹⁰⁰

As Levinas is so keen to remind us, ontology is fundamentally a grasping after the perception of essences (*esse, ousia*) as the most basic and necessary structures of beings (*esse, ousia*) in their manifestation.¹⁰¹ In this way, ontology seeks to express the origin (*archè*) of the object in its most universal sense, thus accounting for difference in terms of identity and singularity in terms of participation. This is what Lubac does by effecting an ontological reduction of subjectivity through the theology of creation: he isolates the origin of the desire for God in an ontological ground that identifies the desire with the human essence, thus revealing that he unites creation and grace by way of the third term, Being, within which the two are identical. "Being" mediates the terms subject, world, creation, grace, and desire so as to render them different manifestations of a single divine act. Together, these mark the convergence of emphasis on identity and participation.

The same can be said of Rahner, though in slightly different terms. He explicitly refuses to consider the natural desire for God an essential characteristic of human being, preferring to emphasize the existential dimension of the desire. By preserving the centrality of subjectivity, Rahner can develop a transcendental analysis that understands

¹⁰⁰ Lubac, S. This is the principal argument of Chapter Six of *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, "The Christian Paradox of Man." See Lubac, *Mystery*, 101-18.

¹⁰¹ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 3-20 and 37-51.

creation as the act by which God gives self-presence and freedom to what is different from God, and grace as the quasi-form of that act by which God gives Godself to that other.¹⁰² Despite not proposing an ontological reduction of the subject, Rahner's proposal does have very specific ontological consequences, specifically as this leads him to affirm the unity of knowing and being.¹⁰³

The most important moment in Rahner's account of subjective dynamism is the moment of knowledge, which occurs when the self that has been abandoned to its other (materiality) in conversion to the phantasm, returns to itself and simultaneously knows itself as present to itself and identical with its other. This knowledge is possible because both self and other are perceived within their common share in Being. As Rahner reminds us, since knowing and being are coincident, apprehension of the complete fullness of Being is the goal of every subject in its self-abandonment. The first moment of receptive self-abnegation is simply the first step in a process of a complete self-presence in the knowledge of the fullness of Being. The dynamism of self-abnegation and return presupposes and demands a more fundamental, originary, and necessary identity between the self and other – one that is premised on their common participation in the mystery of Absolute Being. This commonality is what lies behind Rahner's account of the *a priori* status of uncreated grace. The fundamental identity-in-difference between the self and the other alone makes possible the claim that finite existence occurs as a participation in Absolute Being, which is the field of divine self-communication.

This is what it means to say that Lubac and Rahner both require a metaphysical ontology to unite creation and grace. Each offers an account of the whole of reality that

¹⁰² Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 121. See also Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, 320-29.

¹⁰³ Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 135-45, 54-56, 202-36 [111-18, 24-25, 57-80].

isolates Being as the most ultimate principle of reality, the final term of reference. In each thinker, this has the effect of yielding a fundamental identity between the various terms that are to be related, and does so by way of their common participation in Absolute Being. But, in order to show their privileging of intellection, I will need to discuss the more complex issue of their understanding of the role of the will. Indeed, as we will see, intellection is the mode in which each thinker understands our conception of how we identify ourselves and participate in Being.

For both Lubac and Rahner, the intellect is the primary and most distinguished aspect of human being. Beginning with *Surnaturel*, Lubac was fond of invoking the double entendre of the French “*esprit*,” which allowed him to conflate intelligence with spirit.¹⁰⁴ This was consistent with his appeals to the patristic tradition and Thomas Aquinas to support his claim that the restlessness of the intellect displays the human being not simply as a spiritual being, but as a spiritual being with a supernatural destiny. And this same idea is in Rahner at the level of his insistence on the identity of being and knowing. As the most primary aspect of human being, intellection coincides with freedom. Because both link the desire for God to intellectual dynamism, and understand this to be ontologically constitutive of human being, they directly associate this dynamism with freedom.¹⁰⁵ By freedom they mean a fundamental capacity for self-

¹⁰⁴ Lubac, *S*, 483.

¹⁰⁵ An important point must be underscored here since this reference to ontology might appear to contradict my earlier claim that the natural desire for the vision of God is simply a factual aspect of concrete intellectual experience rather than ontological determination of human being. It is ontologically constitutive of human being that the intellect be dynamically structured to move out of itself and return to itself. However, it is simply a fact of intellectual experience that this dynamism not be satisfied with the self-presence displayed in the moment of abstraction, but reaches beyond to an apprehension of Absolute Being. It is not a necessary aspect of intellectual experience as such. This is what marks for Rahner the difference between an intellect with a purely natural end, and one with a supernatural one. This point is drawn out deftly by Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, 299-306.

determination. And, in both instances, this free capacity for self-determination expressed in this desire is what both mean by the will.

This is less directly apparent in Lubac than in Rahner, who is more concerned with metaphysical precision. Nonetheless, Lubac consistently makes the claim throughout his writings that the natural human desire for God marks the basic identity of intellect and will. The dynamic orientation of the human spirit is always conceived as a matter principally of the will. In *Surnaturel*, for example, he notes that the ontological confluence of necessity and morality in human desire points to just this coincidence, and he repeats this in *Mystery of the Supernatural*.¹⁰⁶ He makes this more explicit in *Pic de Mirandole*, where he notes that the ontological freedom of human being is expressed in a desire that precedes the division between intellect and will, and is manifested differently in each.¹⁰⁷ On other occasions, however, Lubac will speak of this desire itself as if it were the will. As he says, the will wills God as final end because it “cannot not will it.”¹⁰⁸ This association of the desire with the will is what lies behind Lubac’s rejection of the desire as a velleity. If the desire is essentially inscribed upon the creature, then the creature is not simply wishing, or wistfully dreaming, but actually willing to be united with God.

¹⁰⁶ Lubac, *S*. See Lubac, *Mystery*, 182. The reader should note that Lubac explicitly refers to the distinction between the orders as that of nature, which is the realm of “necessary connections, and that of elicited appetite, which is that of freedom. He here shows familiarity with Philip the Chancellor’s distinction, but misses its significance. As I will show below, the entire point of Aquinas’ development of this idea requires the notion of God’s operation to infuse a habit into the creature, and not simply the idea that the habit itself can be freely acquired. Lubac’s understanding of freedom, along with Rahner, requires an ontological conception of freedom that attempts to obviate this moment of infusion.

¹⁰⁷ Henri de Lubac, *Pic De La Mirandole: Études Et Discussions* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1974), 174-75.

¹⁰⁸ Lubac, *S*, 483.

Rahner's position is quite similar, though much more precise.¹⁰⁹ Rahner makes a distinction between the dynamism of human subjectivity and the natural desire for the vision of God. This distinction is rooted in his refusal to ontologize the desire. The dynamism of the subject, however, is an ontological determination, and he links it directly to human freedom. What he rejects is the idea that human freedom has been vitiated by original sin.¹¹⁰ Instead, he develops a more existential concept of freedom as coincident with subjective dynamism.¹¹¹ Freedom is a capacity to take up a positive or negative self-determination in relation to the ground and goal of existence.¹¹² This power is rooted in the most basic existential affirmation that accompanies the dynamic openness to Being that inaugurates the pursuit of knowledge.¹¹³

This ambiguous notion of the will as coincident with the *élan* of human nature is a basically Platonic account of the relationship between the intellect and the will. Both accounts are oriented by a vague interchangeability between intellect, will, and desire. They conceive of the will as a kind of primordial desire (*eros*) expressed in the dynamic thrust of human beings to perceive the being of their world. This is due to a tendency evident in both thinkers to correlate willing with the ontological freedom for self-determination.¹¹⁴ Self-determination, as it is used here, is less about choosing between different actions, and more about a power to actualize desire. But in presuming that

¹⁰⁹ The following discussion of Rahner's account of freedom is thoroughly indebted to Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, especially 306-20. Carmichael's account supplies a superb overview and synthesis of the various places Rahner discusses the will and human freedom.

¹¹⁰ Karl Rahner, "The Sin of Adam," in *Theological Investigations XI: Confrontations 1* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 258. See Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, 312-18.

¹¹¹ See Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 280-83.

¹¹² See *Ibid.*, 290-99.

¹¹³ Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 68. See also Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading*, 301-02. That affirmation is inseparable from the dynamism of human existence, which expresses the basic receptivity to Absolute Being.

¹¹⁴ This way of describing the matter is adopted from Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 193.

freedom co-arises with this desire, both thinkers assume that the intellectual apprehension of the goal of desire is sufficient to direct the will to its actualization. Indeed, because there is no clear distinction between desire, intellect, and will, the object is thought to be attainable simply by virtue of its being desired.

Here is where we encounter the most significant problem with both of these accounts of the unity of creation and grace. Note that Lubac and Rahner both offer accounts of grace as ‘frontloaded’ into creation. Rahner does this by reversing the priority of created and uncreated grace, and Lubac does it by making the natural desire for God ontologically constitutive of concrete human being. Both are seeking to reunite nature with the supernatural by ascribing to grace a kind of *a priori* status within nature such that it functions, to borrow Rahner’s term, as the “quasi-form” of creation. But, in doing so, what each fails to account for is the fact that the original rationale for insisting on an entitative transformation of the human person prior to the production of a supernatural act was not the assumption that transcendence was somehow alien to nature; rather, it was the recognition that nature did not supply, simply by virtue of its status as created, all that was needed to effectively will the end. Both thinkers have developed positions which (ingeniously) occlude the very problem that the concept of the supernatural was posited to solve. In order to see how this is so, I will need to return to the history of the development of the supernatural discussed in the first section of this chapter.

The Nature of the Will and Its Transformation

De Lubac was just mixed up on the point....

—Bernard Lonergan¹¹⁵

As noted above, the idea of the supernatural developed as a way of explaining certain speculative problems that issued from the dogmatic acceptance of key elements of Augustine's mature theology of grace. I noted that the idea developed as a way of explaining the difference between creation and grace, as well as the distinction between the essential goodness of human nature and its corruption by sin. When Philip the Chancellor posited a distinction between what the creature wills by its nature and what the creature wills as a result of an acquired knowledge and habit, theologians were then able to distinguish between what the goodness of the creature's natural orientation to self-preservation and the corruption of its capacity to acquire and perform the supernatural act of charity. This was important for revealing the fundamental disproportion between the good the will could do by its nature (i.e., self-preservation within a given order) and the supernatural good in which that nature finds its perfection (i.e., charity.) And it is imperative to recognize that the later was not considered possible simply by virtue of the acquisition of revealed knowledge. On the contrary, what Aquinas in particular came to recognize was that the realization of charity was itself the result of God's operation to infuse that habit into the person.

This was not a problem of abstraction. Rather, it was of the utmost of concrete practicality. Consonant with Augustine, the point was being upheld that although the intellect may know and even desire God as the final Good to which it is ordered, this does

¹¹⁵ Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 350.

not mean that the creature is capable of effectively willing that end. This is what Philip the Chancellor's insight was able to supply: namely, a way of conceiving the fact that the capacity to will the end results from the reception of that which does not reside in the nature as such. And it is precisely this entitative alteration of the nature that both Rahner and Lubac's positions are designed to avoid. Even granting the truth of their rejection of the scarcity of grace, and legitimacy of their attempts to effect a formal separation between creation, human nature, and grace, neither has adequately accounted for the fact that the idea of the supernatural was posited specifically as a way of preserving the notion that grace was not simply the created reception of that which is not proper to the nature itself. It is always also the immanent actualization of a possibility for transcendence that is not already operative in the factuality of creation itself. The reason for this failure is tied directly to the ambiguous notion of will and its freedom that the two adopted, and most specifically their inability to properly distinguish it from the intellect.

As Lonergan has shown in detail, Aquinas developed his idea of the will by adopting Philip the Chancellor's distinction between natural and acquired appetite and combining it with his own rejection of Aristotle's assertion that the will is a purely passive potency determined solely by the intellect.¹¹⁶ Lonergan argues that Aquinas' encounter with Parisian Averroism led him to this conclusion by making him aware of the need to develop an account of the will's self-determination that did not compromise either its relation to the intellect or its ultimate dependence on God.¹¹⁷ As a result, Aquinas developed the first unambiguous designation of the will as a distinct faculty of the soul. Rahner and Lubac attempt to overcome the division between nature and the

¹¹⁶ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 94-95. See also Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, 84-92..

¹¹⁷ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 92.

supernatural in a way that obviates this, effectively returning the problem to a set of assumptions prior to Aquinas.

What Aquinas posited was a much more complex relation between intellect and will. He argued that the function of the intellect in the production of an act of the will was limited to the specification of those objects that will function as goods for will's act.¹¹⁸ In this respect, the will is an intellectual appetite since it produces its act in relationship to those objects the intellect presents to it as good. Willing itself, however, has two independent but interrelated causes. There is the act of willing an end, which relates to the desirability of an object in itself, and the act of willing the means to that end, which is simply willing one object in order to attain another that is desirable in itself. Aquinas recognized that the will could naturally determine itself with regard to the means to an end, but that it was powerless to effect an operation that extended to its end. This necessarily restricted the scope of the will's self-determination to its role in the established order of nature. Its freedom was delimited by the range of actual goods it had within its immediate purview. Augustine had recognized this fact, but associated it directly with the limited range of goods available to the sinful will. But, Aquinas advanced beyond him, by noting both the limited goods available to the sinful will, as well as the natural limitations of willing itself. With the aid of Philip's notion of supernatural habit, Aquinas was able to affirm that the will had a nature proper to itself, apart from but related to the intellect. That nature was inherently free with regard to its role in the natural order, but it was *a priori* incapable of moving itself toward that end that leads to its salvation.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 94-98.

A purely objective, *a priori* bestowal of grace, such as we find in both Rahner and de Lubac, is then really beside the point. Chapter four will show how this confusion is the result of a misunderstanding of the logic of Augustine's theology of grace, especially as it develops over time. For now, it is sufficient simply to note that, for both Augustine and Aquinas, a recognition of the full gratuity of grace required affirmation of an 'internal' divine motion of the will, not simply for the natural trajectory of the will in its orientation toward God, but in actually moving it to will the good that God is in Godself, and precisely in a way that is proportionate to God in Godself. Both of these latter operations exceed the natural operation of the human will, and thus require the bestowal of a divine assistance reaching to the very heart of the creature. This was the reason Aquinas divided grace into actual and habitual forms, and ascribed an operative and cooperative component to each.¹¹⁹ Actual grace referred to the created bestowal of the conditions necessary for the acquisition of supernatural habit, and habitual grace to the process of that acquisition. In each, God alone first operates (operative grace) to produce human cooperation (cooperative grace.) In their haste to evade the punctualism and scarcity of the Neo-Scholastic interpretation of this account of grace, both Lubac and Rahner overlooked the necessity that Aquinas clearly ascribed to actualizing and elevating effects of grace, especially as these emphasized the priority of the interior operation of God over the creature's own freedom for self-determination. Instead, they developed accounts in which all that was needed for the creature's turn to God was already supplied in and with (even if transcendently distinguished from) the gift of existence itself.

¹¹⁹ *ST I-II.109.*

In light of this history, it is important to note that “pure nature” as both thinkers invoke it is simply a fiction – not only of their Neo-Scholastic adversaries, but of *nouvelle théologie* and transcendental Thomism as well. The point is not about an experience of ‘nature’ apart from the offer of grace. What is at issue is the necessary distinction between the offer of grace and its reception. The debate over the natural desire for the beatific vision in Roman Catholic theology in the twentieth century is a series of different ways of confusing the offer of grace with its reception. As we have left to show, this confusion marks out the limitations of the nature/supernatural paradigm for uniting the doctrines of creation and grace. By way of conclusion, I will show how this is so by looking at the ways of accounting for the grammar of creation and grace according to this paradigm, noting specifically the limitations of remaining within the perspective of metaphysical ontology.

Uniting Creation and Grace in a Metaphysical Ontology

This chapter has been devoted to clarifying the origins of the metaphysical categories of nature and the supernatural as they function in relationship to the doctrine of grace and creation. The centrality of the category of the will as a faculty responsible for a set of operations distinct from intellection and desire was shown to be decisive not only for the resolution of the apparent impasse between the freedom and rectitude of the will, but for the distinction between the gratuity of God’s act of creation and the gratuity of redeeming grace itself. Importantly, this category of the will is the result of decidedly metaphysical analysis. In claiming this is the result of metaphysical reasoning, I mean that the recognition of the reality of an operation called “the will” is a genuine insight

into reality, which, upon its apprehension, resolved theoretical difficulties that preceded it and, upon its subsequent misapprehension (as Lonergan shows in the *de Auxiliis* controversy), were lost. The fact of this metaphysical resolution in Aquinas is as important for my investigation as is this loss, which I will return to in the following chapter in my discussion of Luther.

These resolutions are important when attempting to assess the disputes within contemporary Roman Catholic theology concerning the proper union of creation and grace. De Lubac is a particularly important example in this regard, since his attempt to return to a largely Patristic frame of reference, is consistent with what I referred to in the Introduction as the attempt to achieve an ontological reduction of human subjectivity. I have shown in more detail in this chapter just how this is the case with reference to the complete rejection of Rahner's transcendental analysis. As I have noted throughout, however, this reduction has the effect of generating a return—in harmony, in this case, with his preference for Patristic sources—to the Platonic theory of the soul and its understanding of the will as the intellect's self-determination. As Lubac himself recognized and defended himself against in *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, this project can appear to be an attempt to evade developments in Scholastic theology. It is for this reason that he fought so vigorously to show the continuity of his understanding with that of Thomist thought, including Scotus. The present chapter has shown, however, that Lubac was wrong to see this, along with his Neo-Scholastic opponents, as essentially as a distinction regarding the distinction of the natural and the supernatural orders, rather than principally about the proper distinction and union of the doctrines of creation and grace, and, within the nature/supernatural paradigm of that distinction, as a matter of the

will. Indeed, the whole of Lubac's project pivots around the achievement of just such a reduction of the will to the intellect. As should presently be clear, however, this reduction effectively renders the distinction between nature and the supernatural incoherent.

Karl Rahner correctly recognized this problem very early on in Lubac's writings. As noted in the introduction, the difference between Rahner and Lubac on this point, ultimately pertains to the willingness of the former to acknowledge a certain necessary and integral role for the subjective human agent in the perception of truth and the acquisition of understanding. It is for this reason, and on this basis, that Rahner would insist on maintaining a conceptual distinction between the "natural" possibility of experiencing grace and the actual, "supernatural" experience of grace as grace. In this sense, Rahner recognized that a proper analysis of the dynamism of human intellection entails a reference to human subjectivity and a level of transcendental analysis that requires the distinction of nature from the supernatural, rather than dissolving them, as Lubac had first argued in *Surnaturel*. Indeed, as I have claimed here, it is best to understand Lubac's later, ontological repetition of this theme as the more radical position, as it completely abandons the transcendental analysis of subjective intellection precisely in an effort to resist Rahner's proposal.

In Rahner, however, as we have seen, where this analysis entails the preservation of a transcendental distinction between nature and the supernatural, it does not link that distinction to the will. Rather, he understands these terms as factual realities of human experience that are an otherwise ontological reality of unity between creation and grace. De Lubac is right not only to resist this way of formulating the distinction on the grounds

that it makes no helpful contribution to our engagement with the divine reality itself, but merely preserve a purely theoretical hypothesis when what is needed is clearer recognition of the natural orientation of the whole of reality to God. And, on Lubac's Platonic assumptions, this is correct, for Rahner ultimately comes to the same conclusion as Lubac on this matter. Rahner insists on rejecting the Augustinian understanding of freedom and conceiving of finite human freedom in wholly ontological terms of self-determination. In this respect, Rahner himself has no clear basis for maintaining the distinction between nature and the supernatural as an actual metaphysical characterization of reality because it is a mere abstract designation of dogma.

In both cases, the dispute in question pivots on the Platonic understanding of the will, which is so central to the two thinkers' projects. Rejection of the distinction of the will from the intellect and desire is integral, in each thinker, to the dynamic articulation of the human person toward God. Yet, it is that very distinction that makes the gratuity of grace thinkable at all for the Roman Catholic paradigm. Thus, the no intelligible distinction of grace from creation can be made that is not purely transcendental. The transcendental attribution is not so much objectionable because of its incoherence, but because it literally implies, as Lubac himself recognized and argued in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, a denial of the *reality* of grace that is not always already given in being.¹²⁰ What we find, then, is that the nature/supernatural distinction is grounded, just as Lonergan had argued following Landgraf and Lottin, in the clear designation the category of the will from the intellect and desire. And yet, the contemporary discussion surrounding this issues has tended to be formulated in terms of a dynamic intellectualism

¹²⁰ This is what allows a thinker like Karen Kilbey to insist that Lubac and Rahner are ultimately saying the same thing. See her argument in Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy*, 116-19.

that overlooks these origins. The result is that the nature/supernatural paradigm itself, as Milbank has recently argued, is untenable—and this results in the collapsing of any coherent relation of the doctrines of creation and grace. It is this insight that is most important for my own analysis in the dissertation of the necessary orientation of a metaphysical ontology to privileging identity. For, once again, the difficulty is encountered at just the point that account must be made for the appearance of the *new* in terms consonant with but conceptually distinguishable in reality from the given.

Despite this problem, Lubac and Rahner were both absolutely correct to refuse the patterns of thought characteristic of Neo-Scholastics, such as Garrigou-Lagrange. It is clear that their attempts to overcome the positions propounded by Neo-Scholasticism are bound up with a desire not simply to overcome the division between nature and the supernatural, but to resist the kind of impersonal and rationalistic metaphysics characteristic of such positions. Their attempt to conceive of the freedom of the will in these Platonic terms was clearly a mark of a largely humanistic attempt to resist the overarching objectivity pursued by the regnant Scholasticism of the post-Vatican I Roman Catholic Church. This element is much more pronounced in Rahner, who explicitly links his understanding of freedom and his doctrine of grace to a metaphysical personalism set in opposition to distinction between created and uncreated grace. The difficulty we have been tracing throughout this chapter would appear, then, to involve the demand, on the one hand, to affirm a metaphysics that reduces or occludes the personal dimension of grace, but which is essential to the coherent articulation of the will that distinguishes creation from grace, or to deny the metaphysics that supports this understanding of the will and its concomitant distinction of creation and grace in favor of

a personlist understanding of grace. The resolution of this difficulty cannot be formulated in terms of the present paradigm, and will require looking in more detail at the Protestant response, and specifically the doctrine of justification by faith as articulated by Martin Luther.

CHAPTER III

SIN AND GRACE: A PROTESTANT PARADIGM

Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis begun in the previous chapter of the two dominant patterns of conceiving the union of creation and grace. My focus here, however, is the Protestant paradigm of “sin and grace.” The first section is devoted to specifying what it means to say that the Protestant pattern of thinking about creation and grace is characterized by a sin/grace paradigm. This will provide a context for the second section, which will discuss two thinkers, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth, who I will hold up as representative of the attempt to think the union of creation and redemption according to this paradigm. As with the previous chapter, this choice of figures should not be taken as a claim that Schleiermacher and Barth are spokespersons for Protestant theology in general, but only that their treatments of creation and redemption are representative examples of the union of these doctrines according to the pattern of Protestant theology. This account will supply the ground, in the second section, for a comparative analysis of both accounts, which will be oriented toward demonstrating how the sin/grace paradigm shares the nature/supernatural paradigm’s prioritizing of ontology as the locus for that union. They differ, however, in that Protestant thinking emphasizes the dynamism of the divine act such that categories of “event,” “encounter,” and “person” are foregrounded. As regards the question of the will, I note that this approach adopts a largely voluntarist (particularly Scotist) shape, which conceives of the will not in terms of

an intellectual appetite, but rather an infinite potency. I conclude the chapter with a critique of the adequacy of these assumptions to the task of uniting creation and redemption.

Justification, Election, and Covenant

The primary difficulty of comparing Protestant thinking on the unity of creation and grace to the Roman Catholic approach is specifying the nature of the relation between the two as concerns this question.¹ Generally, the two are treated either as different ‘things’ (as with apples and oranges) or different types of the same thing (as with different breeds of apples). Yet the approach I have adopted here, in choosing to focus on their way of uniting creation and grace, is more akin to comparing the products of different sources (as when simply examining fruit seeds). That specific task is much more complex than may appear at first glance. Doing so responsibly involves not only specifying the distinguishing marks of the object being considered—namely, the discrete “Protestant” way of uniting creation and grace—but also the disclosure of its basic differences from the Roman Catholic example, while simultaneously keeping their fundamental commonality in view.² And yet, as the history of the relationship between the Protestant and Roman Catholic confession attests, it is just this commonality and this difference that is not so easily demarcated.

This difficulty is due to three main factors. The first is the ambiguity of the designation “Protestant” as a discrete identity. The temptation is to follow von Harnack

¹ The reader should bear in mind that I am not directly addressing the question of the relationship between Protestant and Roman Catholic interpretations of the faith here.

² This latter task of commonality will have to await discussion in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. It will suffice here simply to note that this way of characterizing this process is intended only to render the discussion of Protestant and Roman Catholic differences much more complex than is often presumed.

on this point and yield to the temptation to isolate some essential and uniquely Protestant” kernel beneath the changing, historical husk of Christian doctrine.³ But, as Troeltsch rightly underscored in *Protestantism and Progress*, no such essential identity exists.⁴ “Protestantism” itself, he notes, as an interpretation of the Christian faith, is a reification of a set of diverse cultural, political, and theological concerns only coming into clear view in the sixteenth century, and representing the basic fragmentation of European culture. This fact alone makes the offering of an historical development, like that presented in the previous chapter, an impossible task, for there is no such stable point of reference even for its most distinguishing characteristic. Nonetheless, this very ambiguity regarding the specification of “Protestantism” is important. As Paul Tillich famously argued, inasmuch as Protestantism has shifted from “a political into a religious concept,” a “Protestant element in Protestantism” can be isolated, a “Protestant principle” that advances according to a kind of negative dialectic:

Protestantism has a principle that stands beyond all its realizations. It is the critical and dynamic source of all Protestant realizations, but it is not identical with any of them... On the other hand, it can appear in all of them; it is a living, moving, restless power in them; and this is what it is supposed to be in a special way in historical Protestantism. The Protestant principle... contains the divine and human protests against any absolute claim made for a relative reality... is the judge of every religious and cultural reality, including the religion and culture which calls itself “Protestant.”⁵

This kind of approach marks Protestant thought and identity as inherently dynamic, fundamentally resistant to the kind of metaphysical reasoning that marks the nature/supernatural paradigm. Yet while this orientation stands out as a distinguishing

³ Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

⁴ Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. W. Montgomery (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 34-40.

⁵ Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 196.

characteristic, alone it is insufficient, in its negativity, to sustain something that purports to be as definitive as a “Protestant paradigm.” Something more discretely positive must be brought into view.

John Howard Yoder offers an important, but not widely recognized, corrective to this point.⁶ Moving beyond Troeltsch and Tillich to the basic affirmation that drives this restless dynamism, Yoder emphasized the element of faithfulness to the Word of God as a basic receptivity to reinvigoration, correction, and guidance.⁷ This emphasis on faithfulness is significant to Yoder precisely because of its dynamic orientation. But what he has in mind here is not merely a kind of processional constitution of an absent content or the gradual historical unfolding of an otherwise purely formal content. Rather, he is lifting out the importance of an orientation toward the faithful reception of the Word of God by a specific people in a distinct time and concrete place. In this regard, he refuses a more abstract analysis of the Protestant gesture in order to insist that the specific shape and consequences of such reception cannot be predetermined for the simple reason that, if faith defines identity, it is as a positivity one *undergoes* and *receives*, rather than

⁶ The following point is made in multiple places in Yoder’s work, the most significant of which is cited below. However, the reader should also consult the discussion of the development of doctrine offered in John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002). It should be noted that, aside from slight differences in terminology and emphasis, this point as made by Yoder almost seamlessly corresponds to the understanding of scripture’s relationship to reason and tradition as articulated in the Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. The convergence is most apparent (and less shocking) when viewed from the perspective of the most insightful observations made by John Behr regarding the absolute priority of scripture in Christian doctrine. Behr has made his point in multiple locations. See especially John Behr, *The Nicene Faith, The Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004). See also the very helpful John Behr, “Faithfulness and Creativity,” in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West*, ed. John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri E. Conomos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 159-78. Behr also applies this claim to considerable doctrinal effect in his John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006).

⁷ See John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). I have here broadened Yoder’s claim, which is oriented toward “original sources.” By using it in this broader way I hope I expand it beyond the limits of Yoder’s Anabaptism.

produces and establishes. What Yoder intends here is to eradicate any merely negative determination of the content of Christian faith, and to uphold its fundamental positivity.⁸

When so conceived, the positivity of Protestant thinking is directly opposed to the kind of negativity envisioned by Troeltsch and Tillich as the distinctive mark of “Protestant” thinking.⁹

What is at work here is more than the application of a metaphysical “principle” in that it amounts to a distinct logic or order, a “grammar.” That is, the concern is much less to articulate the basis of the unity of the whole of reality, than to isolate the framework within which a set of complex, interrelated concepts disclose and retain their meaning.¹⁰ The concern is summarized as a resolute insistence on—and radical application of—the absolute priority of God’s initiative in the positive determination of the creature and its world. This positivity is important for how it reverses the negative emphasis of Troeltsch and Tillich, which presupposes a fundamentally competitive relation to the divine priority. I say this is a ‘grammatical’ point because it is most basically both dogmatic and formal, giving rise to a characteristically synchronic account

⁸ By negative determination, I have in mind Spinoza’s procedure in the *Ethics* in which the singularity of the one substance achieves determination only through the relation of contrast. See the discussion at Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 19-29, 63, 71, 86, 103, 55-59.

⁹ Perhaps most especially, as Barth indicates, against those such as Troeltsch and Tillich who affirm it in this fashion. See the reference to Troeltsch in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1: Doctrine of Reconciliation, 386-87. All citations from the *Church Dogmatics* are taken from Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-1977). Henceforth cited as “CD,” followed by appropriate volume, part, and page number.

¹⁰ For a good example of this, see Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment*. Tanner there adapts George Lindbeck’s notion of the grammatical structure of Christian doctrine. The present discussion is implicitly reliant on Lindbeck’s claim, which implies that his arguments are more properly at home in the Protestant scheme. See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984). This is especially true in light of the comment regarding the commonality between Hooker, Yoder, and Behr above. The question of the relationship between this grammar and reality is a live one that I do not intend to take up, though my observations throughout the dissertation regarding the metaphysics of the Protestant approach point in a suggestive direction.

of the parameters and content of the unity of creation and redemption, which are correlatively understood to be governed by an uncompromising commitment to the absolute priority of God as the lens through which to view the entire theological enterprise.¹¹ This synchronic account of doctrine, rooted in the absolute priority of God, is the source of the Reformation axiom that the proper knowledge of God and humanity are mutually correlative, that the truth of each is only disclosed when humanity is rightly related to God. Protestant theologians are all united in insisting that this right relation is faith alone, and thus the formality of this synchronic point of departure is already an iteration of the relationship between the doctrines of creation and grace *in nuce*.¹²

This more grammatical approach to the questions posed by these doctrines is in a fundamental tension with the metaphysical approach outlined in the previous chapter, and thereby results in a pattern of thought that is quite distinct from the Roman Catholic paradigm. Gerhard Ebeling has made this point well with reference to Luther's relationship to Scholasticism. Noting why Luther's thought is not "based upon...[a] fundamental continuity between nature and grace," Ebeling states:¹³

Certainly, Luther's view is not adequately represented by the mere negation of the hierarchical Thomist relationship between nature and grace. The difference which is unquestionably present clearly does not lie only in a different definition of the relationship between nature and grace, for it cannot be understood within the same conceptual scheme. The difficulty lies in the fact that the difference goes very much

¹¹ A synchronic account should be contrasted here with the otherwise diachronic approach of the Roman Catholic paradigm. This use is an application of the diachronic/synchronic distinction made in Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 97-120. That discussion should also be compared to his discussion of the "Saying and the Said" in Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 5-9 and 37-51. The reader should also consult the discussion of the diachronic and synchronic accounts of grace in Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 29.

¹² This is an important point because the Protestant position is often interpreted, even by its advocates, as advancing a claim tantamount to the absolute corruption of post-lapsarian nature, with the tendency to interpret Protestant thought as retaining an inherently "necessary" and "tragic" moment. But, as will emerge over the course of this investigation, the general logic of the Protestant position stands in contrast to this very notion.

¹³ The Finnish interpretation is famously opposed to this interpretation of Luther's position, calling attention to his "ontological" advocacy of deification. See the discussion in Chapter Five.

deeper than this. It is the basic concepts, or more precisely the fundamental questions they pose, which are different.¹⁴

Where a metaphysical approach is concerned with developing conceptual knowledge of the whole of reality, the Protestant emphasis on dogmatics asks first after the character, shape, and quality of the God/world relation as disclosed in the revelatory encounter of redemption.¹⁵ The most traditional pattern of Christian theology, running from creation to sin to redemption, is retained, but is not explicated metaphysically; rather, it is “intratextually” narrated according to the Biblical themes of God’s acts of election, justification, and covenant.¹⁶ The result is an emphasis on ‘personal’ and ‘relational’ themes over “substantialist” categories.¹⁷ This thinking begins from the standpoint of faith and proceeds according to the various affirmations generated from clusters of

¹⁴ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 143.

¹⁵ See the discussion of these differences specifically in terms of theological anthropology in Robert P. Scharlemann, *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 10-12 (especially n. 14). Scharlemann distinguishes between Aquinas’s “formal-objectivist” and Gerhard’s “dialectical-personalist” patterns of thinking, respectively. His categories have influenced both my designation of paradigms and my interpretation of them. Scharlemann’s way of formulating these questions has also (along with David Tracy, as mentioned in the introduction) helped to frame the perspective on the issues adopted in this dissertation as a whole.

The reader should also note that I am using the notion of “dialectic,” as both a description of the Protestant paradigm and specifically of Schleiermacher, in a way that presupposes Julia Lamm’s distinction between “dialogical-dialectic” and “speculative-dialectic” in Lamm, “Reading Plato’s Dialectics,” 1-25. Lamm’s work is instructive on numerous fronts, and this distinction has shaped the understanding of dialogue that informs the whole of this work. I mention this in relation to Scharlemann because Lamm’s distinction troubles the idea of too fine a distinction between a “formal-objectivist” and “dialectical-personalist” approach. As I am using Lamm’s distinction here, in connection specifically with Luther and Schleiermacher, the rejection of a “formal-objectivist” approach is coextensive with a rejection of “speculative-dialectic.” This introduces a nuance into Scharlemann’s categories. Further rationale for this association is given in the discussion of Luther that opens the subsection on Schleiermacher.

¹⁶ See Michael Root, “Schleiermacher as Innovator and Inheritor: God, Dependence, and Election,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43, no. 1 (1990): 97-98.

¹⁷ Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction*, 156. This is a consistent theme in the work of Emil Brunner. See especially Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1944), Emil Brunner, *Truth as Encounter*, A new ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 82-139, Emil Brunner and Olive Wyon, *Revelation and Reason; the Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 362-74. The first two of these are especially important for this study, and my formulation here of the characteristics of the Protestant paradigm.

scriptural concepts (e.g., sin, election, gospel, and law) and the patterns of relation between them (e.g., law/gospel and spirit/letter.)¹⁸

The doctrinal formulation that most fully expresses the relational quality of this redemptive encounter is “justification by faith,” which is grounded in Luther’s rejection of the appropriateness of the Scholastic *caritas* soteriology and its dependence on Aristotelian *habitus* to capture the Biblical teaching on justification.¹⁹ This requires Luther to insist on maintaining a distinction between “person” and “work” that, as Ebeling notes, conceives personhood not “on the basis of its potentialities and its activities,” but first according to that “passivity that constitutes man’s being, as his existence as a creature, as his relations to God and his standing in the sight of God.”²⁰ Grace, then, is not thought as a principle or basis of correspondence between a potentiality and its actualization, but as the initiation of a new relation with God.²¹ This basic difference is captured in the fact that Luther insists that grace entails a “substantial” rather than “accidental” transformation of the creature’s nature.²² Luther insists that the relation between God and the creature must be essential and definitive, and that a right relation always entails the absolute priority of God. The important point of note is that,

¹⁸ See Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction.*, which structures the treatment of Luther’s theology according to such contrasts: “philosophy and theology,” “the letter and the spirit,” “the law and the gospel,” etc. As I am using the term, “dialectic” (see n. 15 above) denotes *contrast* as opposed to *conflict* or *contradiction*.

¹⁹See Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 68-81. See also the discussion of Luther that opens the subsection on Schleiermacher below. On *caritas* and *habitus*, see Steven Ozment, “Luther and the Late Middle Ages: The Formation of Reformation Thought,” in *Transition and Revolution: Problems and Issues of European Renaissance and Reformation History*, ed. Robert M. Kingdon (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1974), 109-29.

²⁰ Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction*, 157.

²¹ Note that this is not necessarily an “individual” relation in the now pejorative sense.

²² This emphasis on the “substantial” consequences of this relation lies at the root of the Finnish emphasis on the role of *theosis* in Luther, and is explicitly developed in opposition to the more “ethical” and non-metaphysical reading of Luther developed by thinkers like Ebeling. This reading will be discussed in Chapter Five, but here it will suffice to note that I am in essential agreement with the Finnish interpretation, but believe they have overlooked an important element of the more ethical reading of Neo-Protestantism, and have too hastily repudiated it. My reason for this are adumbrated in this chapter and developed in full in Chapter Five.

because it is essential and definitive, the relation cannot be identified as the final term of the creature's activity, but must rather be its presupposition. Sin, then, cannot be a matter of corrupt capacities and limited choices, but is first and foremost a broken bond that conditions all subsequent performance.²³

What is captured here regarding relation in justification, however, is rooted in the decree of election and has its fulfillment in covenant.²⁴ Both election and covenant are relationally conceived, arising from the Deuteronomist history of Israel and Paul's development of that trope, each of which emphasize the distinctive priority of God's intention, ordination, and choice in the execution of redemption.²⁵ This is seen in the designation of Abraham as the father of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, and in the reception of the Promised Land. Protestant theology has consistently followed Romans 9-11 to reiterate the absoluteness of God's prerogative regarding those to be justified.²⁶ And "covenant" names the goal, the purpose, the intention of election that is actualized in justification, and specifically in terms of a relation. In this regard, election can be thought as the efficient cause of an effect for which covenant is the final. Yet, both

²³ In this way, despite Yoder's disinclination to follow Luther on justification, the same logic is repeated in Yoder's emphasis on the positivity implied by fidelity.

²⁴ On this theme, especially as set in opposition to speculative thought and elaborated in relation to speculative thought, see Brunner, *Truth as Encounter*, 142-45.

²⁵ See George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in *Anchor Bible dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1179-202.

²⁶ The difference between the Lutheran and Reformed confessions must be noted here. I have chosen to use the category of "election" here, which plays less of a prominent role in Lutheran theology than in Reformed. Nonetheless, it remains an important category inasmuch as it is tied to Luther's early theology and his appeal to *Deus absconditus* and the hidden decree of God in his dispute with Erasmus. The general invocation of the category here should be interpreted as comprehensively inclusive of both claims. The same must also be said of the category of "covenant," which is also more prominently invoked in Reformed theology. Once again, the same notion is a key element of Lutheran theology in that it is developed in various places, most particularly the matrimonial imagery of *The Freedom of a Christian*. For the importance of the category of covenant for Luther, as well as an important discussion of the relationship of his use of the term to Augustine, see the discussion of Luther in Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 58-80.

categories are conceived according to the personal and relational orientation disclosed in justification by faith, as its form.

This synchronic mode of reasoning according to the cluster of doctrines election, justification, and covenant provides the categorical scheme for the existential emphasis of the sin/grace paradigm.²⁷ Instead of adopting an approach conceived in terms of the corruption (sin) and transcendence (grace, the supernatural) of nature, this paradigm understands the creation/grace relation according to what is disclosed regarding election and covenant in the revelatory event and the experience of justification. Dynamic relation takes priority here over metaphysics in that dogmatics regulates the meaning of the terms and the apprehension of reality. Sin is thought as the violation of the covenantal relation to which election is ordered, and grace is the manifestation of God's continued fidelity in spite of this violation.

The priority of dogmatic categories and this emphasis on redemption creates a unique set of concerns in thinking through the unity of creation and redemption, which is distinct from—though not necessarily opposed to—the Roman Catholic paradigm. The difficulty in relating the two is, in part, due to the manner in which the synchronic mode of dogmatic reasoning is deployed to open out onto a diachronic priority of God in every God/world relation.²⁸ In the Roman Catholic paradigm, a diachronic movement of creation, fall, and redemption opens out onto a synchronic conception of grace's unity with creation. Yet, in the Protestant paradigm, sin and grace stands at the beginning in a synchronic relation within the order of redemption that opens out onto a diachronic order of creation. The difficulty this poses for uniting the doctrines lies not with specifying

²⁷ Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 17-67.

²⁸ See n. 11 on p. 98.

how grace is distinguished from creation, but with how creation is distinguished from grace. And it is precisely at this point regarding the proper differentiation of the doctrine of creation from that of grace that many of the most pressing difficulties in the Protestant treatment of these issues come into view. This is especially the case insofar as the approaches of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth are genuinely representative of the Protestant attempt to think through the unity of the two doctrines. Presently, I will continue my discussion of this paradigm in conversation with each thinker in the following subsections.

Friedrich Schleiermacher

The world is the totality of antitheses; the deity is the real negation of all antitheses

—Friedrich Schleiermacher²⁹

In contrast to Aquinas, for Luther, the intellect's natural appetite to know does not designate the primary anthropological truth. Rather, Luther wants to emphasize its gluttony. He does not do this to disparage reason as such, but to make a precise point about the limitations of intellectual apprehension as it is related to the natural capacities of the will. This can be clearly seen from the following theses taken from the early

Disputation Against Scholastic Theology (1517):

5. It is false to state that man's inclination is free to choose between either of two opposites. Indeed the inclination is not free, but captive. This is said in opposition to common opinion.
6. It is false to state that the will can by nature conform to correct precept. This is said in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel.
7. As a matter of fact, without the grace of God the will produces an act that is perferse and evil.

²⁹Quoted from John E. Thiel, *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre: Criticism and the Methodology of Dogmatics* (Bern: P. Lang, 1981), 150.

10. One must concede that the will is not free to strive toward whatever is declared good. This in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel.
11. Nor is it able to will or not to will whatever is prescribed...
20. An act of friendship [with God] is done, not according to nature, but according to prevenient grace. This in opposition to Gabriel...
29. The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole disposition toward grace is the eternal election and predestination of God.
30. On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace.³⁰

Luther's argument here is not referring simply to a corrupt, sinful human nature, but to the acts of human nature as conceived in relation to God.³¹ The will, he says, is always bound in its operations (i.e., captive) to a prior divine initiative, which he links explicitly to the doctrines of election and predestination, to which acts of self-determination can have only a negative relation when considered apart from its prior relation to God's promise in the covenant.³² Importantly, Luther stands in continuity with the Roman Catholic tradition as discussed in the close of the previous chapter when he claims that an unaided will cannot even conform to the "right dictate (of reason)."³³ And yet, Luther makes an important step beyond Aquinas here by linking the limitations of the will's

³⁰ Quoted from Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989). A similar selection is given from Ozment in Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 64.

³¹ See theses 8 and 9: "8. It does not, however, follow that the will is by nature evil, that is, essentially evil, as the Manicheans maintain. 9. It is nevertheless innately and inevitably evil and corrupt." Luther is not simply saying here that the nature is not evil, but *as sinful* it is innately evil and corrupt. Rather, as thesis 7 shows, his concern is to underscore how the will only performs the good by God's grace. This is a point not about the nature of the will, but about its limitations as self-determining. Apart from a proper relation to the God to whom it is ultimately captive, the will's self-determination is only an expression of self-preservation and gratification (see Theses 15 and 21), which is never positive but only negative, and therefore not free. This reading is further supported by Thesis 15 of the *Heidelberg Disputation*, written the following year: "Nor could free will remain in a state of innocence, much less do good, in an active capacity, but only in its passive capacity." This is an important extension of the analysis of the operation of willing that concluded the previous chapter. That Luther perhaps too simplistically correlates self-preservation and gratification with evil and perversion, at least in the earlier *Disputation on Scholastic Theology*, is another matter. That he clarified this by the time of the *Heidelberg Disputation* is clear by Thesis 16: "The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty."

³² See Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 58-80.

³³ In this respect, Luther's argument represents an important (and largely unrecognized) recovery of Aquinas' teaching on the matter in the midst of a late-Scholasticism entirely confused on the point.

freedom directly to the operations of the intellect in general and by not simply associating them with the presence or absence of the sanctifying love for God.³⁴ As he continues, explicitly connecting Aristotelian eudaemonism to a critique of speculative dialectical reasoning:

- 38. There is no moral virtue without pride or sorrow, that is, without sin.
- 39. We are not masters of our actions, from beginning to end, but servants. This in opposition to the philosophers.
- 40. We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This in opposition to the philosophers.
- 41. Virtually the entire *Ethics* of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. This in opposition to the Scholastics...
- 46. In vain does one fashion a logic of faith, a substitution brought about without regard for limit and measure. This in opposition to the new dialecticians...
- 54. For an act to be meritorious, either the presence of grace is sufficient or its presence means nothing. This in opposition to Gabriel.³⁵

In agreement with Aquinas on the insufficiency of the will, Luther here nonetheless still rejects the notion that an infused habit is sufficient. Whether understood (after Aquinas) as a rational appetite or (after Scotus) as an indifferent power, Luther is insisting that the Scholastic analysis of the will remains flawed insofar as it associates the perfection of self-determination with the realization of an essentially formal goal.³⁶ This manner of conceiving the will's operations remains essentially sinful, according to Luther, because it is premised on a negative relation between the purely formal possibility of virtue and its reality. This point deserves some elaboration.³⁷

³⁴ A distinction here must be drawn between the capacity of the intellect to receive rather than produce knowledge of God, and the capacity of the will to actively produce only self-assertion. In this regard, it is important that Luther's claim here is made against Scotus and Gabriel, each of whom develop a notion of the will's agency as fundamentally "indifferent" with regard to reason and "productive" with regard to its own self-movement. The difference is precisely that of whether first act is viewed as active or passive. See Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 39 n. 126.

³⁵ While the previous selection of theses from the *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* was taken from Ozment, this selection is quoted from Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*.

³⁶ As will be noted below, this goal is specified by the intellect. The difference in how this is the case between Aquinas' and Scotus' positions will be discussed below.

³⁷ The discussion of the will in Aquinas confirms that he does not wish to dispute this point. See Chapter Five.

For Luther, the idea that righteousness is attained through habituation into the production of virtuous acts is both metaphysically flawed and theologically dangerous. What it establishes is essentially a metaphysics of sin. The link here is to Aristotelian eudaemonism and a transgressive “logic of faith” that proceeds “without regard for limit and measure.” If an essential good specified by the intellect as its formal object receives determinate existential content (i.e., reality) only through the will that seeks to attain it, then the relationship between the two is viciously negative. The actualization of the ideal occurs because of the negation of its formality, and can only be negatively perpetuated by a further ideational negation that advances that relative achievement, which culminates when a complete correspondence of ideality and reality is produced (i.e., justification.) Righteousness, then, can only be thought as a production on the condition of its denial, which is rooted in the will’s desire for possession, which is the very pattern of intellection as conceived in speculative metaphysics. His point is simply that the goal must be presupposed as the basis of the process: “For an act to be meritorious, either the presence of grace is sufficient or its presence means nothing”; and “the singular disposition for grace is the eternal election...of God.”

The union of creation and grace in the sin/grace paradigm is premised on this fundamental insight. The question that is raised is aptly captured by Michael Root: “What must divine election be like if certain Reformation assertions are true about the incapacity of the self for salvation and the total confidence of the Christian may place in God?”³⁸ Luther’s critique of sinful willing and speculative intellection is captured in the

³⁸ Root, “Schleiermacher as Innovator and Inheritor,” 109. Cited from Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18.

second conditional clause of that sentence, which is presupposed by the Protestant paradigm as a whole. Root rightly notes, however, that what is in question here is the nature of election. And some account of the unity of nature and grace lies at the heart of whatever answer is given.

It is in relationship to this question that Schleiermacher's work is so important for my analysis. Much like Rahner's work, Schleiermacher's theological claims emerge in deep continuity with his broader philosophical commitments.³⁹ In this regard, his *Dialectic* is of paramount importance for framing the discussion of general human religiousness in the introduction to *The Christian Faith*.⁴⁰ Most important here is the manner in which those philosophical commitments forestall the possibility of any so-called "foundational" interpretation.⁴¹ As Manfred Frank notes, "strictly speaking, Schleiermacher does not have a metaphysics, if by this is meant a foundational philosophical doctrine."⁴² This marks the fundamental continuity of his *Dialectic* project

³⁹ My interpretation of the relationship of Schleiermacher's doctrine of election to his doctrines of sin, absolute dependence, and ecclesiology, as discussed in this chapter, is indebted to Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 16-103. His work to lift out that architecture in Schleiermacher, as well as to relate Schleiermacher to Barth, is convincing and presupposed throughout my discussion of these matters in this chapter. For further information on Gockel's influence see n. 46 below.

⁴⁰ Schleiermacher is a notoriously controversial figure in theology, with a number of disparate and conflicting interpretations of his work. This fact is only further complicated by the fact that the *Dialectic* is widely recognized as integral to the interpretation of his work, and yet the relationship between the different texts of Schleiermacher's *Dialectic* is complex and intricate, and no definitive edition exists. I have, thus, relied on the English Edition of the 1811 lectures on the *Dialectic* for my discussion here: Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Dialectic, or, the Art of Doing Philosophy: A Study Edition of the 1811 Notes*, trans. Terrence N. Tice (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996). Henceforth, this text will be cited as *Dialectic*, followed by page numbers. I have also relied, throughout, on several important interpreters of Schleiermacher. My reading of the relationship between the *Dialectic* and the Introduction to *The Christian Faith* is thoroughly indebted to the work in Thiel, *God and World*. My overarching interpretation of the *Dialectic* is guided by Jack Forstman, *A Romantic Triangle: Schleiermacher and Early German Romanticism* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), Manfred Frank, "Metaphysical Foundations: A Look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Thandeka, *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), Thiel, *God and World*.

⁴¹ On this point, see Frank, "Metaphysical Foundations: A Look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*."

⁴² See Lamm, "Reading Plato's Dialectics." and n. 15 above.

with Luther's critique of speculative dialectics. As Frank continues, Schleiermacher rejects that "metaphysics could grasp the highest object of the human mind, or that it could exhaustively deal with the essential matter of the human spirit."⁴³ As Thiel has argued in detail, the overlap between the philosophical approach of the *Dialectic* and introduction to *The Christian Faith* is best understood of as a matter of thinking properly⁴⁴ about what it means to know as one is on the way to knowledge.⁴⁵ The *Dialectic* specifies how we should properly think about God, the world, and ourselves on the way to knowledge about them, and the Introduction to *The Christian Faith* brings these rules to bear on the dogmatic task.⁴⁶ Though an exhaustive account is here impossible, I wish to lift out the interwoven themes between the texts that shed light on Schleiermacher's doctrine of election, specifically as a way of uniting creation and grace.

Schleiermacher's basic division of thought in the *Dialectic* is between the mind's "organic function," which corresponds to its reception of sense impressions (objects), and

⁴³Frank, "Metaphysical Foundations: A Look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*," 15.

⁴⁴My reading in this section on the role of proper thought in the *Dialectic* and its connection with the Introduction of *The Christian Faith* is indebted to Thiel, *God and World*. His argument for this connection spans the whole of that work. I have presupposed his argument throughout this section. There is also a deep Platonic influence here that should be noted in connection with this point. This connection is noted at Thiel, *God and World*, 14-16. Julia Lamm has made a similar point in Lamm, "Reading Plato's Dialectics," 1-25. See also Julia A. Lamm, "The Art of Interpreting Plato," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 91-108. On the point, see Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 1-11. Thiel discusses the limits of speculation in the *Dialectic* at Thiel, *God and World*, 28-31. Related to this point is the claim made by Thandeka that Schleiermacher's importance as the father of modern theology specifically with her claim that he "solved the problem of the gap in Kant's theory of self" (Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 83.) Schleiermacher's way of doing so, then, would not only be unique for what it preserves in terms of embodiment, but also for its consonance with Luther's critique of Scholasticism: namely, he does not seek to join ideality and reality in thought, but to disclose the unifying ground that is presupposed *in* yet always *eludes* thought.

⁴⁵Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 1-11. See Thiel, *God and World*, 14-17.

⁴⁶I have here read Thiel's work (see n. 44 above) on the connection between the *Dialectic* and *The Christian Faith* together with Gockel's analysis of Schleiermacher's architecture of election. Also influential on the question of election has been the analysis of Schleiermacher's understanding of providence and grace in Dawn DeVries and Brian Gerrish, "Providence and Grace: Schleiermacher on Justification and Election," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 189-208. Equally influential is Brian A. Gerrish, "Nature and the Theater of Redemption: Schleiermacher on Christian Dogmatics and the Creation Story," *Ex auditu* 3 (1987): 120-36.

its “intellectual function,” which corresponds to its active reasoning (subject).⁴⁷ These two functions deal with reality and ideality, respectively.⁴⁸ Both the organic and the intellectual functions compose the unity of the mind, and yet they are perpetually contrasted within thought, and especially thought about the mind itself. Thought, for Schleiermacher, is a unique process in that it necessarily presupposes the unity of the mind and the world, but it only occurs as the result of a contrast between itself and the world. That is, the unity that is presupposed by the mind and by which it knows its world, can only occur because of dialectical contrast.⁴⁹ The result is that thought can never achieve any final correspondence between itself and its object—most especially when the object under consideration is the mind itself. And yet, a corresponding unity between thought and its object is necessarily presupposed as the basis for thought. His point is simply that this unity between thought and its object does not and cannot be attained *by or in thought*. This claim regarding the fundamental correspondence of thought to reality and the impossible task of representing that correspondence in and to thought is integral to understanding the significance of his “feeling of absolute dependence” and its relationship to the doctrine of election.⁵⁰

Thought is not only a matter of contrasts between the organic and intellectual functions of the mind. Thought also forms concepts and advances judgments about the world in which it participates. This concept of “world” is misunderstood when it is considered in opposition to the mind in such a way as either to stand over against it or as that to which it must correspond. Rather, Schleiermacher says, “world” is that concept

⁴⁷ Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 19-21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-26. See Thiel, *God and World*, 20.

⁴⁹ Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 19-26 and 51-52. See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 69.

⁵⁰ See n. 44.

that most properly specifies the limit of all thought as determined by the organic function.⁵¹ Schleiermacher means to underscore that, precisely as a part of the world it represents, the thought “world” can never achieve perfect correspondence to its object without ceasing the dialectical contrast that is thought. “World” is, then, the concept of “a totality made up of a plurality of specially relativized unities,”⁵² where “accordingly the world and all that is in it stands under the form of contrast.”⁵³ All contrasts are included because “world” marks that limit of what the mind can think, while nonetheless denoting what rightly encompasses, conditions, and determines the mind itself.⁵⁴ Or, as he puts the same idea in the 1822 lectures, “...world = unity with the inclusion of all contrasts.”⁵⁵

Standing at the other pole of “world” is the concept of “God.” Whereas “world” marks the limit of what the mind can think with regard to its organic function, “God” marks the limit of all thought in relation to the intellectual function. What Schleiermacher has in mind here is the notion of “pure reason,” apart from the organic function, which is no more a possibility for the mind than is a ‘thought’ that is pure sensation. Just as thought ceases at the point where it coincides rather than contrasts with sensation, so is it also at the point where it coincides rather than contrasts with reason. “God” is that concept in which the “sphere of identity between”⁵⁶ all contrasts is posited in thought as the “ideal germ of thinking,” which “lacks the form of contrast.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 43.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25, especially n. 34.

⁵⁵ Quotation taken from Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 114.

⁵⁶ Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 64.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

Or, as he once again put it more succinctly in the 1822 lectures, “God = unity with the exclusion of all contrasts.”⁵⁸

In this way, “God” and “world” are transcendental categories of thought, which are necessary and constitutive of all thought. Both serve to delineate what exists prior to the subject/object distinction that gives rise to thought.⁵⁹ This assertion means that any thought of the world (as the totality of being, including all contrasts, and marking the objective limit of thought) must simultaneously include the concept of God (as the totality of being, excluding all contrasts, and marking the subjective limit of thought) and in such a way that God is not thinkable without reference to the world or the world without God.⁶⁰ The world limits thought as the origin of the union of thought and being, and God limits thought, not as the contrast to the world, but as the *non aliud* that is *totaliter aliter*⁶¹--that is, the Source of both the world and thought.⁶² In this way, Schleiermacher’s *Dialectic* is in continuity with Luther’s objection to Scholastic speculative metaphysics in that he marks out a proper designation of God, in thought, but

⁵⁸ Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 114.

⁵⁹ See Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 39-41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33-41.

⁶¹ This way of framing the matter is indebted to Gerhard Spiegler, *The Eternal Covenant: Schleiermacher's Experiment in Cultural Theology*, *Makers of Modern Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Spiegler’s claim that Schleiermacher’s exemption of God from relativity leads to the anthropological interpretation of his theology is bizarre, since Spiegler’s assertion appears to be grounded in an Hegelian conception of the Idea in dialectic that Schleiermacher is explicitly working against (186-92). Furthermore, his claim overlooks the important role of the Redeemer in the inauguration of the Christian content of the feeling of absolute dependence. As the conclusion of this chapter suggests, however, Schleiermacher certainly did not see this insight through to its proper conclusion – and had he done so, much of Spiegler’s concerns would have been more directly answered.

⁶² Thiel notes that the 1828 lectures on *Dialectic* achieve clarity on the God/world relation that is absent from the previous accounts when he arrives at the formula: “The world is not without God, God is not without the world” [*Die Welt nicht ohne Gott, Gott nicht ohne die Welt*] in which “both ideas are not the same” [*Beide Ideen sind nicht dasselbe*] (Thiel, *God and World*, 159.) Thiel refers to this formula as a “cautelen” and argues that it is “a noetic correlation of God and world [that] is a philosophical construct that defines the nature of proper thinking itself.” (160.) These claims support his thesis that dogmatics, for Schleiermacher, is the articulation of the content of *Gefühl* within thought, specifically in terms of the regulative function exercised by a proper correlation of God and world in thought. His argument is convincing and has influenced my reading.

which proceeds according to the non-speculative designation of thought's own limit. In this way, Schleiermacher is consistent with Luther's critique of "theologies of glory."⁶³

This co-determination of thought by God and the world is directly related to the meaning of the phrase "feeling of absolute dependence" (*das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*) as used in the Introduction to *The Christian Faith*.⁶⁴ When sensibility and reason are dialectically contrasted in thought, what lies outside the proper purview of thought is represented within thought as the concepts, "world" and "God." But when the world of thought is expressed in the world lying outside its proper purview, then the proper category, within thought, is not concepts but judgments. Judgment marks the point at which thought leaves off and willing begins. As Thandeka has convincingly⁶⁵ argued in relation to this point, this means that Schleiermacher understands the self as the unrepresentable point of embodied transition between intellect and will, where thought leaves off and willing begins. This point marks the basic, presupposed unity between thought and being, which can be experienced in feeling, but not properly thought or willed. It is an immediate awareness of union with world, and is

⁶³ See n. 44 above. Indeed, it should be noted that he does so in a way precisely in line with what David Burrell has argued are the proper implications of Aquinas' doctrine of analogy (see David B. Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973). and David B. Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).) This would suggest not only that Luther's critique of Scholasticism and its consequences represent a return to and elaboration on Aquinas' teaching regarding the will, but that that critique is already contained within Aquinas himself. See also Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Both Thandeka and Thiel make this claim. See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 83-110, Thiel, *God and World*, 97-141.

⁶⁵ Mariña takes issues with Thandeka's account of Schleiermacher's "embodied" rather than transcendental subject. See Jacqueline Mariña, *Transformation of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 180 n. 29. Mariña argues that Schleiermacher's recognition of immediate self-consciousness implies that the self cannot be *reduced* to its embodiment, but retains a necessarily transcendental element. She further suggests that this does not mean, even for Kant, a "loss" of the embodied self. While Mariña's point is well taken, it is not at all clear to me that this contradicts Thandeka's argument regarding Schleiermacher, though it clearly contradicts her premise regarding Kant.

therefore without an object. Thought and will both cease here as they coincide directly with the world.⁶⁶ But, simultaneously, this site is the origin of that free spontaneity of will by which the agent determines itself in relation to the world. Thandeka calls this, following Dieter Henrich, that irreducible “subject-less” awareness,⁶⁷ wherein the immediate reciprocity of mind and matter is disclosed, and which is the basis for the spontaneity of subjective freedom.⁶⁸ With no object or subject, this awareness is neither conceptual nor judicious, but only the feeling [*Gefühl*] of one’s relative dependence and freedom.⁶⁹ As it is the concept of limit that includes all relative contrasts, “world” is the appropriate concept for the thought of this feeling as expressed in thought. However, as there can be no absolute feeling of spontaneous freedom, the concept of God is the appropriate reference in thought for the feeling of absolute dependence that accompanies the feeling of relative dependence. “God” is the appropriate concept because what is encountered here is that upon which one is always absolutely dependent as the co-determinate of oneself and the world: the “*whence*” of the feeling of absolute

⁶⁶ See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 83-110. She notes that, in the 1831 lecture, Schleiermacher understands passive selfhood as that aspect in which: “We are given back to or return to ourselves as that which is being received.” Her argument is that Schleiermacher is pointing to what remains of the self when neither thinking nor willing is occurring as their “common border,” and that this is the necessary presupposition for Kant’s philosophy, which he never sufficiently demonstrates, and without which thinking would be impossible. It is the moment wherein the self experiences, or feels, itself in distinction from thought, and thus demarcates a genuine limit for thought that is not subject to Hegel’s critique. It also displays both the fact and priority of an awareness of embodied life. She argues that this experience is the encounter with the very limit of thought, and precisely not as a thought. My interpretation of the significance of the feeling of absolute dependence is indebted to her work on this point.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 94-100. The latter is Thandeka’s alteration of Henrich’s original term, “subject-less knowing.” She notes that she is coining the term is to preserve Schleiermacher’s distinction between knowing and feeling.

⁶⁸ Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 39-47.

⁶⁹ See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 97. Thandeka notes that Schleiermacher is careful not to specify God here as the Source of this feeling, because this would give a conceptual determination to the feeling that would destroy it.

dependence.⁷⁰ In this regard, God ‘appears’ for Schleiermacher as the rupture of conscious, reflexive self-determination, because God dissolves all presumptions that the continuity of the self results from and corresponds to subjective activity.⁷¹ In this respect, Schleiermacher is not only in complete agreement with Luther regarding the limitations of speculative metaphysics, but does so for reasons consistent with his emphasis on God’s absolute priority over the attempt of the self to establish itself through the dialectical contrasts of negative determination. God appears, rather, as the rupture of subjective spontaneity.

Philosophy can recognize this feeling and its conceptual significance for thought, as specified in the *Dialectic*. What it cannot do is give that feeling determinate content. Dogmatics alone serves this purpose as it sets forth, in words, the mediate self-consciousness of this immediate feeling of dependence as it is shaped, expressed, and nurtured by the corporate life of the Christian church.⁷² This tie to the Christian church is integral, as the feeling of absolute dependence only appears within thought as a determinate expression of thought, which is shaped by a discursive community’s apprehension of God. Jacqueline Mariña has stated it well in noting that, though the self is immediately aware of the unity of itself with the world in feeling, it only knows itself as expressed (willed) in the world, where that self can apprehend itself as one object

⁷⁰On codetermination: Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 39-47. See also Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), § 4. Henceforth cited as “Christian Faith.” See also, Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 101. On the “whence” of feeling, see Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, § 4.3-4.

⁷¹ See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 94-110.

⁷² As Thiel has noted, though, the proper thinking developed in the *Dialectic* continues to structure the formulation of the role of *Gefühl* in dogmatics. Using the *Dialectic* as its guide for proper thought, Schleiermacher refers to the Christian church as the community that supplies discursive and intersubjective content to the otherwise immediate awareness of God-consciousness. See Thiel, *God and World*, 175.

among, to, and for others.⁷³ Pious self-consciousness of one's absolute dependence only occurs with others who express, share, and mediate that feeling to one another corporately in a shared language and culture.

This has particular significance for the division of *The Christian Faith* into two parts.⁷⁴ The first treats the Christian self-consciousness of absolute dependence in its most general expression as a universal awareness of the God/world relationship shared by all human beings, and superiorly mediated by monotheistic religions. Schleiermacher correlates this awareness with the doctrines of creation and providence, which likewise corresponds to the specification of the divine attributes, and a treatment of the original

⁷³ See Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 109-45. I return to a discussion of this aspect of Mariña's work below.

⁷⁴ This way of relating the two parts of *The Christian Faith* presupposes the work of Robert Sherman, *The Shift to Modernity: Christ and the Doctrine of Creation in the Theologies of Schleiermacher and Barth* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2005). On the point, see Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §§30-31. Sherman notes that Schleiermacher designates three basic forms that dogmatic utterances can take. These are those that describe human "states of mind," those that present conceptions of the divine attributes, and those that present expressions regarding the nature of the world. The first form is the most fundamental form, and presupposed by the other two (§30.2.) This fact is at work in the system, where the First Part describes the Christian religious self-consciousness in general, as it is considered apart from the antithesis of sin and grace, and the Second Part takes it up under that aspect, divided into the two aspects of sin and grace. Thus, he notes that the system has nine distinct sections with the doctrines explicated in each being correlated with the others. Sherman argues that this must be recognized in order to fully appreciate the interconnection between the treatments of doctrines. As Sherman insists, this entails that Schleiermacher's doctrine of creation is only properly understood in its relationship to all those propositions made throughout the system of the third form that relate to the nature and constitution of the world (Sherman, *Shift to Modernity*, 7.) The same point is also made well by Richard R. Niebuhr, "Christ, Nature, and Consciousness: Reflections on Schleiermacher in the Light of Barth's Early Criticisms," in *Barth and Schleiermacher: Beyond the Impasse?*, ed. James O. Duke and Robert F. Streetman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 28. In this regard, as he treats the doctrine of creation explicitly under the first form of human "states of mind" in the First Part (§§40-41), this has important consequences in that it shows that this doctrine is not, for Schleiermacher, based upon a general account of the human experience of the world (or consciousness), but is rather rooted in the immediate experience of the particular consciousness of sin and grace that was brought about by the Redeemer. When this is further presented as under the general feeling of absolute dependence, it is because of the experience of the world that this redemption elicits that the Christian theologian extrapolates to claims about the nature of the world as a whole. As Sherman has noted, this entire procedure is explicitly Christological for Schleiermacher: "it is guided toward Christ from the very outset, and...its content must...be influenced by Christ as well, because it its 'genetic predisposition.'" (Sherman, *Shift to Modernity*, 29.) I have repeated this argument in some detail in this note because of its importance for my reading of the role of election its relationship what I call an "ontology of encounter" in Schleiermacher, and because of the way such a reading contradicts many crass assumptions about Schleiermacher and his intricate and complex project.

perfection of the world. Part two refracts the general awareness of absolute dependence as it is universally expressed in monotheistic religion into its more specific determination in the pious Christian self-consciousness, according to the experience of sin and grace.⁷⁵ This experience is the self-conscious form under which the feeling of absolute dependence appears for the Christian as it marks the transition from alienated (sinful) to regenerate (redeemed) consciousness.⁷⁶ In keeping with the claim that God's appearance marks the rupture of subjective self-determining action, Schleiermacher notes that the Christian doctrine of sin is the expression of the awareness that all human alienation arises from that corporate life (i.e., the world) that is organized around and takes shape solely through the subjective self-determination of spontaneous human action.⁷⁷ This awareness, however, is only possible because of the prior recognition of grace, which is the awareness of fellowship with God that arises solely through God's self-communication in Jesus Christ and mediated in his community, the church.⁷⁸ Sin and grace are thus always dialectically related to one another in pious Christian consciousness in much the way sensation and reason and world and God are for general human consciousness. In fact, they arise as specific Christian determinations of just those

⁷⁵ See Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §§30-31. DeVries and Gerrish note that absolute dependence itself is a decidedly dogmatic category for Schleiermacher, and not a general structure. This fact is expressed, they say, in the original creedal designation of God as "Pantocrator," which Schleiermacher understands to more fully express absolute dependence than any other Christian formulation. The absolute priority of God in the world's preservation is correlative with the doctrine of providence, which Schleiermacher understands as coincident with the traditional Reformed account of predestination. See Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §36-41. and DeVries and Gerrish, "Providence and Grace: Schleiermacher on Justification and Election," 190-91.

⁷⁶ See Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §63.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, §§ 63,65-74, 81.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, §63.

elements of thought, specifically as the form under which humanity's universal and absolute dependence on God's activity is apprehended.⁷⁹

This framework is the proper context within which to situate Schleiermacher's doctrine of election so as to see its significance for a study of the union of creation and redemption within a Protestant sin/grace paradigm. Matthias Gockel's study remains the most important in-depth treatment on this significance, and his comparison of Schleiermacher and Barth has influenced my analysis in both this and the following sections.⁸⁰ As Gockel notes, because the feeling of absolute dependence involves one's self-conscious unity with the total system of relative contrasts (i.e., world), God's creation and preservation of that world must necessarily be thought of as distinct from (i.e., excluding all contrasts) but correlative with (i.e., as the *whence* of those contrasts) the totality of historical and material being.⁸¹ In pious Christian awareness, however, these facts of existence are mediated by the corporate life of the Christian community and there apprehended in such a way that conscious fellowship with God is possible. That fellowship is made possible by the work of the Redeemer, whose own perfect awareness of dependence on God makes actual an awareness of the whole of reality as the singular, unconditional, and self-communicating decree of election to the eternal fellowship with God that he enjoyed.⁸² Not only this, but history is the successive unfolding of that

⁷⁹ Ibid., §62-64.

⁸⁰ Gockel has not, however, discussed in detail the relationship of the *Dialectic* to these questions. For this reason, I have read him together with Thiel (see n. 46 above.) Particularly instructive is Gockel's note that Schleiermacher's discussion of creation and redemption in *The Christian Faith* is structured according to the argument of the 1819 essay, "On the Doctrine of Election, especially in regard to the Aphorisms of Herr Dr. Bretschneider" (Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 16 n.1.)

⁸¹ Gockel's helpful phrase is "the absolute causality of God is at once principally different from and equal in scope with the relative causality of the world" (Ibid., 99.)

⁸² Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §§116-17, 20, 64. See also Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 37-103.

decree, moving toward a complete manifestation of that fact, through the triumph of the church's mediation of the Kingdom of God.⁸³

Creation and redemption are here conceived as a single divine act or decree, which is oriented toward the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, first entering the world in the God-man and mediated in history by the Christian church.⁸⁴ Election is the Christian doctrine in which God's universal creation/preservation as apprehensible by general human consciousness is shown to coincide perfectly with the Christian church's mediation of the awareness of that rupture of sinful self-determination in the form of the grace that discloses the whole of reality as the theater of God's self-communication for the sake of fellowship with humanity.⁸⁵ This claim involves the affirmation that, though dialectically contrasted in thought, what is revealed by God's justifying grace is the order of the entire universe toward complete fellowship with God. Importantly, this unity is not apprehended by virtue of the dynamism of speculative intellection, but specifically according to its rupture by that which absolutely conditions and determines it in its very activity. For Schleiermacher, though this unity is a fact of reality, awareness of that fact is predicated on the prior disruption of spontaneous self-determination by its ground. As a

⁸³ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §§ 116 and 64-69. See Gerrish, "Nature and the Theater of Redemption: Schleiermacher on Christian Dogmatics and the Creation Story," 196-216.

⁸⁴ As Gockel notes, because consciousness of this general truth of election is not itself generally apprehensible apart from its actualization in the life of the Redeemer, and only as mediated by the Christian church, election is an essentially ecclesiological doctrine, insofar as it is ordered toward the realization of the Kingdom of God. It is also divided between the reprobate and the elect insofar as the order of the whole involves some who do not participate, at any given time, in that decree. While Schleiermacher insists on a single decree of election in God's preservation and governance of the world, that decree is nonetheless received as differentiated according to the antithesis of sin and grace. Sin is not a reality for God, nor is it a general structure of consciousness. Rather, it is a specific determination of pious self-consciousness as communicated by the Redeemer, arising together with and in contrast to the knowledge of his grace. More specifically, the social arrangement of the church that mediates this God-consciousness puts into relief the infirmity of all other social arrangements that do not have as their bases the propagation of the Kingdom of God inaugurated by the Redeemer. These claims are made at Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 37-103.

⁸⁵ See *Ibid.*, 99. This word "theater" is taken from Gerrish, "Nature and the Theater of Redemption: Schleiermacher on Christian Dogmatics and the Creation Story."

result, the unity that is achieved occurs insofar as creation is understood as a refracted dimension of the experience of the event of grace (i.e., justification), and not vice versa.

Karl Barth

But God Himself is the Son who is the basic truth of that which is other than God. As the Son of God this Other is God Himself. But God Himself becomes Another in the person of His Son. The existence of the world is not needed in order that there should be otherness for Him. Before all worlds, in His Son, He has otherness in Himself from eternity to eternity. But because this is so, the creation and preservation of the world, and relationship and fellowship with it, realized as they are in perfect freedom, without compulsion or necessity, do not signify an alien or contradictory expression of God's being, but a natural, *the* natural expression of it *ad extra*. The world is, because and as the Son of God is.

—Karl Barth⁸⁶

Barth's thought is notoriously diffuse, even baroque. This makes a comprehensive account of his ideas on creation and grace a matter of grasping his undergirding logic. In this regard, his relationship to Schleiermacher is not incidental, since Barth's thinking matured in reaction against trends of Liberal Protestantism he associated directly with Schleiermacher. Of particular importance to Barth was the perceived need to evade an anthropocentrism he detected in Schleiermacher's theological starting point. Nonetheless, as we will see, the distance he places between himself and Schleiermacher also serves to shed light on a real proximity regarding the central dogmatic affirmations structuring their thought.⁸⁷ This is particularly the case in relation to their appropriation of the central doctrines of justification, election, and

⁸⁶ *CD III/1*, 317.

⁸⁷ Demonstration of this proximity between Schleiermacher and Barth is the overarching thesis of Gockel's work. Being convinced of his argument for the architecture of Schleiermacher's doctrine, I am also convinced by his reading of Barth and particularly his account of the development of Barth's doctrine of election. As with Schleiermacher, his work there, regarding the relationship between the two thinkers and the development of Barth's own position on election, is presupposed by my treatment of Barth here. The reader is directed to see Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 104-97.

covenant. The place to begin with Barth, then, in discussing the relationship of these themes to this thought on the unity of creation and grace, is with his treatment of the interweaving of creation and covenant in Volume Three of the *Church Dogmatics*. There, Barth shows himself to be in close proximity to Schleiermacher, but in such a way that the distinction between them is most clearly brought into view.

Barth opens *CD III/1* with a discussion of the necessarily dogmatic character of the doctrine of creation, noting how it is distinct from scientific and philosophical knowledge.⁸⁸ The affirmation of the world as God's creation, he insists, though no doubt a matter of reality,⁸⁹ is strictly apprehensible as such only in faith.⁹⁰ In keeping with the Protestant paradigm's insistence on the creature's proper relation to God's absolute priority, Barth notes that this reality is only apprehensible to faith because faith is the only proper relationship of the creature to the Creator.⁹¹ Most importantly, however, Barth notes that the apprehension of the reality of this relationship is not only a matter of faith, but is to be interpreted as such in strictly Christological terms. Faith is not to be understood in Schleiermacher's terms—as he understood them—of the implicit religiosity of general human consciousness, but rather directly in relationship to scripture's witness to Jesus Christ as the self-communication of God's eternal Word.⁹² Faith is not correlated to a general human feeling of dependence, but to Jesus Christ alone, in relationship to whom we have certain knowledge of the ontological reality of the world as God's creation.⁹³ In this way, Barth insists from the beginning on the basic

⁸⁸ *CD III/1*, 3-41, especially, 22ff.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-22.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-34.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 34-41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 22-34.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

correlation of creation and grace, which Schleiermacher only states at the end of his presentation. Barth intends to make creation itself a manifestation and extension of the grace of redemption, specifically by noting, in the wake of Jesus Christ, that the world is brought into being and sustained by the Word of God.⁹⁴

This close correlation of faith and knowledge, redemption and creation, and the reversal of the traditional presentation of their relation, leads Barth directly to a treatment of the relationship of creation and covenant in his exegesis of Genesis 1-3. Barth treats creation here as the first work in the history of the realization of the covenant and its fulfillment. He designates that first work as the “external basis” for the covenant and its realization, and the covenant itself as the “internal basis” for the act of creating. In making these claims, Barth is simply unfolding the logic of his position regarding the priority of faith in relation to Jesus Christ as the basis for the knowledge of the deepest truth of the world’s reality. Such knowledge cannot, he insists, be gleaned from any analysis of the world or human consciousness, but can only be brought to light by the history of the covenant fulfilled in the Jesus Christ. The world, then, is brought into being specifically in order to be the stage upon which God will achieve the purpose of perfect fellowship with humanity.

It is important to underscore not only the mutual and primal correlation of the two categories of creation and redemption in Barth’s theological imagination here, but also his emphasis on the dynamic, historical, and material character of this relation. Barth is unfolding an unmistakably Hegelian logic, which sets the stage for his overtly Hegelian structure of the subsequent volume IV. This logic of the relation of covenant and

⁹⁴ Ibid., 29-31.

creation is Hegelian inasmuch as Barth is conceiving God's covenantal intention as the implicit, formal essence (*an sich*) that is to be historically unfolded in the material existence (*für sich*) of creation and eventually culminating in the arrival of the concrete universal (*an und für sich*) of the God-man, Jesus Christ, who as the sublation of the distinction between God and humanity, achieves genuine fellowship between them.⁹⁵

Barth is by no means consistent in his application of this logic, which stands in necessary tension with other integral components of his thought. However, the significance of this point cannot be overlooked, since this orientation toward the dynamic logic of becoming that he draws from Hegel is specifically intended to stand in contrast to any approach—such as Schleiermacher's emphasis on absolute dependence—that would construe creation as a “general concept of a first cause or the final contingency of all things.”⁹⁶ In the excursus passage following this statement, for example, he explicitly links this idea to Schleiermacher's “whence”, and noting that “a general conception of a common, supreme and final Whence of all things” will “not suffice” as a statement of the Christian confession of “an absolutely definite God—who is also recognized as the Lord and Ruler of that history—and of that world's dependence on that God.”⁹⁷ This orientation toward the distinct, concrete determination of God's being in Christ is an element he insists on as essential in *The Humanity of God*, and he would continue to uphold it as the framework for his treatment of the relationship between creation and reconciliation, from volumes III to IV.

⁹⁵ This reading of Jesus as the “concrete universal” is indebted to Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 86-87.

⁹⁶ *CD III/1*, 44-47.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 45.

Barth's purpose in adopting this approach, in the first instance, is to emphasize the historical character of the covenant as the dynamic unfolding of grace in creation. It is this element, specifically, that he emphasizes in his discussion of the unique status of the Genesis accounts as a "saga"⁹⁸ of the encounter of God and humanity.⁹⁹ His exegesis of the first Genesis account of creation is specifically concerned, in this regard, to correspond to his claim that creation is the "external basis of the covenant."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the saga unfolds as a vision of a world wholly dependent on the care of the creator, and absolutely directed by the creator's purposes: the world is the "freely willed and executed positing of a reality distinct from God," which is specifically a "work of His love" in which God "wills...to reveal and manifest it [love] in His is own co-existence with it [creation]."¹⁰¹ In these ways, Barth intends to display the manner in which creation "is the presupposition of the realization of the divine purpose of love in relation to the creature,"¹⁰² and states explicitly that "even the very existence and nature of the creature are the work of the grace of God."¹⁰³ On this front, Barth makes a fundamental distinction between creation and the covenant—or the grace on which it is grounded—even as he irreducibly unites them one to another. In fact, in a statement that is virtually identical to Lubac's discussion of the twofold gratuity of creation, Barth declares: "the existence and being of the one loved are not identical with the fact that it is loved."¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Ibid., 81-92.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 60-81.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 94-228.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰² Ibid., 96.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 97. Barth's statement that creation is not the inner basis of the covenant is perhaps a significant qualification of this comparison to Lubac. This is the case inasmuch as Lubac makes the inscription of a supernatural destiny the second gratuity that follows the original gratuity of creation. Barth effects an interesting reversal of these gratuities, the implications of which we cannot investigate at present. Suffice it to note, however, that this distinction is tied to the different paradigms in which these visions are

If an understanding of creation as the external basis of the covenant is concerned with the existence of the one God loves, then the consideration of the fact that the world is loved is concerned with the relationship of the covenant itself as the “internal basis of creation.”¹⁰⁵ Barth correlates the second Genesis account of creation in relationship to this particular aspect of his doctrine of creation, understanding that account as “the history of creation from the inside.”¹⁰⁶ To offer a history of creation “from the inside,” for Barth, means to explicate reality in terms of its relationship to God’s care and purpose, which alone gives them meaning—a meaning that is, once again, only apprehensible to the eyes of faith. In terms of the second creation account, this means that the creature “does not merely exist, but exists meaningfully,” with a “purpose and plan and order.”¹⁰⁷ This is a purpose that is “solely by reason and in accomplishment of the revelation of the glory of God’s free love” of which the act of creating is the “deed and event.”¹⁰⁸ In speaking of these purposes and linking them directly to their orientation to the grace of reconciliation, Barth boldly states that creation’s “nature is simply its equipment for grace...pure promise, expectation and prophecy of that which in His grace...God plans for man and will not delay to accomplish for his benefit,” which carries with it the consequence that the covenant cannot be understood as the external basis of creation, but only creation as the external basis for the covenant.¹⁰⁹ The internal basis of creation is simply the fact that it is “intrinsically determined as the exponent of

elaborated. Lubac’s speculative ontological vision leads him to see the fulfillment of the God-human relation as a *telos* inscribed within the dynamic structure of human intellection, while Barth understands this fulfillment as God’s work of determining the creature. That the former is irreconcilable with the later, and the latter irreducible to the former is the subject of the following chapter on Augustine.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 228-329.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 232.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 229.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 230.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 231.

His glory...for the establishment and the history of the covenant...[and as] that which was to become God's partner in this history."¹¹⁰

Barth's concerns in this regard are to express the different facets of God's affirmation of created reality. He specifies these facets under the heading of the three categories of "benefit," "actualization," and "justification." Regarding the first, Barth notes that the truth of creation as benefit consists in the fact that it is, most fundamentally, an expression of the benevolence and beneficence of God's life.¹¹¹ This is the case specifically because creation is to be thought of as advantage and profit for the creature, as it opens up the possibility of fellowship with the benefactor, God. This notion of benefit also implies, in addition to the possibility of fellowship, a necessary distinction between God and the creature, which is also affirmed by God and perfectly coincides with what Barth means by actualization.¹¹² The simultaneity of benefit and actualization also entails the fact of justification, which Barth insists must be thought of in terms of the actual constitution of the objective goodness of the creature in the actuality of its discrete existence. All of these are different yet interconnected aspects of God's primordial "Yes" to creation: what is a gracious and caring gift to the creature constitutes it as an actual and good reality alongside Godself.

Like Schleiermacher, Barth is clearly concerned to conceive the unity of creation and redemption in terms of a single divine decree, preceding the act of creation and governing its development. Creation is to be understood as the external expression of this decree. From this standpoint, alongside Schleiermacher, Barth can be seen to be

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 331.

¹¹² Ibid., 344.

working toward an affirmation of the basic theological truth of the Reformed doctrine of election and reprobation, while repudiating its more terrible implications. Additionally, both thinkers' attempt to conceive the unity of creation and grace according to the terms of the Reformed doctrine of election means that the paradigm of sin/grace is the lens through which the doctrinal problem of unity is conceived. Nonetheless, as Gockel documents, Barth's unique reworking of the logic of election, in *CD II/2*, is the framework within which to understand his treatment of the fulfillment of the covenant as the *telos* of the creation, his affirmation of the world's justification in the doctrine of creation.¹¹³

While the covenant is the internal dynamic of which creation is the expression, election is the ground of that relation, and redemption is its mediation. The important aspects of these two affirmations are worked out in *CD II/2* and *IV/1* and *IV/2*, respectively, each of which frames the treatment of creation in *III/1* and *III/2*.¹¹⁴ As regards the significance of election for Barth, if we are to follow Gockel, at least after the time of the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, the doctrine is associated solely with the historical person of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁵ Whereas Schleiermacher advanced beyond traditional Reformed doctrine by thinking creation/preservation as the singular expression of God's one decree to fellowship, Barth insists on a more dynamic account and historical account of God's covenantal intentions. As a result, he distinguished between election and creation as refracted dimensions not of nature or Christian consciousness, but of the

¹¹³ The reader is directed to see the arguments at Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 164-97. It is this same framework that Gockel notes displays his proximity to Schleiermacher.

¹¹⁴ Gockel notes that *CD IV* cannot be adequately understood apart from grasping the importance of the revision of election in *CD II/2*. See *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 134-57.

history of the advent, crucifixion, and resurrection of the man, Jesus Christ. Like Schleiermacher, Barth insists that the doctrine of creation is not to be understood as an account of the world's origins, but as an account of the world's purpose: namely, election. For Schleiermacher, it is the totality of the world and its history that displays this election. In time, all of humanity is both elect and reprobate inasmuch as they become aware, through justifying grace brought by the Redeemer, of the sin/grace dialectic that conditions self-consciousness. This is an election that is mediated to the entire world through the cultural and linguistic agency of the church, which mediates fellowship with the Redeemer. But Barth is adamant that election refers to Jesus Christ alone as the mediator of God's self-determination to be the God of the covenant. In this sense, creation is the consequent expression of that divine determination, and election is the ground of that determination. As Barth states in *CD II/2*, God determines in all eternity to be God *as Jesus*. The important point in this regard is not primarily that this establishes the role of humanity in creation as God's covenant partner. Much like the doctrine of creation itself, this is merely a secondary concern that is more fundamentally derived from God's primal election to be the God of the covenant as Jesus Christ, which is Barth's understanding of the expression of God's being as love.

This importance of this for the sin/grace paradigm is most readily captured in relation to the doctrine of reconciliation worked out in *CD IV/2*. As he deploys it here, the doctrine of election shows Barth firmly in the Reformed tradition of supralapsarian election and reprobation. God's decision to be God as Jesus Christ occurs ontologically prior to any possibility of human merit, and is grounded in nothing more fundamental than the good pleasure of God's decree. Here that the significance of Barth's Hegelian

logic becomes most pronounced in a version of Luther's "wonderful exchange." For what is conceived in the doctrine of creation as the realization of an essence in and through the world's existence is redoubled as God's basic self-relation in the person of Jesus in the doctrine of reconciliation. In the person of Jesus, the essential nature of creation as "equipment for grace" is manifested in the historical existence of this human being Jesus, who is the perfect actualization of that essence as covenant.

Barth repeats this through a series of dialectical relations and reversals that converge around the person of Jesus. As pertains to the covenantal essence of creation, Jesus is considered in his status as the divine Son of God under the heading, "the Lord as servant," which shows Jesus to be the obedient Son, journeying into the "far country" of creation, to be the "judge judged in our place," whose obedience is vindicated in the "verdict of the Father" at the resurrection. Barth interprets this obedience as the negation of the prideful disobedience of humanity, which actualizes "real" humanity, and justifies it in him. According to Barth, it is the historical fact of Jesus' obedience that is grace: the essential covenantal ground for which the world was created, and it is only in the light of that obedience that sin is truly apprehended and humanity justified as participants in the covenant.¹¹⁶

In the second instance, the doctrine of reconciliation is related to the covenant of creation inasmuch as Jesus is considered in his status as the Son of Man: "the Servant as Lord." Barth presents Jesus here as the exalted Son, in his "homecoming" to the Father, as the "royal" human being, receiving the rightful place beside the Father. Such exaltation overcomes the sloth that characterizes the misery of disobedient humanity, and

¹¹⁶ *CD IV/1*, 413

manifests the true freedom of the children of God in the sanctifying work that is the immediate and inseparable consequence of justification. In this respect, grace is not only given as the obedience of the Son, but is likewise in the exaltation of humanity in history, in and through the gift of the Holy Spirit that establishes a Christian community.

Barth thus conceives the unity of creation and grace according to a distinctly Hegelian punctuation of the logic of election, justification, and covenant. He thinks creation as the first moment in the dynamic, historical unfolding of the covenant as the essential form of creaturely reality. This ontological basis of reality, however, is only noetically disclosed in the person of Jesus Christ. But Jesus is not merely the condition of possibility for such knowledge, as both the electing God and the elected individual, Jesus is the ontological coincidence of the covenantal essence in historical existence, and thereby serves the same function as the “concrete universal” in Hegel. God’s eternal election to be God *as* Jesus Christ, which is simultaneously God’s election *of* Jesus Christ, sets up justification as the mediating concept generated by the concrete universal (Jesus) that is the basis for the objective manifestation of the covenant in-and-for-itself.

An Ontology of Encounter

[In margin: The error in Schleiermacher's dogmatics] is that for him religiousness is always really a condition, *it is*; he represents everything in the sphere of being [*Væren*], Spinozian being. How it becomes [*vorder*] in the sense of coming to exist [*blive til*] and in the sense of being maintained does not really concern him...This is of minor concern to Schleiermacher. He treats religiousness in the sphere of being.

—Kierkegaard¹¹⁷

[Barth’s] concern was not just epistemological; it was not just to exclude the attempt to know God on any other basis than that of the Word incarnate in history...Barring the

¹¹⁷ Sören Kierkegaard, *Journals*, X² A 416-17 *n.d.*, 1850

door to speculation was not an end in itself. What was really at stake... was divine ontology.

—Bruce McCormack¹¹⁸

Both Schleiermacher and Barth have here developed their accounts of the unity of creation and grace according to the paradigm of sin and grace. The reader should recall that this paradigm interprets the traditional Christian narrative of creation, sin, and redemption “intratextually” rather than metaphysically, such that the categories of election, justification, and covenant are given precedence and punctuated in terms of relational dynamism.¹¹⁹ This has the effect of rendering the unity of creation and redemption less a matter of the transcendental status of reality in relation to God’s act, and more a matter of the perception and reception of that act. The purpose of this discussion has been to emphasize the continuity between these two positions, but a recounting their differences will be necessary to open that discussion.

In both Schleiermacher and Barth, the decisive element in their deployment of the sin/grace scheme concerned the interpretation of the shape of divine election. The differences between the two are not finally about the status of election as the category through which creaturehood is properly ascertained, but about its proper object and meaning. As we have seen, for Schleiermacher election designates the most precise dogmatic determination of God’s universal preservation—and our feeling of absolute dependence on it—as described in accordance with the God-consciousness received from the Redeemer, mediated in the fellowship of the Christian community, and experienced

¹¹⁸ McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 187.

¹¹⁹ As noted above, Schleiermacher does not use the category of covenant, explicitly. But that it is not absent from his thought is clear from title of Spiegler’s work. See Spiegler, *The Eternal Covenant*. The term is consonant with his emphasis on “fellowship” with regard to the relationship between the Holy Spirit and election in Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §§121 and 64-69.

within dialectical self-consciousness.”¹²⁰ Because God’s preservation occurs prior to the subject/object division that constitutes self-consciousness, thought cannot itself supply (i.e., produce) knowledge of the content of this reality without, by means of a purely negative determination, fundamentally reducing it to sin. Rather, in keeping with the structure of absolute dependence, Schleiermacher insists that such knowledge results only where consciousness of fellowship with God arises as “resting upon a communication from the Redeemer, which we call Grace.”¹²¹ As thought, this knowledge is necessarily divided between the dialectical poles of sin and grace as these characterize the spontaneity and receptivity of thought as simultaneously alienated from God on the basis of its own activity, and yet nonetheless in fellowship with God because of what it receives from the Redeemer. The most basic ontological truth is, then, known as not merely that of our absolute dependence on God’s preservation, but that this one act of preservation is directed toward the arrival of perfect fellowship of God with humanity.¹²² It is only because of our redemption that we know this. And because the church is the site where this fellowship is both mediated and actualized, election is principally an ecclesiological doctrine, treated in terms of the origin of the church and the communication of the Holy Spirit.¹²³ The union of creation and redemption, then, is achieved in the church where the fellowship of the Kingdom that God intends for the whole of reality is now realized.

¹²⁰ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, § 62.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, § 63.

¹²² We know the formal cause of God’s preservation (i.e., efficient causality) as an election toward a final cause of perfect fellowship.

¹²³ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §§ 115-25. See Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election*, 99.

For Barth, this way of framing matters makes it impossible for Schleiermacher to sustain anything more than a purely formal distinction between creation and redemption. Schleiermacher is clearly not guilty of Barth's charge that a general account of the feeling of absolute dependence controls the whole of his theology. At least this does not mean what Barth interprets it to mean. Nonetheless, Barth does correctly perceive that the transformation wrought by redemption is itself co-extensive with God's singular act of creation—and it is this to which Barth objects. His problem lies with Schleiermacher's treatment of redemption as merely an elaboration upon and extension of the world's ontological integrity. Barth's own position, however, shows that he is not *stricto sensu* opposed to this line of thought as long as it is framed such that the radical ontological implications of redemption are given their due. The result is an equally paramount emphasis on election, but formulated such that Jesus himself is the ground and goal of the whole of reality, rather than its highest and most pristine exemplar. The focus is no longer upon the ecclesial mediation of Jesus' perfect God-consciousness, but upon the ontological consequences of the reality of Jesus himself. Consequently, because God determines to be Godself as Jesus for humanity, this election is the ground of all God's acts *ad extra*. This makes his arrival, death, and resurrection the existential actualization of the covenantal essence of the whole of reality. Creation and redemption are united here solely in his person.

This also results in interesting comparison to the approaches of Lubac and Rahner. In the main, Schleiermacher understands the relationship of creation to redemption in terms consistent with Rahner. He differs from Rahner only in his uncompromising opposition to grounding that union in the dynamism of speculative

intellection, which, following Luther, he takes as the proper model of sin. Barth's position is in this manner closer to Lubac. Methodologically, he is consistent with Lubac in rejecting transcendental analysis in favor of a strictly theological starting point, and he develops a union of creation and grace that is based upon a formal and primordial distinction. He differs from Lubac only in making God's decision for grace the basis of creation, rather than creation the basis for grace.

As I argued in the previous chapter, my claim is that two common assumptions regarding the category of Being and the function of the will are decisive for this approach. These assumptions serve to unite of creation and grace within an *ontology of encounter*. By "ontology of encounter" I mean a way of thinking that seeks to articulate ultimate reality on the basis of the concrete experience of the event of existence, and in terms consonant with the philosophical category of Being. "Ontology" here retains its designation as a pattern of thought that not only emphasizes the philosophical category of Being, but interprets reality such that identity, intellection, and participation are granted priority. Thus, an ontology of encounter will seek to interpret the concrete experience of the event of existence accordingly. In what follows, I will treat each of these characteristics in turn, focusing on their roles in the work of Schleiermacher and Barth.

An ontology of encounter is distinguished from its metaphysical counterpart in that the meaning of the category of Being is established on the basis of the concrete experience of existence, rather than speculation. Beginning with a general analysis of Being in abstraction from existence is judged inappropriate and deceptive in that the movement from the ideal to the real can never be finally achieved. Rather, reflection on reality must start from the encounter with existence, recognizing that every attempt to

formulate an account of the whole in abstraction from this encounter—even when grounded in that encounter—has cancelled its regulative status. This also pertains to the speculative move from the real to the ideal, which can only achieve an ideal union of the two at the expense of the regulative function of the real. In this regard, it is important to recognize the significance of justification not only as the site of existential encounter, but specifically as the sole basis for a proper ontological identification.

For both Schleiermacher and Barth, justification is that site. In Schleiermacher, this is the case because, as genuine regeneration, justification marks “the situation of the individual in his transition from the corporate life of sinfulness to a living fellowship with Christ.”¹²⁴ Since every form of self-knowledge is corporately mediated, the only manner in which self-consciousness stands “looking at itself reflected in thought and finding a consciousness of God included there” is through the mediate “common life” of the Holy Spirit that is the divine element communicated in the church.¹²⁵ As the grouping of election and Holy Spirit in the doctrine of the church clarifies, knowledge of oneself as an elected beneficiary of God’s good-pleasure is bestowed by the corporate life. It is through the personal, relational encounter of that corporate life that one identifies oneself as a justified child of God.¹²⁶ Similarly, though Barth significantly alters Schleiermacher’s ecclesiological emphasis, he nonetheless understands justification in terms of relational encounter. Indeed, for Barth, justification is the objective fact of human identity as disclosed by the man Jesus Christ alone.¹²⁷ Identification as a justified child of God occurs on the basis of one’s relation to Jesus alone: namely, whether in faith

¹²⁴ Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, § 107.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, § 116.3, §§ 22-23.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, § 109.

¹²⁷ *CD IV/1*, 628-31.

one sees oneself in him.¹²⁸ Ecclesial life, gathered by the Holy Spirit, is then the expression and consequence of the faithful encounter with the man, Jesus Christ, and not its basis. Justification here is a category conceived by both thinkers in wholly personal and relational terms, and is deployed specifically as a mode of ontological identification.

This identification, though, is also *intellectualist* in character. No ontological change is affected in a subject because one comes to have faith in Jesus. On the contrary, for both Schleiermacher and Barth, in their different ways, human standing before God is objective and ontological because of its grounding in election. Justification, however, marks the epistemic recognition of this truth, which for both is only available *through faith*. In Schleiermacher, as shown, this is a matter of possessing consciousness of God as a determination of self-knowledge, which arises as a result of the active acceptance of one's absolute dependence as conditioning the whole of life (faith).¹²⁹ For Barth, the structure exactly corresponds to this, only its proper object is Jesus Christ rather than the more general state of absolute dependence. It is because of our response in faith to the person of Jesus Christ alone that we know the truth of our ontological identity. In this regard, justification is that existential event of personal and relational encounter in which is provoked a corresponding response of faith, which properly identifies us by disclosing the ontological truth of our election. Barth understands that truth as coincident with Jesus Christ, while Schleiermacher conceives it as coincident with the divine government of the world. In both instances, this is a matter of the intellectual apprehension of the ontological fact of election.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 632. The church has an important and integral role to play here to be sure, but it is understood as the gathering of the faithful, rather than the basis for faith.

¹²⁹ Note this is not self-consciousness, but self-knowledge—i.e, the thought of the self, not awareness as such.

What is disclosed is not merely proper identification of oneself according to the cognitive apprehension of the ontological fact of election. Each of these cohere as a common *participation* in the covenant. Here the difference between Schleiermacher and Barth is principally that of language. What Barth speaks of explicitly in terms of “covenant,” Schleiermacher invokes under the heading of “fellowship.” The meaning is the same for both and carries the same connotation. What is disclosed in the justifying encounter that provokes faith is knowledge of oneself as a participant in the fellowship/covenant decreed in the ontological fact of election. In Schleiermacher, this is a matter of coming to apprehend oneself within the common life of the church as participating in the divine/human fellowship of the Kingdom of God toward which all of reality is ontologically ordered. In Barth, this is a matter of apprehending oneself as a participant in the divine/human covenant realized in the event of Jesus Christ to whom all of reality is ontologically ordered.

This pattern repeats the basic characteristics of ontology, as discussed by Levinas, which has guided our investigation thus far. This is the notion that ontology is marked by a perception and designation of essences (*esse, ousia*) as the most basic and necessary structures of beings (*ens, ousia*) in their manifestation. And, in doing so, ontology seeks to express the origin of the object in its most universal sense, thus rendering the apprehension of difference a function of identity, and singularity a variant of participation. Although Schleiermacher works with a dialectical method that precludes the possibility of ever adequately representing the origin of an object of thought, he nonetheless develops an account of the origin of subjective consciousness in its dependence on an ontological ground (election), which in its cancellation of subjective

agency determines the self-identification of that subject (justification) through its participation in a particular form of corporate fellowship (covenant). The ground, identity, and goal disclosed in the event of encounter, then, are shown as essentially united in Being as the mediation and manifestation of the single divine act of preservation.¹³⁰ And since this truth is not apprehended on the basis of speculative intellection but of a socially mediated existential event, this marks the convergence of identity and intellection in the disclosure of the truth as participation.

The same must be said of Barth, though in slightly different terms. He explicitly refuses to reduce the unity of creation and grace to the singular act of preservation, wanting to insist instead on the radical ontological consequences that follow from his understanding of Jesus Christ as the electing God and the elected human being. By emphasizing the singularity of the human being Jesus, Barth opts instead to develop a more Hegelian understanding of the concrete universal. As a result, he develops an account of the origin of existence in its dependence on an ontological ground (election), which is determines the identity of human beings (justification) through their participation in his fellowship with God by way of his common humanity (covenant). The ground, identity, and goal disclosed in the encounter is shown here as essentially united in Being as mediated and manifested in the singular person of Jesus of Nazareth. And since this truth is also not speculatively apprehended but arises from the event of faith in Jesus Christ, this also marks the convergence of identity and intellection in the disclosure of the truth of participation. This is because, when Jesus is acknowledged in faith such that the truth of one's ontological identity is subjectively appropriated, Jesus

¹³⁰ Recall that Schleiermacher retains the ontological difference.

Christ is simultaneously disclosed as the universal mediator of the covenantal essence historically unfolding in existence.¹³¹

This is what it means to say that both Schleiermacher and Barth unite creation and redemption according to an ontology of encounter. Each develops an account of the personal, relational encounter, cohering with, mediated by, and manifested in Being, as disclosive of the final essence of reality. The fundamental identity of this reality is intellectually apprehended by way of proper participation (i.e., faith) in the event of relational encounter that is the final term of reference for all reality. This has the effect of yielding an identity between the two terms that are related, and does so with reference to Being as their common term.

Whereas the intellect was the primary and most distinguished aspect of human being in the nature/supernatural paradigm, participation holds that place in the sin/grace paradigm, and does so specifically in terms of personal relation. This is most clearly the case for Schleiermacher inasmuch as intersubjective ecclesial relations mark the site wherein knowledge of one's place in God's eternal decree is received and actively appropriated.¹³² In Barth this relational emphasis is perhaps more clearly pronounced inasmuch as both the *ordo cognoscendi* and the *ordo essendi* are singularly personal in that their content is the man Jesus alone. What is rejected in this pattern of thought is any immediate identity of knowing and being. This distinction is consistent with the post-Kantian force of each thinker. Each insists that all knowledge is grounded in thought,

¹³¹ Bruce McCormack has done much to underscore this aspect of Barth's thought, noting just how it implies a highly modified conception of *analogia entis*. The dynamic encounter with Jesus Christ reveals the most fundamental, originary, and necessary connection between the self and the other to be that of their common participation in Being. See McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 183-200.

¹³² This reference to the "intersubjective" aspect of Schleiermacher's work anticipates the discussion of Jacqueline Mariña's work below. See also n. 73 above.

which requires representational mediation for the apprehension of its object. Each insists, in keeping with the dialectical distinction between subject and object that is the condition of thought, that knowledge is only coincident with being provided a proper participatory relation precedes that cognitive division. In other words, thought arises out of and reflects a network of relations that precede it, and only adequately correspond to that network when rightly aligned with it as always already a participant in it.

This distinction between knowledge and being, as we have seen, nonetheless retains an important relationship with intellection as related to the matter of freedom. That relationship is not the same as discussed in the previous chapter, where, as the most proper aspect of humanity, the dynamism of the intellect was understood as coincident with freedom as the basis for the capacity for self-determination. On the contrary, though a similar relation is at work here, because Schleiermacher and Barth understand intellection as determined by its participation in a relation that precedes its execution, freedom is not to be associated with the capacity to follow thought, but rather with that unobjectifiable aspect of the mind that is the condition of possibility for thought.¹³³ Freedom arises out of what evades objectification, even to itself. Rather than simply conceiving freedom as a capacity for self-determination in relation to a good designated by the intellect, this approach takes shape as a more primal indeterminacy. Once again, as with the previous chapter, the nature of this capacity for self-determination must be understood in relation to what both thinkers mean by the will.

This can most readily be seen in Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*. As noted above, Schleiermacher understands thought to arise out of the mutual determination of the

¹³³ See Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, 19-29.

organic (objective) and intellectual (subjective) functions of the embodied human being, and thinks of those functions as equally active and passive according to the perspective from which they are viewed. While the intellectual function is most properly a spontaneous will-to-know, such willing is purely potential unless activated by sensibility.¹³⁴ Likewise, the presentations supplied by the activity of the organic function are mere chaos without the conceptual ordering supplied by the spontaneous activity of the intellectual function.¹³⁵ When considered in itself, apart from organic determination, thought is most fundamentally a spontaneous will-to-thought, wholly unaffected by being. This is not thought, but rather its active ground. Insofar as it is unaffected, this will-to-know is wholly indeterminate and cannot act apart from the determination supplied by sensibility.¹³⁶

Schleiermacher has two distinct notions of will here. Similar to Scotus' pure self-moving potency, he thinks of the sheer capacity of the will in terms of a radical indifference associated with the unobjectifiable spontaneous impulse of subjective thought.¹³⁷ Yet, in recognizing this spontaneity as purely formal,¹³⁸ Schleiermacher

¹³⁴ See Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 19-26. See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 63-92.

¹³⁵ See Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, 24 n. 34, 40, 63, 69.. See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 63-92. What Schleiermacher is uncovering here is the way in which "pure thought" can only be conceived of as a "pure will" with no ability to produce what it intends, a distinct determinate thought. All such determinate thinking can only be relatively conceived insofar as it achieves its intentions on the basis of an activity it has received (Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 76-77.)

¹³⁶ See Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 85.

¹³⁷ The relationship of this impulse to passivity is complex. On the matter, see Jacqueline Mariña, "Schleiermacher between Kant and Leibniz: Predication and Ontology," in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 73-91. See also Frank, "Metaphysical Foundations: A Look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*," 15-34. This connection of this idea to the Scotist understanding of will cannot be here traced. For this see Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 84-89. Bourke notes the connection between Scotus, Ockham, Suarez, and Descartes. This is a clearly post-Cartesian notion, however, in that such willing is the active ground of determinate thinking, as opposed to being subsequent to intellectual thought, as in Scotus. This reflects the post-Suarezian influence and development of this idea carried out in Descartes. Note that the emphasis here is on the notion of "productivity" See Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 39 n. 126.

develops a concomitant notion wholly consonant with Aquinas' position of intellectual appetite.¹³⁹ Jacqueline Mariña has argued convincingly that these two positions are finally irreconcilable.¹⁴⁰ The point for Schleiermacher, however, according to Mariña, is that each is irreducibly a matter of individuality insofar as they are tied to subjectivity.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ It must be noted that this way of describing the relations reflects the late-Scholastic confusion of form and act, or first and second act, investigated so thoroughly by Lonergan. Such is the significance of the Scotist legacy reflected in post-Cartesian and post-Kantian Idealism and Romanticism. Nonetheless, although the terminology is confused (spontaneity, activity, etc.), Schleiermacher has here actually overcome its limitations. What Schleiermacher has identified as the passive-spontaneity of subjective intellection is identical to Lonergan's discussion of Aquinas' understanding of the passive—and therefore formal aspect—of the first act of the intellect. In this regard, assuming Lonergan's analysis of Aquinas is correct, Schleiermacher effectively reconstructed this position quite independent of his influence.

¹³⁹ This is especially so in that, once this will-to-know is so determined, it actively works within this dialectical movement of activity and passivity to conceptualize its world in thought, and to judge those concepts in connection with its activity in that world. This entire process is consistent with Lamm's discussion of "dialogical dialectic," rather than a "speculative dialectic." (See n. 15 above and Lamm, "Reading Plato's Dialectics.") This is also notably distinct from the idea of will noted in the previous chapter with Lubac and Rahner, each of whom render it an ontological principle.

¹⁴⁰ See Mariña, "'Schleiermacher between Kant and Leibniz,'" 90-91. Although she discusses them under the heading of epistemological realism, that discussion is fundamentally connected to the understanding of freedom insofar as her critique pertains to the spontaneous and non-objectal status of subjectivity.

¹⁴¹ Jacqueline Mariña has argued convincingly that Schleiermacher's ethical thinking developed from his earliest attempts to come to terms with the contradiction implied by Kant's intellectualist understanding of the moral law. Mariña notes that this problem pertains to the intertwined matters of how a purely intellectual principle could serve as motive for the will to perform an ethical act and the problem of its transcendental freedom (see Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 18-25.) As she recounts the problem Schleiermacher encounter, in order for the moral law to serve as motive, it must affect desire and therefore be receptive in its connection to sensation; and yet, in order to preserve freedom, the moral law must be rational and directly tied to transcendental subjective spontaneity. Mariña traces the development of Schleiermacher's thought on this matter, which she notes culminates in his discussion of the impossibility of a feeling of absolute freedom in *The Christian Faith*. She notes that the connection of this idea lies with his understanding that all ethical willing is grounded in a representational judgment regarding the desirability of a good. (Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 15-42.) Mariña lifts out that Schleiermacher recognized over time that this power of representation is tied to the first spontaneity of the self in its orientation toward thought, and therefore, like the self, cannot be objectified and is transcendental. This is the mark of genuine freedom within rather than apart from its world, because the self is present and active even in its reception of sensible affections (see Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 130-31.) That is, the reception of sensible affections is bound up with the activity of the subject that receives them, and in such a way that the self cannot be thought of as absolutely determined by that reception, and thus makes a necessary and irreducible contribution to its apprehension of the world. In all of this Mariña's work is convincing, and I have presupposed it here. I have relied on Mariña's excellent work on the development of Schleiermacher's ethical understanding throughout this section.

The difficulty in Schleiermacher's vision, with regard to the larger argument I am developing in this dissertation, is that, though he has made a real advance over the modern understanding of freedom he has received from late-Scholasticism, he has not successfully broken with it. He continues to be linked with an understanding of the spontaneity of the self that is ultimately Scotist in origin, and does not recognize the passivity of the first act of form. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 39 n. 126.

Spontaneous subjectivity arises directly from the immediate dependence of the self on God, even as it arises from and is delimited by the world of contrasts to which it is necessarily bound. The subject, thus, exercises her freedom within those delimitations to actively contribute to the intersubjective social world of which she is part, and in which she is rendered an object of knowledge for herself. While the spontaneity of self-consciousness is immediate, self-determination, like self-knowledge, is mediate and intersubjective.¹⁴²

Barth's position is much less abstractly conceived, tied as it is directly to dogmatics. The question of freedom is not principally an anthropological problem, except insofar as humanity is first understood as God's covenant partner. Freedom can only be specified as the negation or affirmation of this most fundamental of relations.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, the anthropological vision Barth develops is one in which the human being

¹⁴² Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 109-45. As Mariña insists, intersubjective dialogue is the domain in which freedom is manifested for Schleiermacher, specifically as a subjective phenomenon, which is delimited by other subjects and therefore ethically determined. She also notes that this is inseparable from the notion of individuality that is inseparable from the embodied particularity of the other. If the agent is solely a confluence of extrinsic, objective forces, this amounts to the absence of all agency (Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 136-37.) Furthermore, she notes that individuality is central to Schleiermacher's account of freedom because it is through the individual that the divine activity is manifested in such a way as to be known, not conceptually, but ethically insofar as a free individual refracts the divine activity in her very "limitations" (Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 138.) I have found Mariña's analysis on this point in Schleiermacher particularly inspiring, which in combination with Lamm's analysis is of "dialogical-dialectic" (see n. 15 above), have influenced aspects of my own constructive proposal in Chapter Six.

¹⁴³ The kind of freedom of the will I am pointing to here does not stand in contradiction to John Webster's claim that Barth's understanding of freedom is essentialist, and therefore opposed to Sartre's. See John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 224-25. As Webster notes, Barth's position is like Luther's in that it implies that "moral selfhood is derived from, and intimately bound to, a source external to the self, and that the severing of that bond leads to incalculable moral losses." (225.) The difference is, as I have pointed out, that this external relation is only epistemically "external" for Barth, because it is ontological. Jesus Christ is the ontological basis and ground of the covenant, epistemic acknowledgment of which makes possible the creature's act of genuine freedom. Webster is right to insist that the model here is that of Augustinian-Calvinism, and that Barth is specifically working toward a vision opposed to the notion of the will's freedom conceived of as indifference, but it is an entirely different matter whether this coheres with his account of the creaturely response does not presuppose a Cartesian structure, if not ontology. Luther is more complex on the matter, but retains the notion of a real ontological transformation grounded in an external encounter.

is ensnared by her own desires specifically insofar as she is unable to designate her properly liberating epistemic object.¹⁴⁴ Second, this relationship is tied to Barth's discussion of the Word of God. In what is clearly an account consonant with Lubac, Barth insists that the encounter with the Word of God is not a matter of an abstract capacity, which he links explicitly to a Cartesian dualism.¹⁴⁵ Rather, the concern is with the concrete historical and material encounter with the reality of the event of the Word of God that alone gives knowledge of God.¹⁴⁶ Such knowledge then becomes a "determination of the existence of the person who has the knowledge."¹⁴⁷ In this way, as Mangina notes, no conceptual mediation of the event of encounter is possible apart from participation in it.¹⁴⁸ Mangina argues that the self-determining freedom arising from this event is the very positive self-determination of the creature.¹⁴⁹ This is what allows Barth

¹⁴⁴ See the discussion of humanity at *Ibid.*, 66-70. This is the reason Barth understands anthropology in *CD III/2* as an essentially Christological doctrine. His designation of "real man" refers to the relationship between God and humanity as specified and actualized in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ supplies the only proper knowledge of human beings. The point I am drawing out here is that Jesus Christ is the proper object of for the specification of human willing. In doing this, I have relied on Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God*, *Issues in Systematic Theology*; (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). I am also indebted to Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*.

¹⁴⁵ See Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 35.

¹⁴⁶ See *Ibid.*, 32-45. As Mangina underscores, Barth's point is that it is with the actually existing human being as addressed by the Word that theological anthropology is concerned. This is the basis for his insistence that knowledge of the reality of God's Word only becomes possible in the event of revelation itself (Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 35.)

¹⁴⁷ Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 36. Mangina goes on to make the important point that this knowledge-as-determination is directly correlative to our experience.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* One cannot coherently abstract oneself from the event of such determination without betraying it. This fact is intimately tied to Barth's argument that our correspondence to God occurs as an *analogia relationis*. I have made this association in Joshua Davis, "The Fruit of the Tree: On the Affirmation and Use of Analogy," *Princeton Theological Review* 15, no. 1 (2009): 23-36.

¹⁴⁹ Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 36. Colin Gunton has made this same point, noting the real significance of this point in his discussion of *CD II/2*. He notes the intimate connection between God's Trinitarian self-determination in election, which corresponds to the election of God's people. The love and freedom that define the being of God in election has its counterpart in the love and freedom of the creature, which is liberated in its determination by, in, and through God's election. Such liberated freedom is our self-determining "election" of God, which is also said to be our "autonomy." This is a kind of self-determination that corresponds to God's election itself inasmuch as it is personal, thereby requiring a certain free self-determination in relation to this object: namely, "responsibility...decision...obedience...action." [*CD III/2*, 511, quoted from Colin E. Gunton, "The Triune

to speak of the reception of the Word in the event as a very concrete and ethical matter of obedience or disobedience.¹⁵⁰ The fundamental orientation of the human being is only properly oriented by God once it is determined by the reception of the Word of God, which is an epistemically mediated determination of the “whole man.”¹⁵¹ These are likewise self-determinations precisely because they involve the mediating presentation of the proper object of determination to the basic human capacity for self-determination. In this respect, the fundamental assumption at work is Cartesian as opposed to Platonic.¹⁵² The model is clearly that of undomesticated desires awaiting their proper intellectual determination.

The key here is to recognize that this leads Barth and Schleiermacher to adopt precisely the same position as Lubac and Rahner with regard to the relationship of intellect and will, but for reasons that are precisely the obverse of their account. I showed in the previous chapter that Lubac and Rahner work with an ambiguous Platonic notion of the will that allows for an imprecise conflation of will and intellect. This presumed that the will was simply proportionate to will the attainment of the good properly

God and the Freedom of the Creature," in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 51.]

¹⁵⁰ CD I/1, 201. This is most clearly seen here (quoted from Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 37.): “If God’s Word is not spoken to animals, plants and stones but to men, and if determination by God’s Word is really a determination of human existence, in what, then, will it consist if not in the fact that the self-determination in which man is man finds its absolute superior in determination by God, that as self-determination, and without in the least being affected or even destroyed altogether as such, *it receives a direction, is set under a judgment and has impressed upon it a character, in short, it is determined in the way that a self-determining being is by a word and that man is by the Word of God*” [emphasis mine.]

¹⁵¹ The event of the Word of God provides cognitive, intellectual determination for the relative – but no less fundamental – capacity for self-determination that characterizes human being. Mangina notes the three basic corollaries that Barth draws from this: namely, that it frees us to affirm that all areas of life are open to determination by God, that all facets of the human person are engaged in that determination, and that no special aspect of the human person is privileged in that determination (Ibid., 38.)

¹⁵² Despite the ways Mangina shows Barth working here against Cartesianism, he overlooks this basic assumption of Barth’s which is wholly Cartesian. This is no doubt tempered by his insistence that this all occurs within a relational and ethical order of obedience and/or rebellion. See Webster, *Barth’s Ethics of Reconciliation*, 229-30. See also Gunton, “The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature,” 51. Yet it is simultaneously incited by his blatant reliance upon Hegelianism.

specified the intellect. Schleiermacher and Barth, by contrast, operate with essentially Cartesian assumptions in which the intellect serves as the rational legislator for the will's otherwise infinite potentiality.¹⁵³ Once this pure potentiality is properly determined by the intellect, the will is understood to be—as presumed infinite—proportionate to its operation.¹⁵⁴ If the mistake of the previous paradigm was to assume that the will is capable of doing what the intellect specifies as its good, the mistake here is to assume, as Kant declares, that an 'ought' implies a 'can.' Each implies a correspondence between thought and action, but reverses the priority of the terms. Intellection, just as before, mediates the production of the act in and through the representation.

Here we encounter the most important problem with both of these accounts of the unity of creation and grace. Note that neither thinker commits the error of the previous scheme, which effectively reduced grace to creation by rendering it, in different ways, an integral aspect of the created order. Rather, Schleiermacher and Barth commit the opposite error, namely, that of reducing the doctrine of creation to a refracted dimension of the bestowal of grace. Schleiermacher does this by rendering creation coextensive with the preservation and governance of the whole of reality as the expression of the eternal decree of God's election, which simply is the bestowal of grace. Barth does this by understanding creation as the historical unfolding of the covenantal essence of God's decree to bless humanity in and as Jesus Christ. Both are seeking to unite creation and grace according to God's primordial decree of election, which is the ground for the unfolding of the entire world order as the recipient of the grace of God's offer of

¹⁵³ I am indebted to Nathan R. Kerr for initially suggesting the possibility of this distinction in conversation.

¹⁵⁴ Note that this is different than the assumption that the will is an infinite power in its own right, moving itself to its own operation.

redemption and fellowship. Much as with the previous chapter, the two have merely occluded the problem. What both thinkers have overlooked is the theological problematic for which God's decree of election is the response is not merely that of an inability to properly identify and thereby know the ontological status of the world. On the contrary, precisely by emphasizing the participatory (i.e., personal, relational) aspect of reality that precedes the intellectual identification of essences, the doctrine of election designated the means whereby an individual was enabled not simply to know, but to will her redemption. Once again, the problem is an evasion of the importance of grace as a stimulus for the will to act beyond its capacity.

The Nature of the Will, Dialectics, and Redemption

In the opening of the discussion of Schleiermacher above, I noted that Luther's early critique of Scholastic theology centers on a rejection of traditional *caritas* soteriology as coupled with Aristotelian *habitus*. I noted that this was due to two distinct but intimately interwoven concerns regarding the Scholastic understanding of the will and the intellect. Specifically, Luther rejected the will's unaided capacity to perform the good and linked that inability to speculative dialectics. In this respect, Luther's assertion should be understood as both a return to Aquinas in the midst of late-Scholasticism and a very important advance beyond him in the analysis of willing. For what Luther discovered most clearly was the irreducibly relational character of the will in its operation, even as it functions as an intellectual appetite. The proper ordering of the will is not simply a matter of the presence or absence of a grace, conceived as either a formal or material aspect of being, but as a decidedly qualitative character of relation. Such

emphasis on the limits of the will and its relational aspect has important implications for the post-Kantian context of both Schleiermacher's and Barth's work.

As Jacqueline Mariña has shown in detail, recovery of aspects of Luther's initial insight became central to Schleiermacher's early critique of Kantian practical reason.¹⁵⁵ His concern is to reconcile the contradiction in Kant's intellectualist account of moral law: namely, how a purely intellectual principle could serve as motive for the will if the basis for performance was the transcendental freedom of the subject. As motive the moral law must affect desire through sensation, and yet as rational it must result from subjective spontaneity.¹⁵⁶ Mariña shows that Schleiermacher's initial attempts to develop a compatibilism fail precisely insofar as they reveal the irreducible significance of the individual in all moral action.¹⁵⁷ That discovery was of enormous significance for Schleiermacher precisely because of what it revealed about the inability of a universalist reason to account for the "higher existence" of moral individuality.¹⁵⁸ As morality is inextricably bound to individuality, it cannot lie solely within the province of reason, with free transcendental subjectivity, as Kant had thought. This does not mean, however, that rational universal morality is vitiated. Rather, it points to individuality as a "higher existence" in which the transcendental self stands in immediate relation to the infinite and eternal ground of all existents, individuating persons precisely in their limitations.¹⁵⁹ The point here is twofold. On the one hand, the self is individuated by her limitations in that, though she is immediately aware of herself, she only knows herself in the world of

¹⁵⁵ See Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 15-42 and the relational consequences specified at 164-220.. Mariña does not connect this idea to Luther, as I have here.

¹⁵⁶ See *Ibid.*, 18-25.

¹⁵⁷ See *Ibid.*, 135-45.

¹⁵⁸ See *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵⁹ See *Ibid.*, 138.

objects. On the other hand, this is important because she stands in the world as an irreducibly unique expression of the divine decree—an irreducible singularity in which that decree becomes knowable to herself and others.¹⁶⁰

This sheds immense light on the corporate dimension of both sin and grace for Schleiermacher, since insofar as the self emerges in a world that refracts human alienation it does not properly know itself as an expression of God's self-communication.¹⁶¹ Attendance to the universal, then, is for Schleiermacher inseparable from the individual precisely because the infinite is only properly refracted in the specificity of the individual.¹⁶² This involves the necessary recognition, in Mariña's words, of the "perspectival character of all knowledge and of individual apprehensions of the world" the acknowledgment of which serves as the basis upon which all "true moral development is possible."¹⁶³ This is love, according to Schleiermacher: individuals reflecting not their own spontaneous desires in contrastive opposition to one another, but rather the infinite ground on which they are absolutely dependent as their common share.

This aspect of Schleiermacher's thought also illuminates on the nature of Barth's concerns with his project. For it would appear that Schleiermacher has here invoked a purely formal ontological structure that, despite his claims for the unique role of Jesus as the Redeemer, is at least in principle accessible apart from him and of which Jesus himself is but a particular example. Barth is surely correct to oppose this, and to do so on Schleiermacher's own terms. For, if the refracted dimension of the universal divine decree is inaccessible apart from individuality, and if consciousness of that fact is, as

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 139.

¹⁶¹ DeVries and Gerrish, "Providence and Grace: Schleiermacher on Justification and Election," 189-207.

¹⁶² See Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 140-41.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 141.

Schleiermacher declares, wholly due to the Redeemer, then the content of the universal decree must be Jesus Christ himself.¹⁶⁴ What is more, it is only within and because of our recognition of the absolute individuality (i.e., Lordship) of Jesus that the universal and irreducible significance of every individual is reflected.

The difficulty here is that Barth's opposition to Schleiermacher runs so deep that it blinds him to the importance of this point in Schleiermacher.¹⁶⁵ Had he seen it, he could have avoided many of his more exaggerated indictments of Schleiermacher and natural theology, and been able to more clearly isolate their shortcomings. But the problem is more complex even than this. Barth's own preoccupation with securing knowledge of God led him to interpret his own best insight into the singular importance of Jesus Christ in terms of the universality of Hegelian conceptual mediation (i.e., the concrete universal.)¹⁶⁶ In doing so, Barth adopts a speculative dialectics that is an effective reversion from his Reformation heritage in that it renders him vulnerable to at least part of Luther's critique.¹⁶⁷ Barth appears never to have recognized or appreciated

¹⁶⁴ See Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*. My own ideas on this point have developed in conversation with him, but are also indebted to my reading of Luther's discussion of the interrelationship between works, kenosis, and service of the neighbor in *On Two Kinds of Righteousness* (particularly his epigraph, which is Philippians 2:6.) See Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, 155.

¹⁶⁵ This is significant precisely because Schleiermacher's approach exactly corresponds to Bonhoeffer's thesis in *Sanctorum Communio*. Bonhoeffer himself, as well as Protestant liberal theology at the time, appears to have been unaware of this fact. Perhaps the difficulties lay with the complexities of Schleiermacher's analysis of self-consciousness, which Barth does not show clear evidence of ever clearly apprehending.

¹⁶⁶ This way of framing Barth's discussion of Jesus in terms of a "concrete universal" is indebted to Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 86-87. This is the opposite opinion as that drawn by McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth.*, 187.

¹⁶⁷ And, interestingly enough, this would appear to make him guilty of "natural theology."

the extent to which Schleiermacher's project preserved the Lutheran insight into the limits of human knowing, which the dialectical method was meant to put into relief.¹⁶⁸

The difficulty that arises here for both thinkers is tied to their incomplete appropriation of Luther's expansion of the analysis of the will. As we have seen, Schleiermacher's basic understanding of the will, tied as it is to the unobjectifiability of individual subjectivity, is correlative with Scotus' appeal to indifference. The will, for Schleiermacher, is then an infinite potentiality that must be determinately specified and directed by the intellect. What Schleiermacher corrects in Scotus by recognizing that this potentiality is purely formal and empty (rather than as a power of self-motion) is incomplete in that he continues to view this in terms of spontaneity.¹⁶⁹ This leads him to assume that, following proper specification of its object by the intellect, the will is always already poised simply to will the attainment of that object. This same assumption is responsible for his claim that what is disclosed is a more general ontological structure in which the will is simply rendered transparent. The same is true of Barth, and not in such remarkably different terms as is often thought. Indeed, Barth repeats this very structure, only conceives Jesus Christ as both the epistemic object and the ontological essence. The result is, as Kerr has shown, a formulation wholly consonant with Hegel's "concrete universal."¹⁷⁰ The importance of this comes most fully into view when it is recalled that Hegel's project was conceived as the elevation of Cartesian subjectivity to the level of substance. The problem is, then, that each has failed to attend adequately to Luther's

¹⁶⁸ Barth always had an uneasy alliance with this aspect of his Protestant heritage. Even *Romans I*, which appears content merely to designate God as the "absence" of God, still operates according to an essentially Hegelian formula – one that returns later, as I have pointed out here, in his doctrine of creation, and, as widely recognized, in his Christology.

¹⁶⁹ See Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 39 n. 126.

¹⁷⁰ See Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 86-87.

critique of Scholastic theology, thereby repeating its failures. Schleiermacher, in fact, preserves more of that heritage in that he insists on retaining a non-speculative dialectical structure for thought, but continue to presume that the a willing capable of following “whatever is prescribed.” Barth, by contrast, is guilty of both—and this precisely because of his Hegelianism. Each thinker fails, then, to do what Luther could, which was to retain (or recover) the full significance of Aquinas’ insight into the natural limitations of the will.

As I will show in the following chapters, the answer to this difficulty will lie in bringing Barth’s insight into the singular uniqueness of Jesus to bear upon Schleiermacher’s insights into what Lamm has designated as Schleiermacher’s necessarily “dialogical-dialectic” structure of thought, while retaining the Aquinas-Luther insight into the limitations of the will. As should be now coming into relief, this is hindered by the tendency to render the best of these insights in terms of a fundamental ontology. The answer to this, as I will argue in Chapters Five and Six, is to come fully to grips with the genuinely *ethical* implications of these three insights in Aquinas, Schleiermacher, and Barth: namely, affirming the ethical structure of Being in a manner irreducible to ontology, yet in conjunction with the metaphysics of the will. Before this argument is advanced, however, I shall have to investigate Augustine’s work in some detail. It is he who stands as the source of these different trajectories of thought, both the deadlock and the resolution.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF A PROBLEMATIC: THE ROLE OF AUGUSTINE

Introduction

This chapter marks the turning point in the dissertation. The previous two chapters have isolated the primary paradigms in Christian theology for uniting creation and grace. The first, the Roman Catholic paradigm of nature and the supernatural, conceives that unity according to the contours of a metaphysical ontology in which the whole of reality is represented in accordance with the priority of identity, intellection, and participation that characterizes the philosophical category of Being. The Roman Catholic paradigm understands Being principally as the final and most complete term to which the dynamism of speculative intellection is oriented. The drive to know is the distinguishing mark of humanity as the image of God. Upon Aquinas' conception, the will is integral to this structure in that, as an intellectual appetite, it is the faculty whereby a good is attained. Thus, just as the intellect requires revelation to apprehend God beyond its natural capacities, so does the will require the infused habit of charity whereby to attain God as its good.

The second, the Protestant paradigm of sin and grace, is also ontological in precisely this sense, but eschews the speculative approach to Being, favoring instead the category of encounter as alone adequate to the essence of reality. Under the Protestant model, where speculative intellection is taken as ontologically exemplary, it follows a

logic that is not only metaphysically flawed in its orientation toward a conceptually mediated union of the ideal and the real, but is as such coincident with the formal mechanics of sin. The unity of the ideal and the real cannot be *attained*, it asserts, but rather must be *presupposed*. Being is therefore only first encountered in an event that disrupts the negative structure of determination by which speculative intellection proceeds, and on that basis alone discloses its absolute priority over all thought. This critique shares with Aquinas an account of the will as limited in its capacity to follow the intellect and in his assertion of the need for divine aid, but elaborates on that account to show how the will's act of self-determination, when considered apart from the divine initiative, is fundamentally sinful in its seeking after fulfillment in and through that determination. This claim is then linked directly to and used to indict the account of reality yielded by speculative metaphysics.

I have not only been tracing the differences between these two paradigms, but have sought to illuminate the vexed relationships of different accounts of those paradigms. Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner are representative of the nature/supernatural paradigm, both of whom understand the dynamism of the speculative intellect as a unique manifestation of the implicit presence of grace in creation, propelling toward its goal of union with God. De Lubac maintains an essentially ontological interpretation of this dynamism, insisting on its intrinsic relationship to creation. Rahner, by contrast, understands grace as transcendental distinction within the one created order wherein all of experience is concretely graced. Both interpretations are woven around an ambiguous Platonic notion of the will that obviates Aquinas' insight regarding its impotence. On

this account, both fail ultimately to achieve, much less maintain, a real distinction between grace and creation.

In the case of the sin/grace paradigm, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth are representative. Both maintain the characteristically Protestant critique of speculative intellection, and do so such that divine election alone is the basis for the union of creation and grace. Schleiermacher paved the way for this account by reinterpreting the traditional Reformed doctrine as a single decree of divine self-communication coincident with God's preservation of finite existence. Barth also developed a single decree, but insisted that it pertained solely to Jesus Christ, and through him to existence as a whole. The former understands the whole of existence as ordered toward the triumph of the Kingdom of God in and through the Church, and the latter toward the arrival of Jesus Christ. Both accounts are united in their adherence to a Scotist account of the will, which is merely the obverse of the Platonic notion of the Roman Catholic paradigm. There will is here thought of as an infinite power that receives its definite specification by the intellect. Premised as it is on an inversion of the ontological account of creation and grace in the nature/supernatural model, the sin/grace model here commits the opposite mistake of conflating creation with grace.

In this chapter I reach the bedrock strata of my archaeology. Chapters Two and Three have uncovered the interwoven concerns of will and ontology in the dominant accounts of the unity of creation and grace. Together, these chapters show an inner tension between a theological vision that would unite these two doctrines in terms of a "metaphysical ontology" and that of an "ontology of encounter." What the former achieves with regard to a unified vision is bought at the expense of a coherent account of

grace, and what the latter corrects in this regard ultimately renders creation merely a refracted abstraction from the experience of grace. I have focused on the will in these two chapters since it is around this category that these problems come most clearly into view. This chapter is devoted to showing how these two paradigms and their attendant difficulties arise out of the work of Augustine as he struggles to articulate the nature of the will in relation to his attempt to uphold the categories of metaphysics and encounter.

My argument is straightforward. I will carry each of the analyses of will and ontology forward by situating the tension between the two paradigms and the conflicts within them in relation to a broader conflict of the Christian imagination regarding the relationship between knowledge and ethics, the true and the good.¹ I argue that this is a conflict that comes to light first in Augustine, whose writings mark the inauguration of these two distinct and antagonistic ontological visions within the Western Christian theological imagination, the one founded on the priority of the intellect and the other on that of the act.² I argue that the lineaments for both paradigms are not only present in his body of work as it unfolds over the course of his career, but arise specifically out of his own unsuccessful attempts to achieve a comprehensive union of his doctrines of creation and grace, despite establishing the definite Western accounts of each. Bringing this to light will involve close attention to the Augustine's genetic development.³ In his critique

¹ Note that, although this concern plays out as an occlusion of ethics by ontology, this conflict concerns the nature of the relationship between truth and goodness.

² I am not suggesting that Augustine is responsible for the trouble caused by the difference between being and act, and the one and the many in Christian thought. These are much more ancient philosophical problems. My argument is simply that Augustine develops both characteristic patterns of thought in his body of work, and never being able to solve them himself, bequeathed the conflict to Western Christian theology.

³ This stands in conflict with Michael Hanby's suggestion that the divergences in Augustine's thought are best conceived according to the ontology in which they most properly cohere—that ontology being given, according to him, in *The Trinity*. Aside from the obvious point that *The Trinity* is itself not a coherent work, this is to overlook the importance for interpretation that that Augustine's development

of Manichean metaphysics, Augustine establishes a grammar for the theology of creation in which the relationship between divine sovereignty, goodness, and the will (understood as free self determination) are mutual and irreducible. Of decisive importance here is that Augustine's ambiguous, Platonic conception of the will requires him to conceive the divine simplicity, upon which this irreducibility is based, as an immutable self-presence achieved through absolute self-determination. This position becomes problematic when developments in his understanding of election force him to revise his idea of finite self-determination in order to sustain his understanding of divine immutability. He never successfully retrieves the elegant grammatical convergence of sovereignty, goodness, will, and creation of the earlier position. Instead, two irreconcilable paths are opened: one ordered to the metaphysical concerns of the early position and the other to the taking its orientation by the focus on encounter characteristic of the theology of grace. These are the Roman Catholic and Protestant paradigms *in nuce*, respectively.

Throughout my analysis of this development, I am concomitantly noting that Augustine is engaged in a struggle to "invent"⁴ the notion of the will as a faculty distinct from the intellect and desire, and which is ordered to the good specifically.⁵ It is the absence of a clear concept of the will and his implicit reliance on the ambiguous notion of

represents. It is a mistake to presume to draw Augustine's thought into a coherent approach, as Hanby does, and especially without attending to the problems he encountered in his genetic development. See Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, Radical Orthodoxy Series (New York: Routledge, 2003). This also applies to the argument in Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (New York: Oxford University, 2006).

⁴ James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3.

⁵ In this regard, I follow Dihle, Kahn, Sorabji, and to an extent Wetzel. See Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, Sather Classical Lectures ; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Charles Kahn, "Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Aquinas," in *The Question Of "Eclecticism" : Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. John M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 234-59. Richard Sorabji, "The Concept of the Will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor," in *The Will in Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Thomas Pink and M. W. F. Stone (New York: Routledge, 2004). Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*.

self-determination that is responsible, I argue, for opening up a double bind between sustaining God's immutability on the one hand, and human freedom on the other. In this regard, Augustine functions as something of a "pure test case" in which the recognize the conflict between the two paradigms as a dispute over the two facets necessary for a complete notion of the will: namely, a formal distinction from the intellect and desire, and a specification of its content as ordered to the good. This claim will provide the groundwork for a constructive argument for further specifying the nature of the later in the following chapter.

The Grammar of Augustine's Theology of Creation

Never mistake motion for action.

—Ernest Hemingway to Ava Gardener

Creatio ex nihilo: Sovereignty, Goodness, and Immutability

Gerhard May has shown that the basic outline for the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* first fully appeared in the work of Basilides in the second century, where it arose as a direct result of his attempt to unite the highest god of Gnosticism with the sovereign God of the Hebrews.⁶ Basilides' primary concern was to articulate the basis for understanding the "world-seed" as resulting from a single divine act.⁷ The resulting synthesis of Hellenistic metaphysics and Hebraic history would subsequently shape the unfolding of that doctrine a generation later in Irenaeus, Tatian, and Tertullian.⁸ But it was

⁶ See Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 62-84 and 179-80.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68, 71-73, and 179-80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 148-78.

specifically Augustine who realized the full implications of this affirmation, drawing together its various influences into a single whole.

Those implications are brought most fully to view in his early anti-Manichean writings. By framing his argument against them as a rejection of dualism, Augustine develops the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* well beyond Basilides, whose concern—in terms largely consistent with Gnosticism—was to isolate the first and supreme principle of reality.⁹ Yet, although Augustine’s rejection of dualism would become an integral focus of the Western tradition’s appropriation of his argument, it is his rationale for that conclusion that is most important for my analysis.¹⁰ Principally, I am concerned with the roles played by the attributes of sovereignty and goodness, and specifically their often unrecognized convertibility in his argument.¹¹ Together, sovereignty and goodness establish a grammar for *creatio ex nihilo* that would remain determinative throughout Augustine’s body of theological work.

The most important and well-known aspect of that grammar is its contestation of any notion of an essentially evil materiality. Manichean metaphysics insisted that matter was to be contrasted with God, who was immutable and therefore to be distinguished from the corruptions and sufferings inherent to mutable materiality. Because the soul had fallen away from God and become ensnared in this matter, salvation lay in deliverance from corruption and a return to God.¹² In making his case against this view, Augustine

⁹ Ibid., 74-76.

¹⁰ Indeed, Valentinian Gnosticism appears to have rejected two ultimate principles, while having no particular concern to reject the logic of dualism. See Ibid., 85-117.

¹¹ See the discussion in Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 74-114. Harrison does not use the language of sovereignty, but of absolute dependence. She deftly draws out the connection between the two, however.

¹² Manichaeism understood the soul to be an originally divine element trapped now in an evil materiality. See *Against Fortunatus* 19-22.

seeks to exploit their understanding of immutability.¹³ His debate with Fortunatus shows this most clearly. Probing as to why God needed to delimit the contrary nature of materiality, Augustine asks whether the Manichean assumption was that God was subject to injury. Upon Fortunatus' response that this is impossible, Augustine argues that this requires that there be no contrary nature at all, lest God be pressed by necessity and mutable.¹⁴ Two ultimate principles would be mutually and reflectively conditioned by one another, in just the negative sense discussed in the previous chapter. Matter, then, cannot be essentially evil because consistent understanding of God's immutability requires that nothing stand in absolute opposition to God.

This implies a convertible relationship between sovereignty and goodness, as it points directly to *creatio ex nihilo*.¹⁵ If some "unrestrained" domain of existence is affirmed in opposition to God, the problem is not only that this domain must be thought to 'move' or affect an immutable God, but that this domain of existence is likewise unconditioned by God, lying somehow outside divine influence.¹⁶ Consequently, God

¹³While I depart from his interpretation in many important ways, my discussion of the relationship between sovereignty, goodness, the will, and creation out of nothing owes much to the reading given in Rowan Williams, "Creation," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. O.S.A Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 251-54. See also n. 16 below.

¹⁴ See *Against Fortunatus*, 23-47.

¹⁵ See *On the Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life*, 2.3, 5, 7; *Two Souls*, 1-3; *Against Fortunatus*, 23-47; *The Nature of the Good*, I.1-3, 6, 12, 18-19; *Confessions* V.20-21, VII.17-27.

¹⁶ See Williams, "Creation," 251-52. As mentioned in n. 13, I am indebted to Williams for first alerting me to the close interconnection of sovereignty, goodness, agency, and *creatio ex nihilo* in Augustine's thought. However, it is on this point that I depart from him most sharply in my interpretation. Williams interprets Augustine's early discussion of "formlessness" during the anti-Manichean period (particularly in *On Faith and the Creed* 2.2 [393 CE]) as anticipating the position of the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* by making a distinction between that whose "mode of existence is one of potential for structured reality" and that whose mode is the "realization of structures" (252). This distinction allows Williams to interpret *creatio ex nihilo* of the early period in continuity with the *Literal Commentary* as "the setting in being of a living system destined to grow toward beauty and order, even if this beauty and order is not at any given moment fully apparent" (ibid). Williams thus sees a convergence with Augustine's doctrine of predestination on this front, but nonetheless allows, through the mediating quality of the *rationes seminales* (discussed below), that "creation is completed simultaneously...and yet there is a real history of interaction between creator and creation" (ibid). Closer attention to the development of

must be understood as conditioning the entirety of existence—that is, to be its sovereign. No aspect of God’s governance stands opposed to finite existents because all that is mutable stands in absolute dependence upon this single creative act.¹⁷ It is this latter affirmation that is the basis for Augustine’s contention that mutable, material reality is good in itself. This is a goodness that is ascribed not merely by virtue of existence, but which extends precisely to that reality in its mutability.¹⁸ Though it is not a perfect realization of goodness, materiality is nonetheless a relative manifestation of its absoluteness.¹⁹ It is not juxtaposed to the unchangeable, but rather grounded in and governed by it.²⁰ Evil is then not only non-existent in that it has no positive ontological status, but all of reality is actually good by virtue of being conditioned by God.²¹ Augustine’s argument entails that there can be no affirmation of finite goodness that is not grounded in God’s sovereignty, just as the affirmation of God’s sovereignty is

Augustine’s mature theology of grace calls this interpretation into question in that the development involves an increasing emphasis on the absolute priority of the divine initiative in the ordering of created reality. This is necessary to account for the interior, operative grace on the will that develops after the Donatist controversy (ca. 411.) Whatever truth there may be to this invocation of a “living system,” it is markedly different between the two periods—and in such a way that a real “history of interaction between creator and creation” may be affirmed but is not coherently conceived. This is a particularly important point to underscore because this very distinction between “potential for structured reality” is precisely the notion of materiality in Plotinus that Augustine’s *creatio ex nihilo* is refuting. Absence of form and indeterminacy both amount to the same thing in that both are negatively determined. As pure potentiality for determination, Plotinian matter is yet tantamount to Manichean matter.

¹⁷ In this sense, it is somewhat ironic that Schleiermacher’s reason for refusing *creatio ex nihilo* corresponds here to Augustine’s affirmation of it.

¹⁸ See *Confessions* VII.16-21.

¹⁹ Where the Plotinian structure saw a proportionate increase in goodness the further one ascended up the hierarchy in the direction of the One, Augustine was able to conceive of a mutable creation that was good as such, by virtue simply of its existence. See *On the Nature of the Good*, I.5-12.

²⁰ See *On the Nature of the Good*, I.5-12; *Teaching Christianity* I.34-35; *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, I.32; *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, VIII.31-32; *The Trinity* VIII.5, XI.8

²¹ *Soliloquies* I.2; *On the Catholic Way of Life*, II.4; *The Two Souls*, 8, 12; *Against Fortunatas*, 18-21; *Conf. VII.18-19*; *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, II.43.

coincident with God's absolute goodness.²² Any deviation from this correlation, Augustine recognizes, is fundamentally premised on Manichean assumptions.²³

On the whole, this point marks a development of the Plotinian rejection of Gnostic dualism.²⁴ But, Augustine significantly develops its implications in placing such a prominent emphasis on the sovereignty of God's agency as it is connected with the act of creating *out of nothing*. In developing this line of thought, Augustine is in part working out the Hebraic influence Basilides brought to bear upon the Hellenistic emanationist scheme inherited from Plato.²⁵ For, while Plotinian emanationism could conceive the omnipresence of the One so as to have an equally comprehensive vision of the divine influence on finite reality, it lacked any account of the agential governance at the inception of reality that Augustine recognizes as essential to *creatio ex nihilo*.²⁶ Sovereignty demands that *nothing* at all precedes or is presupposed by God's creative agency, and it is only such an account that is sufficient to secure the goodness of material reality.²⁷ Even the most positive anti-dualism of Plotinus failed to achieve this.²⁸ Indeed, as Augustine notes, by placing an absolutely formless matter at the end of the series of descending emanations, Plotinus had inadvertently posited a dialectical opposite for the One—some formless “thing” at the furthest oppositional remove from divinity.²⁹

²² See *On Free Choice* II.41-46, III.76 and *The Trinity*, VIII.5

²³ See *On Genesis*, I.32.

²⁴ See Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 193-97.

²⁵ See May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*. On the role of sovereignty in Augustine's argument, see *On Free Choice* II.41-46, III.76. Particular attention must be paid to the role of justice in this argument. That the references to order, number, and justice should be read as pertaining to the divine providence over reality is clear in *On Order* 1.1.1-2 and especially *On the Nature of the Good*, I.5-12.

²⁶ This emphasis on agency was integral to the Hebrew notion of sovereignty—especially with its covenantal history from the Exodus forward. On this in relationship to Basilides, see *Ibid.*, 62-84.

²⁷ See *On Genesis* II.43.

²⁸ See *On Genesis*, I.4, 6-11. *Confessions* VII.16-27 and XII.6-16.

²⁹ See *On the Nature of the Good*, 3-5 and 18; *Confessions* XII.1-6; *On Genesis*, I.10-12; *Literal Commentary*, I.2, 9, 28-30, V.12-16. In equating formlessness and nothingness, Augustine discovered the

Augustine recognizes that such “formlessness” is finally indistinguishable from “nothing” in that both signify absolute unintelligibility.³⁰ This convertibility of “nothing” and “formlessness” mirrors the convertibility of sovereignty and goodness established in the doctrine of creation. Form is not ‘imposed’ upon a distinct and otherwise indeterminate materiality, but rather the two must arise together in immediate dependence on God’s rational intentional and creative (sovereign and good) agency.³¹ God positively determines reality through the sovereign influence that is itself the establishment and upholding of the world in goodness. Connections between sovereignty, goodness, and *creatio ex nihilo* are related not merely by the intellect (as in Plotinus), but in and through a discrete act of volition (creating.)

I focus on this specific emphasis on volition and its development over the course of Augustine’s writings in the following subsection, and develop it further throughout the chapter. Presently, it is important to briefly underscore the important role played by immutability in this grammar. As Augustine’s argument develops by exploiting the Manichean understanding of immutability, virtually the entirety of his argument unfolds an elaboration upon this point as the baseline for the divine simplicity.³² The contrast that governs the grammatical interrelation of sovereignty, goodness, and *creatio ex nihilo* is that of a relative, contingent mode of existence grounded in the absolute simplicity of

grammar of a position that did not presuppose or grant—even implicitly, as did Neoplatonism—any positivity to a negative principle as the basis for worldly determination. Instead, he sees this more clearly than any of his predecessors, Christian or otherwise. See n. 16.

³⁰ See Williams, “Creation,” 252.

³¹ This link to volitional intent is made explicit in *On Genesis*, I.4. See also *Literal Commentary*, I.29. This ‘arising together’ marks the clear break with not only Manichaeism but Neoplatonic philosophy as well. In connection with this point regarding this ‘arising together,’ I should also note that this implies a certain necessary Aristotelianism as inherent in the Augustinian elaboration of the logic of *creatio ex nihilo*. Although this claim is not overtly integral to my argument here, it is implied by the following discussion of the difficulties Augustine encounters as a result of his Platonic understanding of the will and motion.

³² This is most easily seen from *Against Fortunatus*, 19-47.

God. Such contrast is consistent throughout Augustine's body of work, from early works such as *On Order* to the later *City of God*. He consistently advances the Platonic position that the cosmos is most coherently conceived as a harmonious blending of living and non-living, and spiritual and material beings,³³ and his development of this argument against Manichean metaphysics shows him to be committed to the notion that finite and mutable reality participates in the immutable perfection of its Source.³⁴ Such an assumption is characteristic of Platonisms in general, but in his doctrine of creation Augustine develops the idea in a unique way by incorporating the idea of discrete divine agency in creating.³⁵ Separate consideration of Augustine's understanding of the will is thus integral.

The Will

In addition to the locating rational volition at the origin of the world, the Manichean polemics show Augustine isolating the human will—or more precisely, free choice (*libero arbitrio*)—as the proper locus for evil. This marks an important turning point not only for the history of the Western theology, but for Augustine's own thinking. For the idea of the will becomes the focal point of Augustine's thought henceforth. Because so much of his dispute with Manichaeism pivots on the affirmation of divine immutability and the insubstantiality of evil, the character of volition was decisive.

³³ See especially, *True Religion*, 59-79. A particularly instructive discussion of this point was Donald X. Burt, *Augustine's World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 201-24.

³⁴ See as examples, *On Music* VI.1, *Confessions* VII.18-19, X; and, *City of God* XI.22. See also Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus, or, the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. Michael Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 29-31.

³⁵ For the relationship of this idea to Basilides, see May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 80-81.

Augustine himself states in the *Confessions* that this one point was pivotal in his conversion to Christianity, allowing him to recognize that the inconsistency and variability of matter is not a sign of its essential evil.³⁶ Though the role of volition in God's creating the world and in human evil was decisive for his break with Manichaeism, it involved a more complex relationship to Neoplatonism. *Creatio ex nihilo* significantly transformed his understanding of Neoplatonic ontology, but did not result in absolute breach.³⁷ In Book X of the *Confessions*, for example, Augustine unmistakably conceives his account of volition in Neoplatonic terms when he interprets the disordered intentionality (*intentio*) of sin as directed toward distended (*distentio*) material reality rather than God.³⁸ Degrees of perfection continue to shape his metaphysics, even as the emphasis is no longer placed the "formlessness" of materiality, but rather on its incoherence as a proper intentional object for intellectual (spiritual) creatures.³⁹ Intentionality is thus the primary means of union with God.⁴⁰ This is because, in creating, governing, and ordering the world, God *intends* human beings to be ordered to God as their singular goal.⁴¹ As the orienting of desire, this intentionality is an act of the will.⁴² Indeed, as Bourke has noted, these ideas essentially repeat the discussion of willing in *Ennead* VI, wherein Plotinus analyzes the means by which desire is redirected from materiality to the One.⁴³

³⁶ See *Confessions* VII.1-7, 13-22.

³⁷ Robert Crouse, "Paucis Mutatis Verbis: Saint Augustine's Platonism," in *Augustine and His Critics*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000), 37-50.

³⁸ See *Confessions*, X (especially, 18); see also XI.20, 26, 27; XII.9, 12, 23.

³⁹ See *Confessions*, X.18-19.

⁴⁰ See *Confessions*, X.

⁴¹ Compare Lubac, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*.

⁴² See *Confessions* VII.16-24.

⁴³ My discussion of the will in Plotinus, and his influence on Augustine, is indebted to Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 80-81 and 193-97.

The importance of volitional intent cannot be overemphasized in regard to the shape of Augustine's theology.⁴⁴ First appearing in relatively early writings like *On Free Choice* and elaborated on in *Confessions*, volitional intentionality became a hallmark of Augustine's thought. Book VII of *Confessions* notes its metaphysical importance for helping him overcome a materialist view of divinity,⁴⁵ and the same principle was elaborated upon in the anti-Donatist writings in relation to the social significance of a sacrament, where the use (*usus*) of a thing (*res*) signifies the reality intended by the participants.⁴⁶ Intentionality is integral to his treatments of baptism and the real presence in the eucharist insofar as these are significations of the bounds of charity that unite believers to one another and to Christ.⁴⁷ In *The Trinity*, volitional intention (*intentio voluntatis*) is discussed as that discrete operation of the mind that unites the diverse elements of experience by directing them toward a particular good end.⁴⁸

James Wetzel has noted that Augustine's initial concern in invoking the will as the locus of evil in his argument for *creatio ex nihilo* is to link the objective goodness of the world directly to divine agency through providence.⁴⁹ Wetzel points specifically to a passage in *On Two Souls*: "[In the Manichean system] there is no judgment on the basis of merits and no providence, and the world is governed—or rather not governed—by

⁴⁴ See the discussion of intention and its relationship to the Donatist controversy in Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 59-63.

⁴⁵ See *Confessions* VII.1-7 and 21-27.

⁴⁶ This discussion first appears in *Teaching Christianity*, I-II.5, ca. 396 CE; it is elaborated upon, however, in *De Baptismo* I.8-9. See the discussion in Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 66-71.

⁴⁷ *Teaching Christianity*, III.13. See also the discussions in J. Patout Burns, "The Eucharist as the Foundation of Christian Unity in North African Theology," *Augustinian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 1-23.; (??); and J. Patout Burns, "Establishing Unity in Diversity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32, no. 4 (2005): 381-99.

⁴⁸ See *The Trinity*, XI.7, 15 and XIV.5

⁴⁹ See Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 90.

chance rather than by reason. Governance, after all, should not be attributed to chance.”⁵⁰ Sovereignty and goodness are here not simply logical corollaries of divine simplicity, but are the expression of an intentional agency. This emphasis reaches beyond that of merely maintaining the ontological coherence and harmony of the contingent components of reality, and establishes a constitutively *ethical* character to the universe in and through that governance. Developments in his theology of grace caused by the Donatist controversy ultimately bring the social implications of this ethical emphasis into relief.⁵¹ His concern is to note that the world is not merely rightly ordered, but dynamically directed to the attainment of the good.

In addition to Wetzel, Albrecht Dihle, Charles Kahn, and Richard Sorabji have each argued convincingly in this regard (though offering slightly different rationales) that Augustine is responsible for effectively inventing the notion of the will in distinction from both desire and the intellect.⁵² None of these thinkers believes Augustine succeeded at formulating a clear concept of the will; but, each affirms that, in Wetzel’s words, Augustine was the first to link reality to “a clearly delineated concept of the voluntary,” which pivots on a distinction between “what happens by nature and what happens by will.”⁵³ Sorabji writes, what is unique in this is not a discrete idea, but how he uses a set

⁵⁰ The Two Souls, 17. Quotation is taken from Augustine, *The Manichean Debate*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Roland Teske S.J., 50 vols., The Works of Saint Augustine (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006).

⁵¹ These are the elements reflected in the treatment of sacrament previously discussed. These developments will be discussed in the following section. This claim is consistent with Burns’ argument that sociality was of chief importance in Augustine’s development of an operative grace during the Donatist controversy, most specifically as regards his setting aside of the prior stricture against coercion. See Burns, *The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 53-88.

⁵² See n. 5 above. Wetzel is a unique voice in the discussion represented by Dihle, Kahn, and Sorabji. He has a nuanced account of this difference, arguing that the will is still for Augustine essentially a matter of desire. See Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 7-10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 90.

of concepts inherited from others.⁵⁴ Augustine makes it effectively impossible for Western thought to any longer presume a simple or direct correspondence of nature to volition. And this insight is directly tied to his avowal of a personal, creative, agential God. Indeed, for Augustine, the world simply is the manifestation of an intentional, personal, and ethical justice, to which the human will must actively conform.⁵⁵

In making this distinction of volition from nature, Augustine understands willing primarily as a capacity to determine desire in accordance with intellectual apprehension.⁵⁶ This is most clearly shown in his response to the Manichees in *On Two Souls*, where he defines the will as “a movement of the soul, with nothing forcing it either not to lose something or to acquire something.”⁵⁷ This early definition of the will emphasizes the non-coerced aspect of this movement of self-determination. In this definition, despite a distinction between volition and nature, Augustine does not yet possess a clear distinction of the will from desire and intellection. The will is simply the free self-motion of the soul in accordance with both appetite and knowledge. This is an essentially Platonic notion of the soul.⁵⁸ For, as Risto Saarinen notes, despite this insight into the difference of volition from nature, Augustine continues to conflate willing and intellection⁵⁹ such that “actions

⁵⁴ See Sorabji, "The Concept of the Will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor," 6-28.

⁵⁵ This is one of the moments at which Augustine appears at his closest to Stoicism and its idea of the justice of natural law. With this notion of personal volition, however, Augustine departs significantly from them.

⁵⁶ See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245-46c, where the soul is designated as self-moving, perpetually in motion, and therefore immortal.

⁵⁷ *The Two Souls*, 14. Quotation is taken from Augustine, *The Manichean Debate*.

⁵⁸ See *On Free Choice* I.8-15. Sorabji, "The Concept of the Will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor," 9.

⁵⁹ Throughout this chapter I refer to this concept of the will as self-determination as “Platonic.” I only intend by this the suggestion that this idea begins with Plato’s notion of the soul as that which “moves itself.” I acknowledge that Augustine’s use of the term owes much to Stoic ideas, which were largely mediated through Neoplatonism. For a discussion of this connection, see Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 10-12 and 68-76.

performed against better judgment are explained in terms of ignorance.”⁶⁰ Yet, as the next section will explore in more detail, as he exploits this distinction of nature from will in his reading of Paul, Augustine soon recognizes a further separation of the will from the intellect.⁶¹ Ignorance is not sufficient to explain the kind of self-conflict Augustine saw in Romans 7 and recounted of himself in *Confessions* VIII.⁶² In this analysis, Augustine effectively distinguishes the knowledge of truth from good performance in a manner that requires greater differentiation of the will from the intellect in their associations with the good and the true, respectively.⁶³

⁶⁰ Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan*, Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 22.

⁶¹ This initially appeared to Augustine in the form of a conflict within the self between what is desired and the capacity to achieve it. Yet, as James Wetzel argues, the context for Augustine’s discussion is a treatment of habit. Wetzel suggests that the self does not fail to will the newly recognized good because of a deficiency in the willing, but because of its having been habitually shaped according to a different good. This is not so much a conflict within the self as a differentiation between the perception and execution of competing goods. See Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*. This marks recognition of the difference between the intellectual apprehension of the good and its performance by the will, which takes Augustine beyond Stoicism in that it involves not merely their differentiation of willing from desire, but the further distinction of the will from the intellect, which sets the stage for Aquinas’ development as discussed in Chapter One.

⁶² This problematic only comes most fully into view once Augustine begins wrestling with Paul, particularly Romans 7-11. This is discussed in more detail below.

⁶³ Note the discussion of the good and the will in *Trinity* VIII.5. There Augustine notes that “the good the soul turns to in order to be good is the good from which it gets its being soul at all. This is when the will accords with nature to perfect the soul in good, when the will turns in love toward that good by which the soul is what it does not forfeit being, even if the will turns away again... So the will can forfeit what the will can obtain; the soul was already there to will to turn toward that from which it was, but it was not already there to will to be before it was.” That he moves, directly after this statement, to a discussion of the relationship of this love to the truth, in VIII.6-8, is significant in this regard in that it points to his difficulty in separating the respective objects of intellect and will. In fact, as he says in VIII.10, true love is simply “cleaving to the truth,” but this truth itself is defined as to “love his brother, and to love that love,” which simply is God (VIII.12-14.) This point should be viewed as well in combination with IX.12, in which Augustine insists that nothing is properly willed that is not “previously uttered as a word in his heart,” as an “interior word.” He further associates the will with that which directs the mind’s attention in X.12 (and XI.7), and then further asserts, in X.13, that the will is present for us to “use” or “enjoy” things. In this regard, it points to the mind’s particular use and enjoyment of itself, and is meant to be a way of redirecting the mind away from “sensible” things and toward the apprehension of truth within itself (X.11, XI.7). The will is further noted as a certain “repose” in things that are “delighted in for their own sakes” (X.13). It is in each of these elements that Augustine has recognized but not yet understood how it is that the will as distinct from the intellect is ordered toward the good in connection with the true. The increased moral and ethical orientation to the will is also clearly recognizable in XI.7-8. All “wishes are straight, and all the ones linked with them too, if the one to which they are all referred is good; but if that is bent then they are all bent. And thus a sequence of straight wishes or wills is a ladder for those who would climb to

Nonetheless, after that insight, he consistently moved toward directly associating the will with the good (though he never succeeded in formulating a distinct concept of the will). For example, by the time of writing his *Retractions*, a clear shift has occurred. Reiterating his earlier definition of the will from *On Two Souls*, he emphasizes the distinctly ethical⁶⁴ force of a disordered will in connection with his prior emphasis on uncoerced self-determination.⁶⁵ Defective willing was now defined not as a free choice for a mutable over the immutable good (as in *On Free Choice*) or as an actual failure to will completely (as in *Confessions*), but as “the will to retain or to acquire what justice forbids and from which one is free to hold back.”⁶⁶ In the interval between *Confessions* and *Retractions*, Augustine ceases thinking in terms of complete correspondence in self-determination between a desired and known good, and begins to emphasize the dictates of justice that precede and condition that very self-determination.⁶⁷ And, as I have shown, Augustine understands these obligations to justice to be sustained and decreed by

happiness, to be negotiated by definite steps; but a skein of bend and twisted wishes or wills is a rope to bind anyone who acts so...” (XI.10). Quotations are taken from Augustine, *The Trinity*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, 50 vols., The Works of Saint Augustine (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991).

⁶⁴ I am distinguishing moral and ethical in terms of their common philosophical differentiation between deontological obligation and teleological orientation, respectively.

⁶⁵ The cause of this, as will be shown below, is intimately bound up with his increasingly more sophisticated theology of grace. It is significant that he defines sin as “the will to retain or to acquire what justice forbids and from which one is free to hold back” (*Retractions* I.15.4). Quotation taken from Augustine, *The Manichean Debate*. My argument is not that Augustine once held a particular understanding of the will that he subsequently replaced with another. But, that certain elements in his notion of willing were later put into relief and came guide that understanding.

⁶⁶ *Retractions*, I.15.4. Quotation is taken from *Ibid*. As this is the first appearance of the term ‘justice’ in this chapter, I should here note that this emphasis, characteristic of Augustine’s later writings on freedom, is important precisely for its connection with agency, sovereignty, goodness, and personal divinity. Whereas his earlier writings emphasize, in Neoplatonic fashion, the metaphysical significance of order, his later writings will focus on “justice,” which was traditionally understood as a political, civic, and ethical virtue in Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*. It is true that Augustine tends to conflate metaphysical order with the exercise of justice. The distinction should be noted, however, as its recognition is important to the argument of this chapter.

⁶⁷ The discussion of the interconnectedness of goodness, use, enjoyment, love of God, and love of neighbor in *Teaching Christianity* I.3-9, 20-44.

divine volition in creation and providence.⁶⁸ Thus, although Augustine never ceases thinking of the will as self-determination, he now only considers this capacity “free” and truly coincident with its object on the basis of the rectitude of its relation to the justice that precedes and conditions it.⁶⁹ This is an explicitly ethical development both insofar as it conceives of the will as ordered toward the exercise and attainment of the good and insofar as that good is socially conceived, being grounded in the divine will and shared among human beings.

It is just here that a deep tension surfaces in Augustine’s thought regarding this capacity for self-determination and this later emphasis on moral rectitude. This tension lies at the heart of the incommensurability between metaphysics and encounter being investigated in this chapter. Indeed, Augustine’s metaphysical critique of dualism grounds the objective value of creation and its corruption in the spontaneous self-determination of God and humanity, respectively.⁷⁰ This is an elegant solution as long as this capacity for self-determination is naturally in-determinate. But as he comes to

⁶⁸ The question of justice conceived in relation to these questions of the freedom of the will first fully appears in the discussion of Esau and Jacob, in relation to Romans 9:10-11, in *To Simplician*, I.2.16-17. Also important is the association of the highest justice with the positive willing of God, in juxtaposition to the negative allowing of evil, at II.1.4. Justice is traditionally understood in Hellenistic philosophy as an ethical virtue directly associated with political interrelations. With this turn to election, Augustine is beginning to conceive the God/world relation in these terms in a much more pronounced way. This development should be understood as a direct corollary on the greater emphasis on the voluntary and the personal that occurs at this time, which was also due to his emphasis on the will and *creatio ex nihilo*.

⁶⁹ The clearest case of this is perhaps the discussion of the pride that preceded the performance of the first sin in the lately composed *City of God*, XIV.11-14. Particularly important is the statement: “The choice of the will, then, is genuinely free only when it is not subservient to faults and sins. God gave it that true freedom, and now that it has been lost, through its own fault, it can be restored only by him who had the power to give it at the beginning” (XIV.11). All quotations of this text are taken from Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Scowcroft Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

⁷⁰ The priority of justice is displayed most prominently in his writings against Julian, particularly the *Unfinished Answer to Julian*, I.37: “If God is the origin of justice, as you [Julian] say why do you not admit that justice if given to human beings by God? Why do you want justice to be the choice of the human will rather than the gift of God?” Quotation from Augustine, *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Roland Teske S.J., 50 vols., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999). See also I.45-47, 79-80, 127, 133.

discriminate volitional from natural acts more precisely, as well as to differentiate willing from knowing, Augustine is forced to admit a personal, agential, and ethical relation as the horizon of all spontaneity and determining its character.⁷¹ The difficulty, then, is how to preserve the freedom of the will as the basis for the insubstantiality of evil in his grammar of creation. On one hand was his metaphysical vision in which willing is a natural capacity for self-determination⁷² in relation to the justice by which God orders creation to the good.⁷³ On the other hand is his increased separation of volition from both nature and intellect in which the ethical character of that justice is accentuated in accordance with an affective obligation that determines it.⁷⁴ On this latter model, an act is free only as it is rightly related to the obligations that precede it, and not because of its spontaneity. These two commitments are not easily harmonized. The significance of this tension for Augustine's grammar of creation can be most clearly perceived in relation to the question of immutability.

Divine Immutability

Immutability is ultimately decisive for the coherence of Augustine's grammar of creation. When isolated, the question it raises is whether his grammar of sovereignty, goodness, and the will can be coherently sustained within the confines of Platonic

⁷¹ The problem is precisely the same as that Mariña notes Schleiermacher discovered in his reflections on Kant: namely, how a purely intellectual principle could serve as a motive for the will if the basis for the performance must be the transcendental freedom of the subject. See the discussion of this point in Chapter Three.

⁷² See for example, *On Free Choice*, I.8-15. The model for this approach is no doubt the discussion of justice in Plato's *Republic*, II-V.

⁷³ See *The Nature of the Good*, 9

⁷⁴ See *City of God*, XIV.12: "But God's instructions demanded obedience, and obedience is in a way the mother and guardian of all the other virtues in a rational creature, seeing that the rational creation has been so made that it is to man's advantage to be in subjection to God, and it is calamitous for him to act according to his own will, and not obey the will of his Creator."

metaphysics. The answer to that question turns on Augustine's complex relationship to the emanationist tradition.⁷⁵ For, while he successfully breaks with dualism and emanationism, understanding each as variants of one another, Augustine gives no evidence of having understood the degree to which *creation ex nihilo* breaks with the latter.

This is no doubt due, at least in part, to the fact that the notion of volition Augustine adapted from *Ennead VI* includes a very similar understanding of the relationship of sovereignty to goodness. As Bourke has noted, Plotinus understands the One as radically "diffusive of itself and thus constitutive of at least one aspect of the many things of this universe."⁷⁶ This diffusion would develop into an account of participation in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas.⁷⁷ This differs from emanation, however, Bourke continues, in that the One is not "an agent of the process of world-making," but "an exemplary cause, and not the only one, in the process."⁷⁸ For Augustine, the world is the object of a unique act of God's will, which in Plotinus is simply the effulgence of the One's willing of itself, its absolute self-determination. The difference is well captured in comparing two passages.

The first, from *Ennead VI*, elaborates the diffusive nature of this self-determination:

⁷⁵ For the distinction between emanation and participation, see Oliva Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe According to Aquinas: A Teleological Cosmology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 128-40.

⁷⁶ See Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 193.

⁷⁷ Oliva Blanchette echoes an important distinction between traditions of emanation and traditions of participation, as the latter implies a recognition of the difference between Being and beings that is characteristic of thinkers such as Aquinas, and is therefore more consonant with *creatio ex nihilo*. See Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe*, 128-40. I acknowledge the difference, but have chosen to unite the terms for this study in order to emphasize their reliance upon an economy of identity in rendering difference conceivable.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

In the One, power (*dynamis*) is not open to contraries; it is an irresistible and immovable force, which is the greatest possible...Who could change it, since it is generated from the divine will, and is His will (*boulesin ousan*) itself?...Will was, then, in His essence; in fact, it (*boulesis*) is nothing other than His essence. ..He is entirely will; there is nothing in Him that does not will.⁷⁹

This account is largely consistent with Augustine's understanding of immutability. Plotinus here rejects, in principle, any dialectical contrast to the One on grounds that its "power" [*dynamis*] determines all that follows from it. The importance of the passage lies with the fact that the absence of contrast, the absoluteness of the One, is here understood in terms of the perfection of the One's "self-making," the correspondence of ideality and reality in its self-determination. The context of the passage, which is concerned with the matter of finite volition, shows that every finite self-determination partakes of this primordial self-constitution.⁸⁰ "All was will...There is then nothing before that will: God and will were primally identical."

This passage should be compared with the account of immutable self-determination in Augustine's *The Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life*:

For that exists in the highest sense of the word which continues always the same, which is throughout like itself, which cannot be corrupted or changed, which is not subject to time, which admits no variation in its present as compared to its former condition. This is existence in its true sense. For in this signification of the word existence there is implied a nature which is self-contained, and which continues immutably. Such things can be said only of God, to whom there is nothing contrary...For the contrary of existence is non-existence (emphasis added.)⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Ennead* VI.8.21. Quotation, including Greek, is taken from Bourke, *Will in Western Thought*, 195.

⁸⁰ The reader should note the coincidence between this account and the negative determination at work in Descartes, Spinoza, and Hegel. There is a sense here in which Plotinus is the necessary precursor to Hegel insofar as each understand the development of the world to be a necessary consequence of the Absolute's reflexive self-knowledge and constitution. Augustine, by contrast, insists that the world arises as the result of the gratuitous act of an agency.

⁸¹ Harrison cites this passage to illustrate Augustine's appreciation for God as Being-itself, yet overlooks the significance of Augustine's emphasis on immutability throughout. See Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 90-91. For further demonstration of this point, see *Confessions*, VIII.1 and *Teaching Christianity*, I.8.8. See also Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, 239. This recognition that the "contrary of existence is non-existence" is what Gilson specified as the realization of the ontological difference in Augustine, which sets him on a path distinct from Plotinus. See Etienne Gilson,

This passage is unique in its emphasis on existence rather than will, which reflects Augustine's insight into the convertibility of nothingness and formlessness. Augustine here transcends Plotinian monism on one level only to persists in thinking of simplicity as the "immutably" continuing "self-contained" state with "no variation in its present as compared to...former condition."⁸² The contrast is that Augustine is conceiving perfection according to the self-correspondence aspired to at the end of a process of becoming—that is, as a motion—and has yet to formulate with precision what Aquinas knows as an act of existence (*esse*.)⁸³

It is the metaphysical structure of becoming that Augustine correctly recognizes as an irreducible, reflective dualism even in Plotinus. And yet, this residue of becoming in his account of simplicity internally fractures his grammar of creation, establishing the conditions upon which an internal conflict can emerge. On the one hand, Augustine eradicates with *creatio ex nihilo* any notion that the world is a consequential derivative of a reflective act of divine self-determination.⁸⁴ *Creatio ex nihilo* avows instead that the world is the result of God's unique and gratuitous act to constitute a reality distinct from

The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine, The Random House Lifetime Library (New York: Random House, 1960).

⁸² This would clearly be an example of Heideggerian "ontotheology," and an example of the "metaphysics of the will."

⁸³ Motion here points not only to the Platonic idea of the soul as that which move itself, but the distinction between potency and act as articulated in Aristotle and deployed by Aquinas. In this sense, act is the perfection of a potency, while motion is the "becoming" of an act, see *ST* I.2.3. As the discussion of Aquinas in chapter two makes clear, what Augustine has stumbled upon here but been unable to recognize is the distinction between motion and act. This is an important point regarding Heidegger's critique of the history ontotheology, since so much of that history is tied to an affirmation of the motion of being as opposed to his interpretation of Plato's reifying of Being as an Idea, thereby reducing it to a being among beings. The line of thought I am developing here would place Heidegger's emphasis on this point squarely within that history by virtue of his inability to recognize the absolute priority of the act of Being (as the final identity of identity and difference.)

⁸⁴ Hence my objection to Williams, who still presumes the fundamental validity of a more Neoplatonic, emanationist account, in both his own theology and in his interpretation of Augustine.

Godself, existing not in dialectical contrast to but in dynamic relation with God.⁸⁵ On the other hand, by continuing to think of God's will in its sovereignty and goodness as an immutable self-presence attained through absolute self-determination—that is, as a *perfected becoming*—an aspect of the previous metaphysics remains embedded. The result is an uneasy synthesis, at the level of willing, of Manichean dualism and Plotinian monism that turns the inner necessity of that metaphysical structure toward an extrinsic reality.⁸⁶ As long as Augustine continues to think of finite self-determination, as in texts like *On Free Choice*, as a natural intellectual capacity, this tension is obscured. But as he gains further insight into the primarily affective dimension of willing, as discussed above, this conflict comes more sharply into view. His unexamined Plotinian assumptions give his early position the semblance of a non-competitive relation, which more exact analysis of the mechanism of willing shows as premised on competing spontaneities. Insofar as

⁸⁵ And thus marks goodness as coincident with the constitution of otherness. Though I believe this is a necessary corollary of Augustine's position, it is explicitly anticipated in his work at a number of places, most notably the paradoxical discussion of enjoyment, use, and goodness in *Teaching Christianity* I.31 (34)-34 (38). Augustine notes here that God's "making use of us is directed to his goodness," which is manifested in our existence; and this "use, therefore, by which God is said to make use of us is directed to our benefit and not to his, but only to his goodness." Quotation taken from Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, 50 vols., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996). This associates the goodness of the act of creating with the enjoyment of the 'otherness' of the creature in its 'otherness,' and decisively not for the purpose of accomplishing anything or attaining anything for God. This marks a sharp break with reflective self-determination. The same point is at work in his exhortations to charity in the Donatist controversy. See for example *On Baptism*, I.8-9 and 17-19.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of emanation and necessity in Plotinus, see John M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 66-83. Rist argues that necessity is not the appropriate word to describe the emanations from the One because the One wills to be as the One is. Such a response would clearly not suffice for sovereignty as it is here being construed (See also, *Ennead* IV.8.21.) Furthermore, while there is a role for providence in the Plotinian system, that role is fulfilled by Nous, not by the Ultimate itself (See *Ennead* III.2-3; Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, 89.) Finally, as will be made clear below, it is the very self-determination of this willing that leads it ineluctably to an affirmation of necessity. On the significance of omnipresence for the Neoplatonic conception of the Good, see Robert J. O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), 45-51.

immutability is understood as absolute self-determination, divine simplicity can only be preserved by suppressing finite self-determination in deference to the infinite.

Yet this is not the entire story. Augustine's grammar of creation successfully formulates the world's 'otherness' to God in a manner irreducible to the mere 'difference' according to which "matter" is conceived in both Manichean and Plotinian metaphysics. God's act of creating is God's affirmative constitution of a reality with a discrete and intrinsic integrity. As a unique object of the divine will, the world is good in itself—indeed, only *is* itself—because of its absolute dependence on God's governance.⁸⁷ It is this 'otherness' that is compromised by the ambiguity of the notion of willing Augustine is only just beginning to articulate. With no other basis for relating God than this dialectic of identity and difference, Augustine is incapable of articulating a non-competitive relation between finite and infinite wills. As I have suggested, that conflict only comes into view as Augustine gains greater specificity regarding the nature of the will in distinction from the intellect; but that specificity will not emerge from his grammar of creation, but only in conjunction with his mature theology of grace. In that context, greater emphasis on the ethical orientation of the will slowly emerges as an alternative to this spontaneity.

The following two sections are devoted to analyzing how this tension in the grammar of creation engenders the nature/supernatural and sin/grace paradigms. As discussed so far, that grammar is consistent with my description of metaphysical ontology. In fact, it is just this schematic that is advanced by Lubac and Rahner as outlined in Chapter Two. I will mark these similarities in more detail below. Presently, I

⁸⁷ See the point made by Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 17-26.

will focus on Augustine's mature theology of grace to shed light on the interpretation of this grammar that results in the ontology of encounter and within which the ethical interpretation of the will emerges. I return, in the section immediately following this account, to discuss the role of metaphysical ontology in Augustine's thought, noting especially the difficulties this poses.

An Ontology of Encounter: The Event of Grace

You are my choice, and only by your gift can I please either you or myself.

—Augustine⁸⁸

Augustine's ideas about the relationship between freedom and grace have been from the beginning an almost perpetual concern for philosophers, theologians, and historians. It is then surprising that so little attention has been devoted to how those ideas intersect with, influence, and were influenced by his theology of creation. This is especially puzzling considering that the celebrated link he establishes early in his career between evil and free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) is propounded specifically within his argument for *creatio ex nihilo*.⁸⁹ This is understandable given that after the rereading of Paul sparked by questions posed by the bishop Simplician (396 CE)⁹⁰ and subsequent entanglement in the Donatist controversy, Augustine increasingly finds his earlier notion of freedom questioned by a more sophisticated theology of grace that he continues to

⁸⁸ Confessions X.2. Quotation from Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁸⁹ For a discussion of this connection, see John Rist, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20, no. 2 (1969): 420-42. See also, response by D. J. MacQueen, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination: A Response to John Rist," *Museum africanum* 3 (1974).

⁹⁰ This is the date of the composition of *To Simplician*, which marks the first significant transition of Augustine's position on grace.

reformulate to the end of his life.⁹¹ And yet, while this is true, it is equally apparent that writings after 396 CE show a persistent concern to reformulate certain questions raised by his early theology of creation, especially as these questions intersect with its grammatical structure. This is particularly the case in that the late works, *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (401-414 CE) and *City of God* (413-427 CE), contain his most sophisticated speculative reflections on creation, show the clear influence of the conceptual transformation wrought by his mature theology of grace.⁹²

It will be helpful for the reader to recall my use of ontology in general, as well as my specific definition of the ontology of encounter. I understand ontology to be a discourse oriented toward the specification of the essence of things in their manifestation so as to privilege the categories of identity, intellection, and participation in that specification. A specific ontology of encounter is a form of this discourse in which the most essential aspect of reality is understood to be disclosed only in a concrete event of encounter within actuality, and never in abstraction from it. An ontology of encounter is fundamentally opposed to any metaphysical system that would presume to achieve a final ordering of the whole of reality, or which would seek to mediate the essence of reality in conceptual abstraction apart from an irreducible event of encounter. In this section, I will note the ways that this discourse, which is largely constitutive of the Protestant paradigm for uniting creation and grace, is operative in Augustine's thought as his theology of grace develops over time. In making this connection to the Protestant paradigm, throughout I will note the correspondence of these themes to Schleiermacher and Barth.

⁹¹ My discussion of this development is dependent especially on Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*.

⁹² These works are discussed in the following section.

Thus far my discussion of Augustine has focused on the grammar of Augustine's theology of creation, arising as it does out of a distinctively metaphysical approach. Despite this emphasis, Augustine's thought takes on an increasingly prominent reliance on categories of "encounter," "relation," and "event" that stand in tension with metaphysics as an account of the whole, mirroring the Protestant paradigm. Though these elements are bound up with the themes of sovereignty, goodness, the will, and immutability that constitute the grammar of his theology of creation, my claim is not that these developments are implicit in that grammar. Rather, in those reflections, he develops these four grammatical themes in unanticipated ways that conflict with the prior metaphysical orientation. That conflict can be put into relief by briefly rehearsing the development of Augustine's theology of grace.

I have noted throughout that Augustine's adherence to notions of self-determination and free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) are the result of his Platonism. J. Patout Burns provides a helpful outline for how themes of Platonic spiritualism directly influenced Augustine's earliest theology of grace. Where willing means self-determination and free choice for Augustine, grace meant primarily assistance in the production of good performance. This overarching model here is intellectual illuminationism in which the divine Word communicates to the mind the principles that govern the cosmos to the mind, thereby orienting the human soul intrinsically toward God.⁹³ Thus when it is turned away from God, the intellect is darkened and lacks the moral insight necessary to unite the diverse (*distentio*) elements of existence and perform the good.

⁹³ The connection to Lubac should be clear and the version of Augustinianism he advocated. This is also the kind of vision developed by Rahner.

Burns further notes that this approach is consistent with a distinct interpretation of salvation history. God's dealings with Israel and the church are the developmental overcoming of patterns of individual and social sin that result from this ignorance. In calling Israel, giving the Law, and sending the prophets, God reestablished knowledge of the Good and creating a people committed to its performance, which finds its fulfillment in the arrival of Christ and the church. Jesus gives complete and final knowledge of God, which is alone capable of counteracting the passions; and, his continued presence in the church gives the requisite assistance in good performance, while his incarnation and resurrection give assurance of triumph over the consequence of mortality.

Augustine adheres to Platonic spiritualism and this account of salvation history to the time of his composing his letter *To Simplician* in which his close reading of Paul leads to a very different interpretation. *To Simplician* shows two important realizations. First, it marks his recognition that the tradition of Platonic spiritualism, and especially its account of self-determination and free choice, theoretically allows that the performance of good works and the avoidance of divine punishment are possibilities apart from Christ and outside of the church.⁹⁴ This stands in direct contradiction to Paul's statements that all human beings are declared to be condemned in sin and sharing in the guilt of Adam.⁹⁵ He now realizes that all proper knowledge and good performance are available solely on the basis of prior divine assistance.⁹⁶ Where the account of self-determination he adopted from Plotinus' reflections in *Ennead* VI puts the process of intentional volition at the

⁹⁴ J. Patout Burns, "Grace: The Augustinian Foundations," in *Christian Spirituality, Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 331-49.

⁹⁵ *To Simplician* I.1.4.; I.2.16-17; I.2.19-20

⁹⁶ *To Simplician*, I.1.2, 7

forefront of his thinking, it is his reading of Paul in Roman 7 that deepens his analysis of that process.⁹⁷ As the famous garden incident in the *Confessions* dramatizes, Augustine now focuses his attention on the internal conflict within the will in its attempt to perform the good, and its gracious transformation in the reception of grace.⁹⁸

This new analysis focused on Paul's reading of the Law in which Adam's punishment and guilt are original, shared by all human beings. In this condition, there is no knowledge of the good and no possibility of performing it.⁹⁹ All acts of self-determination are flawed and the only choices available are sinful.¹⁰⁰ Upon the giving of the Law, proper knowledge of the good is restored and the path to righteousness is revealed.¹⁰¹ Yet alongside this disclosure is revealed the insufficiency of the will to correspond to Law's demands, which reach beyond any capacity for self-determination.¹⁰² The final revelation of the Gospel, however, discloses the futility of this condition when Christ grants forgiveness for these failures and offers the gift of the Holy Spirit, who moves the will to love above all and the neighbor as oneself.¹⁰³ Henceforth, Augustine will insist that it is only appropriate to speak of the freedom of the will in this latter context, since everywhere prior to this condition, it is bound by sin.

It was in his analysis of this internal conflict between the will for the good and the inability to achieve its performance that Augustine most keenly confronts the distinction of the will from the intellect. For, if the acquisition of knowledge does not directly translate to good performance, this can only be because of the failure of some process

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, I.1

⁹⁸ *Confessions*, VIII.20-29

⁹⁹ *To Simplician*, I.1.7-10; I.2.16-19

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, I.1.7-11

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I.1.1-6

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, I.1.17; I.2.21; II.1.8, 10-11

that is intimately related to but distinct from the intellect. This failure further implies a basic differentiation of the will from desire inasmuch as it occurs between the desire for the good and the limits of self-determination in relation to it.¹⁰⁴ The passage from the *Retractions* that treats his original definition of the will in *On Two Souls* shows his recognition of this distinction from both intellect and desire, as well as his inability to arrive at greater conceptual precision than that of designating the will as a form of desire.¹⁰⁵ On these points, Augustine has advanced beyond his previous understanding of the will as free, self-determining choice in further specifying goodness as the proper object of the will. He notes a difference between implicitly desiring an object as a good, explicitly apprehending the truth of its goodness, and explicitly willing that object in its goodness.¹⁰⁶ It is the uniqueness and significance of the latter moment I am highlighting on in this study.

A comparison and contrast with Aquinas will help to bring an important point to light regarding these developments in Augustine's thought. As regards their theologies of grace, both Augustine and Aquinas distinguish knowledge of the good and good performance. For Augustine the differential between the two is a mark of sin because failure in self-correspondence results from the conflict and diffusion, rather than the harmony and order, of the self with its desires. For Aquinas, by contrast, this differential primarily delimits the nature and freedom of the will as distinct from the intellect, and is

¹⁰⁴ This claim should be distinguished from Wetzel's argument, and should be compared with *Retractions* I.15.3-4.

¹⁰⁵ The passage from *Retractions* is I.15.3-4.

¹⁰⁶ Despite Wetzel's brilliant rereading of the Augustinian will as coextensive with desire, he fails to recognize this fundamental point that the issue at stake is not only that of a virtuous correspondence or the habitual vice that prevents its attainment as an objective good. Augustine is also investigating what it means to will the good for itself alone, which though involving desire, intellect, and virtue is pointing toward a unique operation.

only secondarily qualified as sinful. Nonetheless, the two understand righteousness in terms of a perfect self-correspondence of reality and ideality. This is the task of the Holy Spirit for Augustine, who heals the fractured self by arousing the self to charity, which alone can rejoining these disparate functions in union with God and other Christians. Aquinas' ability further to distinguish the natural from the sinful in this differential allows him to understand the infusion of the habit of charity as the supernatural perfection and elevation of an essentially good, and concretely disordered structure, of reflective self-determination. It is in this sense that Aquinas, as discussed in Chapter Two, can be said to resolve the difficulties Augustine bequeathed to medieval theology: namely, that of completing the differentiation of the natural from the volitional, and thereby specifying the relationship of freedom and morality. Aquinas thereby succeeds at specifying the will as the function of affirming the goodness of an object and seeking its enjoyment.

Because of the elegance of Aquinas solution (when it has been rightly understood), the Protestant position on grace is often conceived as a reversion to the earlier Augustinian problematic.¹⁰⁷ However, the relational and social emphasis to which Augustine links the doctrine of election in resolving this inner conflict points also toward the Protestant emphasis on encounter and away from the metaphysical application adopted by Aquinas. Even as Augustine upholds an idea of perfection as the correspondence of the ideal with the real (or the actualization of every potentiality), he also intimates that all is not well with those premises. For Augustine is not only resisting the idea of salvific merit and the conflation of the natural and volitional; he

¹⁰⁷ Though I contest this as a final characterization of the logic of the Protestant position, I do not dispute that this is an accurate charge to raise against many of its presentations.

simultaneously perceives that freedom as self-determination is reducible to self-preservation, which effectively precludes the kind of gratuitous relation charity demands. Indeed, the social and relational force of his arguments for intentional charity against the Donatists, which are concomitant with the development of his most mature position on election and operative grace, suggest just this connection.¹⁰⁸ He consistently indicts the Donatist emphasis on ritual purity and ecclesiastical continence on just this point of elevating self-preservation at the expense of the very charity of intention that unites Christians to Christ and one another.¹⁰⁹ Here, the very structure of willing that Aquinas has properly delimited as “natural” is one in which the will’s order toward the good is an expression of the creature’s impulse to sustain itself in the face of what would otherwise dissolve it. Every willing of a good—be it health, friendship, even (and perhaps especially) salvation—is *naturally* an expression of the desire for self-preservation, and is only *perfected* in the supernatural operation of charity. Though not eradicating this orientation toward complete self-correspondence in his account of salvation, Augustine prioritizes the social and relational context of intentional encounter wherein this correspondence occurs in a way incompatible with self-perpetuation. The problem confronted here is the same as that encountered in Neoplatonic emanation: free self-determination requires an implicit negative principle over against which to complete itself. Just as emanation precludes the affirmation of difference at work in the doctrine of creation, so a self-determining will reduces the encounter with God and the neighbor to a negative moment of self-constitution. As he more clearly perceives its distinction from

¹⁰⁸ See Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 53-88.

¹⁰⁹ See the discussion at J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, Routledge Early Church Monographs (New York: Routledge, 2002), 166-76.

the intellect and desire in his mature theology of grace, he more clearly recognizes the extent to which willing is preceded by a relation to the good that always conditions the character of its self-determination, and the inherently relational character of this order to the good.¹¹⁰ What Aquinas conceives as the perfection of the natural desire for self-preservation is for Augustine a perversion of its proper orientation to the good, which is only coincident with its goal insofar as it acts charitably.

This is the sense that Augustine anticipates Luther's rejection of the speculative dialectic on which the Scholastic account of justification is based. Each thinker perceives a fundamental incompatibility between a will ordered toward self-preservation and the command to charity, and recognizes that this implies the fulfillment of the command prior to the performance. This point is consonant with Luther's insistence that "for an act to be meritorious, either the presence of grace is sufficient or its presence means nothing." This represents an important elaboration of Aquinas' emphasis on the infusion of the habitual grace of charity in recognizing that a relation to the good precedes the will's performance and determines its ethical orientation. For what is at issue here is the consistent emphasis on the priority of act over motion. Luther is more consistent in his application of this point in that he realized it implied that redemption was not the reflective *movement* of oneself to perfect correspondence to a goal, but of being properly *related* to that goal prior to any self-determination. Augustine's recognition of this relational priority over spontaneous self-determination anticipates this insight, and yet retains the basis for that system in its continued understanding of willing as spontaneous self-determination. Luther's continuity with Augustine on this item points to the way in

¹¹⁰ See *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian* I.37; I.45-47; I.127; I.133; III.114; V.38.5-6; *Answer to Julian*, I.45; IV.30; and *The Grace of Christ*, I.10.

which the Protestant position is not a reversion, as noted in the previous chapter, but a genuine advance on Aquinas' terms. In fact, Luther recovers and develops an integral and occluded element of Augustine's analysis.

The account of election as it treated in Romans 7-9 is integral to that continuity.¹¹¹ Augustine understands the priority of God's action in terms of this divine election. Yet his greatest difficulty lies in coming to terms with the relationship between election and his commitment to the will as self-determination. This is most apparent in the account of election that develops from *To Simplician* to the works following the Donatist controversy.¹¹² His overarching concern in the letter *To Simplician* is to interpret election as a call from God that is perfectly suited to the disposition of the recipient by orchestrating the circumstances under which the call is given and received, and thus belongs more properly to the Platonic emphases of the anti-Manichean period.¹¹³ His concern is to synthesize his recognition of the necessity of the priority of the divine election with his commitment to Platonic self-determination. Yet, after the Donatist controversy and continuing through the Pelagian disputes, Augustine acknowledges that his emphasis on self-determination conflicts with Paul.¹¹⁴ Thereafter, he ascribes the entirety of redemption to God alone. From the giving of the call to its acceptance and on to perseverance—each is determined solely by God's eternal election.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *To Simplician*, I.1 and I.2. As Burns has argued, of particular importance was Romans 9:16: "It is not a matter of willing or of running, therefore, but of a merciful God" (see I.2.10.) See Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 39-44.

¹¹² See *Ibid.*, 53-88.

¹¹³ *To Simplician*, I.2.

¹¹⁴ Burns argues that this conflict arises first in the Donatist controversy as a concession to the necessity for coercion. Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 53-88.

¹¹⁵ *The Gift of Perseverance*, XX.52 and XXI.55. See *Ibid.*, 124-40.

The accounts of sovereignty and goodness at work in his grammar of creation yield a clearer perception of volitional agency than was previous available in either his own thought or his most important predecessor, Plotinus. His rejection of dualism is intimately bound to ethics in that the goodness of the created order is inexorably linked to the divine agency. The shift in his thinking away from an emphasis on self-determination and toward rectitude shows this ethical aspect of his thought taking on greater prominence as his theology of grace matures. The greater emphasis on election shows a pattern of thinking emerging in his mature theology of grace—as is reflected most prominently in the narrative whole of the *Confessions*, and most lucidly in the “*tollo, lege*” episode—in which it is transformative existential encounter that discloses the world’s order and one’s place in it.¹¹⁶ In his theology of grace, Augustine’s concern is much less with a Neoplatonic metaphysical order within which the will is rightly “ordered” in relation to the whole, and more with describing the event in which God’s summons determines the whole of one’s life, thereby disclosing God’s sovereignty.

This emphasis is consistent with the sin/grace paradigm. Though Augustine does not think of justification in Luther’s terms, the elements of election and covenant are present in his account. Such emphases are important because the pattern of thought they represent, as is evidenced from the above account of salvation history, marks a move away from diachronic ordering of redemption in which the temporal movement of creation, fall, and redemption is synchronically ordered within a union of creation and grace. Instead, he begins with a synchronic experience of redemption in which is disclosed the realities of sin and grace, out of which opens up an emphasis on the

¹¹⁶ *Confessions* VIII.20-30

absolutely diachronic priority of God in every temporal event—that is, that every event has its origin in God. Viewing the world through the lens of election, rather than merely “nature,” accounts for this shift. The emphasis on dynamic relation that the category of election brings is reflected in an increase stress on justice and rectitude as matters of the proper volitional intention of an action. These elements also entail a more dogmatic or “intratextual” thrust such that, by the time of his writing the *City of God*, he is reading the story of the world through the lens of election and redemption, rather than Neoplatonic metaphysics. In this respect, Augustine opens the door to understanding creation as a refracted dimension of redemption in the manner characteristic the sin/grace paradigm. Indeed, each of its basic components has its origin here, and is not recognizable prior to Augustine's mature theology of grace, and specifically his interpretation of Romans 7 and 9.

More importantly for our purposes is the need to see how Augustine’s logic is tied to the origins of the ontology of encounter. As we saw in the previous discussion of Schleiermacher and Barth, the decisive element in that ontology is the role played by divine election. As with Schleiermacher, Augustine’s mature theology of grace casts the relationship between creation and redemption in a decidedly dialectical mode of contrast between sin and grace.¹¹⁷ Sin here is one’s inability to affirm or attain anything but what

¹¹⁷ For Schleiermacher, this contrast occurs in the mode of self-knowledge as reflected in thought, and for Barth it is a matter of the sloth and pride of human existence. By contrast to each, though, for Augustine the conflict is between the desire for an object and the capacity of the will to attain it. There is an important point to made here. Though Augustine is reflecting here self-consciously, he is not referring to the nature of self-consciousness. He is thinking through the significance of the discrete faculty of the will in its distinction from the intellect. This is an important difference because it shows, in one respect, how the Augustinian concept of the will anticipates Aquinas’s rational appetite, rather than that of non-objectifiable indifference lying at the root of Schleiermacher and Barth’s proposals. And this also points away from the Platonic self-determination at work in Lubac and Rahner. For, what Augustine isolates as a distinct operation, both indifference and self-determination leave indistinct. This line of reflection,

is produced through reflective self-determination, while grace is the opening of that self to what is distinct from by the divine operation that determines it. This determination is election, and the justifying encounter discloses this to be the reality of the world. This encounter is ontological insofar as it manifests the most primal truth of one's *identity* as absolutely subject to God through one's *participation* in election. The *intellectualist* aspect of this pertains most strictly to the overarching ordering of the cosmos according to the divine providence and election.¹¹⁸ This particular inflection of these three categories of identity, intellection, and participation only appear in Augustine's thinking after his mature theology of grace. In each case, however, Augustine's development is strictly related to the rupture of the metaphysical orientation by grace in that the proper perspective on the whole can never be attained apart from and as a direct extension of the event of encounter with Christ that discloses the fundamental truth of reality. His argument here is that any metaphysical account formulated on any basis presumably more fundamental than the event of incarnation fails to be properly determined by that event. Such is the importance of the increased emphasis on election and predestination in his work.

Though it is true that Augustine's thought undergoes a dramatic shift following his reading of Paul, the speculative metaphysical component of his thought persists. For, the tension between the metaphysical affirmations that structures his grammar of creation and the emphasis on encounter that arises in his mature theology of grace persist to the end. Indeed, it is this very tension that sparks the medieval reflections discussed in

however, sparked this introspective trajectory in thought about self-consciousness even as it laid the groundwork for its overcoming.

¹¹⁸ See *City of God* V.8-11; XI-XII, XIV.26-28. This is the reason he insists throughout his writings that the Neoplatonists possessed everything they needed except the incarnation, but this meant they mediated only death (see *Confessions*, VII.27.)

Chapter Two. In this respect, the persistence of metaphysics is coextensive with his continued emphasis on self-determination as his predominant paradigm for the will. We must now turn our attention to those persistent elements as they are reflected in his later mediations on creation, which bear the marks of having been shaped by his mature theology of grace. I address his broader metaphysical ontology in the following section.

A Metaphysical Ontology: A Speculative Theology of Creation

As I turn to address the role of a metaphysical ontology in Augustine's later thought, it will be helpful to review my use of that term as well. As I am using phrase, "metaphysical ontology" refers to a particular kind of ontological discourse, which is ordered toward formulating a systematic account of the whole of reality in terms consonant with the philosophical category of being. "Ontology" here continues to designate the discursive specification of the essence of things according to the categories of identity, intellection, and participation. My present discussion of metaphysical ontology is distinct from that carried out in the first section in that the concern here is to discuss how this pattern of thought persists despite the transformation inaugurated by his mature theology of creation. In what follows, I am concerned to show how Augustine attempts to develop his theology of grace into a speculative metaphysics of creation consonant with the grammar established in the Manichean polemics. Special concern will be paid to the specific ways this constitutes a metaphysical ontology and the impasse that results for the attempt to draw the elements of encounter into this frame. Throughout the discussion, attention will be paid to convergences with the approaches of Lubac and Rahner.

The issue of metaphysical ontology is bound up in Augustine's thought with the demand to formulate some account of the world in light of his affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo*. It was not enough simply to disrupt Manichean discourse; he was also obliged to offer a more satisfactory metaphysics based on that account. That he worked out this metaphysics over the course of three major (one unfinished) commentaries on Genesis speaks both to the seriousness with which he took that task and the magnitude of its demands. Ironically, however, it is vital that, at precisely the juncture Augustine rejected Hellenistic cosmogony in favor of a more Hebraic theology, he simultaneously relied on the Platonic category of *form (eidos)* to develop his speculative vision. It is here that his thought returns to a decidedly metaphysical orientation. On just this point, the full significance of his emphasis on immutability comes most sharply into relief.

I emphasized the grammar of Augustine's theology of creation as pivoting on an affirmation of the world's inherent goodness as predicated on the universality of God's rational intentional agency. It is this emphasis on volition that secures an element of objective value in the created order of the world, which points toward a notion of justice as the proper ontological order of reality, as well as the ethical affirmation of that reality as such. The latter is emphasized more after 396 CE, and corresponds to a greater recognition of the will's distinction from the intellect. I have already anticipated the conflict resulting from these two approaches to the will, but it is just here that this conflict becomes most apparent as Augustine seeks to develop a speculative theology of creation that is consistent with both his mature theology of grace and his original grammar of creation. The difficulty he encounters is, as we will see, inseparable from the fact that he continues to understand the divine agency as an immutable self-presence

established through absolute self-determination. The problems this poses for him occur on two fronts.

First, the new position on grace appears to fracture the intimate relationship between sovereignty and immutability. It has become absolutely clear that the entirety of redemption is a divine work in which the acceptance, willing, and attainment of salvation is God's work. The new emphasis on encounter involves the disruption of the continuity of creation, grace, and the will in that grace interrupted the tragic structure of self-determination. Ironically, where this clarifies the logic of God's sovereignty, it also compromises an aspect of God's immutability by suggesting that God reacts to fallen creatures rather than governing absolutely. This is problematic because, as Augustine makes clear in his debate with Fortunatus, to think of God reacting to evil is to think of God as conditioned by it.

A second problem runs in tandem with this. Once he understands *creatio ex nihilo* as a discrete volitional act, directed away from Godself and toward an other, Augustine no longer has the theoretical resources that would allow a distinction of the bestowal of grace from absolute necessity.¹¹⁹ This is the deep irony that runs through Augustine's account of *creatio ex nihilo*. As I noted in the previous section, *creatio ex nihilo* marks the first thought of a genuine *otherness*, God's affirmative constitution of and relationship with that what is genuinely distinct from Godself. In this respect, by

¹¹⁹ See *City of God* V.8-11, where Augustine includes free acts of the will within the natural order of causes, "which is," he says, "for God, fixed, and is contained in his foreknowledge, since human acts of will are the causes of human activities. Therefore he who had prescience of the causes of all events certainly could not be ignorant of our decisions, which he foreknows as the causes of our actions." He then goes on to associate this directly with a form of necessity, in chapter 10, if "we define 'necessity' in the sense implied when we say that it is necessary a thing should be thus, or should happen thus," concluding that he sees "no reason to fear that this would rob us of free will." This discussion of necessity should be read in combination with the discussion of creation of angels and men in XXII.1-2.

making the world rather than Godself the object of the divine will, Augustine breaks radically with the form of divine necessity implied in Plotinus One.¹²⁰ Yet, simultaneously, insofar as he thinks of the will as absolute self-determination, the preservation of divine immutability entailed that every contingent particularity of the world must be determined by God's self-determination. What is regained here for divine immutability, in response the first problematic regarding sovereignty above, is bought at the expense of free human agency. Eventually, in his strongest anti-Pelagian position on predestination, Augustine appears to adopt a position that eradicates divine goodness by eradicating the conditions necessary for human culpability regarding sin, even seeming to grant positivity to the negative moment in God's eternal decree.¹²¹ The hinge of immutability that linked sovereignty, goodness, will, and creation has been compromised at the level of his understanding of immutability. Augustine, thus, faces a conflict between the demands of his mature theology of grace and the stipulations of his grammar of creation.

This is why it is ironic that he resolves this dilemma by returning to a Platonic notion of form that had been present in his earliest of theological reflections, even as he now recast this idea in light of the developments in his theology of grace. The category of form allows him to develop an account for how an immutable sovereign agency exercises its influence over mutable particulars. And once Augustine's doctrine of creation situations these forms in the divine mind, he can then speak of their created

¹²⁰ See *Ennead* VI.8 for the appropriate example in Plotinus. Rist argues against this interpretation of Plotinus (Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, 66-83.)

¹²¹ See for example *City of God*, XI.33-XII.5. It is imperative to recognize that the culprit here is not his notion of sovereignty, but his understanding of willing in the exercise of that sovereignty. Augustine will insist that this does not render God the efficient cause of evil, but a positive role of this negation is affirmed. A theory of reprobation seems thus ineluctable. See Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 175-78.

actualization as an expression of their participation in and direct dependence upon their creator.¹²² This is a significant transformation of the concept of form in that it allows him to conceive God's governance as the originary establishment of the world's potentialities and the delimitation of a range of the whole of its given actualities, and to link that governance directly to the divine knowledge.¹²³

Temporality is integral to that development. As with Book X of the *Confessions*, time is the immanent horizon within which the formal potentialities of the whole of the distended (*distentio*) world order are actualized.¹²⁴ It is the *milieu* in which formal potentialities are actualized across the duration of the entire cosmic order, and it is linked to form by the mediating role of the *rationes seminales*.¹²⁵ Recalling both the Stoic idea of the *logoi spermatikoi* and perhaps Basilides' notion of the "world-seed," the *rationes* are the immanent "seeds" of the Divine Ideas within creation. They are inscribed into its fabric from the beginning. As with Basilides, Augustine maintains that "the whole cosmic process develops according to the original plan of God," and the *rationes* effectively are the immanent means for God's governance, present in reality from the outset and determining the last detail.¹²⁶ This is exacted according to the three criteria of

¹²² See *Confessions* VII.17; *De Trinitate* VII.12. The order and goodness of the Origin that is reflected in creation applies only to the whole, and is only relatively perceptible from the perspective of a given part of the whole. This relativity is essential to Augustine's account of creation, and is intimately tied to his understanding of finitude's direct association with temporality. On the dynamic, temporal qualities of creation see Williams, "Creation," 251-54. His appropriation of the category of Form allowed Augustine to conceive the goodness of the created order on the analogy of a piece of music wherein the composite of different finite potencies and acts express creation as it exists eternally in the Divine Mind in much the way the collective notes come together as the symphony envisioned by its composer. On this point, see Robert J. O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 50-90.

¹²³ See *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, VI.10.17, VI.11.18-19. See also, Williams, "Creation.", 252.

¹²⁴ See *Confessions*, XI.

¹²⁵ Although the idea is Stoic in origin, Augustine most likely received the notion from Plotinus. See *Enneads*, II.1 and III.1.7.

¹²⁶ See May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo.*, 70-73.

measure, number, and weight, which accounts for immanent self-directed growth, development, and decay of material reality. There is a convergence of goodness and sovereignty here in that form, time, and the *rationes* account for the order of the whole of finite reality and as established directly by God. As a result, Augustine can say that God created everything at once, and in such a way that the divine simplicity was not compromised in the form of absolute immutable self-determination.¹²⁷ In this sense, the *rationes* mark the immanent modality by which God's election is realized.

Importantly, neither the appeal to the Divine Ideas nor the category of *rationes seminales* appears in Augustine's doctrine of creation before the *Literal Commentary*.¹²⁸ Prior to this, Augustine is content merely to insist that form and matter arose together *ex nihilo*, and does not appear to believe that an affirmation of providence requires an immediate agency governing particulars. This situates a strong notion of gubernatorial providence after the development of his mature theology of grace around 396 CE, and supports the argument that this development is the result of the practical and pastoral challenges he encountered after becoming embroiled in the Donatist controversy.¹²⁹ If this is not the case, it is difficult to see how the level of providential control that Augustine affirms would have ever been necessary—or have even occurred to him—if not preceded by his recognition of the necessity for an interior operation of God's grace upon the human will. We should regard these developments as his attempt to offer some

¹²⁷ See *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 5.23.45 (see also Williams, "Creation."252.)

¹²⁸ A possible exception to this claim could be made by pointing to his comments in *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, 46. The matter in question regarding this passage must be decided by the date of the production of question 46. While I am inclined to date it after Augustine's wrestling with the Pauline material as this is expressed in *Ad Simplician* on the basis of the present argument, I can only direct the reader to the discussion of dating in Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1977), 1-34.

¹²⁹ See Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, 53-88.

account for his new theology of grace, and most specifically the interior operation of God upon the will. As such, these developments in his doctrine of creation stand as evidence of the broader impact his theology of grace had on his speculative theological reflections as a whole.¹³⁰

Also, while I have stressed the impact *creatio ex nihilo* in leading Augustine away from Hellenistic cosmogony (and Neoplatonism specifically), this appeal to ontological participation in the forms is the most important aspect of his thought where a Platonic residue continues to guide his thinking. Although Augustine significantly transforms his Hellenistic inheritance by introducing an idea of agency into it and by arguing that created reality arose from nothing, he never completely abandons the emphasis on participation that becomes prominent with the return to the forms in the *Literal Commentary*. Indeed, participation is throughout invaluable in allowing him to hold immutability together with that the goodness of reality. It is the dual force of the appropriation of the *rationes* and the situating of the forms in the Divine Mind that accomplishes this. Whereas *creatio ex nihilo* had sharply marks the world as the object of the divine intention, the *rationes* are capable of preserving the immanent participation in the Divine Ideas that likewise preserve the continuum of the relationship between the two. It is, then, not accidental that Augustine develops so strong an account of providence when working out his later doctrine of creation in light of his mature theology of grace.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Against Hanby, this would include *The Trinity*. See the argument in Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*.

¹³¹ The tenets for a coherent doctrine of creation alone, even one governed by the logic of immutability, would not have yielded this result. Likewise, it is not until the production of *The Literal Commentary on Genesis* that we begin to see the impact of his mature theology of grace on his vision of the

Here the significance of immutability is most pronounced. Given the fact that it is Augustine's Neoplatonism that is so often appealed to in the attempt to soften the blow of his later theology, we must not overlook the significance of this. Once he has tied the affirmation of a contingent creation's inherent goodness both to the providential ordering and control of God's free sovereign will, and conceived that action of ordering according to creation's participation in the Divine Ideas actualized by means of the *rationes seminales*, an affirmation of ontological necessity is unavoidable. *Pace* Carol Harrison, then, we must note that this level of necessity is demanded, not primarily because of a misplaced distinction between interior and exterior grace on the part of some interpreters, but because the participatory schematic of his early position determines this interpretation of the mature theology of grace. Augustine simply cannot imagine a domain of finite existence, possessing its own operational integrity and agency, which is not essentially in competition with God for control of the world. Having reworked his metaphysical vision in this light, it is Augustine's implicit reliance on an emanationist metaphysical scheme in working out his mature theology of grace that will, then, appear to be responsible for leading him to his most severe of conclusions. The practical result is that the internal necessity Augustine uncovered in Manichean and Neoplatonic metaphysics is turned outward onto the world, resulting in a genuine ontological necessity.

These developments intersect with his notion of the will in important ways. On the whole, whereas the theology of grace had led him to an increasingly strong emphasis on the ethical aspect of the will and its exercise, the fact that he understands the divine simplicity in terms of immutable self-determination is decisive here for this conclusion of

whole of reality. Moreover, the metaphysical speculations of *The City of God*, written even later in the midst of the Pelagian controversy, bear out this claim.

ontological necessity. Indeed, from the beginning of his reflection on the theology of creation, a strong agential component was integral, allowing him to link the goodness of creation directly to the exercise of divine sovereignty. No difficulty arises on this front as long as this goodness is tied simply to the execution or failure of finite self-determination in relation to the good. But once that very capacity is understood to be determined by God's absolute self-determination, an implicit competition between the two is set up that can only be decided in God's favor. The result is an ontological necessity that is directly tied to the return to the metaphysical emphasis of his thought. Uniquely, however, this necessity follows from his invocation of participation in the forms as the transcendent ideas realized in and through the providential unfolding of the *rationes* as the media of election.¹³²

This speculative elaboration of the theology of creation in light of the mature theology of grace remains consistent with the contours of the nature/supernatural paradigm. On the whole, this is true insofar as this speculative approach is grounded in the categories of traditional metaphysics, particularly the Platonic categories of form and participation, each of which are mediated by notion of *rationes seminales*. But more importantly, what we find here is the attempt to articulate an account of the whole of reality. In this respect, the synchronic perspective on the creation/grace relationship that develops from his reflections on election is recast once more in terms of a diachronic metaphysics and a discrete account of salvation history. This attempt to return to a diachronic pattern of relating creation and redemption reveals the fundamental conflict

¹³² This aspect of Augustine's thought ties him to Heidegger's charge of ontotheology. However, it is important to note that his recognition of the ontological difference, noted above, shows the degree to which he advances beyond it.

between the two ontologies. Whereas the ontology of encounter tends to reduce creation to a refracted dimension of redemption because of its emphasis on election, the metaphysical ontology tends to reduce redemption to an aspect of the established created order. This is the case in the early model in which natural self-determination was the conditional basis for both evil and redemption. In the later model, this is recapitulated in such a way that the divine decree is inscribed into reality from the outset as it unfolds over time. In many important respects, Augustine's schematic is the inversion of Schleiermacher's account of election. Instead of creation being understood as an abstract application of the event of redemption to the whole of reality, the whole is here understood as metaphysically ordered toward the manifestation of election.¹³³ Augustine has, thus, succeeded in reducing the insights gained into the existential and social dimension of grace to a metaphysical account that once again cannot sustain a distinction between grace and creation.

Conclusion: Augustine's Dual Ontologies

Reality limits my boundlessness from outside, and this outside is no more intellectually conceivable but only believable.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer¹³⁴

A reiteration of my argument is in order. Augustine's early theology of creation establishes a grammar of *creatio ex nihilo* that persists throughout his writings. That grammar is characterized, first, by the convertibility of the divine attributes of

¹³³ The difference here can be said to be that of seeing election as a formal (Schleiermacher) and an efficient (Augustine) cause.

¹³⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Concerning the Christian Idea of God," *The Journal of Religion* 12, no. 2 (1932): 193., 177-85.

sovereignty and goodness, which mutually establish the goodness of finite materiality. No absolute evil materiality (as in Manichaeism) or formless potentiality (as in Neoplatonism) precedes or accompanies God's creative act of determination. Second, this affirmation of sovereignty and goodness also involves avowing a unique creative act of the will. Creation is thus the result of a rational volitional act that is distinct from the divine nature. Finally, these are bound together by a notion of God's immutable self-presence understood as absolute self-determination. This idea of self-determination, then, serves as the basis for finite human self-determination (*liberum arbitrium*), which grounds his moral rather than ontological definition of evil. On each of these fronts, Augustine's thought is representative of metaphysical ontology in its attempt to establish an account of the whole of reality in terms of the categories of identity, intellect, and participation. This position is, in its overarching details, essentially that of Lubac's and Rahner's.

Augustine elaborates upon this grammar even as, after 396 CE, he commences the development of his mature theology of grace, which will most significantly alter that grammar. His close reading of Paul in *To Simplician* leads him to focus his attention on his previously unexamined notions of grace, recognizing his previous position to involve a notion of merit explicitly rejected by Paul. This leads Augustine to develop a doctrine of election the turning point of which is recognition of the need for God to operate directly within the will to affect its response. This entails significant revision of his previous account of the will as self-determination. He now has to account for the priority of affectivity over spontaneity in the will's operation, which involves an even greater distinction from intellection and desire, as well to incorporate a greater ethical and

relational emphasis that emerges in the Donatist controversy. A free will is now less a matter of self-determination, and more a matter of willing rightly. Grace is now clearly perceived as an event distinct from—and even discontinuous with—creation, and was correlated with a deeply relational insight into charity. Each of these points is consistent with the ontology of encounter.

A conflict comes into view here in his grammar of creation. On the one hand, the distinction of grace from creation implies that God is reacting to human sinfulness, which compromises his understanding of God's immutable self-determination. On the other hand, preserving God's immutability on these terms eradicates the contingency of human self-determination, which compromises his argument for the moral origin of evil. The culprit here is the persistence of his Neoplatonic understanding of divine simplicity as an immutable self-presence of absolute self-determination.

Augustine attempts to account for these difficulties in his later theology of creation, as in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* and the *City of God*. In doing so, he attempts to reframe these dynamic elements of event, relation, and encounter in terms of metaphysical ontology. This involves a reformulation of the Platonic category of form, which allows him to account most fully for identity, intellect, and participation most completely. In this light, God's determination of reality occurs through the mediation of the divine ideas to the world by the *rationes seminales* implanted at the inception of the world, governing scope of reality as it unfolds over time. While this preserves a metaphysical account of justice as the ordering of the whole of reality, the result is an ontological necessity in which God's immutable self-determination must determine every override the contingency of every finite act of self-determination.

We find here a strange return to the consequences of the earlier position in which creation and grace are theoretically indistinguishable, and which Aquinas' formulation of the nature/supernatural paradigm would prove so important. For grace is not simply a category pointing to the contingency of God's act of redemption, but likewise a fundamental distinction from nature as such. In this sense, it is, as noted above with reference to Wetzel, tied to the distinction of natural and volitional occurrences. Yet, it is just this distinction that is occluded in the later creation account. Because the metaphysical perspective is ordered toward supplying an account of the whole, and must now include the divine election, the contingency of finite volition is eradicated (even if finite willing remains), and once again collapsed into the natural.

Nonetheless, the distinction between nature and volition has been made, as has the difference between creation and grace. Each of these differences are captured in the existential and relational emphases of the ontology of encounter that continue to impinge on the later account, and which are widely recognized as there being compromised. In this sense, Augustine establishes the conditions of possibility for a metaphysical reduction of the existential and social emphases of the ontology of encounter, upon which Aquinas will build. But insofar as Augustine's vision remained authoritative for Western Christianity, these two incommensurable ontologies remained. When, as discussed in Chapter Two, Aquinas resolves these difficulties in Augustine's metaphysics, he does so in a manner that effectively perfects the metaphysical approach, at the expense of eliminating the existential and relational dimension of grace. In this respect, these elements simply awaited reactivation in Luther's work. What is more, those elements were intimately attached to an aspect of the content of will's orientation—one might

equally say, it's final cause—to the good that had been neglected by Aquinas' preoccupation with settling the issue of its form. That issue pertains to the relationship, already noted above, of the will's orientation to the good and the affirmation of otherness, which first arose in Augustine's theology of creation and was implicitly elaborated upon in the reliance on charity in his mature theology of grace. This is the topic of the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

A CONTINUED IMPASSE

Introduction

The previous three chapters have traced out and revealed an incommensurability between two different schemes for uniting creation and grace. The last chapter showed how these two schemes, the one metaphysical, and the other relational, developed out of two discrete trajectories in Augustine's theology. The Roman Catholic and the Protestant schemes, each develop one of these trajectories, and neither successfully draws the two into harmony. The final section of the last chapter also showed how Augustine's later theology of creation reduced the social dimension of his mature theology of grace to its constitutive metaphysical elements. I concluded that this was due to an insufficient account of the nature of the will as oriented toward the good, which Chapter Two had shown Aquinas effectively supplied and Luther elaborated. This chapter will focus, specifically, on this aspect of the study.

In this chapter, I will draw the pieces of this argument together by revisiting the function of the will as understood by Thomas Aquinas. Though repeating certain aspects of Chapter Two, my concern is different here in that I focus on his development of the metaphysical orientation of the will toward the good. My intent is to show that Aquinas' analysis stumbles at the very social and relational elements emphasized by the Protestant perspective, unable to account fully for those elements. I also intend to analyze how it is that Luther's objections to scholastic speculation serve as a necessary transformation of

Aquinas' metaphysics, and one that returns these concerns of sociality to their rightful place. In showing this, I refer directly to the important work of the Finnish interpretation of Luther, which helps to show how Luther's work must be understood as directly responding to the problem of negative determination that persists in Aquinas' account. That same Finnish interpretation, inadvertently, also lifts out where Luther himself goes wrong. As the Finnish interpretation makes clear, Luther's recuperation of the social dimension of grace, nonetheless, runs aground at precisely the same difficulty when he frames his most important advances in distinctively ontological terms.

In contrast to this, I argue that what is needed is a metaphysical account of the relationship of the will and intellect, as drawn from Aquinas, which can resolve the issues that Augustine's mature theology of grace causes for his grammar of creation. But this metaphysics must also be able to account for the critique of the Scholastic position as developed by Luther, yet without his own ontological reduction. This analysis sets the stage for my own programmatic reformulation in the conclusion.

Nature and the Supernatural: Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Will

The imperfect is always for something more perfect: therefore, just as matter is for form, so also form, which is first act, is for its operation, which is second act; and so operation is the end of a created thing.

—Thomas Aquinas¹

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *ST I.105.5*. This discussion on the mechanics of the will, as well as the Latin, in Aquinas is throughout dependent on the analyses in David M. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iae, Qq. 6-17)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), Eberhard Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (Iia Iae, Qq. 23-46)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Daniel Westberg, "Good and Evil in Human Acts (Ia Iae, Qq 18-21)," in *The Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002).

The focus of Chapter Two was the importance of the role of the will in Aquinas' account of grace.² I showed that both Lubac and Rahner sought the union of creation and grace in terms that occluded the centrality of the will, which was essential to Aquinas' development of the speculative metaphysics of the Roman Catholic scheme. They reverted to the Platonic account of the will that Aquinas' thought overcame and which had been integral to that scheme. The most important mistake of that scheme had been the assumption that the performance of the good was principally a matter of right knowledge. Only by recognizing the will as distinct from the intellect and desire could the conflicts be resolved in the theology of grace inherited from Augustine. What remains to be seen is how what is achieved regarding the metaphysics of the will comes at the expense of Augustine's emphasis on the social dimension of the will's rectitude. Closer analysis of the mechanics of his account of the will is thus in order.

According to Aquinas' treatment in *Summa Theologiae* I-II.10, the will is to be distinguished from nature in that it is the source of all voluntary and contingent activity. As he notes, "the will is distinguished from nature as one kind of cause from another; for some things happen naturally and some are done voluntarily";³ and the will's "movement remains contingent and not necessary, except in those to which it is moved naturally."⁴ He thus develops the line of argument inherited from Augustine, which sought to distinguish voluntary and contingent action from natural operations as such. On this

² I follow Lonergan's argument regarding the development of Aquinas' thought on the will. This takes *ST I-II* as the most complete expression of a development beginning with his *Commentary on the Sentences*. I do not here enter into the debates concerning this development. For a contrary opinion, see Terry J. Tekippe, *Lonergan and Thomas on the Will: An Essay in Interpretation* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993). See also the response, J. Michael Stebbins, "What Did Lonergan Really Say About Aquinas' Theory of the Will?," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994).

³ See *ST I-II* 10.1.1 ad

⁴ See *ST I-II*.10.4

basis, Aquinas understands the will as an appetite (*appetitus*)⁵ insofar as it is both ordered toward a desire, the power by which the desire arises, and also the basis for free choice (*liberum arbitrium*).⁶ The will is thus a principle of self-determination in much the way Augustine understood it, but is specifically designated as that set of operations by which the good is attained in actuality. Where Aquinas developed beyond Augustine was in recognizing not only the distinction of the will from desire and intellect, but in realizing that the will is itself an “intellectual appetite.”⁷ It was this recognition that allowed him to properly differentiate willing from intellect without succumbing to the Platonic or Scotist confusions on the matter.

The designation “intellectual appetite” means the will is moved to action first by an object apprehended by the intellect as a good.⁸ The formal cause of the will’s act is not the goodness of the thing itself, but the universal good that transcends the material expression of that which is intellectually apprehended.⁹ This universality is central to Aquinas’ account, as the will is ordered not simply by the desire for a particular good, as is the case in non-intellectual creatures, but by desire for Good *per se*. This Good can only be intellectually—that is, not sensibly—apprehended.¹⁰ Such apprehension actualizes the will’s capacity to will the Good, which corresponds to the proper transcendental ordering of the natural cosmological hierarchy: first of the universe as a

⁵ See *ST* I.80.1, I.82.1 This understanding of appetite as desire and the power by which desire arises is from Gallagher, “The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17),” 86 n. 5.

⁶ See *ST* I.83.3-4. *ST* I.83.2 is of special concern for noting that free-will is to be understood specifically as a “power” and not simply as a habit or a power and a habit, and I.83.3 further specifies that this power is “appetitive.”

⁷ See *ST* I.59.1 and I.80.1-2, I.82.3-4, I.83.2-4.

⁸ As Lonergan insists, it is the first (formal) act of the intellect that moves the will to its action, and is passive. The self-determining choice of the will cannot move itself to will God for God’s sake, as this end exceeds its natural capacity.

⁹ See *ST* I.82.4, I-II.8.1, I-II.10.2-4.

¹⁰ See *ST* I-II.9.1-2 (this should not be taken to mean that the sensible appetite does not move the intellect, only that sensation itself does not) and II-II.24.1.

whole, then the preservation of the species, and finally to the individual.¹¹ To will the Good as such is to will the order of universality in which that Good is finitely manifested. Upon apprehending these goods properly, the will is to will them in that proper order, giving more love to those things of higher value, beginning with the most universal and descending to the most singular. Aquinas inherited this understanding of the *ordo caritatis* from Augustine.¹²

Aquinas insists that love (*amor*) is the most basic relationship between the will and the Good. The affection aroused by apprehension of the good gives rise to desire (*desiderium*) for it, and this desire is love (*amor*).¹³ It is desire because the apprehended good is not yet attained and enjoyed (*delectatio/gaudium*.) That desire is for a correspondence between its own activity and the ordered totality of creation, to know itself, as an individual, to be ordered rightly in relation to its species and the universe as a whole. Every appetite—natural, sensible, or rational—is an expression of love in that what is desired is this harmonious correspondence.¹⁴ But the will is unique amongst these faculties in that, as an intellectual appetite, it alone desires good for its own sake, desires to intellectually apprehend itself as harmoniously participating in the metaphysical order of the whole.

¹¹ See *ST* I.60.5.3 ad and I-II.109.3. See Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17)," 72.

¹² See *ST* II-II.26. This should be supplemented with the discussion at I.60.5.3 ad and I-II.109.3. My discussion of the significance of the *ordo caritatis* in this chapter is indebted to Sammeli Juntunen, "Luther and Metaphysics: What Is the Structure of Being According to Luther?," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). The reader should also consult Juntunen, *Der Begriff Des Nichts*. The most comprehensive analysis and history of the concept is given at Raunio, *Summe Des Christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" Als Gesetz Der Liebe in Der Theologie Martin Luthers Von 1510-1527*, 56-124.

¹³ See *ST* I-II.26.2. See also, "Every agent acts for an end... Now the end is the good desired and loved by each one. Wherefore it is evident that every agent, whatever it is, does every action from love of some kind" (I-II.28.6.)

¹⁴ See *ST* I-II.28.6. See Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17)," 84-85.

The rational love manifested in the will is a “dilection” (*dilectio*¹⁵), a unique arrangement of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*) and friendship (*amor amicitiae*).¹⁶ Gallagher notes that an important critique of egoism emerges here in Aquinas precisely as related to issues of relational and existential concerns.¹⁷ As appetitive, the will expresses desire as a self-regarding good. What is desired is the attainment of an object (concupiscence), but this object is always desired for the sake of a person (friendship).¹⁸ On this point, Aquinas quotes Aristotle, from *Rhetoric* 3.4, that “to love is to wish good to someone.”¹⁹ Friendship is thus the more basic of the two, since every good object is only willed for a person.²⁰ Friendship is also most comprehensive since only persons are willed for their own sakes and not as a means for some other object or as something to be possessed, like knowledge.²¹ All the more, every non-personal good is willed for the sake of attaining some good for a person.²²

However, Aquinas importantly does not conclude from this that friendship implies the priority of loving persons other than ourselves. Indeed, the opposite is largely the case: every good object is willed as a good primarily for oneself.²³ Even beatitude is an expression of friendship as fundamental self-love.²⁴ What Aquinas is affirming, however, is an account of how we rationally determine the right persons to love, the proper hierarchical ordering, and the proper goods for them—in and the willing of those

¹⁵ See *ST* I-II.26.3. Not *delectatio*, which is the enjoyment of a good attained. See Gallagher, *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶ See *ST* I-II.26.4. See Gallagher, *Ibid.* See also *ST* I.60.3.

¹⁷ See Gallagher, *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹⁹ See *ST* I-II.26.4.

²⁰ See *ST* I-II.26.4

²¹ See *ST* I.60.3. Gallagher notes an important connection with Kant here. See Gallagher, “The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17),” 85.

²² See *ST* I-II.26.4 and I-II.73.9. Gallagher notes that Aquinas understands love of friendship to include love of concupiscence, and cites *In div. nom.*, chapter 4, lect. 9, n. 405. See Gallagher, *Ibid.*, 84 n. 43.

²³ See *ST* I.60.3. See Gallagher, *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁴ See *ST* I.60.3.

goods in their proper order, which is the mark of his understanding of ethical activity in accordance with the *ordo caritatis*.²⁵

An interesting perspective emerges here in his account. Because every human wills the universal Good principally as a form of friendship arising from self-love, and the goal of that willing is the Good itself, the will cannot itself produce an act capable of attaining that Good. And this is due, principally, to the fact that the nature of the will is fundamentally oriented toward self-preservation. What Aquinas is pointing to is the peculiar situation in which the universal good is the concupiscent object of the will, but in such a manner that the orientation toward personal fulfillment is overturned by the friendship one shares with God.²⁶ This is a situation in which the personal good is fulfilled, but not with reference to oneself but God's own good alone.²⁷ The natural operations of the will, then, have the consequence of subsuming and instrumentalizing the universal good to its own end of self-preservation.²⁸ A habit of charity is infused precisely in order to elevate the will above its natural self-regard so that its created perfection is achieved in and through the ecstatic and harmonious coincidence of its own activity with the whole of the cosmic order of which it is a part.²⁹ As carried out by a free yet finite creature, this act is decidedly *super-natural* precisely because it lies beyond

²⁵ See *ST* II-II.26

²⁶ Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17)," 84-85.

²⁷ As we will see, whether Aquinas can fulfill this will be the concern adopted by Luther.

²⁸ Aquinas explicitly notes that every act aims at the universal good, and not simply at the fulfillment of itself. But, what is in question here is the sense in which the universal good is willed directly, for its own sake, as the expression of one's friendship with God and not for oneself (in the sense of including oneself in the universal). See *ST* I.60.5, I-II.28.2-3, I-II.109. 3. 1, *ST* II-II.180.1. On this point, see Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17)," 72.

²⁹ This good is not impersonal, nor is it directed at the cosmos as such. On the contrary, the good of the universe as a whole, including as it does the totality of all persons, is itself only a good among goods, not the Good *per se*. But, moreover, the ecstatic good that is actualized here is personal because it is the universal Good that is Godself, whose greater comprehensiveness includes oneself, one's neighbor, and God. See *ST* I-II.28.3 and II-II.180.1.

its own natural capacities, and is carried out in concert with the divine operation, with friendship as its mode. Friendship with another always involves assuming her good as the good I desire for myself, as the enjoyment (*delectatio/gaudium*) of my friends' attainment of virtue.³⁰ Yet friendship with God involves enjoying the Good *per se*, which is the good that God wills, as *our* own perfection. This claim means that we love God for Godself and will the order of the world, and our place within it, as it is willed by God. The Good that is God's essence is manifested in the reality of the cosmos as a whole, in its various refracted and complex dimensions and relationships. Our proper good, then, lies in our being properly related, in and through our own agency, to this divine order.³¹ Aquinas' treatments of predestination, providence, and fate are to be understood in precisely this same sense, and are absolutely integral and irreducible elements of his vision.³² Because of this union, a hierarchical metaphysical ordering of relationships is strictly reinforced and required for the vision.

Aquinas' concern is to articulate the transcendental ordering of the whole of reality to its perfection, and the human being's cooperative production of an act in harmony with that perfection.³³ Oliva Blanchette's analysis of Aquinas' logic of perfection is important for this point as it highlights the extent to which Aquinas has moved beyond Augustine's notion of the immutable presence conceived as absolute self-determination.³⁴ In Augustine's grammar of creation, immutability was the category

³⁰ See *ST* I-II.28.1-2. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia Iiae, Qq. 6-17)," 85.

³¹ See *ST* I.60.5.3 ad, I.103, I-II.19.4, II-II.23.2.

³² See *ST* I.23, I.103, I.116, I-II.109, I-II.112, II-II.58

³³ See *ST* I-II.19.9-10

³⁴ Oliva Blanchette, "The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas," in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, ed. David M. Gallagher, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 107-30. This article in many ways represents the argument of his larger study, Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe*. Referring to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, he

designating absolute perfection. Yet Aquinas very early recognized that perfection can only properly be understood as completion (*factum esse*) of that which is *coming-to-be* (*fieri*).³⁵ It was the application of this realization to the distinction between natural and acquired habits that led to both the distinction of intellect from will and nature from the supernatural. Perfection is only the goal of a motion: “the attainment of the fullness of its nature and power according to its species”,³⁶ it is the realization of the proper operation of the form of a thing.³⁷ As Blanchette notes, the perfection of the universe is the harmonious totality of that which is the goal of the various motions making up the universe when considered as a whole.³⁸ Aquinas speaks of the perfection of the universe as a whole as a relative manifestation of the Good *per se*.³⁹ The degree to which the Good is expressed is directly proportionate to the differentiation internal to the functioning of a whole.⁴⁰ The greater the difference, the greater the complexity there is, which means the greater capacity that the perfection of the whole has of reflecting and

notes that there are three dominant English definitions of “perfection.” The first is “to be fully accomplished, thoroughly versed and skilled in some activity.” The second, which is the one most commonly associated at present with God, is “the state of complete excellence, free from any flaw or imperfect quality.” As discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine’s understanding of the divine simplicity is a combination of the two, namely, a fully accomplished self-determinate excellence. Yet, there is a third definition, which has become obsolete in English before the last century. This definition implies the idea of something that is “thoroughly made, formed, done, performed, carried out, accomplished.” This was the definition implied by Aquinas’ word “*perfectum*,” to which no reference to divinity was included. I have relied on Blanchette’s analysis throughout.

³⁵ See *ST* I.4.4.1 ad. As Blanchette notes, the word is formed from the Latin *facere* or *fieri*, meaning “to be made” or “to become.” See Blanchette, “The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas,” 107-16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁷ See the helpful discussion of Lonergan on *actus perfecti* and *imperfecti* in Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*. The form is therefore understood as the *actus imperfecti* of the thing, which is actualized in and through the act of thing that is more properly understood as the *actus perfecti*. This distinction is also noted in Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe*. See also Blanchette, “The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas,” 107-16.

³⁸ See Blanchette, “The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas,” 116.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ The reader is directed to the discussion of the perfection of the universe at *Ibid.*, 117-25. The idea is that a whole composed of differentiated parts, working in harmony, is a greater manifestation of the good than an undifferentiated whole.

manifesting the Goodness of its Source. Blanchette uses the example of a lake to illustrate the point: a body of water exhibits a greater degree of continuity and stability than does an animal, but that stability comes at the cost of a decreased capacity to manifest the good of perfection. And this greater degree of differentiation that yields a greater manifestation of the harmony of the good occurs at the cost of an increased probability of instability, entropy, and even disharmony at the level of individual parts.⁴¹ For Aquinas, then, a greater differentiation corresponds to a greater capacity for perfection, which is itself a greater capacity for the Good.

This insight is rooted in the unity of essence and existence that is the hallmark of Aquinas' understanding of Being (*esse*.) God is not a being among beings, nor is God an agent among agents. Rather, God is Being itself (*ipsum esse*), which involves no becoming. In this sense, Augustine's problem is overcome when Aquinas recognizes that perfection does not properly designate an attribute of God at all. God is the *act* of existence, not the grandest expression of completed motion.⁴² It is this very insight, first formulated ca. 1255 CE in *De ente et essentia*, that established the basis for the metaphysical differentiations that would prove so important for his distinction of will from intellect and supernatural from the natural. In this light, perfection applies only properly to creatures; and, with specific regard to intellectual creatures, such perfection is acquired through volition. This is because the will is an "intellectual appetite" in which it is the abstract apprehension of the form of the Good that moves the will to attain the Good that perfects it. As noted, this good is the goal of the will's operation. Priority lies not only with the intellectual apprehension of the form, but with the recognition that this

⁴¹ See *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴² This is the basic Heideggerian misunderstanding as regards the category of ontotheology.

form is the hierarchically ordered expression of Godself. The order of this hierarchy flows downward, first from the perfected order of the universe as a whole, then to the species, and finally to the individual. The creature's friendship with God is, then, less a matter of willing this order *per se*, than it is of willing the reality of the ideal of the Good as expressed in that order, and precisely as it is abstractly apprehended by the intellect. This is similar to the Stoic notion of freedom fulfilled in the immanent harmony of the cosmos, but it is distinct in that the concupiscent object of the will's act is neither itself nor the cosmos as a whole, but Godself. The creature finds her perfection not as a determined member of a universal order, but in friendship with God whose Goodness is manifested in that order. Indeed, Aquinas insisted that, as naturally ordered toward self-preservation, the will lacked the immanent form necessary to produce its own operative perfection. In this way, the operation of the will in charity that marks the perfection of form cannot be *produced* by the will but must rather be *received*. Aquinas' insight into the nature of the will, then, genuinely reveals that the natural operations of form only *produce* acts proportionate to that nature, while being capable of *receiving* operations that transcend its own productivity. The important point of note here is that Aquinas recognizes, with his invocation of the operative aspect of actual and habitual grace, that the will's natural activity is only proportionate to produce acts that are expressions of its own orientation toward the good of its own self-preservation. In order to produce an act that is not merely an expression of this self-preservation, the creature must receive the operation of charity, which transcends any given natural operation such that it can produce acts that are expressions of that charity.

What is received is the divine charity expressed in the cosmic order as intellectually apprehended and cooperatively willed as the creature's fulfillment—a charity that is neither naturally apprehensible by the intellect nor naturally possible of being willed.⁴³ In this regard, the structure is the same as that which distinguishes the perfection of immutable self-determination from the act of existence. When the intellect apprehends God as its concupiscent object, the will is moved to choose the means to attain that good as its perfection. That this good is ecstatic in this manner is the substance of its designation as supernatural.

It is on this point that the Platonic influence on Aquinas's "alleged Aristotelianism" is most apparent.⁴⁴ Indeed, what Aquinas is seeking here is in keeping not only with Aristotle's idea of actualized excellences, but the kind of ecstatic beatitude (*eudaimonia*) Plato envisions in the contemplation (*theoria*) of oneself as a manifestation of an ordered whole (*to kalon*). The influence of Pseudo-Dionysius is perhaps most palpable in just such facets. But Aquinas' Aristotelianism is present in such a manner as to transform the very Platonic elements of self-determination that caused Augustine to run aground. His appeal to potency and act helps him to avoid these problems, precisely insofar as they allow him to perceive this fundamental priority of receptivity at the heart of all created natures and their perfection, which is itself premised on insight into God as the act of existence (*esse*.) Importantly, this means that the offer, acceptance, and reception of grace pertain most properly not to the free human act of means to its end, but to the transcendental ordering of the whole of created being as such. It is for this reason

⁴³ On this basis, one is justified in saying that the will is, in some sense, the only proper instance of a pure nature.

⁴⁴ I advert here to the instructive phrasing and thesis of Mark D. Jordan, *The Alleged Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas*, Etienne Gilson Series (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992).

that Aquinas is not only a predestinarian, but insists that providence is properly convertible with the idea of fate.⁴⁵ This is no mere Stoicism, since genuine contingency is part of that world order as pertains to the means to the end. But whether one receives the divine operation that actualizes the will's capacity for charity is finally a matter of God's providential governance of the whole.⁴⁶ Friendship with God is here understood in terms of the union of wills, wherein the common good of the created order is willed by the creature in harmony with the divine will manifest in that order.⁴⁷ This repeats the *ordo caritatis* in which God, as the highest and most universal, is to be the direct object of love and enjoyed for Godself alone, followed by the self at whom all actions are directed, and then the neighbor, who is loved together with both.⁴⁸ It is God, as the most universal, that here encompasses both love of self and neighbor, while properly ordering them.

It is just here that we can see how the extraordinary significance of Aquinas' accomplishment comes at the expense of the social dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace. This may not be immediately apparent, as the differentiations of multiplicity are integral to a greater manifestation of the good, which might seem to imply a deep continuity with sociality, especially as Aquinas conceives of these ideas in terms of love and friendship. And with this notion, Aquinas has clearly resolved the metaphysical difficulties attendant to Augustine's grammar of creation in the wake of his mature theology of grace, yet his approach is consistent with Augustine's strategy in *The Literal Commentary*, where the social dimension of the justice and the rectitude of the

⁴⁵ See *ST* I.116.1

⁴⁶ See *ST* I.23.1 and 5, I-II.109.

⁴⁷ See *ST* I.28.1-3

⁴⁸ See *ST* I.26

will is metaphysically inflected in terms of a cosmic *ordo caritatis*. The real advance occurs in that the combined force of Aquinas' work on God's being, nature and the supernatural, and the will and the intellect is that human agency is no longer contrasted with divine agency. But he is saying something even more fundamental: namely, that a non-competitive relationship of divine and human agency must be grounded in the affirmation of the absolute priority of the divine operation and initiative. This point was quite clearly recovered in Lonergan's insistence on the significance of recognizing that the first act of form is passive (a *patis*), which I have emphasized throughout this study. Concupiscence as such is not the problem here. Rather, the basic confusion arises from Aquinas' conception of the will in terms of self-preservation. As such, the very realization of charity is undermined in the willing of it. This was the very problem Augustine recognized in treating the relational component at the heart of the will, naming its right order to "charity" and conceiving of it socially.

The contemporary debates of the proper relationship of the natural to the supernatural in Roman Catholic theology represent the attempt to recover this social dimension of grace. It is perhaps most evident in Henri de Lubac's largely organicist model for understanding the church, as represented principally in *Catholicism*. The links of this theology to his political vision were also noted in chapter two, and this is also bound up with his appreciation of Teilhard de Chardin.⁴⁹ This social dimension was first

⁴⁹ Maurice Blondel et al., *Pierre Teilhard De Chardin. Maurice Blondel, Correspondence* ([New York]: Herder and Herder, 1967), Henri de Lubac, *L'éternel Féminin, Étude Sur Un Texte Du Père Teilhard De Chardin* (Paris,: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), Henri de Lubac, *The Religion of Teilhard De Chardin* (New York,: Desclee Co., 1967), Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard De Chardin: The Man and His Meaning*, [1st American ed. (New York,: Hawthorn Books, 1965), Henri de Lubac, *La Prière Du Père Teilhard De Chardin, Le Signe* (Paris,: A. Fayard, 1964), Henri de Lubac, *La Pensée Religieuse Du Père Pierre Teilhard De Chardin* ([Paris]: Aubier, 1962), Henri de Lubac, *The Eternal Feminine; a Study on the*

represented in *Catholicism* and reinforced by the study, *Corpus Mysticum*.⁵⁰

Comparatively, Rahner's account of the union of creation and grace is formulated explicitly in terms of personalism and set in opposition to substance metaphysics.

In each case, as I have shown, the difficulty is that both thinkers recover this element by way of appeal to the very elements in Augustine that simultaneously generated the insight and precluded its overcoming: namely, the assumption of a self-determining will that merely follows the intellect's designation of the good. So as to prevent the metaphysical reduction of the human being to the hierarchical ordering of the whole of reality, Lubac and Rahner both invoked the self-determining capacity of the human being, reconceived in personalist terms. This reconstruction had the ultimate effect of actually occluding the real problem, which is directly concerned with specifying how a supernatural good comes to be willed for its own sake at all. In this respect, the contemporary debate in Roman Catholic theology over the proper relationship of nature to the supernatural is itself an implicit recognition of the problems inherent to Aquinas' solution. To take Aquinas seriously on these points would be to erase just those ecclesiological and soteriological elements so dear to both Lubac's and Rahner's projects. It would also require retaining the more medieval shape of the Neo-Scholastic ecclesiology and certain aspects of its understanding of grace (albeit perhaps without *natura pura*.) Emphasis on the social dimension, then, involved recovering the very

Poem by Teilhard De Chardin, Followed by Teilhard and the Problems of Today, [1st U.S. ed. (New York,: Harper & Row, 1971).

⁵⁰Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism; a Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind* (New York,: Sheed and Ward, 1958), Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme : Les Aspects Sociaux Du Dogme*, 5. éd., rev. et augm. ed., Unam Sanctam, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1952), Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: L'eucharistie Et L'église Au Moyen Âge. Étude Historique*, 2 éd., rev. et augm. ed., Théologie, (Paris,: Aubier, 1949), Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages : Historical Survey*, trans. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (London: SCM, 2006).

category that Aquinas had to dissolve in order to achieve an effective solution to the problems posed by grace. This emphasis set the issue down with one foot in the early Augustinian position on freedom and grace and the other in the mature position on sociality. The resolution of the problems of the one side would involve invoking Aquinas' theory of the will which would dissolve the social dimension, and the affirmation of the social dimension apart from the Platonic metaphysics of the early Augustine led directly in to Protestant territory. Indeed, the difficulty that Luther will raise with this notion, as I will show in the following section, is whether it is appropriate to name it "charity." But my present concern is with the metaphysical issues bound up with that claim. This difficulty was adumbrated in Chapter Three, where a dialectic of negative determination as the form under which the ideal is actualized was discussed. It is this that we must now consider.

Sin and Grace: The Social Dimension of Grace

The end of the generation of a man is the human form; yet the end of the man is not his form, but through form it is fitting for him to act toward an end.

—Thomas Aquinas⁵¹

This social dimension of the creation and grace relation that emerged in Augustine was decidedly recuperated in Luther and extended by the Protestant paradigm. Chapter Three argued that Luther's protest against late-Scholastic theology was registered against its neglect of the affective dimension of the will that had been essential to Aquinas. Indeed, Luther's opposition to speculative logic in the *Disputation on*

⁵¹ *In II Physicorum*, lect. 11, n. 242 quoted from Blanchette, "The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas," 116..

Scholastic Theology is directed decisively at Scholastic theology's perpetuation of the structure of self-preservation, which Luther believes to be emblematic of rebellious humanity. Luther clearly associates that structure with reliance on Aristotelian *habitus* to describe justification in terms of an act made possible by the presence of the accidental form of charity. By insisting that "grace alone is sufficient, or it means nothing," Luther was not only advancing Aquinas' own teaching on the affective dimension of the will, but developing his insight specifically in terms of the social dimension of Augustine's theology of grace Aquinas left behind.⁵² As we will see, the most important problem with Luther's proposal is that it he links it specifically to the Augustinian-Lombardian position the rejection of which is integral to Aquinas' metaphysics of the will. However, while this does become ultimately problematic for Luther, he does avoid much of this with his dialectic of sin and grace in which the self's structure of self-determination is ruptured as it is constantly confronted with the task of affirming, in faith, a gracious determination of its being that can only appear in thought under the form of this contrast.⁵³ Indeed, the problem with the Scholastic notion of justification was that it understood justification in terms of the *product of a motion*,⁵⁴ which thus linked it with the competitive vision that Aquinas's metaphysical advances had overcome. This section will elaborate upon this point.

⁵² See Simo Peura, "Christ as Favor and as Gift (*Donum*): The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 48-49. He notes that Luther's Commentary on Lombard's Sentences shows that he associated this gesture with the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit, operating to produce good works. Though Aquinas himself specifically rejects this view, which is associated with just the social and relational dimension of grace found in Augustine. See *ST I.23.2*.

⁵³ Such is the basis of what I noted, following Julia Lamm, was a "dialogical-dialectic" as opposed to a "speculative-dialectic." See n. 15 of Chapter Three. .

⁵⁴ This is exactly how Aquinas describes it in *ST I-II.113.1*. There justification is described as the motion from God toward justice and the rectification of the interior disposition of humanity. However, the movement is not itself the justification, as Aquinas notes, in *ST I-II.113*, but the perfection of the motion in the just act. The significance of this distinction is the mark of the difference between Aquinas and Luther.

The most important insights in this regard have been supplied by those associated with the so-called “Finnish” interpretation of Luther.⁵⁵ Their work helps us to see the sense in which Luther’s work is not too easily set in opposition to metaphysical questions, but should rather be understood as taking up a peculiar relationship to them. Central to Luther’s critique, they claim, is the fundamentally social and relational component of Luther’s work.⁵⁶ Tuomo Mannermaa has argued this claim extensively, insisting that Luther scholarship has been overly influenced by nineteenth-century Neo-Kantian interpreters, and especially the work of Hermann Lotze. Such interpreters maintain the Kantian separation of *phenomena* from *noumena*, suggesting that the unity of God and believer in faith must only be a matter of individual assent to God’s extrinsic decree. The Finns insist, however, that Luther’s thought is essentially realist in the same sense as Aquinas’, operating according to the assumption that the formal being of the known object must be within the knower. Knowledge of Christ is thus a real, ontological union in which the Christian partakes of Christ’s divine nature by faith, receiving both his favor and his grace.⁵⁷ This ontological realism is fundamentally Trinitarian: faith receives the very Word of the Father and thereby is drawn into God’s Trinitarian life.

The key distinction from Scholastic thought that Luther develops lies with the role he ascribes to faith in salvation. Whereas Scholastic thought took charity as the form of

⁵⁵ Though much of my own reading of Luther stands in marked contrast to aspects of their interpretation of the consequences of their work, I find their basic thesis convincing.

⁵⁶ This element is emphasized throughout their work. See especially Raunio, *Summe Des Christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" Als Gesetz Der Liebe in Der Theologie Martin Luthers Von 1510-1527*, 53-56 and 319-62.

⁵⁷ See Tuomo Mannermaa and Kirsi Irmeli Stjerna, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 23-30. The German is Tuomo Mannermaa, *Der Im Glauben Gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung Und Vergottung : Zum Ökumenischen Dialog, Arbeiten Zur Geschichte Und Theologie Des Luthertums N.F.*, Bd. 8 (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989), 30-40.

faith (*fides charitate formata*), Luther insisted that faith alone must be saving precisely because Christ himself is its form (*fides Christi formata*).⁵⁸ For the Scholastic model of justification, the acts of faith, hope, and good works supply substantial content, through the necessary cooperative second acts, for what is an otherwise purely formal “charity.” As the accidental form, charity is the ideal goal of the action that is realized in and through the theological acts of faith and hope, such that these acts can be said to “merit” justification.⁵⁹ Acts of faith and hope *realize* the ideal of charity. Luther does not dispute that charity is saving, but rather insists that Jesus Christ alone is its form—with faith as the mode of receiving and responding to God’s promise given in him.⁶⁰ On his model, faith cannot be a *realization* of the form of charity⁶¹ as its created ideal, but rather the manifestation of its *reality*. Faith is one’s response to the encounter with that reality. As such, for Luther, faith alone justifies because faith is the mode of union with Christ (*unio cum Christi*), who is its formal object, who does not require an additional perfection.⁶² The paradigm of speculative metaphysics is here decisively replaced with one of personal encounter, thus retrieving the social and relational dimension of grace.

It is the connection of this claim to a refusal of speculative metaphysics that has been so clearly misunderstood in the appropriation of Luther’s work. Despite the Finns’ recovery of the centrality of *theosis* in Luther over against the otherwise narrow ethical paradigm of Neo-Protestantism, they do not adequately grasp how it is that Luther’s

⁵⁸ See Reijo Työrinoja, "Opus Theologicum. Luther and Medieval Theories of Action," *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 44, no. 2 (2002).

⁵⁹ See *ST* I-II.114.1. Importantly, “merit” means something quite different for Aquinas than it does for Biel and other Late Medieval scholastics. See Työrinoja, *Ibid.* Nonetheless, the point remains the same according to my analysis.

⁶⁰ See Mannermaa and Stjerna, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, 26-30.

⁶¹ See *ST* I-II.62.4

⁶² See Peura, "Christ as Favor and as Gift (*Donum*): The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification," 53-56.

approach is set in opposition to speculative metaphysics.⁶³ Luther's most astute interpreter on the question, Sammeli Juntunen, explicitly rejects the claim that Luther's thought is "antimetaphysical and antiontological."⁶⁴ His argument is levied against Ebeling and Joest, who insist on a merely "personalist" interpretation of Luther, which seeks to obviate questions of being as "corrupted questions."⁶⁵ Juntunen insists that Luther is "antimetaphysical" and more "relational and existential" not because of a "refusal of the concept of being," but because of "a certain understanding of love, which is fundamental for his theology."⁶⁶ It is this understanding of love that is central to the analysis being developed here.

The decisive point is marked by Luther's distinction between God's love (*amor dei*) and human love (*amor hominis*), where Luther understands the latter—with Aquinas—as a natural and good expression of self-preservation.⁶⁷ Luther states clearly that all natural human loves are directed toward the good, but in such a way that this good is sought self-interestedly. This love is to be contrasted with God's. Juntunen summarizes Luther's position on God's love:

...God is in his essence a pure, giving love whose motive is not to get good for himself, but to give good to that which lacks it in itself. God's love is creative; it never finds its object as something preexistent. Rather it turns to that which is nothing and is in itself needy in order to create it and make it existent and good through loving it.⁶⁸

⁶³ This is perhaps what is most important about Eberhard Jüngel's insistence on the inappropriateness of Tridentine and scholastic metaphysics to describe the reality of justification. See Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith: A Theological Study with an Ecumenical Purpose* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001).

⁶⁴ Juntunen, "Luther and Metaphysics: What Is the Structure of Being According to Luther?," 129.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 131.

⁶⁷ See Ibid., 131-36.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 131.

All natural human loves are to be contrasted with God's love, not because they are opposed to it, but because they are finite. This finitude involves creatures in a necessary orientation toward self-preservation. The resulting love, Juntunen notes, is "egoistic."⁶⁹ Such a claim is not tantamount, as is often claimed, to a version of Manichaeism or even a reversion to the early medieval problem of the relationship of sin and nature. On the contrary, Luther's point is here perfectly coincident with Aquinas' analysis of the same phenomenon. Neither Aquinas nor Luther thinks this impulse is evil,⁷⁰ and both concur that operations beyond this natural orientation are only possible through participation in God's own life. This affirmation is the basis of Luther's doctrine of *theosis*. Yet, unlike Aquinas, Luther insists that participation in God's own life involves a transformation of the *ordo caritatis* scheme because love is primarily self-bestowal.⁷¹

Juntunen insists that this critique of speculative metaphysics does not itself entail that Luther would, as he takes Ebeling and Joest to mean, eliminate the concept of being (*esse*) from theology. Rather, Juntunen suggests that Luther's distinction of *esse naturae* and *esse gratiae* is not between existential self-understandings, but rather intended to highlight the specifically affective (*affectus*) dimension of being.⁷² Both *esse naturae* and *esse gratiae* are expressions of the world's dependence on God as being through another (*ens per aliud*.) This disallows an overly actualistic interpretation of grace in terms of *becoming* in that it underscores the persistent internal continuity of the created

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Ibid.

⁷¹ See Ibid., 134 n. 22..

⁷² See Ibid., 137.

reception of being.⁷³ *Esse gratiae* is not merely the existential perception of being as graced, but an actual transformation of *naturae gratiae*. As Juntunen and the other Finnish interpreters recognize, what is at stake here is whether the transformation wrought by justification is a genuine, intrinsic ontological change or if it is merely epistemic and accidental.⁷⁴

Juntunen is certainly right that Ebeling has misunderstood the consequences of Luther's emphasis on the relational and dynamic aspects of being. And he is all the more right to insist that this involves a clear affirmation of the intrinsic continuity of created existence. Yet this does not necessarily mean that the critique of ontology is completely without merit. This is the case, primarily, because Juntunen's interpretation of Luther is striking, on just this point, for the correlation it reveals with our earlier analysis of Schleiermacher and Barth. As we saw in Chapter Three, by beginning with the concrete, historical, and existential conditions of existence, both Schleiermacher and Barth emphasize the dialectical contrast of sin and grace as inaugurated by the encounter with the Word of God in Christ. This encounter discloses the ontological reality that grounds and determines that structure. For Schleiermacher, the general human awareness of absolute dependence receives religious determination as divine creation/preservation, which is yet further determined within the Christian consciousness of sin and grace as the doctrine of election. The whole of creation is ontologically ordered toward the actualization of the social reality of the Kingdom of God as mediated by the church. Barth, by contrast, insists on a stronger distinction between creation and redemption, tying election not to the church, but to the unanticipated appearance of Jesus Christ

⁷³See *Ibid.*, 145-47.

⁷⁴See *Ibid.*, 147.

himself as the subject and object of election. Whereas for Schleiermacher the ontological secret of the world is the Kingdom of God, actualized in Jesus, for Barth this is only because Jesus Christ himself is the principle.

The Finnish interpretation of Luther differs from this only by retrieving the element of *theosis* that was central to Luther's vision as the result of his metaphysical realism. This is a realism that we noted in the discussion of Schleiermacher was nascent within his account but undeveloped.⁷⁵ In the absence of this realism, Schleiermacher and Barth tend to develop their thought in terms more consonant with the actualistic and ethical model being critiqued by the Finns. The result is a notion that by adopting a specific epistemic relation to Jesus Christ in faith one's existential awareness of the world is altered such that a genuine perception of the ontological truth of our being is disclosed. Jesus is that truth and the encounter with him discloses it. For Schleiermacher the fundamental reality is the form of social existence that is the Kingdom of God, while for Barth is it the person of Jesus himself. The Finns, however, in contrast, return to Luther himself to recover the sense in which the reception of Christ is not merely an epistemic alteration of our relation to our being, but actually entails a change in being itself. Our faith in Christ is our union with Christ (*unio cum Christi*), which entails that knowledge of Christ is possessing a share of him. The realism on which this is based is important for displaying the sense in which Luther's recovery of the affective dimension of the will is not a nominalist or voluntarist variant, but is rather bound to the same structure of intellectual appetite envisioned by Aquinas. This is an important corrective for understanding Luther's conception of the consequences of justification, but it is

⁷⁵ This claim was noted in Chapter Three and relies on Frank, "Metaphysical Foundations: A Look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*."

predicated on the same basic ontological assumptions at work in Schleiermacher and Barth, thereby missing the real significance of Luther's embellishment of Aquinas.

The Finnish interpretation fails to see the radical implications of this realism when they declare that claiming Christ as the form of faith (*fides formata Christi*) is tantamount to recognizing him as an ontological abstraction. On the one hand, this is exactly what Luther does. As Työrinoja rightly notes, Luther's insistence on Christ as the form of faith has the effect of rendering Christ the substantial form of the soul in the believer, as opposed to the merely accidental form of charity as advocated by Aquinas. This is the ontological element the Finns emphasize, and it shows the extent to which genuine substantial transformation is affirmed by Luther. Insofar as the context is an ontological realism, this shows the degree to which Luther can be said to be guilty of a kind of "Christomonism" in which the very acts of the human being are directly attributed to Jesus Christ. However, what this interpretation achieves by way of correcting an overly ethical emphasis in Neo-Protestantism, comes at the cost of linking Luther's insights to the kind of speculative metaphysics he rejected in his critique of self-preservation.⁷⁶ Schleiermacher, Barth, and the Finns each rely on the assumption of a spontaneous self-determination of the will that is precisely the obverse of Lubac and Rahner's Platonism. This interpretation of the will shares with Platonism the assumption that knowledge of the (form) of the Good is sufficient for its performance. Yet, in this form, as shown in Chapter Three, the assumption is that Jesus Christ provides the proper ontological specification for an otherwise infinite will. Such is the structure of an ontology of

⁷⁶ See Anja Ghiselli, Kari Kopperi, and Rainer Vinke, eds., *Luther Und Ontologie: Das Sein Christi Im Glauben Als Strukturierendes Prinzip Der Theologie Luthers: Referate Der Factagung Des Instituts Für Systematische Theologie Der Universität Helsinki in Zusammenarbeit Mit Der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg in Helsinki 1.-5.4.1992*, Veröffentlichungen Der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg Bd. 21 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1993).

encounter. It is not only the Scholastic view of justification that Luther rejects with his insistence that Jesus Christ is the form of faith, but this notion of action as well, which he believes is tied to a dialectic of negative determination. In recuperating the social and relational dimension of grace, Luther is simultaneously deploying the Augustinian grammar of creation as corrected by Aquinas. The result, however, in this framework is that Luther can point to the implicit identity between the Platonic and Scotist accounts of appetite in their presupposition of an essentially Manichean cosmology in that they proceed according to a purely formal spontaneity in the intellect that either follows from knowledge (Platonic) or is conceived as an infinite potentiality specified by the intellect (Scotist). In each, the will acts only in juxtaposition to another standing over against it, functioning as its specification. To insist on the ontological realism of Luther's doctrine of justification may affect a much stronger association with *theosis*, but it will not solve the most important difficulty with that position. Rather, it reinforces that element of the ontology of encounter that renders the Protestant paradigm most problematic as a framework for uniting creation and grace.

On the other hand, beyond this ontological element of Luther's account lies his own rejection of speculative metaphysics, which is equally clear. It is the stakes of this rejection that have not been so readily recognized. As noted in Chapter Three, those stakes are shown to be a rejection of the structure of negative determination. In this way, Luther upholds the fundamental insight of Aquinas' metaphysical advances: understanding God as the act of existence, distinguishing the will from the intellect and desire, and distinguishing nature from the supernatural. In this way, he insists on the coincidence of ideality and reality in an operation over against the scholastic conception

of justification, which would understand justification as a product of the soul's movement to perfection in justification. Luther rightly recognizes in this a structure of negative determination in which the ideal of the action is purely formal apart from its realization in the act. Insofar as Scholasticism conceived justification as the effect of this coincidence of divine operation and human cooperation, rather than its cause, it confuses the form (charity) with the act (faith), such that justification becomes a *product*, a becoming or coming-to-be (*fieri*), which is merited. The conflict resides neither in Aquinas' metaphysics nor in his actual statements, which consistently note the simultaneity of the cause and the effect. Aquinas even goes so far as to underscore that the difference is not temporal but formal between the various elements of justification. Yet the crucial difference between Aquinas and Luther pivots on the role of the first act of form. It is true that the first act of form, as passive, immediately corresponds to the production of the act once it is actuated. But the difference between Aquinas and Luther pertains to whether it is the actuation of form or the production of the act that amounts to justification. Aquinas clearly teaches that justification is the result of this *motion*, rendering it a perfection, and Luther clearly maintains that the actuation of the form alone qualifies as justifying.⁷⁷ It is true that while Aquinas' metaphysics mitigates against this conclusion, his account of justification in terms of merit displays its presence, especially as he makes charity the principle of merit.⁷⁸ And it is this reliance upon merit, especially as elaborated upon by his teacher Biel, that so provoked Luther's ire.

⁷⁷ See ST I-II.113.8 and Disputation Against Scholastic Theology, n. 54 (cited in Chapter Three).

⁷⁸ See ST I-II.113.5

The problem here, as Luther will note in the same document, is the impropriety of Aristotle's theory of virtue for the discussion of God's work of justification.⁷⁹ I do not think it wrong to suggest that Luther displays greater metaphysical acuity on this point than Aquinas.⁸⁰ For, Luther correctly recognizes that the category of accidental form is premised, for Aquinas, on the acquisition of a distinct personal perfection, which, because it is not a formal potency of the human soul as such, can have only a negative relation in its ideality to the soul until it is realized by it. That is, Aristotle's theory of virtue is premised on the perfection of certain excellences native to the human soul itself. Aquinas has deployed the same logic of perfection to describe justification, the gratuity of which is preserved through the infusion rather than acquisition of a habit of charity. By insisting that charity is an accidental form of the soul, however, charity is not a reality finding expression in the action but an ideal to be realized in and through the self-determination of the action. The relation between the ideal and the real here is negative in precisely the speculative and Hegelian sense. Because the infused form is accidental rather than substantial, while charity may have an ideal reality, it is only realized when

⁷⁹ Työrinoja says it is medieval action theory in general that Luther deems inadequate. It seems to me that this is imprecise. The problem, as I note below, is related to the issue of Luther's rejection of speculation, which, when combined with Aristotle's theory of virtue, results in a specific problem for Luther.

See also Theodor Dieter, *Der Junge Luther Und Aristoteles: Eine Historisch-Systematische Untersuchung Zum Verhältnis Von Theologie Und Philosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001).

⁸⁰ Perhaps it would be more accurate to say "theological" rather than "metaphysical" acuity, as the point is doctrinal for Luther and not speculative at all (in keeping with the basic paradigmatic differences between the two.) Nonetheless, I am suggesting that this doctrinal point is a more consistent expression of this metaphysical insight. Indeed, when reading I-II.113, it appears as if Aquinas is more struggling to map the existing High Medieval Roman understanding of the economy of merit and ecclesial mediation onto this point, as he clearly thinks of justification as the product or effect or perfection of a motion of the will (infused grace, movement of freewill toward God in faith, movement of freewill away from sin, and remission of sins [*Summa* I-II.113.6].) Despite the Joint Declaration, this is not compatible with Luther's point, nor is it accurate to say that this is a different language for expressing that same point. Quite the contrary, insofar as justification is thought of at all as the perfection of a motion, it is a flawed interpretation from Luther's perspective. The key to recognizing this is, however, what is at stake in his rejection of the speculative paradigm.

appropriated and deployed for itself. This understanding implicitly presumes that God's love is ineffectual in itself—an empty formality—and only becomes effective when this pure formality is negated through the self-determining act of appropriation, resulting in a sublation dubbed “justification.”⁸¹ Such is the reason justification must always be an expression of concupiscence for Aquinas—which he freely admits—whereby a certain excellence is attained in reality. Indeed, Aquinas insists that the *ordo caritatis* requires not only a conceptual application of proper loves in order to be charitable, but also that self-love comes after God but before neighbor-love in the proper order. This is a manifestation of the priority of concupiscence, but it is especially poignant insofar as the form is not substantial. Were charity a substantial potency in the human soul, this determination would not be negative as it would be a prior reality for the agent, merely requiring the acquisition of the appropriate skills and habits wherein this reality of excellence would be manifest. As an infused accidental habit, however, this reality has a purely ideal status in relation to the agent, requiring not merely the actualization of a potency but the realization of the ideal.⁸² As ideal, the form stands in a negative relation to the agent, whose action adopts a negative relation to that formal negativity, thereby realizing it.

Luther, of course, rejects this vehemently precisely because he recognizes this moment of negativity, lying at the heart of the scholastic account of justification, to be an ironic denial of the reality and not only the efficacy of God's grace. By linking justification to the will in this way, through human action, the Scholastic doctrine of

⁸¹ This is not a point about the role of grace, to which Aquinas clearly grants priority; it is a point about the understanding of justification in relation to that grace. Indeed, my entire point is that Aquinas theology of grace is radically incompatible with his understanding of justification and only becomes intelligible in Luther.

⁸² At this point and in just this way, Aquinas' metaphysics takes on an idealistic rather than realist cast.

justification set the question of salvation within the purview of the negative infinity of the will's potentiality for self-preservation. The *de facto* result is not that the will is elevated to charity, but that charity is domesticated to a more expansive concupiscence, redefined as an expression of the self-preservation in harmony with the universal Good expressing itself in the common good of the cosmic whole.

It is in this light that Luther's emphasis on grace and works should be understood, as he will link sin directly to this structure of concupiscence, calling it "robbery" of God.⁸³ For this reason, the common complaint that Luther's *simul justus et peccator* formula prevents real personal transformation is mistaken for a reason not commonly recognized. Indeed, the claim itself amounts to its virtual opposite. What Luther is protesting is the manner in which the Scholastic structure, which renders justification an effect of divine-human action, prevents it from having any meaningful sense in relationship to human action.⁸⁴ The negative moment intrinsic to the realization of charity always sets itself up at a distance from it in order to render it one's own. The relationship is not the positive one of potency and act or cooperation and operation (which is maintained in theology of grace), but the negative one of competitive self-determination. This is the reason Luther insists that the presence of grace alone is sufficient or it is (rendered) meaningless.⁸⁵

There is a certain sense in which it is true to insist that the divine operation corresponds immediately to the production of a human cooperation. Yet, this claim is

⁸³ See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 144-52.

⁸⁴ This is what Hooker claimed in his early work on justification, noting that "double justification" was required in the Roman Catholic perspective such that the term was effectively meaningless. See Cornelius C. Simut, *Richard Hooker and His Early Doctrine of Justification: A Study of His Discourse of Justification* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 55-58.

⁸⁵ See above, n. 15 in Chapter Three.

only non-competitively conceived when it is understood, as the will stands in relation to the intellect for Aquinas, to be predicated on a prior passivity of form in relation to operation.⁸⁶ When this is not the case, and justification is formulated in terms of merit, it is not in fact non-competitive simultaneity that is invoked, but an implicit competition and exchange. It is not the manifestation of the reality of the ideal, but the realization (*becoming*) of the ideal in existence, which reduces God's act of justification to a finite *production*. This implicitly sets the real in negative relation to the ideal, as the existential negation of the ideality of form that is its realization. When charity is the form of faith this confusion of form and act is at work. In keeping with the reduction of sociality to metaphysics that it here reflects, this reduces love to the structure of concupiscent self-regard that is the natural operation of the will, and therefore repeats the structure of sin.⁸⁷ And in this respect it displays a residue of the competitive metaphysics of Augustine's notion of absolute self-determination. Understood in this way, election is the eruption of love within the self, disrupting that circle.

While Luther's account may be consistent with and even an elaboration upon traditional metaphysics, his claim is much more complex than this. No ontological principle is finally appropriate to describe God's relationship to the world or the world's to God. If love is the actuality of which faith and hope are the created expressions, precisely as the receptions of Jesus Christ, then faith and hope depend solely upon the divine initiative that is the basis for those acts. As a result, it cannot be the act that is

⁸⁶ One should think here of Levinas' appeal to a "substitution, in which identity is inverted, this passivity more passive still than the passivity conjoined with action, beyond the inert passivity of the designated..." Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 115.

⁸⁷ Lutheran theologians have continued to insist, even in the wake of the Joint Declaration, that concupiscent is not an appropriate category for discussing justification. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*, Unitas Books (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 105-08.

saving, but rather the act expresses a proper relation to the prior divine operation. It is for this reason that Luther insists on a real theological transformation rather than mere adoption and deployment of philosophical categories such as classical Aristotelian action theory.⁸⁸ No matter their great value, such categories are always given a new and fresh meaning as a result of the encounter with God in Jesus Christ, who is always most properly not the God of glory (who displays his wrath at the human refusal to receive him as he is) but of the cross (where his love of humanity is most clearly displayed.) It is in the cross that metaphysics is overturned not as a denial, but as insufficient to address the fundamentally social and relational nature of God's self-disclosure. Luther thus recovers this social dimension through his refusal to allow for a speculative reduction of the relation disclosed in the encounter with Christ.⁸⁹ In this way, Luther represents an important elaboration upon and application of the very metaphysical insights deployed by Aquinas with regard to God's being, human freedom, and the nature/supernatural distinction. That application serves, however, to empty metaphysics of its pretensions, recovering the centrality of the relational and social dimension and revealing that a speculative metaphysics cannot at all account for the concerns of that dimension.⁹⁰ Most importantly, this means that Luther's way of formulating the social and relational dimension of grace recovered from Augustine stands in continuity with Aquinas work and the Scholastic tradition, while moving decidedly beyond them.

And yet, despite this important development, Luther's insights remain restricted.

This restriction is connected directly to the element of ontological transformation the

⁸⁸ See Työrinoja, "*Opus Theologicum*. Luther and Medieval Theories of Action."

⁸⁹ This is especially in relation to *Anfechtung*.

⁹⁰ Such is the objection to speculation lying at the heart of Luther's dispute with metaphysics (*theologies of glory*), which allows him to recover this social and relational dimension derived from Augustine's mature theology of grace. See *The Heidelberg Disputation*.

Finns rightly recognize in Luther's work, which has the effect of linking him to the difficulties inherent to the ontology of encounter. As I have noted, Luther's concern to make Christ rather than charity the form of faith in an important and decisive corrective—as is his important recognition that this implies a substantial rather than accidental transformation of the creature. His concern is to show that the encounter with Christ ontologically alters the will's order to self-preservation when it assumes the form of Christ as its own.⁹¹ In this way, Christ and his action become the principle and goal of human action, such that it becomes *ontologically* accurate to say that Christ himself acts in human action. This difference significantly alters the more epistemological and existential emphasis of Schleiermacher's and Barth's ontologies of encounter, but nonetheless remains afflicted by the difficulties that plague this perspective. Those difficulties concern the manner in which the encounter of Christ is taken as a disclosure of the most basic truth of being as relational. In making this claim, Luther himself tends to rely upon a largely Alexandrian Christology, which sees Jesus as the manifestation of a more abstract and general reality of existence (*Logos*).⁹² This Christology is perhaps most evident in his Christmas sermon. A legitimate "Christomonism" here in this treatment of human action insofar as the operational integrity of created human action seems to be swallowed up by and overshadowed by Christ. It is in this way that Luther, while not overtly reducing the doctrine of creation to grace, does often appear to suggest that creation itself is somehow flawed. This suggestion establishes the basis upon which

⁹¹ See Mannermaa and Stjerna, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, 13-30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2-3 and 13-30. See also Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 3-39. I am grateful to Jodi Belcher for calling my attention to this in Jodi Belcher, "Subversion through Subjection: A Feminist Reconsideration of Kenosis in Christology and Christian Discipleship," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 8 November, 2009), n. 36.

those elements of the Protestant scheme for uniting creation and grace will be based, especially as those elements often appear to suggest that the goodness of the created order is somehow in question. These elements have the effect of repeating, though in an altogether different register, the overarching determinism that plagues Augustine's later theology of creation.

If this is the case, therefore, then we are in a position to draw the various pieces of our study together. In order to do that, it will be important to take up again the thread of ontology, which I have been tracing throughout the investigation, putting into relief its significance for the question of the doctrinal unity of creation and grace. This rehearsal and my programmatic account for a reconstruction will be the subject of the final chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have isolated the two most important elements of the study thus far: Aquinas' metaphysics of the will and its attendant notion of the act of existence, and Luther's recuperation of the social and relational dimension of grace in his understanding of justification. My concern has been to show how Aquinas' metaphysics of the will is bound up with a notion of the act of existence that resolves the difficulties Augustine encountered in trying to overcome his implicitly competitive account of the God-world relation. But also to show, in connection with this, that the solution of these metaphysical difficulties comes, for Aquinas, at the price of a thoroughgoing reduction of the social and relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace. In this regard, Aquinas completes the project Augustine himself began in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis*.

It is on this specific point that I have been concerned to show how Luther's doctrine of justification is a development of Aquinas' best insights. Luther's rejection of the claim that charity is the form of faith, and his insistence in the teaching on justification that Christ alone is that form, achieves a genuine continuity with Aquinas' metaphysics by insisting on the actuality and reality of God's operation in grace to a degree that is more consistent than Aquinas himself. In addition, the doctrine of justification is able to recuperate the social and relational dimension of grace by linking it directly to the person of Jesus Christ himself as the object and form of grace. And yet, at just this point, where Luther recognizes the human being's share in the divine life, he also adopts an explicitly ontological perspective that serves to take away with one hand what he has given with the other. For, just as he has recuperated the social and relational dimension of grace by referring it specifically to the person of Jesus, he conceives this formal element of Christ's saving work in overtly ontological terms that evacuate the distinctiveness between Jesus and the individual. The result is a kind of "Christomonism," wherein the actions of the believer are the actions of Christ himself, and the genuine otherness of the relation is destroyed. It is in this respect that Aquinas' appeal rejection of Lombard's direct association of grace with the presence of the Holy Spirit takes on an additional level of significance. The impasse, therefore, continues.

But from this perspective, we can also now recognize the lineaments of the way forward. First, what is required is the metaphysical perceptive developed by Aquinas, which can account for the distinction of the will from intellect and desire, and which is correlated with an account of the act of existence. Second, what is required is an account of the sociality of grace, as developed by Luther in his doctrine of justification, which is

able to preserve the metaphysical elements of Aquinas' vision. But, third, that account of the sociality of grace must be formulated in such a way that the union of creation and grace can be conceived without the eradication of the elements necessary for maintaining the otherness necessary for relation and sociality. The answer to this difficulty is to think that union without recourse to the identity that is integral to ontology. The concluding chapter takes up this task.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECONSTRUCTION

On the one hand, in their imperfection and temptation, believers will often seek refuge in dogmatic affirmation, escaping selfishly from the works of love and the risks of nonconformity involved in committing oneself to the presence of the one who make his lot not with the righteous but with the rejected of this world. But they always know better, and their very lack of love of God and neighbor and their insistence that others agree with their own opinions, attitudes, and dispositions will indicate the uneasy and defensive way in which they hold their dogmatic affirmations.

On the other hand, believers will, in their doubt, seek to escape the burden of factual affirmation by identifying response to Christ's presence with making the causes of the disinherited their own (often quite automatically.) But their conscience is almost always uneasy because appeal to the presence of Christ in and to the neighbor is only one. Apart from the factual affirmation of Christ's presence, the association of his particular image with one's sensitivity to humanity in oneself or others will seem a halfhearted or forced undertaking.

But reference to the Spirit is the affirmation that the unique unity of Jesus Christ's identity and presence calls forth a similarly unique response. It is a response, the unity of which is rendered only by the effective gift to us of the unity of Christ's identity and presence. Reference to the Spirit or to the gift of the Spirit means that, concerning Jesus Christ and him alone, factual affirmation is completely one with faith and trust of the heart, with love of him, and love of the neighbors for whom he gave himself completely.

—Hans Frei¹

Introduction

It will be helpful to begin the concluding chapter by rehearsing the argument of the dissertation to this point. In doing so, I will begin not with the problem of the union of creation and grace as I have framed the analysis so far, but with the root of the difficulty of which that problem is a manifestation. The following section will bring the study to a close by recounting that problem and its resolution in chronological order,

¹ Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 188.

rather than according to the thematic framing adopted thus far. The remainder of this chapter, then, should be read as a recapitulation of the themes of the dissertation as a whole, but turned toward the presentation of a resolution of their difficulties. The presentation of this resolution is oriented toward showing the manner in which an appropriate treatment of the role of the will opens out onto a vision of Being and the role of the intellect that is not alien to the received tradition, but is nonetheless uniquely articulated from within it. The resolution I offer is concerned with the active development and sustaining of the spiritual and mystical orientation of the mind. This treatment is both cursory and programmatic.

Recapitulation: A Chronological Presentation of the Analysis

The problem I have uncovered begins with a set of interrelated issues in Augustine's theology which lie at the foundation of my investigation and which I claim are responsible for this conflict of paradigms. I first bring these elements into view in Chapter Four, where I focus on the tension of Augustine's grammar of *creatio ex nihilo* and theology of grace. The grammar of creation is treated first and notes the internal connection of divine immutability and human freedom that come together to constitute the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The notion of divine immutability at work here, which affirms God's sovereignty and goodness over the whole created order, is the basis for the affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo* and is worked out in direct contrast to Manichean dualism. The concept of the will first takes on a prominent role here in Augustine's thinking, where it refers to God's voluntary creation of the world and the free human cooperation with God's purposes in that creation. This notion of the will is

nascent and is conceived solely in terms of self-determination. This grammar adds up to a metaphysical ontology in the sense used in the dissertation of a speculative articulation of the whole of reality.

The first great weakness in the metaphysical expression of this grammar is disclosed once Augustine begins to work out his mature theology of grace, after his close reading of Paul in the letter *To Simplician*. In this text, Augustine wrestles for the first time with the recognition that the relation of free will and grace in his grammar also implies a notion of obligation and reward that indebted God to the creature. This raises important questions regarding his theology of grace because this implication violates the grammatical tenet of God's sovereignty, which is the basis for his rejection of dualism. Once this tenet is removed, the goodness of the created order is also compromised. However, to attempt to preserve divine sovereignty, and with it created goodness and the doctrine of creation, would require the diminution of created freedom, which is the cornerstone of Augustine's argument for the moral origin of evil against Manichaeism's dualism. Augustine thus finds himself in a double bind.

It is in response to this conflict that Augustine's doctrine of the will begins to mature alongside his theology of grace. In light of these developments in his theology of grace, Augustine reconceives the notion of freedom in the social, relational, and ethical terms of justice, rather than metaphysics. This is in keeping with his moral rather than ontological definition of evil, and perfectly coincides with his linking of this idea directly to the will. Nonetheless, this more discretely ethical emphasis makes freedom more a matter of the rectitude of one's relationship to a prior determination, as opposed to a metaphysical expression of one's self-determination. In fact, freedom becomes a matter

of how one's self-determination is related to this prior determination. Grace is conceived, in this light, as an expression of the divine election, which enables the will to act in a manner precluded by its self-determination. Augustine's theology of grace develops progressively in such a manner that it becomes clearer the degree to which God's action directly upon the will is necessary in order for this action to occur. This insight is provoked especially by his meditations in the *Confessions* on the failure of the will to will what the intellect recognizes as its good. This marks not only the site wherein the will emerges as distinct from desire and the intellect, but also illuminates the role of grace in moving the will to its act. Ultimately, such a position is integral to his strong notions of election and predestination in his later, anti-Pelagian works.

Despite the emphasis on the priority of grace over the will, the will's freedom as constituted by that grace, and a much more distinctly social and ethical expression of the will in distinction from the intellect and desire, Augustine never satisfactorily resolves the tension between the necessity of the will's determination by grace and the created freedom demanded by the grammar of his doctrine of creation. Augustine's own attempt to resolve this tension in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* shows the conflict between the metaphysical and social dimensions inscribed here. The result is a metaphysical inflection of the social dimension of grace that results in a strongly deterministic interpretation, reminiscent of Stoicism, which completely reduces that dimension to the progressive unfolding of a predetermined form over the course of history. As becomes clear in this commentary, the major metaphysical difficulty Augustine encounters, and which he cannot successfully transcend, is the notion that God's immutability must be conceived as an absolute self-determining motion. As a result, divine and created

freedoms are implicitly in competition for control of the same immanent field. In the wake of Augustine's mature theology of grace, human rather than divine freedom must be compromised. And this bequeaths to the West the problem of explaining how it is that the will is absolutely determined by the divine decree of election, and yet is necessarily free and responsible for its own actions.

This is the problem that early Medieval Scholasticism addresses. Unable to make any clear differentiation between natural gifts and redeeming gifts, early Scholastics are unable to distinguish between the grace of creation and the grace of redemption. The first step in the direction of a solution to this is taken early in Aquinas' career in his text *De Ente et essentia*. Here Aquinas develops the metaphysical insight into the nature of God's being as the act of existence (*esse*.) This notion makes it possible to conceive of the ways in which God's voluntary actions do not occur on the same plane as human actions and are not in competition with them. Augustine's tendency to think of God as a presence of absolute self-determination can be recognized by Aquinas as more characteristic of a *factum* or *fieri*, and is therefore inappropriate to designate the divine. God is not a perfect act of self-determination because God simply is, by essence, the act of existing. This sets the stage for correcting Augustine's misunderstanding of the nature of divine immutability in relation to finite freedom.

But it is only in the wake of Philip the Chancellor's distinction between a natural and an acquired habit that Thomas Aquinas can resolve the metaphysical issues bequeathed by Augustine to the West. Aquinas is able to see, in light of this distinction, that certain actions happen within things by virtue of what they naturally are, while others occur because of some knowledge they have acquired. This distinction allows Aquinas to

complete the articulation of the will that Augustine has begun insofar as he is then able to specify how it is that the will can have its own natural integrity of operation apart from the intellect. Once the will has its own nature, he can further specify what operations the will does by nature and what operations are supernatural. With both a clear notion of the will and of its supernatural operations, Aquinas can then resolve the Augustinian problem by noting how it is that certain operations occur naturally and are proportionate to natural ends, while other operations are supernatural, reaching beyond what the natural operations of the will can produce alone. Thus, the rectitude of the natural operations is an important aspect of the proper exercise of freedom, but it does not account for it. Rather, freedom pertains to the nature of the will's operations and is specific to the choice of means to a particular end. Freedom does not, however, pertain to either the origin or the end to which the will is directed, and does not entail a capacity for infinite self-determination. If the will is to operate supernaturally, it must receive the infusion of a supernatural habit (*caritas*). The transcendental categories of nature and the supernatural become the basis for establishing the proper distinction between creation and grace, and also serve as their most proper union.

With these two metaphysical corrections, Aquinas resolves the dilemma that plagued the Western doctrine of grace in the wake of Augustine. And yet, it this resolution was only possible from within the metaphysical trajectory of Augustine's thought. In fact, Aquinas' accomplishments are best viewed as a completion of Augustine's project in the *Literal Commentary*, wherein he achieved a partial but important metaphysical reduction of the social dimension of grace to the formal

categories of number, weight, and measure. The result is the metaphysics of the *ordo caritatis*.

Luther's work is best understood as standing in this trajectory of thought, but developing this social and relational dimension of the Augustinian heritage that had been occluded in the metaphysical legacy of Aquinas.² Luther recuperates this legacy by explicitly downplaying the metaphysical notion of freedom, conceiving it instead in terms of moral rectitude. In what can only be understood as an exploitation of the metaphysical definition of truth that he rejected, Luther famously notes against Erasmus that, if it is understood as self-determination, *freedom* of the will only properly applies to God. To many, this aspect of Luther's thought gives the impression that he is merely returning the question of the will to the confused perspective of the later Augustine prior to Aquinas.³ Yet this is not accurate, as Luther's position is not a return to the ambiguous notion of the will in Augustine and early scholasticism, but rather makes use of Aquinas' achievement. His discussion of the will marks a recovery of the social dimension of grace and the will as inherited from Augustine, but in a manner that presumes Aquinas' work.

This fact is most apparent in Luther's analysis of the self-interest of the will. Aquinas' analysis clarified the extent to which all ethical action is taken up for the sake of the attainment of an object judged to be good for the agent. Yet, though oriented toward the universal good, the will is not itself naturally capable of an act proportionate to that end as its action is always an expression of self-preservation. Aquinas sought to

² This is a heritage that includes Gregory the Great and Francis, as Raunio has noted, and so in this sense is not unique to Luther. Rather, Luther is elaborating upon this element as it was received in the West. Raunio, *Summe Des Christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" Als Gesetz Der Liebe in Der Theologie Martin Luthers Von 1510-1527*, 61-87.

³ This does, in fact, often appear to be the case with the Finnish interpretation of Luther.

overcome this by invoking an infused habit of charity in which the concupiscent object of the will is not merely oneself or the common good, but the Good itself, God. Friendship with God is expressed in willing the order of the common good of the whole—which includes oneself—as the self-expression of the Good. For Luther, the difficulty with this way of conceiving matters lies with the reduction of the relational dimension of love to a metaphysical order, and its failure to interrogate the centrality of the element of self-preservation lying at the heart of the proposal. Indeed, for Luther these two are of a piece, and represent a failure to fully interrogate the nature of the will as self-preservation.

In keeping with his dialectic of law and gospel, Luther understands the difficulty of the attempts of theologies of glory to map a general philosophical theory of action onto salvation, and to thereby reading salvation through that theory. Luther insists that these attempts will always fail to do justice to the gospel, which fundamentally alters the meaning of such categories. The upshot of all speculative systems is to subordinate the revelation of God to the self-interest of the human being. This is, as Luther notes, merely an attempt to rob God of divinity, which he understands to consist most essentially in service rather than the reward of such self-interest. There is a genuine transformation of the *ordo caritatis* when viewed from the theological perspective of the gospel as opposed to law.

This problem was epitomized in the scholastic doctrine of justification. The Protestant critique of this claim aims at its speculative structure, which is enshrined in the Aristotelian account of virtue. This account is premised on the idea of the achievement of the perfection of the form of a being. This perfection is attained on the basis of the

potentialities inherent in the being in question. The problem that the Protestant account raises with this proposal does not lie with the Aristotelian structure itself, but rather with its use to describe the nature of salvation. The point of the Protestant critique, however, is that this manner of framing things sets up the form of the good as an empty form whose actuality must be achieved, as opposed to this actuality being presupposed as its basis. Luther's point regarding justification by faith is simply an elaboration upon Aquinas's point regarding the relationship between potentiality and actuality, namely, that the realization must be presupposed in order for the act to be possible, rather than conceived of as the result of becoming. The reason for this is that the possibility of deification is destroyed if it is conceived in terms of the self-preservation of the creature.

It is this that Luther most stridently rejects. The rationale for his rejection reveals an important insight into the metaphysical approach itself. Luther recognizes that this speculative abstraction to the transcendental union of the whole is implicitly an expression of human self-preservation. This had been, in fact, the supposition of Aquinas' position all along, which he had sought to overcome in part by referring to the supernatural operation of the charitable will that adopts the good of another as its own. Aquinas, however, was forced by his metaphysical vision to see this transformation as the perfection of the natural impulse to self-preservation. Justice as conceived in Augustine's mature theology of grace as interpersonal charity is completely collapsed into a reiteration of Augustine's earliest Neoplatonic vision of the *ordo caritatis*. This was integral to Aquinas' position in that his conception of perfection is tied not to God's infinity, but to created finitude. The creature thus receives its perfection by being rightly related to the will of God as expressed in the natural hierarchical ordering of the cosmos.

Indeed, the complexities regarding the Augustinian tradition that Aquinas is able to resolve with this approach come at the expense of the social dimension as elaborated upon by Aquinas.

That recognition, however, is supplied through Luther's analysis of the role of justification as conceived in Scholastic theology as a second-act perfection of the creature, *habitually* achieved. Luther rightly recognizes the internal connection this approach has with self-preservation,⁴ but unlike Aquinas ties it directly to the evasion of the social dimension. Grace cannot simply be understood in terms of the status of one's relation to a metaphysical order, but must be tied directly to the quality of one's relationship to that which precedes and determines one's entire field of action. Such is the status of election for Augustine, and though it is intimately tied to predestination, it has a distinctly ethical inflection that is absent from Aquinas's metaphysical inflection of predestination. Luther's primary focus for emphasizing this dimension is the doctrine of justification. As he notes, the Aristotelian doctrine of *habitus*, predicated as it is on this notion of perfection, not only conceives salvation completely in terms of a structure of self-preservation that is inimical to love, but builds the very structure of speculative metaphysics on it. Such a structure requires also that the determination of the content of salvation be established in negative opposition to the principle upon which it is carried out. That is, cooperation with the divine operation must be immediately effective, if it means anything at all, which necessarily entails that justification is not the effect but the presupposition of those actions. This point requires that these actions be seen, not as

⁴ This connection to self-preservation or concupiscence is widely recognized as a difference between Protestant and Lutheran thought that persists even in light of the Joint Declaration. See Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*, 99-108.

alterations of a metaphysical substance, but as prior motions determining the quality of actions—determined not by the presence or absence of a particular ontological aspect, but by the relation an action bears to what precedes it.

In this way, Luther's thought is a direct elaboration upon the notion of operative grace as it develops in Aquinas. Luther's appreciation for Lombard's insistence on the notion that charity is simply the presence of the Holy Spirit to the will makes this clear.⁵ However, where Aquinas interprets this as a metaphysical principle by means of which the creature is enabled to produce its own operation of love, Luther insists that that action itself *is* love and its expression. For Luther, it is Christ himself—and not an abstract “charity”—who is the form of faith and the other theological virtues. Christ is the agent of all good human actions for Luther. The difficulty this poses is that the structure of negative determination that Luther rightly corrects by making grace a substantial rather than accidental form, also renders Christ an abstract actuality. The result is that Luther establishes the framework within which the ontology of encounter can be developed as the mode of uniting creation and grace within the Protestant paradigm.

It is the overarching significance of the role of the will in the Roman Catholic paradigm of nature and the supernatural that is overlooked by Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner in the twentieth century. Nonetheless, in light of our study, we are now in a position to see that their quest to overturn Neo-Scholasticism's sharp division of the

⁵ On this point see the following: Juntunen, *Der Begriff Des Nichts*, Mannermaa, *Der Im Glauben Gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung Und Vergottung : Zum Ökumenischen Dialog*, Mannermaa and Stjerna, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, Peura, "Christ as Favor and as Gift (Donum): The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification.", Raunio, *Summe Des Christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" Als Gesetz Der Liebe in Der Theologie Martin Luthers Von 1510-1527*, Risto Saarinen, *Gottes Wirken Auf Uns: Die Transzendente Deutung Des Gegenwart-Christi-Motivs in Der Lutherforschung*, *Veröffentlichungen Des Instituts Für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Abteilung Religionsgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989).

natural from the supernatural was most importantly an attempt to overcome the problems arising from the metaphysical reduction of the social dimension of grace—especially as these grew up in the aftermath of the First Vatican Council documents *Aeterni Patris*, and *De Filius*. However, we have noted that their failure to attend to this legacy simply returned their thought to the framework of Augustinian Platonism that the nature/supernatural paradigm had been formulated to overcome, thereby returning the question of creation and grace to its origins in the early work of Augustine. Though in light of this history, Lubac and Rahner prove to be of no particular help in forging a coherent union of creation and grace, they are essential for bringing to light what is most essentially at stake in this dispute.

As the opening of the present chapter has shown, however, the difficulties Lubac and Rahner encountered are not internal to their own proposals. Both Lubac's organicism and Rahner's personalism are struggles against the limitations of the Roman Catholic paradigm itself. More precisely, they represent distinct but interrelated attempts to pour the social and relational dimension of grace into the old wineskin of a speculative metaphysical ontology. Without a discrete concept of the operations of the will from those of the intellect, however, not only can they not arrive at a cogent distinction of grace from creation, but they cannot recognize that their own objections are tied to a social and relational protest against the speculative reduction of this dimension to metaphysics.

Recognition of this fact sheds further light on the impasses arising within the Protestant account as articulated by Schleiermacher and Barth. Where these representative Protestant figures evade the problems attendant to the Roman Catholic

reduction of sociality, they nonetheless wind up in a similar position. Starting from a perspective that privileges sociality and relation, they still overlook the centrality of the will as developed in Aquinas' metaphysics. This oversight has the result of inverting the Platonic emphasis of Lubac and Rahner, such that the will is rendered, in Scotist fashion, as an infinite potentiality that receives the specification of its operation by the intellect. The flaw is the same as in the Roman Catholic paradigm, but its expression is obverted. The doctrine of creation is here reduced to the doctrine of grace precisely because there is not a proper specification of the two. The result is that grace itself becomes an ontological concept of differentiation and union, which merely repeats the problem of deploying a calculus for the apprehension of being. Rather than correcting the problem, recovering the social dimension of grace in terms of an ontology of encounter simply perpetuates it by conceiving it in terms of the essence of reality.

This would appear to place the question of the union of creation and grace in a double-bind. On the one hand, as we have seen in Augustine, the doctrine of creation requires a clear metaphysical account in order to avoid Gnosticism and Manichaeism. That account must include a distinct notion of God's sovereignty and goodness, and must understand the world to be the direct result of a distinct act of God's will, with the introduction of evil in the world to be the result of the human misuse of its free will. Also from Augustine, we learned that the gratuity of grace demands that God's sovereignty and grace be given absolute priority in the achievement of salvation, and that this priority is tied directly to a social and relational understanding of justice and the rectitude of the will. If the Roman Catholic paradigm of speculative metaphysical ontology is followed, even in Aquinas' most coherent articulation, the doctrine of grace is

reduced to a function of the doctrine of creation. This is seen in the manner that Aquinas must ultimately understand grace to enable a concupiscent act of the will that takes God's universal goodness as its own, thus willing the manifestation of that good according to the order of the common good of the whole. In this manner, the social dimension of grace is completely reduced to the metaphysical order of creation. Conversely, if the Protestant paradigm of the ontology of encounter is assumed, then the doctrine of creation is effectively reduced to the doctrine of grace. This is the case even in the most coherent expression in Luther, who must understand the encounter with Jesus Christ to be the ontological truth of being itself, such that the doctrine of creation is only meaningful as a refracted dimension of the doctrine of grace.

Such is the impasse of the present conversation regarding the union of creation and grace. One position requires a dimension of relation and sociality to complete its doctrine of grace that its metaphysics disallows, and the other requires a metaphysics to complete its doctrine of creation that its emphasis on relation and sociality disallows. A very real zero-sum game is at work here. What is asserted in one paradigm as pivotal comes at the expense of an equally integral dimension. In this respect, we can see that we have not gotten beyond the impasse of the metaphysical demands of Augustine's grammar of the doctrine of creation and the social and relational demands of his mature theology of grace. But with these elements clearly identified, we are in a position, perhaps for the first time, to more precisely identify the problem and begin to formulate the lineaments of a solution.

Metaphysics and the Will, Sociality and Being

Ontology: Recollection and Mediation

...the responsibility of what remains to be decided or done (in actuality) cannot consist in following, applying, or carrying out a norm or rule. Wherever I have at my disposal a determinable rule, I know what must be done, and as soon as such knowledge dictates the law, action follows knowledge as a calculable consequence: one knows what path to take, one no longer hesitates. The decision then no longer decides anything but is made in advance and is thus in advance annulled. It is simply deployed, without delay, presently, with the automatism attributed to machines. There is no longer any place for justice or responsibility (whether juridical, political, or ethical).

—Jacques Derrida⁶

Throughout my analysis of the two paradigms for uniting creation and grace, I have emphasized the role of the philosophical category of being as the category for uniting the two doctrines by appeal to identity, intellection, and participation. In the case of the Roman Catholic paradigm, being is invoked as a speculative category through which creation and grace are distinguished, by appeal to nature and the supernatural, as different manifestations of a common reality. It is in this way that the category of being serves a distinctively metaphysical function in the Roman Catholic paradigm insofar as it is oriented toward the designation of the whole of existence. The union of creation and grace occurs in and through the intellectual apprehension of the proper relationship between the one and the many, the whole. In this structure, the intellectual apprehension of reality, especially the good expressed in the order of the whole, is the basis for the voluntary acts by which the individual intellectual creature elects the means to cooperate with that good. The result is that the doctrine of grace is conceived as a

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Meridian (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 84-85.

transcendental designation of some aspect of the overarching order of the doctrine of creation.

In the case of the Protestant paradigm, this speculative account of the whole is rejected. That rejection is due to the reduction of the social and relational dimension of the doctrine of grace, which the metaphysical ontology achieves. The Protestant paradigm does not invoke a third category, such as nature (and its modification, the super-natural), to distinguish different aspects of a common being. Rather, it seeks to understand the truth and reality of being itself in terms of relation. In this sense, the conceptual apprehension of being invoked in the Roman Catholic paradigm is simply inadequate to the proper identification of the truth of being because it effectively denies the reality of the experience of temporal existence. Concrete existence is marked by an irreducibly dialectical movement between unity and multiplicity, intellect and action, harmony and distinction—all of which gives rise to, but is not identical with, the dialectical distinction of sin and grace occurring in the epistemic relation to being. Though abstraction is a necessary part of human existence, the desire to bring the reality of concrete existence into harmony with this abstraction is the clearest mark of human sin, for the Protestant paradigm. It is the expression of the desire to submit reality to itself rather than itself to reality. Only through the encounter that ruptures this dialectic—identified as Jesus Christ—can we apprehend the relational truth of being. Grace is the event alone within which truth is disclosed, with the result that the doctrine of creation is a conceptual abstraction from the event of grace.

These approaches represent two different ways of distributing the terms of identity, intellect, and participation as constitutive of being. The two approaches differ

only with regard to the position and role of intellectual abstraction in their accounts; they do not dispute its final significance; and they agree on the importance of identity and participation. For the Roman Catholic paradigm, it is the intellectual apprehension of the order of and cooperation with the Good expressed in the order of the universe as a whole that is decisive. Because this cooperative willing of the Good itself is not within the natural capacities of the creature, grace is understood as the infusion of charity that makes this act possible. It is, however, the intellectual apprehension of the Good of the order as an abstraction that is significant. For the Protestant paradigm, by contrast, it is the intellectual apprehension of the absolute priority of an all-determining relation that is crucial, a relation that is itself constitutive of intellectual abstraction. Because this relation cannot be apprehended without subordinating oneself to it, grace is understood as the rupture of the structure that occludes this apprehension. Once apprehended, the creature is free to conduct itself so as to bring its acts and thoughts into harmony with that truth. In each account, what is intellectually apprehended is a more fundamental reality of identity within which the creature participates. The fact of identity and participation are not in question, only the manner of their distribution in relation to the role of intellectual abstraction. It is this distribution that accounts for the different ways that the Roman Catholic and Protestant paradigms understand and unite the doctrines of creation and grace. In the Roman Catholic paradigm, participation is conceived as a fact of being, of which grace is an expression—thus disclosing their fundamental identity. Participation in the Protestant scheme, however, is a more dynamic reality that happens in and through the truth of reality revealed in the event of encounter. It is one's

participation in the event of encounter that alone renders this identity apprehensible. The former takes creation as primary and the latter insists that grace is primary.

What is at issue here is the different punctuations and distributions of *common being* (*ens commune*). This is not surprising, as it is the perennial problematic of all classical philosophical engagement on the question of the One and the Many, substance and act, form and matter, and time and eternity. As I have been investigating them in this study, these concerns are taken up in a unique fashion not simply in relation to the doctrines of creation and grace, but specifically with regard to the question of their union. On the matter of the distribution of common being, both paradigms reveal a strange coincidence and reversal.

The analysis of Søren Kierkegaard, as developed in *Fear and Trembling*, is helpful in illuminating the different structures at work in my analysis, as well as this reversal. In that work, Kierkegaard (under the pseudonym of Johannes de Silentio) notes two distinct ways in which conceptual abstraction (“ethics”) attempts to comprehend the act of faith. The first is by virtue of Platonic *recollection* in which the demands of the multiplicities of finitude are transcended with reference to the eternal priority of the universal abstraction of form. It is only with reference to the determinations of form that the value of the temporal order is apprehended and enjoyed. It is for this reason, for example, that Kierkegaard will speak of the Knight of Infinite Resignation, who always seeks to attain her place in the world through conceptual abstraction to an eternal truth apprehended prior to and apart from time, though it is expressed in it. But it is through this movement of recollection that the differences of time, becoming, matter, and action are resolved into a greater whole, by way of identity and participation. Both the Roman

Catholic and Protestant paradigms for uniting creation and grace appeal to recollection and mediation in just this way, but to different ends.

The Roman Catholic paradigm addresses this question in terms of mediation: how are the doctrines of creation and grace to be properly differentiated so as to maintain their unity? The Roman Catholic response to this question is to posit the category of “nature” to characterize the integral operations of creation and the “supernatural” to designate those created actions that exceed those natural operations. Thus, nature is the mediating term between creation and grace. But this mediation functions in the paradigm to resolve these differences into a common union, which is *recollected* in the mediating term as the prior basis for and determination of the given itself. One can see this in both Lubac’s appeal to the twofold gratuity of the act of creation and its orientation to beatitude, and also in Rahner’s appeal to the concretely graced status of all experience, the distinction of which can only be abstractly apprehended. Thomas Aquinas deploys the idea of nature as mediator with regard to the role of the transcendental order of creation in which the good is expressed. Recollection is the conclusion to the question for which mediation is the response. Thus, what begins as an essentially Hegelian problem of the unity of the differentiations of speculative reason is resolved by appeal to Platonic recollection.

The Protestant paradigm, conversely, begins with the question of recollection: how are the doctrines of creation and grace to be properly united, given their clear differentiation in concrete experience? The response to this question is to *recollect* the unity that is the prior basis for and determination of the given order of experience. It is because one apprehends, in the event of encounter with Jesus Christ, a prior identification that is expressed in and determines the differentiations of existence, that creation and

grace can be united in him. The basis here is not the mediating concept of “nature,” but the very encounter with Jesus Christ himself. One can see this in both Schleiermacher’s appeal to the union of election and preservation as disclosed in communion with Christ, and also in Barth’s appeal to Jesus Christ himself as the temporal expression of the eternal covenant. In both cases, reality is only apprehended from the perspective of the determination of existence disclosed in the encounter with Christ, who is thereby recognized as the ontological mediator of the coherence of existence. This has the very different effect of accounting for an already existing distinction in terms of that prior unity that renders it intelligible, rather than introducing distinction into a presumed unity. Mediation here is a conclusion, grounded in the presupposition of recollection. Thus, what begins as a Platonic problem of differentiations of unified experience is resolved by appeal to Hegelian speculative mediation. As in Kierkegaard’s analysis, the pattern of thought is consistent with appeals to mediation, namely, to maintain and articulate the equilibrium of a unified whole.⁷ This mediation is understood in terms of the recollection of a previously given principle of unity.

The differences between the approaches concern the distribution, application, and understanding of the nature of this mediation and recollection. In the instance of Roman Catholic thought the unified whole is distributed through the conceptual mediation of “nature,” while in the Protestant paradigm Jesus Christ supplies the mediatory framework necessary to unify the disparate aspects of existence into a whole. This difference is significant in that the speculative understanding of mediation at work in the Roman Catholic position concludes to a largely Platonic understanding of recollection, in which

⁷ I am grateful to conversations had with Craig Keen while writing on this point regarding the relationship of mediation, recollection, and universal equilibrium.

the whole is metaphysically ordered according to the priority of form. The Protestant position, on the other hand, begins with a Platonic understanding of form in its doctrine of election, only to introduce a speculative principle of mediation as the basis for distinction. This difference of priority lies at the root of the dispute regarding the role of the *analogia entis* in contemporary Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, especially as that dispute has divided according to whether priority is granted to being or to becoming.⁸

At issue in both cases is the most appropriate way to conceive of the participatory distribution of difference within an immanent, finite field of identity. As a result, the two positions are locked in competition over a single conceptual field. The different ways that the two paradigms distribute the doctrines of creation and grace within this field is their distinct ontological discourse. These are the different ways of uniting identity, intellection, and participation according to metaphysical ontology and to an ontology of encounter, respectively.

This is not, however, the whole of the story. Where contemporary attempts to unite creation and grace according to a discourse of being have failed, I have tried to show that they do so precisely because they neglect the significance of the development of the notion of the will as an operation distinct from the intellect and desire. I have been intent to note the manner in which this problem of distribution and mediation arises specifically from the priority granted to identity as a mediating abstraction of the intellect. I pointed to this in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant paradigms, respectively. In the four cases of Lubac, Rahner, Schleiermacher, and Barth, a

⁸ See Davis, "The Fruit of the Tree: On the Affirmation and Use of Analogy."

remarkable union of creation and grace is achieved, but always such that the status and the role of the will becomes a function of the intellect or desire. Indeed, my whole project has been oriented toward showing that the history of the attempts to unite the doctrines of creation and grace in the West pivots on the irreducibility of the will in those equations. Where this distinction is not maintained and correctly expressed, the union of creation and grace inevitably results not only in the reduction of one doctrine to the other, but also in the repetition of a Gnostic metaphysics. It is clear, at this junction, why it is that ontology is itself essentially Gnostic.

I do not mean to suggest by this that the problem here pertains to the status or role of the category of “being” in general. On the contrary, I have gone to great pains to show the important role of Aquinas’ understanding of *Being (esse)* for resolving the difficulties analyzed. That difference pivots on the distinction of the act of being from the totality of the community of being. Only on the basis of this distinction can Being not be understood in terms of the perfection of the immanent community of being. The consequences of this idea will be unfolded in more detail in the following section in connection with a suggested alteration for understanding the significance of the doctrine of creation. At present, it is enough to lift out the consequences of this difference for the ontological discourse as such.

Ontological discourse is most fundamentally the attempt to produce a distinction and a union from out of an otherwise undifferentiated totality. Such union and difference is achieved by way of a conceptual abstraction that mediates both the identity and the difference of the terms in question. However, it can only properly determine the distinct content of these terms by setting them in generative opposition to one another, such that

the distinct content itself is produced from that opposition. It is for this reason that I have focused, in the discussions of Augustine and Aquinas, on the sense in which creation is not an expression of generative production. This is the problem that Augustine recognizes in both Manichean and Plotinian metaphysics, and is the rationale for his grammar of *creatio ex nihilo*. Nonetheless, it continues to plague his understanding of God's agency insofar as he fails to comprehend God's act of existence, which Aquinas sees so well. As we saw in the last chapter, however, this same confusion persists in Aquinas himself insofar as he thinks of justification as the creature's perfection, and understands perfection itself in terms of the ordered totality of creation. Luther's appropriate advance beyond this implicit competition in his doctrine of justification only serves to further compound the problem, however. He conceives of Jesus in terms that construe the form apprehended in the encounter with Christ to be the general truth of creation itself. In this way, the social and relational dimension he recoups from Augustine and in continuity with Aquinas is compromised by a Christological formalism that effectively absorbs the creature's operational integrity, and with it the entire field of relation.⁹ In each of these cases, the problem arises not simply because of an impulse toward speculative metaphysics, but from an implicit reliance on ontology as such to generate both the necessary distinctions and unity. The unity of the whole is maintained for both Aquinas and Luther by way of a category of mediation within which both the whole and its constitutive oppositions are resolved in relation to a specific categorical abstraction. At issue in the two different paradigms is the distribution of the terms "creation" and "grace" as differentiations of determinate opposition within that whole.

⁹ Aquinas' insistence that grace is an accidental rather than substantial quality was clearly intended to forestall just this. See *ST I-II.110*

This principle of distribution is integral to ontological discourse as such. Ontology requires a negative principle of differentiation within being to supply the necessary determination for development and differentiation within the unity of the whole. The problem encountered here is the same as the one that Augustine refuted with Manichaeism: namely, the notion that the unity of reality involves the mediation of a contradiction between a more primal union of opposition. In this sense, creation and grace cannot be related except through a conceptual logic in which a presupposed opposition between the terms is overcome with reference to a more basic unity, or that more basic union is distributed between two opposing and complimentary terms. In each case, as with Kierkegaard's analysis, this mediation preserves a more fundamental unity that is recollected as the ground for the relation itself within the order of being. It was against this purely intellectualist discourse that Augustine apprehended the logic of *creatio ex nihilo* not simply as a more intelligible and consistent speculative metaphysics, but as a distinct operation of the divine will, which was irreducibly tied to the manifestation of the world's goodness. This opens the door to the recognition that the doctrine of creation is inseparable from the notion of the will as the distinctively ethical operation of positively affirming otherness itself in its very *otherness*. This claim means that otherness is inseparable from its concrete manifestation in appearing.

As noted in Chapter Four, however, the deadlock between Augustine's grammar of creation and his mature theology of grace arises due to an attempt to distribute material and temporal development, change, and differentiation within a unified totality absolutely determined by God. The metaphysical problem he encounters here concerns the fact that he is unable to account for these elements in a manner that does not result in the

eradication of the operational integrity of created reality. We saw that this is due to the fact that he conceives God's immutability as an absolute self-determination standing in competitive relation to created self-determination. It is only with Aquinas' doctrine of God as the act of existence (*esse*) that the groundwork is laid for overcoming this conflict, as it allows for a non-competitive relation between God and the world. It is on this ground that the real operational integrity of created reality can be affirmed precisely through the differentiation of the operations of the will from the intellect, which give rise to the further differentiation of nature from the supernatural. Thus the category of being itself remains an integral facet of the problem posed by the unity of creation and grace.

Beyond this, we saw that the metaphysical response to these questions, even in the most sophisticated form of Aquinas, is unable to account for the social and relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace. Rather, the metaphysical account can only succeed by reducing the social and relational dimension of Augustine's emphasis on rectitude and justice to matters of the appropriate conceptual framework for thinking the operational integrity of created reality. Thus, the social reality of the will's ethical orientation must also be retained, even as the metaphysical framework that makes the will itself intelligible appears to undermine that affirmation.

What is needed is a metaphysics that can account for the doctrine of creation as specified by Augustine. This metaphysics must be that of *creatio ex nihilo*, which can evade Gnostic and Manichean assumptions regarding Being by being specifically grounded in the divine will. This metaphysics must further involve an understanding of Being in Aquinas' terms as the act of existence (*esse*), which can also serve as the basis upon which to maintain and articulate the differentiation of the operations of the will

from the intellect and desire. But, concomitantly, this metaphysics must maintain the connection Augustine draws in his grammar of creation between God's will, sovereignty, and goodness, and in such a way that the social and relational element integral to Augustine's mature theology of grace must be retained and cannot be reduced to metaphysics. But neither can this social element be reducible to an abstract ontological principle. What is needed is a metaphysics of being that fully accounts for the social dimension of reality and in such a way that it is not reducible to a function of identity, intellect, and participation. Such an account is simply a matter of fully applying the significance of the distinctiveness of the will from the intellect and desire to the metaphysical tradition of Christian theology. That role, however, concerns the account of Being that is most appropriate to the understanding of the nature of reality as expressed in Christian doctrines of creation and grace. This means that the question of the status and role of Being in Christian theology must be decided by the presentation of a coherent doctrine of creation. Once this is done, a clear insight into the doctrine of creation will be opened up, which will shed light on its union with the doctrine of grace. This requires a significant reconstruction of each in light of the grammar of creation, history of reflection, and doctrinal stipulations we have outlined.

Creation: Metaphysics, Being, and the Otherness

The intellect is facing a blank and the will follows it.

—Dom John Chapman, OSB¹⁰

¹⁰Quoted from Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, 54. See also her discussion of this idea on pp. 40-55.

The place to begin to reconstruct the union of creation and grace in the Western tradition is with the fundamental affirmation of the grammar of *creatio ex nihilo* as articulated by Augustine against the Manichees. This involves a repetition of the basic themes of the relationship of sovereignty, goodness, and the will as their relationship was elaborated in Chapter Four. The interrelationship of these categories demands that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* sit at the heart of a coherent Christian doctrine and metaphysics of reality because the world has an operational integrity of its own that renders it essentially knowable as such and shows it to be fundamentally relational. The doctrine of creation must be maintained as an accurate description of the reality of the world in its actuality, and not merely a unique determination of “Christian” consciousness. The doctrine of creation must, then, have the kind of realist metaphysical significance that Schleiermacher denied it, which further means that the metaphysical affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo*—precisely as a *doctrine*—cannot be understood as a function or extension of the doctrine of redemption. Rather, the doctrine of redemption presupposes and perfects the doctrine of creation. The world must have its own integral existence. Anything other than this is Manichean.

Proposals such as those of Catherin Keller, which seek to reformulate this doctrine in terms of a more fundamental “depth” of fluid relations, are misguided for just this reason. What they seek to gain regarding the goodness of God’s relatedness to the world is compromised precisely at the point that God’s sovereignty is set aside.¹¹ The doctrine of creation is, then, essentially a metaphysical doctrine about the constitution of reality as absolutely dependent on the divine creativity and preservation. Such

¹¹ See Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
265

dependence is the essence of creaturely life, meaning that there can be no absolute opposition between God and any aspect of the world. To suggest this is to define the creature's relation to God in fundamentally negative terms that deny the creative relation of absolute dependence that unite them. This relation is one in which dependence is understood to make the creature what it is. Thus, the grammatical relation discovered by Augustine that connects God's absolute sovereignty over the whole of reality cannot be compromised in any cogent doctrine of creation.

In connection with this point, God's absolute determination of the whole is not merely a matter of creating a world with its own distinct operational integrity, but is likewise the act of preserving it in that being, thereby expressing its fundamental goodness. This claim means that the world can only be understood as the result of a distinct and voluntary divine action. Claims that emanation is a wholly acceptable interpretation of the doctrine of creation and the world's relationship to God, must be rejected.¹² A finite participation in God's infinite plenitude can only conceive the act of creating as either an effulgence of the divine intellect or as a finite differentiated expression of God's own absolute identity. The primary difficulty with this way of conceiving matters is not merely that it refuses—at least implicitly—to link the creature's goodness to its operational distinction from God, but it must do so because it only conceives God's act of creating in terms of becoming (*fieri*) or making (*factum*), which repeats the basic structural dualism of negative determination. As such, it remains an incomplete form of Gnostic thinking about the created order. Created being is the direct

¹² For a nuanced acceptance of the emanationist position, see David Burrell, "Creation or Emanation: Two Paradigms of Reason," in *God and Creation*, ed. Bernard McGinn and David Burrell (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

and immediate result of the divine will to create not simply a finite participation in God's life, but otherness as such.

God's voluntary act of the will to create the world out of nothing cannot be captured in terms of the categories of participation or emanation.¹³ When God acts to create the world, God is doing much more than differentiating absolute and relative being, thereby manifesting finite being. As we have shown in the discussion of Augustine on immutability and its relationship to Aquinas, were this action all that was entailed, then God could not properly be said to create, but only to make, to produce, to generate. On the contrary, when God acts to create, God actually constitutes in existence that which did not exist before.¹⁴ As God is absolute, this action can only be properly understood as the very constitution of *otherness*. That is, God not only acts to create what was not, but in doing so brings into being an *other* to Godself, which is fundamentally related—and therefore not dialectically opposite—to God as other in its mode of being.

Importantly, if the act of creating is fundamentally related to otherness in this fashion, this can only be because this act of creating is a work of the will specifically, and is not merely a mediating differentiation within the intellect, achieved through determinate negation. The world is not nor can it be related to God as a mere *difference* within the overarching identity of God's absolute Being. Were this the case, the world's operational integrity would be compromised insofar as the world itself would be reducible to a modality of God's own self-apprehension. This conclusion is, in fact, what Luther's ontology threatens to do with its "Christomonism." It is finally irrelevant

¹³ Though, I do not think that this insistence means that these categories are absolutely invalid.

¹⁴ See *ST* I.45.1.

whether this mode of self-apprehension is *necessary* or *gratuitous* to God's life, as some would like to claim. It is irrelevant because the world's relationship to God would remain confined to the external, finite manifestation of God's own internal intelligibility. On the contrary, in creating, God acts to create what is really and distinctively *other* to God, and does so as an act of the will. The suggestion here is not that God creates with the will apart from the intellect, but that the will is an integral aspect of God's unifying action—that is, that God's act of creating is itself irreducible to a modality of God's own self-knowledge.

This claim entails not only that creation is the constitution of otherness as such, but also that it is an act of affirming this otherness in that very otherness. It is in this way that the creation of the world reaches beyond being a metaphysical account of the nature of created being to the claim that this being is integrally good in its very otherness. Such goodness adheres to creation not in spite of its distinction from God, but in and through that distinction. The world is the “concupiscent” object of the divine good pleasure because it is distinct from God, is irreducible to God, and this because of God's action toward it. By acting to create what is other, God does not merely constitute but affirms the goodness of otherness. This other is the object of God's will and is created by that will. This act is no mere function in the order of knowledge, but is an ethical affirmation of absolute and irreducible value.

Further, this has implications for the metaphysics of the operation of the will in that it completes the articulation of the nature of the will as analyzed in this study. This way of tracking the metaphysics of the will to the point where it is irreducibly united to the positive affirmation of otherness means that the will can no longer be understood in

any way as an extension of the mode of intellect or desire. Doing so merely obviates its uniqueness by reducing it to ontological identity. On the contrary, as its very being is grounded in God's affirmation of otherness and is the ethical faculty of value, otherness itself is the site of value. Otherness here is transcendental only in the sense of designating the universal value attached to every individual, specifically as *other*. In this way, the will retains a discrete metaphysical integrity that is grounded in concrete otherness as it confronts an agent. In this respect, concern for the rectitude of an action is inseparably tied to the affirmation of the other that precedes and determines it in its sensible appearing. As such, the rectitude of an action pertains to whether a given action is taken up as an affirmation of the other that precedes, conditions, and establishes the possibility of that action, or whether that action is taken up in opposition to this fact. Such is the basis for understanding charity as a matter of rectitude in the same social and relational terms established by Augustine.

Value is thus regulated by otherness. This claim means that otherness is the mode within which absolute value is apprehended in the world. This claim should not be taken to mean that the creation of otherness was necessary for God's goodness. Rather, it notes that because the world is constituted in and by the volitional and contingent act to create otherness, the intelligible value of the world and its absolute point of reference (i.e., the Good itself) appears within the world as an-other. As the set of operations related to contingency and value, this means that the will must be understood as the *faculty of otherness*, which is irreducible to the intellect. If this claim is intelligible, then it is only appropriate to identify the will itself as that set of operations that has the *act of affirming the otherness of the other* as its proper goal, and the failure of which results in a

disordered relation to oneself, one's world, and God. Here we have a reversal of the metaphysical ordering of the *ordo caritatis*, but only insofar as the path to the "height" that conditions the whole passes irrevocably through the other that confronts and conditions every finite action.

I do not mean by this that the will is not an intellectual appetite, as defined by Aquinas. On the contrary, my claim in this study is that the affective relation to otherness lies at the heart of Thomas' formulation, and it is only as an intellectual appetite that the will is shown to be fundamentally related to the other. As noted above, the will is actualized by an abstraction (the phantasm) in the intellect from a sensible object. This structure pertains to the manner in which the first operation of the will is passive in relation to the representation of material reality provoked by the sensory object. The actuality of that object moves the intellect to generate a phantasm of the object, the general good of which actualizes the first operation of the will. The significance of this relation, which our analysis puts into relief, is the sense in which the very materiality of the sensory object, tied as it is here to the goodness of reality, is fundamentally distinct from the abstractions of the intellect and has priority over them as the basis for their actualization. As the entire study has been oriented to show, this abstraction is not itself sufficient for the performance of the good unless the will's action in relation to that good is first rightly ordered. As adumbrated above, this means that the rectitude of the will's action is completely determined by whether that action is taken up not simply for the sake of attaining a good for itself that was presented in that object, but whether the will is fundamentally oriented, in its action, toward the positive affirmation of the otherness of the object that has affected it. The former is characteristic of the speculative

metaphysical gesture that Luther rightly rejected as a wholly natural love, and the later alone is properly designated “supernatural.” For, what is apprehended along with the form of the object in question is ethical obligation, which reaches beyond mere affirmation of the representational abstraction of the phantasm, to an unequivocal affirmation of the priority of concrete, material value of the object itself in its operational integrity. The affirmation of the truth of a given representation is, then, necessarily inseparable from the act of the will that affirms *the reality of the value of the otherness of the other*. Insofar as that reality is not affirmed, a true representation of the object cannot be said to have been obtained. It does not obtain because truth itself is not an abstract expression of value in an object, but is rather invested in the value of the object in its very otherness.

This understanding of truth ties the metaphysical reality of the world directly and uniquely to its status as created. One does not so much abstract from the world to the truth of its status as created and valuable, but rather finds oneself so determined by the value of truth that one encounters obligation at the root of existence. This obligation is bound up with the manifestation of the finite value of the world as distinctly related to Godself. In this regard, when we act in such a way as to deny the reality of the value of the other that we encounter, that value is not destroyed, but it is subsumed into an object of our own self-preserving concupiscence. Nonetheless, because the obligation we encounter is metaphysical, the truth of the world is inaccessible and the world is incoherent apart from it. We perceive truth only in direct correlation with the rectitude of our willing, which is irreducibly tied to the positive affirmation of the other.

This affirmation of otherness is the metaphysical mode within which we recognize the *absolute otherness* of the divine life. This absolute otherness is the basis for a metaphysics of relation that is not a “relational metaphysics” that, with Hegel, conceives this relation as a metaphysical principle of logical contrast, as in Manichaeism. The kind of idea that is at work here is more consistent with the traditional perspective adopted by Schleiermacher’s claim that God is to be distinguished from the world in such a way as not to stand in opposition to it. I will return to this idea in reference to Aquinas once more below. At present, it is more pertinent to underscore that this affirmative relation to the other as *other* locates the appearance of this absolute determination of finite existence, as Emmanuel Levinas has insisted, in the face of the concrete, material neighbor.¹⁵ It is in this way that we should come to understand the nature of the Golden Rule.¹⁶ The manner in which Luther’s insight into the non-concupiscent demands of love becomes most important in just this form of the affirmation of relation.

But the main concern of the metaphysical articulation of the significance of otherness in the grammar of creation concerns the manner in which these ideas are not alien to Aquinas’ own vision, even as they specify and reach beyond the limitations of his project. Within this frame, which sees the will as the faculty of the affirmation of otherness, it can be affirmed without reservation that the human being only finds fulfillment in attaining the goal of the intellectual and appetitive operations that define her. In this respect, the overarching impulses of Lubac, Rahner, and Lonergan are affirmed without reservation. The supernatural goal of human life is integrally related to

¹⁵ See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 61-97.

¹⁶ This at least is Luther’s position. See Raunio, *Summe Des Christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" Als Gesetz Der Liebe in Der Theologie Martin Luthers Von 1510-1527*, 319-62.

the natural operations of the human being, and their fulfillment comes to those operations in a manner that fulfills rather than destroys their natural operations. There is a natural orientation, then, to the supernatural.

By understanding the will in this way, we see that the meaning of the supernatural is also illuminated. The human being is, as Aquinas notes, both intellectually, appetitively, and voluntarily ordered toward a fulfillment of her natural operations in and with God alone. Such fulfillment comes as the gratuitous “perfection” of those operations. This claim confirms Aquinas’ teaching that no natural production is proportionate to that goal, but this fact is not, as Aquinas thought, due merely to the infinity of the concupiscent object and the finitude of the agent. Rather, the attainment of that object occurs, paradoxically, on the condition of the will’s positive affirmation of that object’s otherness to the will, which entails acting in concert with and accepting the prior determination of the reality of the value of the other as other. In this respect, it is not the concupiscence of the nature of the will that renders the action impossible. Nor is it the case that these operations of self-preservation are evil. This situation merely points to the fact that, because the will is ordered toward the goal of enjoying a value that is irreducibly tied to *otherness* as such, that goal is not one that it can be said to attain by virtue of its own production.

This point is only reinforced by the logic of Aquinas’ discussion of friendship. He states that beatitude is attained only where the good of another is taken up as one’s own, and he recognizes that such an act is only possible for the will because of an infused habit of charity within it. The previous chapter noted that Aquinas conceives this act of assuming another’s good as one’s own in a way that reduces the otherness of the relation

to the hierarchical ordering of the whole of reality as an expression of God's absolute goodness (*ordo caritate*), thereby reducing the social dimension of grace to a purely metaphysical relation. When the will is understood as the faculty of otherness, however, we see that the impulse to abstraction is the perversion of the basic impulse to self-transcendence toward the other. Indeed, if the will is the faculty of otherness, then the perfection of the will lies not in the satiety achieved by the attainment of its object, but in the positive affirmation of its determination by the very otherness that establishes it. This relation is, as Kierkegaard notes in *Practice in Christianity*:

But the ultimate potentiation in every passion is always to will its own downfall, and so it is also the ultimate passion of the understanding to will the collision, although in one way or another the collision must become its own downfall. This, then, is the ultimate paradox of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think.¹⁷

And it is through this process that the self is established as a “relation that relates itself to itself” that both “wills to be itself” and “rests transparently in the power that establishes it.”¹⁸

This observation is in continuity with the Roman Catholic tradition in claiming that grace perfects nature, and that the orientation to a supernatural goal is natural and inherent to the human being. My proposed alteration of this understanding significantly transforms the meaning of these affirmations. On my model, everything pivots on correctly ascertaining the ethical aspect of truth and being as they coincide with the positive affirmation of otherness. Aquinas is correct to conceive the meaning of the will in metaphysical terms, but he develops his insight into a speculative ontology,

¹⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments; Johannes Climacus*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 37.

¹⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 14.

demonstrating that he fails to recognize the continuity between the operation of the will, the actuality of the good, and the positive affirmation of otherness as integral to the doctrine of creation. My observations open the door to correcting this oversight in such a way that the metaphysics of the will and the “supernatural” orientation of its natural operations that are integral to the Roman Catholic paradigm are retained and uncompromised.

Nonetheless, I have simultaneously argued that the value of the metaphysical orientation of the Roman Catholic paradigm is only retained when it is supplemented by relational critique of speculative metaphysics levied by Luther’s doctrine of justification. In claiming that speculative metaphysics was inappropriate for theological truth, Luther saw quite rightly that the structure of such purported knowledge remains diametrically opposed to the relational affirmation of otherness lying at the heart of a genuinely Christian metaphysics, which always proceeds according to the absolute priority of the divine determination.¹⁹ It is for this reason that Luther insists that Scholasticism’s assertion that grace is an accidental rather than a substantial quality of the soul is wide of the mark. Indeed, for the same reasons specified by Aquinas, Luther believes that if the will is fundamentally ordered toward self-preservation, its basic orientation does not rise to the level of the supernatural, but remains ordered to and conditioned by the natural alone. For Luther this simply means that they remain an instance of self-preservation,

¹⁹ I am deliberately using the terms “metaphysics” here in order to contrast my own interpretation with that of Juntunen, who insists that Luther has an ontology without a metaphysics. I certainly agree that Luther’s thought is not speculative, but as I have tried to show in this chapter, this should be tied to ontology directly, and not to metaphysics. By affirming metaphysics, I am merely attempting to lift out the sense in which the good is an integral component of any properly conception of Being. This means Being as generically conceived, but most especially for Christian theology, grounded as that vision of Being is in the doctrine of creation out of nothing.

and not of charity. Our analysis of Aquinas has shown that Luther's charge is essentially correct in the details, even if he does not capture Aquinas' intention.

Luther's critique involves a development of Aquinas' position that leads necessarily to the claim that, although the Roman Catholic paradigm's insistence on a metaphysical expression of the proportionality of the natural operations of the will's self-determination must be maintained, the doctrine of creation likewise demands that this metaphysics adopt the distinctively Protestant rejection of concupiscence. Luther's insistence on the form of faith as substantial rather than accidental takes on its full significance precisely as an alteration of the capacity of self-determination at work in those natural operations. Yet even there, as discussed in Chapter Five, when this transformation is conceived in discretely ontological terms, the doctrine of creation is reduced to a function of the doctrine of grace, and the social and relational dimension is again lost. From the perspective I am advocating, this reduction can be directly attributed not to a flaw in Luther's perspective, but, just as with Aquinas, to his failure to perceive the distinctively ethical affirmation of otherness that lay at its heart. He sought instead to develop this claim in terms of an intellectual mediation of a recollected ontological union.

From this standpoint, we can see that what is needed is a cogent way to reject this structure of concupiscence of the will that nonetheless maintains the metaphysics that specifies the will's operational integrity. This category can be attained when the will is understood in the decisively ethical terms developed here, according to the voluntary affirmation of the value of otherness as such, which is the proper way to configure the rectitude of the will's natural operations. The point here is not that the will cannot will the other as other, but that the will cannot move itself to this action apart from the other's

prior determination of it, and without the reduction of that other to itself. Because this other is, effectively, internal to the will's operation, the failure to rightly will by positively affirming the otherness of the other, results in a contradiction at the heart of oneself—the contradiction of sin. It is in this way that we should maintain Luther's teaching regarding the bondage of the will, especially as he states that true freedom consists in being bound to the Other that determines it *absolutely*.

In this section I have laid out a cursory sketch for a metaphysics of Being that is irreducible to *ontology*. In doing so, I mean to argue that the Christian doctrine of creation involves the unavoidable affirmation of a metaphysical account of reality, by which I mean an account of the whole. However, because of the inherent and irreducible role of volition in that doctrine (that I addressed in Chapter Four), such a metaphysics is best conceived only according to what Edith Wyschogrod dubbed as Levinas' "ethical metaphysics."²⁰ When punctuated in relation to Christian theology, however, such a metaphysics takes on a very different cast than what Wyschogrod means by the term. I mean to point to the manner in which Christian doctrine recognizes a unique, irreducibly ethical component of reality that is bound specifically to the volitional aspect of God's creative act of bringing into being otherness as such and bestowing upon it, by virtue of that act, a value that adheres specifically to its status as other. The metaphysics implied by this doctrine of creation specifies the act of Being in its apophatic irreducibility to thought (even the thought of negativity) by recognizing that the truth of thought coincides

²⁰ I am not here directly following either Wyschogrod's interpretation of Levinas or Levinas' own proposal in formulating this ethical metaphysics, especially as worked out in *Totality and Infinity*. I am, however, inspired by both of them, and find the phrase especially illustrative of a goal I understand myself to have acquired from Levinas, even as I depart from him. This is especially true with regard to the criique of concupiscence at work throughout *Otherwise Than Being*. On Wyschogrod's influence, see Chapter One, p. 36, especially n. 61.

immediately with the ethical value of otherness itself. Because creation is the voluntary and contingent constitution and affirmation of otherness as such, Being is never conceptually apprehended or mediated as a whole. The intelligibility of the whole does not obtain in relation to the conceptual apprehension of its overarching order, but in relation to the positive, creative affirmation of otherness as such. This does not mean—*pace* Barth—that God’s act of existence includes otherness within itself.²¹ Rather, it means that only the God who is the act of existence can create because only the act of existence can absolutely affirm the positive value of otherness. Furthermore, it is only because of this metaphysical identity that otherness stands in a non-competitive relation to God. Because of this action, the whole of created reality is shown to be metaphysically determined as ethical, and Being itself is shown to stand in excess of the conceptual mediation of the whole, grounding its reality and ordering it toward the positive affirmation of the absolute otherness that grounds it.

Though this affirmation is metaphysical, it is not and cannot be speculative. Indeed, the recognition of the world as created coincides immediately with the affirmation of the *priority* of otherness—in thought, in ethics, and in existence. The creation of the world, then, is always principally a doctrinal affirmation, because it cannot be separated from the ethical act of affirming the otherness to which it points. This affirmation entails the ethical recognition of God’s final priority over the world as its other and the world’s dependence on God’s continued affirmation of it as God’s other, but includes the active affirmation and reception of the value of the world itself that is

²¹ See *CD* II/1, 371.

implied by these claims. The apprehension of Being is always first dependent on otherness as such.

Grace: Encounter, Ethics, and the Other

...the very precocious idea that certain formal notions are not fully intelligible except in a concrete event, which seems even more irrational than the notions, but through which they are truly thought.

—Emmanuel Levinas²²

In addition to the metaphysical affirmation that the being of the world and the apprehension of its truth are integrally united with the positive affirmation of otherness is another factor that surpasses the significance of the proper metaphysics of Being. This factor pertains directly to the social and relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace, which I have pointed to throughout this study. The previous section was devoted to showing how it is that the metaphysics of the doctrine of creation binds the ethical dimension of Being directly and irreducibly to the an *otherness* that cannot be what Hegel calls "conceptually mediated" or what Kierkegaard referred to under the category of "recollected." My claims to this point have been Kierkegaardian insofar as they are intended to force one more deeply into the concreteness of existence rather than allowing one to abstract from it. However, the metaphysics I am pointing to is not limited to the notion of an ongoing creative act of positively constituting otherness as such, but reaches out to include the possibility of real encounter.

²² Jill Robbins, "Philosophy, Justice, and Love," in *Is It Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas*, ed. Jill Robbins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 179.

What God constitutes as other in the act of creating simultaneously involves the continued affirmation, preservation, and sustaining of that other in its very otherness from God. This moment of continuance is important to distinguish from the act of creation, and certainly should not be conflated with it as Schleiermacher does. As itself an act of the will, this act of fidelity to the otherness constituted by the act of creating always remains contingent in relationship to the world. It is this emphasis on contingency and fidelity that marks the overarching importance of covenant to the Hebrew people—beginning as it does with the Hebrew people—and to the Protestant tradition more generally, as noted in Chapter Three. In making this distinction, I am advancing a point similar to that of Lubac’s “second gratuity” in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*. However, I wish to distinguish my point by the fact that where Lubac speaks of the first gratuity of creation and the second gratuity of inscribing its supernatural end, I wish to join this second moment to the first as its constitutively ethical aspect. I do this not simply in order to underscore that Being’s ethical dimension remains irreducible to recollection, but because the act of voluntarily binding oneself to another is the deepest expression of the social and relational dimension that I have sought to emphasize. I do so specifically in terms of intimate fidelity that is inseparable from a genuine encounter that is only conceivable in the terms I have described of the ethical as a positive affirmation of the otherness of the other. God does not simply *create* otherness and observe its unfolding but, concomitant with the act of creating, elects to be bound to that other and to her history, assumes responsibility for her, and inseparably unites God’s own identity to her particular history and responsibility.

Importantly, because this act of fidelity must be distinguished from the act of creating, but not conflated with it, God's act is not to be understood as the proper object of this fidelity, but rather the other in her otherness. God's principle act of constituting the world in its being, as an ethical act, involves the continual affirmation of the relation established by that act, and not simply the act of fidelity as such. The affirmation of this relation, as ethical, is not abstract, but marks a genuine and concrete encounter between God and humanity. As David Burrell has brilliantly observed, it is precisely because God's knowledge is convertible with God's will that God's act of creating is eminently practical.²³ God knows in the most concrete of ways precisely because the apprehension of the object of that action is inseparable from its emergence into material existence. What Burrell fails to elaborate upon are the distinctively ethical aspects of this claim—a mistake that his most recent work on the will simply elaborates upon, when he explicitly draws the Platonic conclusion that what is intellectually apprehended as good also necessarily entails the capacity for its performance.²⁴ Rather, we should be more attentive to the nature of the affirmation of the distinctiveness of the will as an ethical faculty whose operations are ineluctably linked with otherness as such. This is all the

²³ Burrell makes this claim in numerous places, but it was more characteristic of his early work, where he emphasized a distinctly practical knowledge in God's works. See Burrell, "Creation or Emanation.", David Burrell, "Divine Practical Knowing: How an Eternal God Acts in Time," in *Divine Action*, ed. Brian Hebblethwaite and Edward Henderson (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1990), Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action*.

²⁴ Burrell's most recent work explicitly notes that his view of freedom implies that knowledge of the good implies the capacity for perform it. See David B. Burrell, *Faith and Freedom : An Interfaith Perspective*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2004). This strikes me as an unusual and unnecessary development in his thought. The development appears to coincide with his greater appreciation for the Platonic tradition in general, especially emanationism. I do agree that there is a Platonic element at work here that must be affirmed. I will return to this point below. There I will note my essential agreement with Burrell's turn to a non-dualist interpretation of Aquinas' legacy. I wish here to press Burrell to link those insights not to an Neoplatonic emanationism, but to an overtly ethical articulation of those elements of the doctrine of creation that link it to otherness as such. See Burrell, "Creation or Emanation."

more important if, as we have shown, the link between created existence, the good, and the will pivots around a distinctive positive affirmation of otherness itself.

If God's ethical fidelity to the positive affirmation of creation as God's other involves a concrete encounter with that other, then this can also only mean, in Derrida's terms, that in the encounter, "every other is wholly other" [*tout autre est tout autre*]. By invoking this turn of phrase, I mean to insist that God's act of creating is not the constitution of otherness as a generic and therefore transcendental category. On the contrary, if otherness is the object of the divine creativity, then it is every other so constituted by that act that is encountered as other and in which otherness is expressed—and this is not applicable to a collective. It is for this reason that election is inseparable from the establishment of a covenant with a distinct people, but that this election must, as Augustine and Calvin understood (flawed as their proposals were), include individuals. Indeed, if we are to follow the most recent scholarship on the meaning of justification in Paul, then election is, as Barth taught us, most truly spoken of only of a single individual.²⁵ There is, in this regard, no higher expression of God's "righteous lovingkindness" than the attention to individuals which is testified to in the doctrine of election. Such a claim is affirmed by Jesus himself about the hair on our heads, the lilies of the field, and every dying sparrow.²⁶ When this aspect of the divine activity is understood in distinctively ethical rather than ontological terms, and when its social and

²⁵ On this point, the representative works are Richard B. Hays, "Jesus' Faith and Ours: A Re-Reading of Galatians 3," in *Conflict and Context: Hermeneutics in the Americas*, ed. M. Branson and C. René Padilla (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), Richard B. Hays, "Further Reflections on Galatians 3," in *Conflict and Context: Hermeneutics in the Americas*, ed. M. Branson and C. René Padilla (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

²⁶ When this doctrine is construed in ontological terms, it involves the claim that the divine will arbitrarily selects individuals to be the objects of divine grace. Such an interpretation interprets the election as the ontological determination of the truth of reality.

relational dimension is not reduced to a metaphysical principle of the order of the whole of reality, then this intimate proximity of singular affirmation can be properly recognized and affirmed.

God is “closer to me than I am to myself,” not simply because God establishes me in my being, but because that act is the affirmation in and through which God encounters me as myself, along with every other *as* herself. There is an interesting metaphysical parallel here to Aquinas’ conception of the overarching order of the whole. As noted in the previous chapter in relation to Blanchette’s work on perfection in Aquinas, the term only properly pertains to the created world when considered as a whole. This claim means that multiplicity, for Aquinas, is vital to the finite expression of divine goodness. A greater reflection of the absolute good is attained where greater diversity and complexity achieve harmony in spite of their requisite increased risk of disharmony and entropy. I have gone to great pains to show that this principle finally fails to account for the overarching concerns it expresses; nonetheless, in the present context it gains new traction. When viewed as an expression of the affirmation of otherness of created being (*ens commune*), we recognize God’s act of fidelity to creation as a recapitulation of the ordinary, voluntary act of creating otherness itself. This claim is not the kind of reversal of traditional metaphysics carried out by Eberhard Jüngel’s suggestion that God’s essence is constituted in and through existence.²⁷ Because God’s creative act is constitutively ethical, the harmony that is achieved in the created order, in its recapitulation of the original divine act, must be understood in terms of a recapitulation of this God’s positive

²⁷ Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983).

affirmation of otherness as such.²⁸ This claim means, however, that the harmony of the world is not now an established fact, nor is it ever properly finished in the sense of being complete. Rather, the very diversity of the otherness that is manifested in and by the very act of creating summons human beings, as ethical agents, to the task of creating harmony where it does not yet exist. Importantly and decisively, this means that such harmony cannot be conceptually invoked as an ontological principle mediating a recollected unity, but must be concretely enacted within the ethical encounter as the positive affirmation of the otherness of the other. For this reason, God's creative act, precisely because it is the constitution of otherness and the faithful preservation of it, includes an element of social and relational encounter.

We can and should invoke the Platonic tradition of the "beyond Being," the "above" of "above Being." Yet, in the context of creation out of nothing, we should not understand this, as Levinas does, as that which is *superior to being*, and which lies apart from and conditions a univocal being. Rather, the beyond of Being, the Good that is above Being, is that aspect of created being that is *not-yet*.²⁹ All the more, what is beyond being is that aspect of finite reality wherein God's creativity continues, in and through the ethical aspect of Being which works for greater and greater transparency to the benevolent act of the creator. It is not enough to say, as does Kierkegaard, that it is the individual, the singular subjective agent, who stands in excess of mediated

²⁸ Indeed, Sarah Coakley's work with evolutionary biology, game theory, and sacrifice has suggested that the order of the world is such that altruism is ontologically beneficial and creative for complex biological systems. See Sarah Coakley, "Sacrifice Regained: Reconsidering the Rationality of Christian Belief," *Inaugural Lecture as Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity* (2009), http://scripturalreasoning.org/faculty/coakley_inaugural.pdf.

²⁹ This way of phrasing the matter is inspired by John Westerhoff's lecture, "The Priest as Catechist." See Urban T. Holmes, *The Priest as a Spiritual Resource* (Atlanta: Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation, 1985).

recollection. Rather, the creativity of the ethical encounter with the other must be asserted, such that what lies beyond the given reality of being is decisively thought in terms of an ethics that is convertible with creativity itself. Thus, the ethical encounter that is coincident with the creation of being cannot be reduced to an ontological principle of order in reality.

In this way, the element of encounter that is opened out by this ethical understanding of God's fidelity to the constitution of otherness in the act of creation is the proper fulfillment of Aquinas on friendship—both with God and with the neighbor. As we saw in Aquinas' discussion of charity, it is through the reception of an infused habit of charity, which exceeds the natural self-determination of the will, that the creature is brought to fulfillment. With this habit, the creature comes to assume another's good as one's own concupiscent object for happiness. We noted that this other, for Aquinas, cannot be the other human being because of the priority of the *ordo caritatis*, which orders loves properly according to a hierarchy that is determined by levels of universality, thus placing it firmly within the structure of Hegelian mediation as critiqued by Kierkegaard. Rather than the other human being, one must come to take the good of Godself as one's object, which includes both the self and the other. Most notably, Aquinas understands that the *ordo caritatis* places love of self, even in the order of charity, above love of the other. While one may successfully defend Aquinas against egoism here, it is clear that this fact is in keeping with our analysis concerning the priority of the ontological discourse of intellect, identity, and participation. The significance of this lies with the manner in which the priority of abstraction, operative for Aquinas at the level of the *ordo caritatis*, precludes any genuine ethical encounter with

the other. Indeed, I insist that the priority of sensation in the apprehension of truth requires a certain ecstatic structure to human knowledge. In this regard, Rahner is absolutely correct in his analysis in *Spirit in the World*. The difficulty, however, concerns the fact that this inevitably involves the priority of the metaphysical order of being over the other (or, as is the case with Rahner, a distinctive Platonic personalism). In each case, the significance of the role of the will as the ethical faculty of the affirmation of the otherness of the other is overlooked.

What Aquinas should perceive here is the manner in which the will is ordered toward a goal that requires the other for its fulfillment. It is in this light that we should interpret and correct his teaching on friendship and charity. Charity marks that act of the will whereby the human being adopts the good of the other as its own good. This is what is disclosed in the doctrine of creation, when God's voluntary act of constituting otherness is shown to be that act by which the affirmation of the other as other is God's adopting the good of the other as God's own. Such an action is impossible apart from real encounter with that other. And it is this positive affirmation of the other as other that completes Aquinas' own analysis. Charity cannot be the abstractive positioning of the other in a more universal field of reference. Charity must be the actual, concrete, historical affirmation of the good of that other. It is not that one seeks one's own good in that other, but that one actually takes that other's good as one's own—bears it, seeks it, knowing that one is bound to the good of this other. Such an act demands real encounter.

Luther is right, then, to protest this element of Aquinas' Scholastic legacy. And he is right to emphasize the profoundly gratuitous factor of charity in response. Nevertheless, Luther's ontological discourse confounds the real insight at work here. For

Luther, because Jesus Christ is the form of faith, the substantial alteration of my person and the act of my act. Christ's work of redemption is *pro me* in justification, and reveals the being of God to be most profoundly *pro nobis*. While this goes a long way toward correcting the overly metaphysical interpretation of charity by Aquinas in terms of the *ordo caritatis*, it remains bound by the limitations of ontology, overlooking the genuinely ethical component of this action. Indeed, somewhat ironically, despite all of his emphasis on the priority of the encounter with the Word of God as the promise of fidelity, Luther himself manages to evade the *encounter* at just this point. The act of justification is not shown to be *pro me* and *pro nobis*, but in the act is shown to be *pro tu*. The ethical aspect of being discloses God, in all God's actions, to be, in relation to me, always acting *for you* (*pro tu*.)

It is in this respect that proper attention to the ethical dimension of being includes an element of concrete encounter between God and humanity, in and through the other. As Kierkegaard—who appears to have been confused on this matter, given his emphasis on individual self-determination³⁰—states in *Works of Love*, God is the “middle term” in every charitable relationship.³¹ We should understand this idea in the terms laid out by Luther in *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, where God's kenotic service to us directs us immediately to the neighbor. Luther describes the attempt to stand before God with a righteousness attained by concupiscent action as “robbery” of God, and it is in this light that the ethical imperative is best understood. Our preoccupation with the righteousness

³⁰ It is, however, an ethicist, Johannes de Silentio, who emphasizes the individual.

³¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 58 and 77.

of our works, our sin, robs God of us, the objects of his service, and robs our neighbors of us in service.

Luther's teaching on justification is the proper framework for understanding the distinctiveness of grace as being in continuity with and yet distinct from creation. When justification is understood as a particular expression of God's fidelity to, preservation of, and encounter with the other in the act of creation, a unique paradigm arises for conceiving how it is that the genuinely new can appear in continuity with and in transformation of a given order of being. This ethical emphasis opens out the possibility of talking about Being in such a way that it is not confined by ontological discourse, but is genuinely open to the appearance of the new as an expression of what most truly *is* in all its truth, beauty, and goodness. Such a claim is what Luther expresses when he notes the profound transformation and conversion of philosophical concepts through their encounter with the Gospel.³² Such an idea is surely also at work in Frei's fascination with Barth's recovery of the typological reading of the Bible and Lindbeck's appropriation of his work to suggest that "the text, so to speak, that absorbs the world, rather than the world the text."³³

In this way, Luther, Barth, and Frei all point toward some notion of a distinct appearance within the world of what previously *had not been* and what cannot be accounted for at all in terms of what *was*, but that stands in full continuity with what *is* by virtue of its pointing in the present to what *shall be*. On these terms, the doctrine of grace can be conceived with complete metaphysical consistency, and in such a way that it is not reduced to the doctrine of creation. Because creation includes not only the bringing of

³² This claim also applies to Hans Frei's work. See Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ*.

³³ Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 118.

another into existence, but the continued fidelity to that other as other, genuinely new and creative moments are possible in the world. Such moments cannot be understood as *ontological* possibilities precisely because the condition of their possibility is not given in the structure of the world as it presently is. Nonetheless, the possibility for such moments are included in the texture of being insofar as God has acted to create and continues to affirm the world in its otherness. This means, unequivocally, that creativity is not an ontological but rather an ethical reality—and this because of the doctrine of creation.

The fact of such relations does not precede their manifestation. It is for this reason that the priority of justification as conceived by Luther must be insisted upon, because it is only in such terms that these relations can be said to be actual and real prior to and apart from the agency through which they are carried out. As creative agents, human beings do not relate to these possibilities as ontological ideals to be realized. As ontologically conceived, such possibilities can only appear as a negative determination of the self-identical given. This is true even for the concept of Being at work in Aquinas, where the ethical order of being is conceived of in terms of the metaphysical *ordo caritatis*. However, where Aquinas' metaphysics of being, together with his metaphysical distinction of the will from the intellect, is coincident with Luther's own doctrinal elaboration upon the social and relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace, this new paradigm of the ethical creativity can be recognized.

God's real encounter with the world, however, is central to this vision. As the creative ethical agent, God truly *encounters* the world as the power of both real and actual precedence over all human activity. This actuality is not to be conceived as a

given ontological fact, but as the manifestation of God's own continued fidelity to the act of creatively constituting otherness as actually real. For this reason, human beings must be said to cooperate with God's operation. Yet, because God's action is the constitution of otherness itself, this cooperation constitutes a true social and relational encounter. Luther's doctrine of justification is imperative here because it enables us to speak of Jesus Christ as the form of faith, which, when construed in these ethical rather than Luther's own ontological terms, can point toward a substantial and deifying transformation of the human being. Such terms, however, do not involve construing Jesus himself as something of a metaphysical principle. For, in this man God's act of knowing the world is coincident with God's fidelity to it as other to Godself in the person of Jesus Christ. Every truly human affirmation of the other is preceded and determined by Jesus Christ's positive affirmation of us. In him, the act of God that saves is coincident with both the act whereby God creates a world that is other to God and affirms that world in its otherness.

The path to God moves through our affirmation of the otherness of our neighbor, for it is in our neighbor that God has appeared. In him is disclosed that other that created us, the otherness that we are, and the otherness that we are summoned to affirm. And so the possibility of actually affirming the goodness of the world is inseparable from the collective affirmation of the otherness of this man in his very concreteness. Such an affirmation, then, can only be coincident with and absolutely determined by him in its positivity. In this way, his act is irreducibly divine. And it is by our participation in his act that we become participants in the eternal otherness of his divine life. Indeed, it is only in giving ourselves to Jesus of Nazareth that we encounter him as God's own self-

communicative affirmation of us, and as the reality that we seek. Our encounter is with Jesus, the Jewish man from Nazareth. This is an insight shared across Christian literature, and is not confined solely to Karl Barth. As Teresa of Avila is keen to remind us, the deeper we make our way into the Interior Castle, the more significant it is that it is Jesus himself whom we find there.³⁴ The same impulse resides in the *hesychasts* as well, in their prayer, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

The association in this prayer of the recognition of the humanity of Jesus as perfectly coincident with his divinity is appropriate given the largely Antiochene (rather than Alexandrian) form it demands. I make this point in continuity with Sarah Coakley, who has noted that what is at issue here, in keeping with the seventeenth century Lutheran kenoticists, is the idea that the incarnation marks the site of the emptying of the humanity of Jesus, and not the emptying of divinity *into* him.³⁵ In this light, Jesus Christ is best thought of not as the most perfect historical instantiation of an ontological principle of reality, as Luther himself conceived the matter, but rather as completely transparent to the divine activity to which he ceded control. In that act, Jesus marks the perfect coincidence of the divine fidelity to the other, and that other’s perfect response of affirming the otherness of the Other that he is. As Frei famously remarked, “when God speaks, Jesus appears.” Our reception of him as the Christ is, thus, inseparable from the positive affirmation of the otherness of the other and can, in this light, be understood as truly transformative.

³⁴ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 22.2, 11. See Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1991), 90-91.

³⁵ Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, 38, and n. 81.

Because the reality of God is actual in his person, and because it is through our own acts of faith in him that we are joined to God in him as the form of our faith, we are truly *deified* by him. Deification is, then, the paradigm for the creative transformation of being. But this transformation is grounded in and presupposes the reality and actuality of the priority of God's fidelity to the positive affirmation of our difference. It is through our own self-giving in faith that we join God in the creative affirmation of the *pro tu*.

Our affirmation of God's own affirmation of the other, then, is our deification. Yet this deification is not simply our coming to share in God's own life. We are deified inasmuch as we have been given a share in God's own life as communicated in the act of creation. Such participation opens the world, as Moltmann and Metz have insisted, to the future of God's purposes for the world, in which we have a decisive and significant share. We must speak, then, not simply of an infusion of a charitable habit that makes a supernatural act possible, but we must also understand this as our own share of God's self-communication in the act of creating. Our *own* kenotic self-emptying to God in Jesus is the expression of God's own self-communication in the act of positively affirming the other as wholly other.

It is in this way, as noted at the conclusion of Chapter Three, that the encounter with the man Jesus of Nazareth must be combined with the Schleiermacher's understanding of dialectic understood explicitly in the terms, as argued by Julia Lamm, of Socratic dialogue. If the doctrine of creation is essentially the basis for an "ethical metaphysics," and it is this because God's positive fidelity to the act of constituting otherness as such involves genuine social and relational encounter, then this also entails not, as is often claim, that being is "relational," but that reality is fundamentally

dialogical. Thought does not apprehend truth apart from encounter, and in that encounter, with the positive affirmation of the priority of the other. Dialogue is the primary means of our apprehension of truth and of our creative transformation of reality.

Having spoken of the genuinely creative aspect of this account of the relationship of the doctrines of creation and grace, and having noted this way of distinguishing them according to the proper understanding of the relation of the will to the intellect and ethics, it is now important that we specify how it is that these two doctrines can be thought of as united. This union has already been anticipated in my discussion of their distinctions, especially as I have noted the manner that the encounter with grace is an extension of the ethical dimension of God's act of creating. However, I have not yet specified the precise manner in which these two are united, and particularly how they should be understood as expressions of the relationship between the intellect and will, as well as what that union means and what it looks like. The closing section is devoted to this concern.

Attendance: Union of Creation and Grace—Intellect and Will, Being and Act

This authentically human factor is passion, in which the one generation also fully understands the other and understands itself. Thus no generation has learned from another how to love, no generation can begin other than at the beginning, the task of no later generation is shorter than its predecessor's, and if someone unlike the previous generation, is unwilling to stay with love but wants to go further, then that is simply idle and foolish talk.

—Johannes de Silentio³⁶

This reconstruction of the union between the doctrines of creation and grace has been oriented toward showing the essential neglect that the matter of the will has been given in the history of engagement with this question. Within this framework, I have

³⁶ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling; Repetition*, 145.

claimed that it is precisely as a voluntary work that creation must be understood, emphasizing its ethical orientation toward the constitution and affirmation of otherness as much as the “essential” continuity of this fact in intellectual apprehension. I have argued that this affirmation requires a particular metaphysical structure, one distinctively and irreducibly ethical in orientation. Yet despite what this emphasis owes to Levinas’ insight into the good, the distinctively Christian conception of the matter includes a doctrine of Being—albeit, in the terms here articulated, a non-ontological one. Only, I contend, such a non-ontological metaphysics of the ethics of Being can offer a rationale for the kind of claims Christians make concerning the distinctiveness of grace as a new aspect of being. This new aspect is consistent, not with existence as such, but with the creativity that establishes and maintains existence as *other*. Now I wish to draw these elements together, recapitulating them in a register other than the received terms I have been working with thus far. This different register can only be cursorily developed here, but it is necessary as something of a concluding postscript to the study as a whole, which, though decidedly not scientific, is programmatic.

First, the metaphysical perspective of the Roman Catholic paradigm involves the articulating of a unique account of Being, oriented toward supplying an account of the whole of reality as decidedly ethical but irreducible to a mediating ontological discourse that prioritizes identity, intellection, and participation. This conclusion is an outworking of the distinction of the will from the intellect and desire, which is integral to the overarching metaphysics of the *creatio ex nihilo*. This account of Being thus involves a separation of metaphysics from ontology as regards the articulation of the unity of the doctrines of creation and grace. That is, the union of these doctrines must be according to

an account of the whole, and that union must entail an account of Being, but it cannot be said to be ontologically mediated. Instead, the emphasis on the will that is integral to the metaphysical aspect of this account directly associates the doctrine of creation with the positive affirmation of otherness itself as the very expression of God's goodness. In this regard, the otherness that is created being *is* the self-communication of Godself—the offer of communion. The Christian account of Being, then, can only be offered as a distinctively ethical metaphysics.

This vision is distinct from both classical and modern monisms and dualisms. Its uniqueness is grounded in the priority of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which I have shown to be the basis for the claim that created reality derives its share of being from God as the act of existence. This derivation is the effect of a distinctively voluntary act of constituting and positively affirming *otherness* as the basis for and as integral to the world and its manifestation. Value is thus attached irreducibly to the voluntary precisely as an integral aspect of Being. In God, as the act of existence, this volition is coincident with knowledge and manifests as a singular actuality. In the world, knowledge, existence, and volition are distinct operations. It is because of the convertibility of these terms in relation to God's act of existence that the voluntariness integral to Being does not reside in the mediation of a transcendental order, but exists by virtue of the very immediate manifestation of *otherness*, which simply *is* created being (*ens commune*) and which God's own volitional act *creates*. The unity of this act of constitution and affirmation, insofar as it also entails God's practical knowledge of the world in its

otherness, means that the Christian understanding of being must be non-dualist, apophatic, and dialogical.³⁷

This understanding is non-dualist because the relation that is established through the act of creating is not one of contrast. Indeed, as we saw with Schleiermacher, this relation is like Nicholas of Cusa's *non-aliud*. This relation is the kind spoken of and imagined by Sara Grant, and consistently affirmed by David Burrell, of a transcendence in which the differentiation of terms is such that they cannot be coherently divided without introducing an inappropriate dialectic. What I have emphasized here in terms of the fundamental ethical and volitional character of the creation of the world parts ways from each of these authors in refusing to link the manifestation of the world to the intellect in a manner that reduces the volitional aspect. I have sought, instead, to directly associate the volitional with the intellectual in this act of creating such that the world is known and apprehended by God immediately in the practical work of creating, which must be understood in terms no less radical than the very constitution and affirmation of otherness as such. Only such a notion of otherness can adequately correspond to the non-dual relationship of a proper understanding of transcendence. The world is related to God as God's other because and only because God is not contrasted with the world. This means that only such a relationship of absolute otherness is adequate to the radical

³⁷ The categories of nondual and apophatic owe much in their use here to John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006). Where I differ from Thatamanil, I agree with David Burrell and Sara Grant. On Burrell, see above; on Grant, see Sara Grant, *Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian: The Teape Lectures, 1989* (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). The meaning and importance of relation has been explicated throughout the work. As Thatamanil notes, this vision is deeply indebted to aspects of the mystical traditions of medieval Northern Europe. On this, the reader should consult the discussion of the "mysticism of Being"—Davies' translation of *Wesensmystik*. See Davies, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe*, 190-96. Davies has himself developed this line of thought in the tradition of metaphysical personalism in Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2001).

ontological affirmation made in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The contrast that is made in this affirmation is that of the most intimate unity and dependence, such that the two are, from the perspective of the creature, absolutely inseparable. The very thought of the world cannot occur, as Schleiermacher saw so well, without the thought of God. That Schleiermacher thought he could reverse this statement, however, is indicative of his misunderstanding of the ethical rather than the ontological aspect of this account of Being. In this manner, the world and God are not one nor are they two, They are related in an account of being that is radically *non-dual*.

This concept of being is apophatic because non-duality is the form the God-world relation must take when expressed conceptually. This kind of non-dualism refers to the very darkening of the intellect in its conceptual mode. Insofar as Being is so radically non-dual, it is also shown to be radically in excess of all conceptual mediations, determining them and thereby “blinking” them.³⁸ Schleiermacher saw this relation as well, and it was the point he sought to make with reference to *Gefühl*. But it runs much deeper in Christian theology and spirituality. The quiet union of the mind and the heart reach the very limits of their adequacy as they are conjoined to the very act by which they are brought into being *as other*. This is because all conceptual mediation, understood as abstract recollection, ceases as the mind and heart are rightly related in their operations to the operation by which they exist. This involves the intellect in the pursuit of that which is always its excess by virtue of the fact that it is its ground. Such is the union of the will and the intellect in this excessive movement-out. What is affirmed of Being, therefore, occurs by virtue of denials. It is not because such denials are the dialectical negations

³⁸ Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, 40-54.

through which Being attains its conceptual content, but because it is conceptual content itself that is rejected as adequate to the absolute priority of Being. As Denys Turner has noted, “We do not know what Being is.” Indeed, we cannot *know* what being is, if this means conceptual apprehension. We can only, as Kierkegaard notes, live with *passion*.

This non-dualism of being and its necessarily apophatic character entail a dialogical form. This dialogical form of the intellectual apprehension of Being has been decidedly overlooked and misinterpreted. This is true of Schleiermacher himself, from whom this notion takes its inspiration in the present study. It has been overlooked precisely because the will is misunderstood, in either Platonic or Scotist/Cartesian terms, as an aspect of either the intellect or desire. The point is that the Christian understanding of our apprehension of Being is radically non-conceptual for the explicit reason that it finds its fulfillment in its ethical orientation to the other. Julia Lamm has called attention to this in relation to what Schleiermacher rejected in what he wrongly understood to be Plato’s early work. Furthermore, it is what Kierkegaard sought to affirm in his project of indirect communication with reference to Socratic irony. In Kierkegaard’s terms, it is the attempt that Plato makes to recollect the form of Being through mediation that is so deeply problematic. In contrast stands the irreducibility of the role of dialogue in the apprehension of Being, which is the Socratic form *par excellence*. However, a Christian metaphysic of *creatio ex nihilo* recognizes that dialogue is integral not only to the pragmatic negotiation of our competing desires or to the formulation of greater conceptual clarity, but to the very form of the real. This is true because the essence of what it means to be the world is to be *other*. And within that world, *every other is wholly other*, such that any apprehension of reality is inseparable from the ethical affirmation of

the *other as other*. This affirmation is able to be thought only in relation to the intellect inasmuch as it is carried out dialogically. As Gadamer notes, it is in this dialogue that the truth *happens* in manifestation.³⁹

Second, the emphasis on encounter in the Protestant paradigm involves the orientation toward an account of the distinctively social and relational aspect of the ethical dimension of this non-dualist, apophatic, and dialogical understanding of Being. The metaphysical aspects of the first point are oriented toward articulating the intellectual inflection of the apprehension of Being when the integrity of the will is restored to the doctrine of creation. The dynamic emphasis on encounter taken up from the Protestant paradigm gives expression to the volitional dimension of Being where the integrity of the will is restored to the doctrine of grace. The non-dual, apophatic, and dialogical understanding of Being that results from the proper articulation of the doctrine of creation explicitly rejects a dialectical relation between God and the world. Within this framework, the doctrine of grace nonetheless involves the affirmation of a real encounter between God and the world that is as an entirely gratuitous affirmation of the world in its otherness to God and genuinely transformative in that it is itself a creative production of the new that is not-yet, the *beyond being*.

This means that the ontological transformation wrought by this encounter is fundamentally affective. As in the doctrine of creation, the creature's relation to God is established in and through God's voluntary act to create an-other. Such a relation is immediate and non-dual, but this means it is fundamentally and absolutely passive and affective. The creature receives itself from God's act, and the fact that this reception

³⁹ I have gone significantly beyond Gadamer here, however, in taking up this Levinasian account of *otherness*.

includes the capacity for its own integral operation is not contradicted by this receptivity. Contrary to critics of the classical doctrine of God, this absolute receptivity is not tantamount to an ontological determinism precisely because of the integral role of the will. Determinism is the expression of created reality's absolute dependence in ontological rather than ethical terms. On the contrary, insofar as the doctrine of creation is the constitution and affirmation of *otherness*, this absolute passivity and affection in relation to God's creative operation is the sole basis for a true relational encounter between God and the world. As Luther repeatedly notes in his insistence that we let God be God, he intends that we allow ourselves to receive the service that God desires to give us. Thus our freedom lies precisely in our bondage because we are only in a position to encounter God insofar as we have ceded control of our lives to God's own life-giving activity. It is in that giving—of God to us and of ourselves to God from out of God's prior giving—that we coincide with the reality of ourselves. In this manner, the encounter with God always takes the form, as Protestant theology insists, of the absolute priority of the divine election, the divine action, and the divine operation as the very condition for the possibility of our response. Further, insofar as this encounter is concrete and not transcendental, it only occurs as the positive affirmation of the singular *other*. It is in this way that the 'individualism' of Kierkegaard finds its fulfillment in the structure discussed above of God's Being as ordered not *pro me* or *pro nobis*, but only being these as we know and encounter God *pro tu*. God creates the new and we experience that appearing as ordered toward the affirmation of the other. God's grace is the positive transformation of the other in and as the positive affirmation of the other in her very otherness.

The affective dimension of this orientation means that the ontological transformation wrought by this encounter is a matter of intention, and is not simply given in reality as such. As Augustine recognizes in his reflection on Manichean and Neoplatonic metaphysics, God is not present to the world simply by virtue of its existence. Rather, God is present to the world by virtue of an intention, God's and our own. That intention, for Augustine, is charity, which is the sheer presence of God's own Spirit. But, in this framework, the objection Aquinas levied at Lombard is not repeated because the one who is present, is present genuinely *other* to us: what binds us to God is our share in the act of positively affirming the other as other.

This link between God's presence in the world and volitional intent is the primary basis for the fundamentally social and relational dimension of Augustine's mature theology of grace, especially as this dimension played out in his battle with Donatism. Importantly, Augustine did not realize that the ethical dimension of this claim, insofar as it is rooted in God's own act of creating and affirming *otherness* as such, entails affirmation of the fact that God's presence to the world in and through such intention is genuinely transformative *because* it is a new and distinct dimension of God's own creativity. In and through human intention, rather than sheer existence, God comes to the world in a new way inasmuch as the world is rendered transparent to the divine activity in a unique and distinct way by that intention. What is disclosed in that intention is not simply the act of creating and affirming otherness, but God's own faithful intention to affirm the other that God has created. It is by virtue of the creature's intention that this divine fidelity is manifest in the world, serving as the means by which the very constitution of the being of the world is transformed. As this unity of intention creates a

new relation between God and the world, we speak here of deification, or *theosis*. It is in this new relationship, occurring by virtue of the ethical intention of affirming the other, that a new dimension of Being is created.

As such, the ontological transformation wrought by the encounter of divine and human intention is concrete, historical, and genuinely creative. As something of a parallel to the dialogical component of the Christian understanding of Being, here the other-affirming dynamic of existence takes on a uniquely contemplative form of engagement. The Christian that has ceded control to God in such a manner as to be transformatively united to God in intention has sought to transform the historical conditions of reality not politically, but contemplatively. This does not imply a divorce of politics and contemplation, but suggests that the only truly transformative agent is the contemplative, for only the contemplative is creative. This claim serves to place ascetical theology back in its proper place beside systematic, moral, and pastoral theology.

We must now speak of the unity of creation and grace in new terms. That union is both essential and existential, but it is not achieved through a dialectical ecstasy. Rather, it proceeds by way of a more profound return to ourselves through what Simone Weil spoke of as *attendance*, waiting. Weil speaks of attendance in a number of different locations, but in one of the more significant, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God,” she writes:

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above

all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it.⁴⁰

In this posture of *attendance*, Weil points explicitly to prayer as the simplest expression by which all intellectual activity finds its orientation. Though learning a new language or solving a problem in geometry require just this kind of use of the mind, prayer is the fullest and most simple expression of this most basic posture of the mind.

Although this use of the mind is one of waiting, this *attendance* is nonetheless an active engagement with the world. In this fundamental emptiness of the mind, “waiting, not seeking anything,” a distinctively apophatic emptiness perfectly coincides with the absolute demand of the good. In directing one’s attention (*intention*) in this way, one remains open to perceive the truth of being in its manifestation. It is a command to *wait* upon the appearing of the real and to be attuned to its appearing. In this way, such attunement is a moral imperative to be aware, to intend the true, the good, and the beautiful. The kind of attitude Weil is invoking here is that which is demanded for the learning of a new language: the kind of non-egoic release of the mind to a determination that precedes it, and to which its own operation are, after much concerted effort, merely a hindrance.⁴¹ For this posture of the mind, truth is not something that we apprehend, but something upon which we wait, *attentively*, to receive. In this manner, our perception of the truth of being is perfectly coincident with the mind itself, but in such a manner as to compel us forward into that which darkens possessive abstraction, having ceded control to that which absolutely determines the whole of our being.

⁴⁰ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 111-12.

⁴¹ See *Ibid.*, 105-16.

Attendance is not only waiting, but it is also tending, nurturing, cultivating. Attendance is thus simultaneously an active care for being. This quiet attentiveness, however, is not quietism. Rather, attentive waiting is a bidding to the service—the other meaning of attendance—that is itself expressed in Being. In this regard, contemplative attendance is fidelity to Being. We are *summoned* into existence and affirmed by God in our very otherness. Thus and thereby our own attention, our own waiting, can only be the movement in and with the activity of *ipsum esse* to affirm the other in her being, absolutely. Such attendance is not only attentive to the occurrence of truth as it ruptures our desire for apprehension and mediated totality, but insists that such apprehension and comprehensibility is found only in this service. In service to the neighbor, in our attention to her, we await the reception of the truth, as it is manifested in our good action. This is our deification, for in it we are assumed into Godself, taken up into the expression of God's own life that is our own creation. In this way, though we are not by nature creators, we are given the grace to create. And it is in this new act of God, which includes us, that God's act of creation is fulfilled.

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