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THOMISM AND AUGUSTINIANISM IN THE WORK OF
JOHN DONNE AND GEORGE HERBERT

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A Note on References

Donne's verse and Herbert's works are cited without footnote reference throughout this thesis. The editions used are:

The Poems of John Donne, ed. H. J. C. Grierson (Oxford University Press and London: Geoffrey Cambridge), Vol. I.

The Works of George Herbert, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941).

The following works are also referred to in an abbreviated form:

Augustine, St., De Libero Arbitrio, tr. Anne S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City: The Bobbs Merrill Co. Inc., 1964), referred to only by page number.

The Works of Aurelius Augustine, ed. Rev. Marcus Dodds, D.D. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873-1876, 15 Vols.), referred to as Works.

Oeuvres de Saint Augustin (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 72 Vols.), referred to as Oeuvres.

Aquinas, Thomas St., Summa Theologiae (London: Blackfriars, 1966, 60 Vols.), referred to as S.T.

On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles, tr. and ed. James F. Anderson (New York: Image Books, 1956, 4 Vols.), referred to as S.C.G.

Gilson, Etienne, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, tr. L. K. Shook (London: Gollancz, 1957), referred to as St. Thomas Aquinas.

Loyola, Ignatius St., The Spiritual Exercises, tr. and comm. Joseph Rickaby, S.J. (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1923), referred to without footnotes as S.E.

Simpson and Potter (ed.), The Sermons of John Donne (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962, 10 Vols.), referred to as The Sermons.

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INTRODUCTION

When Sir Herbert Grierson wrote: "Donne was steeped in Scholastic Philosophy and Theology. Often under his most playful conceits lurk Scholastic definitions and distinctions . . .,"¹ he threw open the gates to a large body of critical works that attempted either to concur with that opinion or to interpret Donne's work in the light of a variety of other theological and philosophical modes. On the one hand, then, one has a work like Mary Paton Ramsay's Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne which indicates the extent to which Donne had read, and was influenced by, the work of Scholastic theologians, especially that of the arch-Scholastic, Thomas Aquinas; and on the other, a work like Michael F. Moloney's John Donne: His flight from Medievalism which asserts that Donne was "positively inimical" to the medieval world.² In fact, Donne's flight from medievalism, if it exists as a more potent drive than might be indicated by a mere awareness in his work of the philosophical and theological controversies that raged around him,

¹ The Poems of John Donne (Oxford University Press, London: Geoffrey Cumberlege), Vol. II, p. 4.

² Michael F. Molony, John Donne: His flight from Medievalism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), p. 27.

would explain most of the other post-Grierson points of view. For example, Helen Gardner's annotations to Donne's poems, both in The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets and The Divine poems, include far more neo-Platonic sources and fewer Scholastic ones than do those of Grierson. Patrick Grant (in The Transformation of Sin) and William Halewood (in The Poetry of Grace) present an Augustinian and Franciscan Donne, with the distinct implication that he belonged more to the Reformation than a Scholastic interpretation would allow. When Louis L. Martz, in The Poetry of Meditation, clarified and explained many elements in seventeenth-century poetry by comparing it to the numerous treatises on meditation that had been written during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he consolidated yet another interpretation of Donne's spirituality: poetry as interior prayer.

The question that immediately arises with regard to this plethora of interpretations is the following: Could Donne have been Scholastic (or Thomistic) and Augustinian, a medievalist and a man of the Reformation and the Renaissance, a Scholastic Aristotelian and a neo-Platonist, a man with theological definitions at his fingertips and a man of interior prayer? As an answer, a definite 'no' would quite foolishly underestimate the variety of influences in the life of this extraordinarily well-read man. However, an unqualified 'yes' may reduce his work to little more than a hodge-podge of philosophies and theological speculations. What this thesis intends to show is that, despite various and often differing elements in the work of John Donne, the basic mode and tone of his thought and emotion is Thomistic and Aristotelian; and, further, to show that his work can scarcely be read otherwise by juxtaposing it with, and comparing it to, the work of George Herbert, which is shown to be essentially Augustinian and Platonic.

One of the reasons that critics like Patrick Grant and William Halewood are able to discount Thomistic influences in Donne's work is that while the nature of Augustinianism or Lutheranism or Calvinism is defined and described by them at length, the characteristics of Thomism are not. Indeed, when Halewood asserts that "grace comes not to sinners, in the Thomistic analysis, but to the virtuous,"³ he is not being over-simplistic about the nature of Thomism. He does not seem to understand it at all. Misconceptions about the nature of Thomism lead to misconceptions about the nature of Donne's work. On the other hand, both Miss Ramsay and Richard Bauer (in his doctoral thesis, John Donne and the Schoolmen) offer us an exhaustive description of the elements of Scholastic theology and dogma and show the presence of these in Donne's work. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to show what Donne and Herbert thought and believed in, but to show how and why they thought as they did, and how the modes of their thinking affected the verse that they wrote. Admittedly, Bauer's thesis is closer to mine; nevertheless, his purpose is quite different. He is concerned with showing how Donne's extensive knowledge of Scholastic sources enhanced the intellectual complexity of his work; my purpose is to show that the underlying themes of Thomism (rather than what Thomism formally posits) and the working out of these themes affect the vocabulary, the structure, the imagery and the purpose of Donne's verse. As such, the thesis deals with the common ground shared by the poets' philosophical and theological orientations, to show, that is, that Donne is Thomistic when he is Aristotelian (and that Herbert is Augustinian when he is Platonic). Indeed, if one avoids a discussion of the philosophical elements in their theological beliefs, one is apt to interpret their work from the point of

³ The Poetry of Grace (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 54.

view of a particular dogma. One might then infer that Donne could not be a Thomist because as a Dean in Reformation England he would have had to believe in justification, predestination, imputation and the irresistibility of grace. Indeed, such an a priori method of invalidation is dangerous in criticism. It has lead, for example, to unnecessary speculation on Donne's motives for joining the Anglican church, speculation which has little or nothing to do with the nature of his verse.

The thesis, then, concentrates for the first two chapters on the philosophical basis of the theology of Donne and Herbert. It is necessary to define at length, and describe in detail, exactly what Augustinianism and Thomism imply in the context of this thesis to avoid the misinterpretations, referred to above, of the poets' works. Reference as far as Donne is concerned is restricted almost entirely to his prose; in Herbert's case, of course, apart from The Country Parson and the Brief Notes on Valdessos Considerations, one has only the poetry to refer to. The first part of the thesis thus deals with the how and why of the poets' thinking and belief. The second two chapters deal only with the verse and the extent to which the poets' epistemological orientations and ontological beliefs affect its dialectic and its imagery. As Martz noted, argument in Donne's verse has qualities in common with methods of meditation. Chapter three, therefore, shows why Donne found in Ignatian meditation (as opposed to Augustinian Devotio Moderna) the dialectical complement to Thomistic and Aristotelian theology and philosophy, and how this new influence affected the structure of his verse. Reference to Herbert is minimal here because, as the text will show, most of what has already been written as regards his dialectic is in accordance with my general argument. Chapter four deals only with the natures of the conceit (in Donne) and the emblem (in Herbert) and the extent to which these are the imagistic counterparts to the philosophical and theological orientations of the poets.

I feel it unnecessary to describe events in the lives of John Donne and George Herbert that might throw any light on the subject of this thesis. As I have argued, it is unwise to relate any aspect of their work to particular religious phenomena or to a particular church, if only because the age, unlike, for example, the thirteenth century, is rife with serious differences in religious opinions, differences, moreover, not restricted merely to the division between the Roman church and the Protestant ones. The work of the poets must suffice by itself for any interpretation of it that one may offer. Una Nelly's critique of Donne's dialectic from the point of view of his emotional response to his hesitation in entering the Anglican church⁴ reflects a method that I would prefer not to employ. The difference between the churches and the extent to which the poets' work reflects an allegiance to a particular church is a matter for the ecclesiastical historian and not the literary critic. Nor should the extensively Scholastic curriculum of seventeenth-century Cambridge (Cf. William T. Costello, The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth Century Cambridge (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958)) be employed as evidence in imputing a Thomistic orientation to Donne's thinking; after all, George Herbert was also a product of that university, but never has there been the slightest suggestion that his work was to any extent Thomistic. Theology, then, in the context of this thesis, is less a series of tenets formally held than a series of intellectual beliefs, each dependent on the other - a world view; for ultimately my central concern involves the ways in which John Donne and George Herbert approach the world with regard to man's final aim: reaching God.

⁴ The poet Donne: A Study in his Dialectic Method (Cork: Cork University Press, 1969), pp.9-16.

CHAPTER I

PARTICIPATION AND CAUSALITY: MODES OF THEOLOGY

1

Any opposition between Augustinianism and Thomism as theological systems must be evaluated not with respect to their conclusions, for these are often similar, but with respect to their respective methods, in terms, that is, of differences in philosophic approach. Two terms may suffice, at present, to differentiate these modes: on the one hand, participation, and on the other, causality. The former is, above all, pragmatic and experiential, the latter intellectual and scientific. It is interesting to note that whatever St. Augustine wrote may be related to particular religious phenomena: the Pelagian controversy, the Manichean movement, the Donatists, and so on; whereas St. Thomas is involved in producing a sum total of Christian teaching and dogma irrespective of particular events. It seems natural, then, that one should be properly pragmatic and the other properly scientific; the one digressive, the other supremely methodical; the one personal with occasional lacunae in argument, and the other exhaustive and objective. This, of course, is to over-simplify the case. The problem arises when one considers their philosophic attitudes to Christian

St. Augustine sees it. His entire personal inclination towards such an orientation is, of course, the result of a conversion actually experienced. Participation becomes a question of his own destiny and thus involves two major areas of human existence, the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of happiness; and the course of his method reflects the relationship between these two, not in terms of causality, but in terms of a single end to be achieved for its own sake: the union of beatitude in wisdom, or experiencing God.

Nosce te ipsum, therefore, becomes his principal personal directive. The soul, the seat of knowing, must become aware of its true nature, thus establishing its proper place as subject to God, but superior to all material things, including the body.³ This it does in its pursuit of happiness which must involve the possession of the permanent and, therefore, the independent, and one object does satisfy these two requirements: God.⁴ There is, however, another criterion for happiness: truth, a fact self-evident in the dissatisfaction of anyone who embraces scepticism.⁵ The possession of absolute truth must, subsequently, involve happiness. What St. Augustine is working towards is a concept of 'fullness,' the absence of want or emptiness, albeit requiring a sense of propriety: "Wisdom is fullness, but in fullness there is measure."⁶ One realises that St. Augustine constantly emphasises the possession of the end, and although it may seem paradoxical, it remains pragmatic that he is solely concerned with the 'essence' of this end. Aquinas, on the other hand, will occupy

³ De Trinitate, X, 5,7. Works, Vol.7, pp.249-251.

⁴ De Beata Vita, II, 11. Oeuvres, Vol.4, pp.241-243.

⁵ Ibid., II, 14. Oeuvres, p.249.

⁶ Ibid., IV, 32. Oeuvres, p.279: "Donc la Sagesse est plénitude. Or la plénitude implique la mesure."

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⁶ Ibid., IV, 32. Oeuvres, p.279: "Donc la Sagesse est plénitude. Or la plénitude implique la mesure."

himself with the relationship between end and means in terms of cause and effect and the link between the two, the act. It is also typical of such a pragmatism that St. Augustine's entire search is dictated by a subjective conviction - and this is where Christianity parts fellowship with Greek philosophy - that the end must exist. From here it is but a single step to argue a credo ut intelligam directive in the pursuit of such an end, and hence his instinctive acceptance of the Pauline identification of wisdom with God,⁷ the appeal to John 14,6: 'I am the Truth,' the acceptance of the fact that the Supreme Measure engenders truth and exists through it, and the ultimate conclusion that Spirit, Truth and Measure are one substance, namely, God.⁸ Prof. E. Gilson notes that St. Augustine's mind is quite settled, from the first of his works, on the belief that perfect happiness is not of this world, in spite of the tenor of certain passages in the Retractationes.⁹ This conviction is emphasised by St. Augustine's conception - which shall be examined later - of the soul's conferring life on the body, and its being superior to it. The sovereign good must belong to the soul;¹⁰ moreover, the good of the soul is obviously the possession of virtue, and wisdom now becomes identifiable with the source of virtue, God.¹¹ St. Augustine is thus concerned with obtaining a bonum beatificum, a good which confers happiness, and the quality which characterises this eudaemonism is the awareness of the vanity of knowing for

⁷ Ibid., V, 34. Oeuvres, p.238; I Corinthians I, 24.

⁸ Ibid., V, 34 & 35. Oeuvres, pp.283-285.

⁹ The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine, tr. L. E. M. Lynch (London: Gollancz, 1961), p.249, n.16.

¹⁰ De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae, I, 3,5; I, 5,8. Works, Vol.5, pp.4,6.

¹¹ Ibid., I, 6,10. Works, p.7.

its own sake, and the necessity of acknowledging that contemplation of truth is a bonum beatificum only in the sense of possessing the ultimate Truth. It is clear that loving, caritas, is equally involved here, and the will that desires is wholly as important in the absorption of the soul in God as the mind is in alone being able to contemplate Him.¹² Part of the mode of participation in the thought of St. Augustine is the characteristic effect of the object loved on the person loving it, so as to properly assimilate it.¹³ As to love material things is to perish like them, to love God is to become godly. Augustinian participation thus presents a mode of possessing truth, and the acquisitive connotation of the term cannot be sufficiently emphasised. While, therefore, St. Augustine's attitude to the End is in one sense pragmatic, it is in another sense entirely transcendental.

It is here that the full force of the idea of participation is brought home. St. Augustine, unlike Aquinas, is not concerned with affirming existences and then proceeding to find their first efficient cause. Faithful to the Platonic tradition, he is more concerned with being as essence, than with being as actually existing. While, therefore, Aquinas will seek to show the necessity of a supreme being as the subsistent act of existing, St. Augustine simply wishes to attain to this supreme esse, fulfilling what he regards as an obligation of the mind to explain away the spurious esse of the world by reference to the supreme Vere Esse. Since to change is not really to be, and since being is his central concern, the ontological scandal of the sensible world can only be abrogated by approaching this Vere Esse: "O Truth, it is thou (alone) that truly art! . . .

¹² De Civitate Dei, VIII, 8; Works, Vol.I, p.318; De Libero Arbitrio, II, 2, 6 and II, 13, 35. pp.39, 68.

¹³ De Diversis Quaestionibus 83, XXXV, 2. Oeuvres, Vol.10, pp.103-105; De Trinitate, XI, 2, 5. Works, Vol.7, pp.266-267.

Past and future I find in every creature-movement: in truth, which is abiding, past and future I find not, but the present alone, and that unchangeably, which has no place in the creature. Sift the mutations of things, thou wilt find WAS and WILL BE: think on God, thou wilt find the IS, where WAS and WILL BE cannot exist." ¹⁴ What is being advocated is a complete participation in, and submission to, the true Being, a submission, that is, to its immutability through which the final end is achieved - union with God.

The term chosen in opposition to Augustinian participation is the Thomistic notion of causality, and its implications offer neither a purely Aristotelian via, nor mere remnants and syntheses of the Arabian Aristotelians of the Middle Ages. ¹⁵ Quite apart from the fact that Thomism is a Christian theology, it offers a purely philosophical alternative to either Platonism or Neo-Platonism. While, therefore, the dogmatic conclusions it reaches have already been met with in Augustinianism - and Aquinas refers constantly to St. Augustine's works - Thomism in particular, and Scholasticism in general, offer an entirely new epistemological and ontological orientation.

An explication of terms is the surest way to enter into the spirit of Thomism. Beings of which we are aware through the senses are called entia, substances. A substance, however, is not itself intelligible. The degree of its potential intelligibility is its essence; and the extent to which the essence is expressed in a definition is its quiddity. Substance, essence and quiddity together represent an ontological unit. Substance is therefore defined as an essence or quiddity existing by itself in virtue of its own act of being. ¹⁶ The

¹⁴ In Joannis Evangelium, XXXVIII, 8, 10. Works, Vol. 11, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, pp. 37, 38, 42; S.T., Vol. 8, Appendix I, pp. 148-149.

¹⁶ S.T., I, 3, 5, ad. 1.

essence, of course, contains complementary determinations which are the accidents. It is at this stage that the first important reservation must be made. The relation of accidents to substances must not be regarded as mere predications of a subject. Thomism, once reduced to a system of logical and verbal entities, loses its very firm grasp on reality. Accidents constitute themselves into units of existence which exist by virtue of the substance's very act of existing; "their being is to be in." ¹⁷ It is important to realise that it is concrete reality that must mould analytical expression, and it will be in this light that Thomistic dialectic shall later be examined. To continue, since essence is substance as intelligible, substances may be distributed into classes, each determined by one concept. These classes are the species, and every substance implies a form by virtue of which it may thus be specified. Species, however, are non-existent as such, and do not, except in the case of angelic forms, represent individual substances. This individual aspect of a substance is called matter. Every corporeal substance is, therefore, a unit of existence, indivisibly constituted of form and matter. ¹⁸ Matter is not intelligible and merely contains a potency determinable by the form, which becomes the act whereby the matter is made the matter of a particular determined substance. ¹⁹ Form activates the substantiality of a substance.

Now, thus far substance has dominated the point of view; but while essence tells us what a thing is, it does not tell us why a thing is. Existence, therefore, must come first as the ultimate term to which analysis of the real is oriented.

¹⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, p.31. Prof. Gilson cites In Metaphysicorum Aristotelis, V, 9, 84, p.445, n.5.

¹⁸ De Ente et Essentia, C.2, cited in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.445, n.7.

¹⁹ S.C.G., II, 54.

Prof. Gilson indicates the inability of English (and French) to distinguish between the Latin ens and esse, both being translated as being (or être).²⁰ Esse, for Aquinas, describes the very act-of-being. Beyond form, which makes a particular ens belong to a determined species, we must place esse which renders the substance thus constituted a being in the act of being. Aquinas puts it thus: "The act-of-being is like the act itself with regard to the form itself. For if we say that in composites of matter and form the form is the principle of existence, it is because it achieves the substance whose act is the act of being."²¹ This is to argue that matter : form :: substance : act-of-being :: essence : existence. In such a conception, essence and existence are not terms opposed to each other; conceiving existence as the act of the form of the substance is to insist on the radical primacy of existence over essence. More important, existence, as an absolute term, is superior and precedent even to the Good, because ens is only good insofar as it has esse.²² It is in this sense that Aquinas will accept the Platonic formulation of God as greater than ens, not because of the fact that He is bonum, but because he is pure esse.²³ His assertion of the complete transcendence of existence and its place as the heart of reality is superbly voiced in the sentence: "The act of existing is more intimate to anything whatsoever than is what determines it."²⁴ It is in this sense too that the Thomist God is at the very heart of reality, for to posit such an act without any other determination is to posit it as an absolute. God is

²⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, p.29. See also S.T. Vol.8, pp.148-149.

²¹ S.C.G., II, 54.

²² S.T., I, 5,3.

²³ Quaestio Disputata de Potencia, 7 ad.9, cited in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.446, n.17.

²⁴ In II Sententiarum, I, 1,4, cited in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.446, n.18.

this pure esse, for the problem of finite existences is the problem of God's existence. We are now squarely in the field of causality, of act and potency, and it is the movement of substances from potency to act which supplies Aquinas with his proofs of God's existence from motion and causality.

To conceive of a pure act-of-being is, of course, impossible, a territory governed, perhaps, by grace rather than metaphysics. Aquinas' ontology thus uncovers a mystery in the very heart of reality. There is however, one act of the mind that works according to this absolute principle: the judgement. To judge is, above all, to consider various substances in relation to their common achievement of act-of-being, thereby forming propositions.²⁵ In this light we shall later examine the proper implications of this compositio in metaphysical dialectic and the necessarily dramatic nature of any meditative technique that may be subsumed under the Thomistic via. (St. Augustine, one notes, conceives meditation as contemplation.) Consequently, Thomism will examine the ens that is the human being not from an a priori concept of the Good, but with regard to the extent to which the human entity has achieved full esse. Aquinas' subject will, therefore, be the human act, and its relation to God who is Absolute Act.

2

William R. Mueller describes a need in Donne to dwell on the fact of God's existence and His relationship to man rather than on his essence.²⁶ It is not, he remarks, directly related to the emotional atmosphere of the Sermons,

²⁵ In I Sententiarum, XIX, 5, 1, ad.7, cited in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.448, n.31.

²⁶ John Donne: Preacher (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp.247-248.

although the subjectivism of such a belief may engender a depth of human feeling that, for example, a sermon imbued with an awareness of God's transcendence may not.²⁷ This, however, seems hardly to be the case in the works of St. Augustine, for one. Indeed, if one is to differentiate between the thinking of Donne and Herbert, one has also to distinguish between the emotional personalities involved therein. Donne's acceptance of a God of 'existence' indicates rather the source of his metaphysical and scientific attitude towards cause and effect which is the hallmark of his literary dialectic. His conception of such a God is distinctly Thomistic, and is clearly apparent in the Essays in Divinity: " . . . And therefore, Aquinas, after he had preferred the name, I am, above all, . . . because others were from formes, this from Essence."²⁸ What Donne is dismissing is the idealism of abstract epitomization in favour of the very real fact of existence, and this is made clear in the same text when the moral a priori of Platonism is roundly rejected: " . . . Art thou got any neerer, by hearing him called Abstractly, Goodness;"²⁹ In such an early text, his Thomistic orientation is indisputable; he will work through Aristotle and Averroes to accept Aquinas' position,³⁰ in terminology, moreover, that he is clearly familiar with.³¹ The Sermons themselves abound with references to this 'existential' God. He is the Lord of life and being,³² and the spirit of all

²⁷ Ibid., p.248.

²⁸ Ed. Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p.24.

²⁹ Ibid., p.21.

³⁰ Ibid., p.33.

³¹ The Sermons, III, 3, ll.724-729.

³² Ibid., III, 2, l.594.

flesh (spirit, here, clearly signifying act), the cause of being in all creatures. ³³

The Thomistic interpretation of 'I am' ³⁴ is at the centre of Donne's conception of God: ". . . when God speaks to the whole world, his name is, Qui sum, I am, that all the world may confesse, that all that is, is nothing, but with relation to him." ³⁵ And thus is engendered Donne's respect for man, the world, and all the creatures in it. The subsistent act, God, becomes the basis of the fabric of life, which is sustained by Him in the act of Divine Providence - a natural concomitant of the fact of God as pure Esse. ³⁶ This link between God and his creation is the essential cause of Donne's optimism, which is discernible even in the midst of passages evoking what has often been regarded as his Augustinian sense of sin. ³⁷ Donne's world is constructed on the fact that all things, past, present and future, have their dependence, derivation and subsistence from God, ³⁸ their life so becoming a question of divinely oriented cause and effect. He, God, means them to be what they are; ³⁹ He is their father, and so the Creator-created tie is the most intimate one there is. ⁴⁰ This is the reason why Donne has recourse so often to the word Nature. Creation is a production out of nothing, specification, individualization, and conservation, the continual working of secondary causes, naturally producing their effects. ⁴¹ Nature and God are thus intimately related. Certain causes must produce certain effects; this is God's common law, and his ordinary working is thus by nature. ⁴²

³³ Ibid., II, 2 ll.366-367.

³⁴ S.T., I, 13, 11, resp.

³⁵ The Sermons, III, 8, ll.15-17.

³⁶ Ibid., II, 6, ll.582-584.

³⁷ Ibid., X, 9, l.704 ff. See also Introduction p.4.

³⁸ Ibid., III, 8, ll.1-7.

³⁹ Ibid., I, 9, ll.113-117.

⁴⁰ Ibid., IX, 2, ll.559-565; see also ll.512-516.

⁴¹ Ibid., III, 3, ll.187-196.

⁴² Ibid., III, 10, ll.164-166.

Platonists would argue that change is related to evil - and Herbert certainly reflects a strong sense of the accompanying dolours of mutability and its cause, mortality, but Donne realises that this perpetual motion, instigated originally by God, is also the cause of the heart's fulness and happiness.⁴³ It is thus natural for him to deny entirely any other-worldly spirituality, in the sense that it is not a God sitting in heaven that he extols, but one manifestly working on earth.⁴⁴ Not to conceive of a creature with the Almighty in it is, to him, inexcusable, as is, he adds, entering a well-kept garden and exclaiming, "Here is a good Gardiner," and not, "Here is a good God."⁴⁵ Donne's God is a personal God, and this scientific and Thomistic view of the world is, in a very special way, indicative of a fine and emotional joy: ". . . it is not enough to finde Deum, a God; a great and incomprehensible power, that sits in luce, in light, but in luce inaccessibili, in light that we cannot comprehend . . . but it is a God that is Deus noster; Ours, as we are his creatures; ours as we are like him, made to his image . . ." ⁴⁶ One evident result of the rejection of Platonic transcendence is the all-embracing fervour with which Donne approaches and appreciates the world of men and things; because God requires us to know him in ourselves and not in himself, we have a special duty to apply ourselves to the world we live in.⁴⁷ No man must deny the common law of nature. Every man is a link in the chain of being. A denial of this is to cast oneself outside the enervating circle of the

⁴³ Ibid., I, 2, ll.478-480, but see also, for example, I, 3, ll.583-587.

⁴⁴ Ibid., III, 12, ll.90-92.

⁴⁵ Ibid., III, 12, ll.303-305.

⁴⁶ Ibid., III, 2, ll.524-530.

⁴⁷ Ibid., I, 4, ll.440-455.

sustaining influence of Divine Providence.⁴⁸ Donne is precise and drastic in pronouncing this basic belief: "He that will be nothing in this world, shall be nothing in the next; nor shall he have the Communion of Saints there, that will not have the Communion of good men here. As much as he can, he frustrates God's creation. . . . he hath received a soul to no purpose."⁴⁹ To deny oneself political life and social life is tantamount to denying oneself natural life; one can no more remove oneself from the labours of mutual society than withdraw altogether from the world. The consequence is the same: annihilation of being, of God in the man.⁵⁰ This is merely the extension of Donne's pervasive optimism. Being, life, these are blessings not to be denied, refused or despised. Life is good: ". . . you cannot ascribe to any but him, your Being, your preservation in that Being, your exaltation in that Being to a well-Being, in the possession of all temporall, and spiritual conveniences . . . for here thou art no more than a sojourner, but yet remember withall that thou art so much, Thou art a sojourner."⁵¹

The characteristically muted tone of Herbert's poetry - and a poem like The Collar is clearly an exception - does not, at first, seem capable of containing the strong emotional flavour of the writings of St. Augustine, particularly of the Confessionum. One of the reasons for this may be that Herbert is imbued with the spirit of the via media that Anglicanism sought to be. He certainly respects that fact:

"A fine aspect in fit array,
Neither too mean, nor yet too gay,
Shows who is best."

(The British Church, p.109)

⁴⁸ Ibid., I, 3, ll.911-913.

⁴⁹ Ibid., I, 3, ll.947-951.

⁵⁰ Ibid., I, 3, ll.981-988.

⁵¹ Ibid., III, 13, ll.121-124 and ll.510-511.

Another reason may be the pragmatism contiguous with such an approach. There is a remarkable similarity between such an early Anglican 'manual' as The Institution of a Christian Man and Herbert's The Country Parson both in content and in style. They are pragmatic and simple; but this pragmatism may be closely identified with, as has been discussed, the Augustinian spiritual desire for participation in the Divine. Margaret Bottrall remarks: "Herbert was constantly concerned with the relation between the finite and the infinite, between the human and the divine, but his concern was practical. He wrote as a devoutly believing Christian, who strove for a closer knowledge of the god whom he worshipped and loved."⁵² To St. Augustine, as to Herbert, two facts of Christianity are supremely important: "For first, Man fell from God by disobedience. Secondly, Christ is the glorious instrument of God for the revoking of Man." (The Country Parson, p.225). Because of the first, the second becomes Herbert's preoccupation, as indeed, was reflected in St. Augustine's cur deus homo si Adam non peccassit. The consequent rejection of all else but what is involved in the direct movement to God is pervasive in all Herbert's poetry:

"Teach me thy love to know,
That this new light, which now I see,
May both the work and workman show:
Then by a sunnebeam I will climbe to thee."

(Mattens, p.63)

The emotional urgency of this desire is apparent in the repeated refrain (and Herbert uses refrains as part of a very conscious poetic antiphonal style) of Home:

"O show thyself to me,
Or take me up to thee!"

(p.107)

⁵² George Herbert (London: Murray, 1954), p.134.

Credo ut intelligam becomes the way of life. In this aspect, Herbert is hardly an intellectual poet. His Platonic identification of God with truth, love, beauty and wisdom is the other face and extension of his overwhelming awareness of the power of faith:

"Then burn thy Epicycles, foolish man;
Break all thy spheres, and save thy head.
Faith needs no staffe of flesh, but stoutly can
To heav'n alone both go, and leade."

(Divinitie, p.135)

Indeed, Herbert's poetry, like the Confessionum of St. Augustine, is dominated by a conviction of an 'essential' theology. God is a bonum beatificum, entirely transcendent. Quite the contrary of Donne's inability to refer to the Godhead in superlative abstractions (this in spite of the fact that, like Aquinas, he can endorse the Platonic theory of Ideas as rendered in a Christian context⁵³), Herbert's enthusiastic references to a transcendent Absolute are all-pervasive:

"My God, Man cannot praise thy name:
Thou art all brightnesse, perfect puritie;"

(Miserie, p.101)

Not that what he once refers to as "Divinities transcendent sky" (p.134) is to be accepted as the natural preoccupation of an other-worldliness; Herbert is nothing if not supremely practical. He is, in a typically Augustinian sense, completely assured of the veracity of this 'essential' Godhead, a veracity, moreover, cemented by the mutual love between desired and desirer, and the fusion of love and wisdom in the Bonum Beatificum:

"Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.

⁵³ The Sermons, IV, 3, ll. 348-352; with a reference to Scholasticism, VII, 1, ll. 339-342.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
 Such a Light, as shows a Feast:
 Such a Feast as mends in length:
 Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
 Such a Joy, as none can move:
 Such a Love, as none can part:
 Such a Heart, as joyes in love."

(The Call, p.156)

3

Contingent on these two quite separate conceptions of God, are two differing attitudes to the union of the body and soul which constitute man, and, by implication, towards the nature of man and sin.

While St. Augustine asserts the unity of man as a soul-body composite, he cannot but, in the light of what has already been said, insist that the soul is also a substance, "a rational substance equipped to rule a body."⁵⁴ The philosophical problem arising from this does not concern him. St. Augustine is practical especially with reference to his spiritual goal. Man is therefore defined as a rational soul using a body.⁵⁵ The ambivalence of this position is due, in no little way, to the necessity of conflating Platonic definitions with a Christian consciousness, but it also reflects the nature of Augustinian morality. The end of man is as much truth as it is the desired good. Stress the hierarchic dominance of the soul, and the inherent discrepancies between morality and such an epistemology are resolved. For this reason "the soul is the better and by far the more worthy part (of man)."⁵⁶ It is the soul, after all, which,

⁵⁴ De Quantitate Animae, XIII, 22. Oeuvres, Vol.5, p.273: ". . . une substance douée de raison et apte à gouverner un corps."

⁵⁵ De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae, I, 27, 52. Works, Vol.5, p.33.

⁵⁶ Civitate Dei, XIX, 3. Works, Vol.2, p.299.

because it is a spiritual substance, is in contact with the Divine Ideas. It is thus assigned the role of both mediator and informer. It will know material things only by immersing them in its own light, for the only way that material things can be known is by referring them to the Ideal Form with which the soul is in contact.⁵⁷ Matter, the body, is concerned with space and is limited by it. The soul is not. It therefore "pervades the whole body which it animates, not by a local distribution of parts, but by a certain vital influence, being at the same moment present in its entirety in all parts of the body, and not less in smaller parts and greater in larger parts, but here with more energy and there with less energy." The underlined phrase shows something of the disdain of the body in such epistemology that is to come to the foreground of the more extreme of Reformation opinions on the subject. He finds it necessary to insist, for this very reason, that the soul is "created from a substance superior to the elements of this world."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this antipathy towards the body must be seen, as Robert Hoopes suggests, less as a polarity between spirit and flesh, than between "whole regenerate man versus whole unregenerate man."⁵⁹ What the soul can do is to facilitate the conversion of the latter to the former. Yet the polarity is undeniable and it is the hallmark of what is often described as an Augustinian sense of sin. It is the soul's role as unqualified teacher, the inability of the body to inform the organic whole, man, and the resulting philosophic difficulties involved in such a position that urges on St. Augustine the sole possible explication of "this other mode of union, by which bodies and

⁵⁷ De Anima et ejus Origine, IV, 6. Works, Vol.12, pp.302-304; De Vera Religione, XLI, 77. Oeuvres, Vol.8, p.139.

⁵⁸ Epistolae, CLXVI, 2,4. Works, Vol.13, pp.298-299.

⁵⁹ Right Reason in the English Renaissance (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.69.

spirits are bound together and become animals, which is that it is "thoroughly marvellous, and beyond the comprehension of man, though this it is which is man." ⁶⁰

In positing the soul as immaterial substance, Aquinas does not merely become an Augustinian with philosophic footnotes, for "every substance is not a distinct subject nor a distinct person, and the human soul is not a distinct existence in reality." ⁶¹ The body, as matter, only exists by the soul, as form; but both together only exist by the unity of the existential act that causes them and contains them. In rejecting the Manichean hypothesis, Aquinas, unlike St. Augustine, is removing from the area of morality the whole problem of the union of the body and the soul; but in its stead he offers a hierarchy of matter, soul and man, all of which are good in increasing degrees, as regulated by the principle of perfection, act-of-being. ⁶² Hence the optimism of the Thomistic position. Contrary to St. Augustine's belief that the soul knows things by immersing them in its own light, Aquinas acknowledges that, here below, the soul only knows things through its act. ⁶³ Before a pure intelligible it is powerless, so weak is it in its incomplete perfection. Hence it is that with the body it seeks out the intelligible in the sensible, ⁶⁴ its intellectual operation presupposing sensation by its very act-of-being. But this is not the final position adopted by Aquinas on the subject. For in positing a human esse, he also posits

⁶⁰ Civitate Dei, XXI, 10. Works, Vol.2, p.435.

⁶¹ S.T., 1a, 75, 4, ad.2.

⁶² S.T., 1a, 47, 2; 65, 2.

⁶³ For a discussion on this subject see Jacques Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge, p.298.

⁶⁴ S.T., 1a, 75; 76.

individuation: "The act-of-being and individuation of a thing are always found together."⁶⁵ Where, then, on the one hand, the Augustinian soul achieves its perfection by approaching the transcendence of the Divine Ideas, on the other, the Thomist body-soul composite most efficaciously participates in the Pure Act which is God, by means of its individual human act. The emphasis is now squarely placed on personality, and the human act achieves a deeply introspective colouring. Furthermore, as non-being becomes the absence of what should and can be, the human act also moves towards fullness. The final cause is directly related to the formal cause and virtue and nature become inextricably linked as points of reference.

The problem of sin arises very much out of the problem of the body and the soul. Insofar as a creature is created out of nothing, it participates in both being and non-being. It is, for St. Augustine, this fundamental deficiency that is the root of mutability.⁶⁶ He retained, as has been shown, something of the Platonic identification of human existence with mutability; because St. Augustine's God is essential being, the notion of existence which is characteristic of the Jehovic 'I am that I am' is always interpreted by him as a sort of immutability.⁶⁷ The concept of privation is thus both evident in and close to St. Augustine's way of thinking. Since God bestows measure, form and order on all creatures, every nature must be good.⁶⁸ Evil, then, can only be a corruption of one or all of these perfections, to the degree that nature becomes vitiated.⁶⁹ Evil thus

⁶⁵ Quaestio Disputata de Anima, 1, ad.2, cited in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.198.

⁶⁶ De Natura Boni, I. Oeuvres, Vol.1, p.441.

⁶⁷ De Trinitate, XV, 6, 6. Works, Vol.7, pp.378-383.

⁶⁸ De Natura Boni, III. Oeuvres, Vol.1, p.443.

⁶⁹ Ibid., IV. Oeuvres, p.445.

becomes a privation of a good which a nature should possess, and hence a nothingness.⁷⁰ However, St. Augustine's attitude to evil vis-à-vis his ontological conception of the soul provides his view of privation with an important implication. The soul participates in Being as present in the Divine Ideas while the body-soul composite also participates in becoming. Prof. Gilson draws a fine distinction from Plato's similar ontology. If one's perspective is 'essentially' oriented, one can discern what an essence is, that it is, what it is not and that it is not; that is to say, one can aver of a substance that it is the same as what it is, and that it is not other than what it is. As Plato declares in the Sophist: "When we affirm non-being, it is not at all, it seems, to specify the contrary of being, but only something other." "While, therefore, there is in an 'existential' ontology a strict opposition between existence and nothingness, in an ontology of essence, on the contrary, being and non-being mutually imply each other."⁷¹ Privation, that is, is only understood in terms of the good: viz. its absence. Given such an ontology, the violence of the desire for the immutable must imply an equally violent distaste for the source of the mutable: privation; and this is what epitomises St. Augustine's view of fallen nature. Because he is so aware of God he is constantly and equally aware of sin and of unworthiness, the absence of good. It is this philosophical position which engenders the sense of pessimism often pervasive in his theological writings on the nature of man.

That evil is negation in a subject, and, therefore, privation, is just as evident in the theology of Aquinas,⁷² but the pervading optimism of his work is much aided by the constant awareness of evil as an ens rationis and the

⁷⁰ Confessionum, III, 7, 12. Works, Vol. 15, p. 46.

⁷¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 49. Sophist 257b cited therein.

⁷² S.C.G., III, 7; S.T., 1a, 48; 49.



implications of this in an 'existential' position such as his. The emphasis is always on nature and the natural. Matter, as the natural precedent in the generation of things, remains an enduring substrate in their existence and corruption. To be in potency, as matter is, is as not to be, because what is in potency does not exist actually. Nevertheless, because of the central concept of existence in Thomism, one is constantly reminded that potency is ordered to act and is, therefore, "non-being, which in a certain way is." ⁷³ For this reason, creatureliness or limited being is never regarded as the merely mutable. While, in theological terms, St. Augustine will also agree to this position, Aquinas implicitly believes in it because, to his empirical mind, theological absolutes are ipso facto theoretical - in the sense of actual - absolutes as well. The statement, that is, that men are not angels carries with it no philosophical disapproval, and, consequently, no moral disapproval either. Now, because evil is an ens rationis it can only exist formally in things as the thwarting of a perfection, or act, or form. "The subject of a form and of its privation is one and the same, namely, being in potenciality." ⁷⁴ The direction of Aquinas' thought, as recognized earlier, seeks always the mode of causality. If the subject of evil is good, then that must become the point of reference in the discussion of evil, and one must remain aware that the potential of human fullness in achieving act is more central to philosophical and, therefore, theological concern, than is the possibility of its being thwarted through privation. Moreover, when the argument is extended to relate to sin, which as a form of evil is also in itself a nothingness, the movement towards the perfect is seen less as a movement

⁷³ Sister Mary Concilia O'Brien, The Antecedents of Being (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939), p.93.

⁷⁴ S.T., 1a, 48, 3.

away from sin, than as one away from illusion: for in sinning, the will chooses an ens rationis which will thwart the proper act. Rather than sin, it illudes itself.⁷⁵ Such a conception of privation leads the human composite to become intensely aware of the relationship to something (or one) beyond the self, of the constant state of perfection between itself and this source of perfection, and, above all, that the movement towards it is consummately natural. These two factors, dynamism and the overriding awareness of a justice in natural perfectibility, become clearer when evil is related to the primeval source of privation: Original sin.

Indeed, dynamism, as a term, may take precedence over morality in the Thomist conception of sin, as, in the sphere of ontology, existence precedes it. Aquinas' arguments serve, in fact, to show that in such a position as his the consideration of the human act as formal cause is inextricably linked to its ontological end, the final cause, which, in its turn, exists as both an 'existential' and moral absolute: God.⁷⁶ Accordingly, Aquinas begins his theology of sin from the point of view of virtue and vice. The morality of St. Augustine's definition, virtue being "a good quality of the mind by which one lives righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us without us," is conflated with the concept of habituation as described in accordance with the Aristotelian categories - a good operative habit.⁷⁷ While, therefore, one continues to deal with moral issues, one is primarily concerning oneself with the potency-act dynamism of the human composite.⁷⁸ Indeed, far from being a

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1a 2ae, 71, 2, ad.2, 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 73, 1, resp.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 71, 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 71, 3.

tissue of intellectualism, the Thomistic conceptions of evil as privation and sin as privative habit assume a profound psychological vibrancy.⁷⁹ Sin is, indeed, linked with the moral end of mankind, but, in a much more personal sense, every human act, because containing a movement from potential to act, becomes referable to habituation, and may, therefore, be related to sin and to the consciousness of sin which is guilt. Sin, as immanent action,⁸⁰ necessitates, moreover, a consideration of the human being in his substantial unity. Not body alone can cause sin, nor soul alone. By the laws of existence, only the entire composite may sin. The results of sin, guilt and punishment, are reflected in the loss of selfhood which is nothing more than the inability to attain actuality and self-realization, themselves components of the experience of guilt.⁸¹ In terms of psychological awareness, an acceptance of the Thomist position will undeniably create a consciousness of the possibility of failure while never losing sight of the necessity for human potential to achieve fullness.

4

Mary Paton Ramsay declares, quite categorically, that Donne's view of the union of body and soul is "une conception sur la quelle nous ne saurions trop insister chez Donne: celle de la dépendance réciproque des deux parties qui forment l'homme."⁸² His own constant reiterations of this arise from a conviction of a universe firmly bonded together; nature is linked to its elements, the spheres to the intelligences, and, basic to all this, matter itself to its

⁷⁹ For a discussion on this see S.T., Vol. 8, appendix, pp. 233-234.

⁸⁰ S.T., 1a 2ae, 74 passim.

⁸¹ Ibid., Vol. 25, p. 244.

⁸² Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne (London: Oxford University Press, 1924, 2nd ed.), p. 204.

plethora of forms.⁸³ He is aware that it is the union itself that reflects the ability to exist. This is why, for example, he chooses the Scholastic argument over that of Hugo de St. Victor, wherein Christ himself was no man when he was in the sepulchre, precisely because His human soul had been deprived of its association with the body. Because the soul is the form of the man, it does not therefore signify the man; man exists only by virtue of the union of soul and body.⁸⁴ Indeed, the soul, as in Scholastic thinking, is less perfect when separated from the body, and this is the primary philosophic reason that the resurrection will assure the reunification of soul and body.⁸⁵ Above all, Donne is aware that the conferring of existence, that is, the act of the soul, to the body-soul composite is the link between man and God. This 'spirit' in man reflects existence: ". . . the spirits in a man which are the thin and active part of the blood, and so are of a kind of middle nature between soul and body, those spirits are able to doe . . . to unite and apply the faculties of the soul to the organs of the body, and so there is a man; . . . as there are spirits in us, which unite body and soul, so there must be subsequent acts and works of the blessed spirit, that must unite and confirm all, and make up this spiritual man in the wayes of sanctification."⁸⁶ It is this spirit which is most like God, and which He enriches in the individual and personal gift of grace. It is this conception of the fine resonance between the soul and the body that urges the grave warning in

The Litanie:

⁸³ The Sermons, III, 11, ll.498-500.

⁸⁴ Ibid., IV, 13, ll.283-291.

⁸⁵ Ibid., IV, 14, ll.422-430.

⁸⁶ Ibid., II, 12, ll.420-434.

"From thinking us all Soule, neglecting thus
Our Mutuall duties, Lord deliver us."

(p.344)

On Donne's attitude to privation, Mueller suggests that while he does not absolutely deny the Augustinian paradox that sin is essentially nothing and a deprivation of 'holy righteousness,' he is hardly comfortable in that position,⁸⁷ and, at first glance, this certainly seems true. In a sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn, he agrees in principle with the Scholastic concept of privation, but refuses to find any ease in it.⁸⁸ Elsewhere, however, he considers the very same concept in an entirely optimistic sense. For a thinker who embraces the inherent ascendancy of existence over essence, the idea of privation must be overwhelmingly terrifying. A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day is ample proof of this:

"Were I a man, that I were one,
I needs must know; I should preferre,
Some ends, some means; Yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love; All, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, a light, and body must be here.
But I am none;"

(p.45)

In any essential theology, privation is understood as the absence of God. A sense of unworthiness dominates. But with the positing of an absolute 'existential' act, privation becomes an absolute nothingness, or, as Donne calls it, the quintessence of nothingness. The human act is negated, the human composite implodes, so to speak, and despair becomes inevitable. The essentialist position, in the face of privation and sin, can revert immediately to the good;

⁸⁷ Op.cit., p.169.

⁸⁸ The Sermons, II, 3, ll.169-175.

privation and sin to Donne, however, leave him with little alternative since privation tends to terminate action itself. This is probably why many of the Holy Sonnets express the 'dark night of the soul': others

"Have the remembrance of past joyes, for reliefe
Of coming illis. To (poore) me is allow'd
No ease;"

(Holy Sonnet III, p.323)

The alternative, pursuing the memory of past sin, and, by implication, the dread of privation, leads surely to the complete collapse of hope - as perceivable also at the close of A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day. It is not surprising, therefore, that Donne, as does Aquinas, contains and restrains excessive guilt. The sonnet structure is well deployed, in this sense, by him. In the Sermons, he has recourse to insist that the Thomist axiom 'Desperatio potest esse ex solo excessu boni,' is worth bearing in mind.⁸⁹ An argument he uses in the Sermons might serve to highlight the sense of sin that privation engenders and the human act that it annihilates. It arises with St. Augustine's praise of St. Paul's reference to himself as the 'chiefest' sinner. St. Augustine endorses this reference, interpreting 'chiefest' as 'greatest.' Donne will not accept this. In a distinctly Scholastic mode, he differentiates the material from the formal aspect of sin, and argues, with Aquinas, that St. Paul's sense of sin must be understood in its relation to his own natural disposition and as referring to the actions which, by a resistance of divine assistance, he had recourse to.⁹⁰

Two things become clear from such an interpretation. Donne dislikes what became an extreme Reformation sin-consciousness, and does much, especially

⁸⁹ Ibid., II, 16, ll.265-268.

⁹⁰ Ibid., I, 9, pp.315-317.

in the later sermons, as Evelyn Simpson notes, to redress this tendency.⁹¹ He also, like Aquinas, places the entire question of sin in causal terms in the individual human act. This is why he constantly asserts the ascendancy of human dignity over privation. If Adam sold mankind cheaply into original sin, we do much worse, he argues, to sell ourselves into actual sins, when sin is nothing but a privation.⁹² A privation, "as darknesse is but a privation," must be compared unfavourably with the inherent dignity of the natural man, a dignity renewed in the fact of the Incarnation. What God loves is precisely this "valuing of (oneself) above the tentations of this world."⁹³ The human composite imbibes the goodness of God in its very act. Scholasticism, he notes, differentiates between two kinds of essential goodness. That which may exist independently and subsist of itself without relation to any extrinsic source cannot be posited of any created thing; but in actual being there is always excellence, simply because by participating in the excellence of the creator "everything is essentially good."⁹⁴ It is evident that Donne expects a knowledge of the implications of Scholastic doctrine in his congregation. This is how he regards privation in relation to that which exists: ". . . sin itself is not evill; not evill so, as that it could make us incapable of this diffusive goodnesse of God. You know, I presume, in what sense we say in the Schoole, Malum nihil, and Peccatum nihil, that evill is nothing, sin is nothing; that is, it hath no reality, it is no created substance, it is but a privation, as a shadow is, as sickness is; so it is nothing."⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ibid., X, pp.3-4. Donne's attitude to sin is dealt with later in this chapter, and more extensively in Ch.2.

⁹² Ibid., VII, 2, ll.413-416.

⁹³ Ibid., IV, 8, l.661.

⁹⁴ Ibid., VI, 11, ll.518-524.

⁹⁵ Ibid., ll.560-565.

By occupying himself with the sphere of causality, Donne has to evaluate sin in itself, thereby relating it to a moral concept, but not deriving it from one. In this sense he agrees with Aquinas' description of the sin of the Angels "in affecting a right end a wrong way."⁹⁶ The way is what concerns him. To achieve an end which is contrary to the law of God and, therefore, to His providence, is disordered act;⁹⁷ 'Actus inordinatus', he calls it again, an action deprived of the rectitude it should have.⁹⁸ An act will be classed as disorderly when it assumes a wrong form, and sin, of course, is exactly a formal deficiency. As God, with recourse to his Ideas, acts,⁹⁹ so the human composite must tend to God as the form of its own act: "Something then I must propose to myself, to be the rule, and the reason of my present and future actions."¹⁰⁰ Sin, as St. Augustine understood it, is conversio ad creaturam.¹⁰¹ Donne accepts this in his own way. To stoop to love of the creature is a degradation of the fact that man, in his act, his capacity to love, is most like God. The creature is to be loved only as a reflection of the divine existence, for there "it is above him." Sin is, therefore, analysed in terms of the successive stages of the erroneous act: inclinat, fatigat, retardat, praecipitat.¹⁰²

The human composite is always in act in which it finds the possibility of either achieving dignity or self-debasement. Primus actus voluntatis est amore according to Aquinas, and Donne assents. Man's love is always directed onto

⁹⁶ Ibid., VII, 8, 564-573.

⁹⁷ Ibid., II, 573-576.

⁹⁸ Ibid., V, 3, II, 98-100.

⁹⁹ Ibid., IV, 3, II, 348-352.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., VII, 1, II, 389-390.

¹⁰¹ De Vera Religione, XX, 40. Oeuvres, Vol.8, pp.77-79.

¹⁰² The Sermons, II, 5, pp.132-136.

something. That one wills, is to be human.¹⁰³ Thomistically, order always presumes a beginning; and one type of order, relating to man and God, reflects the dependence of all creatures upon God "for their very being." This order is God as primary cause. A second kind of order reflects the means by which man lives in the world and, acting as his own formal cause, moves back to God - the final cause.¹⁰⁴ It is within the confines of the second ordering that man can sin. Donne accepts, for instance, the Thomistic analysis that even the evil angels while on their way to hell, in statu viatorum, and not yet in termino, may have repented.¹⁰⁵ What this implies is that Donne's attitude to sin is especially dynamic. It is, possibly, this constant awareness of the continuous immanent movement of the human being that prevents an excessive brooding on the unworthiness of man, so probable to an introspective nature as his own. It is, in fact, this eternal vibrancy that Donne perceives in creation and, above all, in man, that leads him to declare that there is nothing more contrary to God than the self-annihilation of being and doing nothing. It is in being that one achieves a conformity with the Creator.¹⁰⁶ When he avers that the new man is patterned according to Christ who is the new Idea, he is not merely indicating or advocating a parallel in the sense Herbert will employ the idea in terms of Christian typology; he is simply speaking of a vocational act.¹⁰⁷ For Donne believes in the Scholastic dictum that whatever a man wishes must be something

¹⁰³ Ibid., III, 1, ll.29-33.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., IV, 7, ll.710-719.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., IV, 2, ll.589-598. (See also S.T. 1a, 63, 5, resp.)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., ll.818-828.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., IV, 3, ll.359-370.

better than what he already possesses, and "whatsoever is better, is not nothing." ¹⁰⁸

Like Aquinas, Donne, therefore, places sin squarely in habit. One may almost say that he concerns himself with vice rather than sin. Sin can be constantly related to an extrinsic absolute of good; vice is always immanent, "when by a habitual custom in sin, the sin arises meerly and immediately from myself . . . (to) begin at a Concupiscence, and proceed to a Consent and grow up to Actions and swell up to habits." ¹⁰⁹ Multiplication of sin leads to habitual vice, and this is seen as constantly "aggravating circumstances." ¹¹⁰ In this aggravation of circumstance, the human act is vitiated; it becomes insensible of an end that is to be attained, or, indeed, a course that is to be followed. "In every sin we become prodigals, but in the habit of sin we become bankrupts . . ." ¹¹¹ One must bear in mind that in such a Thomistic conception of sin as habit, the possibility of virtuous action does lie within the sphere of the human act. (We shall later examine how grace also works in the confines of man's constant movement from potency to act.) This is why Donne can declare, quite forthrightly, that God does not require unnatural things of the human being, and that his requirements are located distinctly within man's own nature. He adds, "This firmness then, this fixation of the heart, is natural to man." ¹¹² Within such theological dynamism, sin becomes an immediate and immanent retrograde action. In Goodfriday 1613. Riding Westward (p.336) this is quite

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., IV, 2, ll.833.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., I, 2, ll.403-404; ll.414-416.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., II, 4, l.183.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., IX, 7, ll.55-58.

literally presented in a movement away from the east, the point on the compass that symbolises the risen Christ. The return eastward, however, is a constant possibility, and one that achieves fruition. A Hymne to God the Father offers even more emphatically the sense of present misdirection:

"Wilt thou forgive those sinnes, through which I runne,
And do run still: though still I do deplore?"

(p. 369)

And if the Holy Sonnets describe throughout the resultant loss of self-hood through vitiation of the act of sin, A Hymne to Christ restores the balance, offering the calm volitional response of a man moving confidently and of his own choice towards the fulness that union with Christ implies, the indicative tone emphasising the inherent dynamism with which proper act is now imbued:

"As the trees sap doth seeke the root below
In winter, in my winter now I goe,
Where none but thee, th'Eternal root
Of true Love I may know."

(p. 353)

There is little question that Herbert's theology is oriented in terms of credo ut intelligam. In the Brief Notes on Valdesso's Considerations, he makes an interesting observation on the relativity of knowledge, and that supranatural knowing which is reflected in the revealed word. Valdes describes natural knowledge as that which is "by relation, humane perswasion, and by opinion . . ." (p.308) Herbert clearly opposes this mode of knowledge (or, believing, which is the word he uses) to revelation, described by the mode of "spirits bearing witness with our spirit . . . with such sincerity and efficacy . . ." (p.309) The 'spirit' involved here is clearly the soul; and if this passage in the Considerations is conflated with a poem like H. Baptisme (II), it becomes evident that faith and the subsequent revelation of true knowledge are gifts concomitant to the ascendancy of the soul over the body:

"Since, Lord, to thee
 A narrow way and little gate
 Is all the passage, on my infancie
 Thou didst lay hold, and antedate
 My faith in me

Although by stealth
 My flesh get on, yet let her sister
 My soul bid nothing, but preserve her wealth:
 The growth of flesh is but a blister;
 Childhood is health."

(p.44)

The title of the poem may remind the reader of the relation of this view to those of Vaughan and, much later, Wordsworth: the purity of the knowledge of the soul in infancy which, through contamination with the flesh and the world, is gradually eroded. In any case, the epistemological gulf between the soul and the body is fairly apparent. Herbert is aware of the difference in intellection between angels and men; one of the Latin poems, In Angelos (p.415), makes this clear:

"The mature intelligence of the angels
 Is not at all like ours. We must
 Call in sense to give us the forms of things . . .
 We cannot grasp even what we are
 Except through appearances . . ." 113

The angels, as pure spirits, intuit the formal aspect, the species, of things directly. Man must have recourse to matter. This seems a perfectly Thomist awareness. However, that Herbert accepts the Augustinian position that the soul is itself a substance, and that he sees a parallel between the angelic mind and the soul, the body being an inhibition, is evident if In Angelos is read in the light of the following:

¹¹³ Joseph Summers, George Herbert: His Religion and Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), pp.68-69.

"To this life things of sense
 Make their pretense:
 In th'other angels have a right by birth:
 Man ties them both alone,
 And makes them one,
 With th'one hand touching heav'n, with th'other earth.
 In soul he mounts and flies,
 In flesh he dies."

(Mans medley, p.131)

The knowledge that the soul seeks is, of course, God, and there exists a natural conformity between the measure and rule of the soul and that Absolute Measure and Rule which is God, a conformity, however, abrogated by the flesh. Herbert uses a beautiful image to express this. In Coloss. 3.3, he compares the diurnal motion of the sun as drawn to the earth to that of the flesh; the unbending and immutable ecliptic movement of the sun, while less common and more astral, has an affinity to the soul's natural movement towards God.

"My words and thoughts do both expresse this notion,
 That Life hath with the sun a double motion.
 The first Is straight, and our diurnall friend,
 The other Hid and doth obliquely bend.
 One life is wrapt In flesh, and tends to earth:
 The other winds towards Him"

(p. 84)

The quality of immutability which Herbert assigns to the ecliptic movement is further emphasized if one refers, as F. E. Hutchinson suggests,¹¹⁴ to a similar image in The Church Porch:

"Entiſce the trusty ſunne, if that thou can,
 From his Ecliptick line: becken the ſkie.
 Who lives by rule then, keeps good companie."

(p. 12)

Further, the soul's yen for knowledge is identified with its desire for happiness. Lines like "If what my soul doth feel sometimes, / My soul might ever feel"

¹¹⁴ The Works of George Herbert (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), p.505

(The Temper, p. 55) make this evident. The flesh, on the other hand, is often seen as dissociated from the soul in the latter's superior and transcendent vocation. The efficacy of The H. Communion would be nullified if the sacrament did not first negate this obstructive quality of the flesh:

"Yet can these not get over to my soul,
 Leaping the wall that parts
 Our souls and fleshy hearts;
 But as th' outworks they may controll
 My rebel-flesh, and carrying thy name,
 Affright both sinne and shame."

(p. 52)

If the flesh is allowed its own way, then the soul will clearly be unable to fulfil its appointed role:

"If thou shalt let this venome lurk,
 And in suggestions fume and work,
 My soul will turn to bubbles straight,
 And thence by kinde,
 Vanish into a winde,
 Making thy workmanship deceit."

(Nature, p. 45)

The connection between such a formulation of the relation of the soul and the body on the one hand, and sin on the other, is not difficult to realise. Herbert obviously grasps and accepts the Augustinian identification of God with immutability, and the transient world with the mutable quality of 'becoming.' At one point he actually urges the dissolution of soul and body precisely because the latter's natural inclination to participate in change (his word is mortalitie) inhibits the soul's urge for the attainment of transcendence:

"Oh loose this frame, this knot of man untie!
 That my free soul may use her wing,
 Which now is pinion'd with mortalitie,
 As an entangled, hamper'd thing."

(Home, p. 109)

Sin as privation becomes exactly this want of true being, itself identified with absolute virtue. In the following, sin as privation is not opposed to 'becoming';

it is understood as a deficiency, a lack:

"Sinne is flat opposite to th'Almighty, seeing
It wants the good of virtue, and of being."

(Sinne, II, p.63)

In fact, the poem seeks to know what sin is, and, unwilling to enter into the metaphysical implication of privation as we have seen Donne doing, Herbert seems content to settle for sin "in perspective," or the devil. However, he has already averred that even the devil "Hath some good in him, all agree." (ibid.) Privation, then, and sin, by implication, seem more to connote what they are not than denote what they are. This is exactly what Prof. Gilson has described as the Platonic inability to posit non-being except as a deficiency in true and essential being. A reference in St. Augustine may make this clearer. At one point he argues that sin is certainly act and not a real thing; but he does not stop there. He cites lameness as a flaw, but finds defect in none of the three: foot, body, or, indeed, the lameness itself. He then amends his definition of sin. It is not the thing, or the act, but the disordered condition in the thing that causes the existence of the deformed act. And in man, quite apart from the act itself, sin becomes "the vitiated condition, or quality by which the soul becomes evilly affected, even when it does nothing in immediate gratification of its avaricious principle" ¹¹⁵ It is very easy, now, for Herbert to take the next step and regard all that is not entirely essential being, that is, godlike, as partaking in various degrees of sinfulness. Without the Thomistic conception of the analogous nature of the human act and the Divine Pure Esse, Herbert's theology, like that of St. Augustine, is polarised by two extremes: sin and God. This is apparent in lines like: "Who in heart not ever kneels, / Neither sinne nor Saviour feels."

¹¹⁵ De Perfectione Iustitiae Hominis, II, 4. Works, Vol.4, pp.315-316.

(Busnesse, p.114) And, characterically, Herbert is often very close to a bias that human nature is essentially sinful. One may find that the witty paradox of Herbert's verse combines with the paradoxes of Christianity to mitigate the harshness of such an attitude to sin. Such a situation is certainly expressed in The Pulley. Lest man revel in the beneficence of his own nature, God imbues in man an inherent inchoateness:

"For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewell also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts in stead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlesnesse:
Let him be rich and wearie, that at least,
If goodnesse leade him not, yet wearinesse.
May tosse him to my breast."

(p.160)

In fact, a pulley symbolises perfectly the tug and pull of a polarised human nature. Sin, as the constant decay and decline of good, gives rise to the pictorial diminuendo of Easter-wings:

"Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:"

(p.43),

while Decay states what seems to be Herbert's conviction of the nature of human existence:

"Where yet both Sinne and Satan, thy old foes,
Do pinch and straiten thee, and use much art
To gain thy thirds and little parts."

(p.99)

The Agonie once again presents sin as what it is not:

"Who would know Sinne, let him repair
 Unto Mount Olivet; there shall he see
 A man so wrung with pains, that all his hair,
 His skinne, his garments bloudie be.
 Sinne is that presse and vice, which forceth pain
 To hunt his cruell food through ev'ry vein.

Who knows not Love, let him assay
 And taste that juice, which on the crosse a pike
 Did set again abroach; then let him say
 If ever he did taste the like.
 Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,
 Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine."

(p.37)

The poem works on two clauses: "Who would know Sinne . . . ," and "Who knows not Love . . ." The syntax of the latter makes the parallel expressed in that stanza easier to apprehend: Christ suffered out of love, therefore Christ is love. On the other hand, Christ suffered to defeat sin, therefore Christ and love are opposed to sin. So, when Herbert yearns for participation in the divine, he is immediately made aware of sin. Sin is, for him, a moral deformity. For Donne, as we have shown, it becomes an 'existential' deformity. The Agonie makes one other facet of Herbert's sin-consciousness clearer. Bearing in mind Herbert's attitude towards the flesh, it becomes natural that he should regard sin not only as an inherent concomitant of human nature, but also as a bodily affliction; and the first of the stanzas quoted above drives this fact home with consummate force. The tone of affliction is pervasive in Herbert's poetry:

"But sinne hath fool'd him. Now he is
 A lump of flesh, without a foot or wing
 To raise him to a glimpse of blisse:
 A sick toss'd vessel, dashing on each thing;
 Nay, his own shelf:
 My God, I mean myself."

(Miserie, p.102)

Of course, one has to bear in mind the constantly precarious state of Herbert's health; one has also to remember the optimistic fortitude that followed Donne's bouts of illness. In a poem like Affliction (I), Herbert clearly expresses a

physical sickness, but the connection between this symbol for sin and the human situation is still viable:

"My flesh began unto my soul in pain,
Sicknesses cleave my bones;
Consuming agues dwell in ev'ry vein,
And tune my breath to grones.
Sorrow was all my soul;"

(p.47)

The other four similarly titled poems restate the elements of Herbert's attitude to sinfulness. When human nature is always so prone to fault, affliction must be a constant state of human experience. This seems to be the lesson of Love Unknown (pp.129-130), where the "boiling caldron, round about whose verge / Was in great letters set AFFLICTION . . ." serves to mortify the "callous matter" of humanity. And, as thought of the divine instantaneously implies human sinfulness, affliction readily directs the soul to God. The mechanism of the pulley is fulfilled:

"There thou art struggling with a peevish heart,
Which sometimes crosseth thee, thou sometimes it:
The fight is hard on either part.
Great God doth fight, he doth submit.
All Solomons sea of brasse and world of stone
Is not so deare to thee as one good grone."

(Sion, p.106)

This is, of course, to come the full circle. As far as human existence is concerned, the Absolute Good implies - in terms of what it is not - sinfulness. So affliction, in its turn, implies goodness. And St. Augustine is particularly instructive here: "Quant à la douleur . . . elle ne peut être que dans les natures bonnes. En effet, ce qui résiste en souffrant refuse en quelque manière de ne plus être ce qu'il était, parce qu'il était quelque chose de bon . . ." ¹¹⁶ Not

¹¹⁶ De Natura Boni, XX. Oeuvres, Vol.1, pp.457-459.

only does affliction thus presuppose the good, but also to resist affliction is to resist true being. In one sense, then, the Good, or sin, or privation are opposable; in another, they are two faces of an ontological coin.

Privation as an actuality is thus absent in Herbert's poetry. Being is opposable to non-being, but non-becoming is a notion quite alien to, both, Herbert's ontological scheme, and to his religious sensibility. Joseph H. Summers argues that, for Herbert, the "proper service of God required the fulness of God's creation; the rejection of any part of it implied the Manichean heresy that evil had the power of creation."¹¹⁷ But in an ontological outlook as Herbert's, Manicheanism has no place whatsoever. Evil is a retreat from the good: it achieves emphasis merely in terms of the deficiency of the latter. This is also one reason why St. Augustine's theology is supremely equipped to deal with the heresy. What is left for Herbert to do is to offer a moral code as preacher. As goodness and the lack of it are the two poles of his world-view, a set of moral precepts becomes necessary. Nevertheless, the strength of his emotional involvement in the divine, and its emotional concomitant, the awareness of sinfulness, prevent him from indulging, with a very few examples indeed, in the optimism so frequent in Donne. As Summers notes, Herbert's attitude towards any perfectionist tendency is negative.¹¹⁸ This is clear in his Brief Notes on Valdesso's Considerations. He is adamant in declaring that even habits, in general, resist natural cure, and that Valdes is wrong in assuming that man may, of himself, free himself of "the inflammation of the naturall." (pp.307-308) Any advice that Herbert is to offer must, therefore, reside

¹¹⁷ George Herbert: His Religion and Art, p.65.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.66.

entirely in the pragmatic, which is the key to The Country Parson. The tone is always muted and ordinary, for a man can only work at a lack of goodness "not as out of necessity, or as putting a holiness in the things, but as desiring to keep the middle way between superstition, and slovenliness, and as following the Apostles two great and admirable Rules in things of this nature: The first whereof is, Let all things be done decently, and in order." (p.246)

CHAPTER II

FALLEN NATURE

1

Two radical components in St. Augustine's theology have thus far been established: the constant awareness of mutability as containing within it human frailty, and a theory of non-becoming as conceptually separate from one of non-being. They are in fact mutually inter-dependent. In a non-existential linear spectrum, immutability will be opposed to nothingness, with mutability at a point along it; but the nether region of the scale becomes necessarily fore-shortened, thus bringing the concepts of mutability and privation closer into identification. Two states are thus verified: the transcendent and the laps^{er}ian. Aquinas can place evil in privation because that exists for him as the actual philosophical antonym to pure existence. St. Augustine must, if he is to avoid Manicheanism, place it, in fine, in nature. Since, however, nature as created by God is good, evil must be a human attribute, in the sense that its source is lodged in the one independent seat of human nature: the will. Given St. Augustine's philosophic mode, this is an inevitable conclusion. He describes in

the Retractationum how, when in Rome, exploring and discussing the origin of evil, careful reasoning and debate led him to place the sole cause of evil in free choice.¹ While his reasoning is careful, it can only proceed in this direction. The source of evil must be lust² not only in the sense that lust is volitional, but also because lust in the evil will loves that which is "liable to the vicissitudes of time."³ Mutability looms greyly over much of his writing. Man must be good as created by God, but, as the Enchiridion recognizes, mutably good, and evil is generated by the deflection of this mutably good being from the immutable good.⁴ One must, however, also recognise that, given such a mutably good being, the possibility of the will's deflection is integral to it, so that the good of divine creation, because it is so, must co-exist, in philosophical and theological terms, with the evil inherent in human volition. The cause of mutability is the fact of creation from nothing.⁵ It seems, sometimes, that the human will becomes the progenitor of evil almost by default. Clearly there cannot be a distinct connotative gap between mutability and non-being in such an orientation. The movement, De Libero Arbitrio states, of the will from an immutable good to a transient one cannot be caused by God because it must be evil. Its origin in nothing makes no sense either because nothing which is not from God can be located.⁶ In a Platonic context, as has been shown, the

¹ VIII, 1. Oeuvres, Vol.12, p.311.

² De Libero Arbitrio, I, 3, p.6.

³ Ibid., I, 15, p.30.

⁴ VIII, 23. Oeuvres, Vol.9, p.149.

⁵ Civitate Dei, XIV, 11. Works, Vol.2, p.22.

⁶ II, 20, p.83.

concept of nothing does not exist. This 'defective' movement of the will ⁷ can only be caused by the will itself, ⁸ and the will falls away from God because, again, it is created out of nothing. ⁹ One must remember, however, especially with a view to examining the work of Herbert in the light of such an attitude towards fallen nature, that St. Augustine's conviction of its sinfulness is the natural conclusion of a Platonic awareness overwhelmed by the consciousness of a transcendent and immutable God. This is why his constant response to the entire question is the pointlessness of further enquiry into it. If the will is not the first cause of sin, there is no other cause. ¹⁰ It seems that in locating blameworthiness in free volition Augustine comes to what he regards as the ne plus ultra of argument, ¹¹ for he is interested in free will and evil only as part of his overwhelming consciousness of God, and the lack of God - sinfulness. In many ways this is to leave the gate open for theologies of a bound will, for the will that is free to do right can only be referred to in the context of pre-lapsarian man. ¹²

The pervasive tone of mutability unquestionably sets the dominant mood of affliction in Herbert's poetry. The sense, moreover, that the natural world of non-sentient things does not share to the same extent in a similar decay, refers the sorrow of transience clearly to the chiefest subject wherein it lies: fallen nature. For Herbert is perfectly aware of natural generation and corruption.

⁷ Ibid., II, 20, p.84.

⁸ Ibid., III, 17, p.125.

⁹ Civitate Dei, XIV, 13. Works, Vol.2, p.26.

¹⁰ De Libero Arbitrio, III, 17, p.126.

¹¹ Ibid., III, 1, pp.85-88.

¹² Ibid., III, 18, p.128.

Human mutability, however, reflects the tension which develops in unregenerate man who has fallen from grace. This is why, unlike the rest of creation,

"He hath two winters, other things but one . . .
And he of all things fears two deaths alone . . ."

(Man's Medley, p.131)

The bitter awareness of dissolution must be located in the fact that men "Pine, and decay / And drop away," the cause of which must be further sought in the loss of immortality; man's age thus becomes "two houres work, or three," a natural consequence "From what life feeleth, Adam's fall." (Repentance, pp.48-49) In a very evident sense, this affliction is symbolised in the perpetual promise of the body's ultimate putrefaction, nowhere more ironically perceptible than, by contrast, in the far less destructible church monuments which epitomise the fact "That flesh is but the glasse, which holds the dust / That measures all our time; which also shall / Be crumbled into dust." (Church-monuments, p.65) Further, as has been argued, Herbert eschews the concept of privation. For him, as for St. Augustine, the line along which degrees of being are allocated is limited by God on the one hand and fallen nature on the other: "the earths great curse in Adam's fall." (The Sacrifice, p.32) These poles of opposition are referred to in diverse ways. In H. Baptism (I), the resuscitative property of the "water" of heaven and its opposite, the regression of sin become "a dark and shadie grove" and, beyond it, "the skie"; (p.43) Sin is clearly not a 'nothing.' If heaven is the centre, then the circumference is the earth where "in so much dregs the quintessence is small." (The Sinner, p.38) Fallen nature as identified with sin is "As is the dust to which that life doth tend," and it is due to the concept of this perpetual regression from God which human nature - as containing in it the 'nothingness' of sin - exemplifies, that Herbert declares: "I am no link of thy great chain." (Employment (I), p.57) Mutability and the

"He that doth love, and love amisse,
This world's delights before true Christian joy,
Hath made a Jewish choice:
The world an ancient murderer is;"

(Self-condemnation, p.170)

The will relinquishes its power when it is thus "Guiltie of dust and sinne,"
(Love III, p.188) craving "flat delights (which) on earth do creep and grow."
(Vanitie II, p.111) William H. Halewood, in arguing against Rosamunde Tuve's
treatment of Herbert and the tradition "inherited through at least the ten or
twelve preceeding centuries," seeks to re-establish the value of the element of
shock and surprise in his poetry, and to relate it to the Reformation awareness
of "the human situation as paradoxical and improbable in every significant
circumstance"¹³ and, in particular, Calvin's depiction of man as "essentially
wilful and wayward."¹⁴ He chooses to discuss The Collar, and notes the
similarity in Herbert and Calvin of words such as labour, fruit, harvest and
crimson:¹⁵

"Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me bloud, and not restore
What I have lost with cordiall fruit?
Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did drie it: there was corn
Before my tears did drown it.
Is the yeare onely lost to me?
Have I no bayes to crown it?
No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
All wasted?
Not so, my heart: but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands . . ."

(p.153)

¹³ The Poetry of Grace, p.96.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.93.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The element of shock and surprise is certainly present, but it need not be referred to the influence of Calvinism or any other Reformation theology. Indeed, if one has to choose a model for its peculiar mode of rhetoric, one might suggest the Confessions. In an Augustinian framework of nature, the will is always to choose between a pair of opposed terms: the mutable world, with its intimations of spiritual death (thorn-bloud, wine-sighs, corn-tears, flowers, garlands-blasted, wasted) and, by implication, the transcendent world of God's "cordiall friut." This opposition, naturally enough, heralds both shock and surprise, but these elements are very much what a modern reader perceives. Viewed from within the context of the Platonic-Augustinian ethos, the external stylistic qualities of shock and surprise are accidental to the poem's dialectic expression and, indeed, are subsumed under it as natural limits of the will's choice with regard to fallen nature. This is why the close of the poem must not surprise, in fact, cannot surprise:

"But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde
 At every word,
 Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!
 And I reply'd, My Lord."

(p. 154)

The will can only choose the mutable world; this is sinful, and must be rectified. Miss Tuve is certainly correct in insisting that Herbert's poetry, when removed from its traditional setting, will be read as containing elements of opposition which Herbert himself is certainly not surprised by. Indeed, the sense of turmoil generated by the will's perpetual deflection towards the mutable world is accepted by Herbert as consummately natural to this state of fallen nature.

The human act, per se, is in no sense at the heart of St. Augustine's experiential, pragmatic and radical involvement in the transcendent. The psychological ramifications of such a theory of the will are hardly considered.

In a theological and moral sense, there is a lacuna between the natures of man before and after original sin. Resurrected man shall possess, assuredly, a will that will subject to itself all powers and potentialities of the body and soul inferior to it.¹⁶ It is not quite clear how this is to be distinguished from the 'original blessedness' which prevented either fear or desire from instigating the will to commit, or constraining it from committing, original sin.¹⁷ The nature of the freedom of the will under such blessedness is not examined. In De Libero Arbitrio, a middle state is referred to, which allowed the will to commit original sin, but which, it is averred, we can, in this life, understand only in terms of contraries.¹⁸ It is clear that for St. Augustine, the psychological intricacies of human nature are irrelevant. Because the transcendent is all, human nature must be subsumed under that in any theorising. Platonic dialectical division seeks, in fact, to do precisely this. In Paradise, man could do exactly what he wished because what he then wished was what he could will and no more.¹⁹ If that is not the case in mutable man, then the disobedient affections of the body must be to blame, as, indeed, they could not be before that first sin.²⁰ But why they could not then affect the will is not clear. St. Augustine's response is merely: away with the thought that they could.²¹ The disobedience of the body can thus be seen as the effect or penalty of original sin. Whether the affections of the flesh now control the will and thereby cause evil, or whether the will is still the only cause of evil is not

¹⁶ Civitate Dei, XIII, 20. Works, Vol.1, pp.544-545.

¹⁷ Ibid., XIV, 10. Works, Vol.2, pp.20-21.

¹⁸ III, 24, p.145.

¹⁹ Civitate Dei, XIV, 15. Works, Vol.2, p.30.

²⁰ Ibid., XIV, 10. Works, pp.20-21.

²¹ Ibid.

ascertained either. The distinction becomes necessary when human nature or a theory of its psychology is of integral importance to the theology of fallen man. If it is not, then the entire question may be left unanswered. And St. Augustine asserts this wholeheartedly: ". . . is it not the infirmities of the flesh that hamper (the will) in its service? Yet what does it matter how its service is hampered, so long as the fact remains, that by the just retribution of the sovereign God whom we refused to be subject to and serve, our flesh, which was subject to us, now torments us by insubordination, although our disobedience brought trouble on ourselves, not upon God?"²² Thus St. Augustine avoids both the perils of Manicheanism and those of Pelagianism. What this philosophical gap produces in seventeenth-century England is the Puritan insistence on the thorough infection of human nature. In St. Augustine himself, the 'flesh,' however stringently he defines it as referring to the whole man,²³ as flesh, is often presented as the immediate cause of sin, so that one effect of original sin is distinctly the fact that the soul has to put on the mortal body and suffer.²⁴ It falls, "dissipée par une vaine foie."²⁵ There is no question that St. Augustine asserts that the corruption of the body is the punishment and not the cause of the first sin. He also, unquestionably, avers that it is the sinful soul that makes the body corruptible. Nevertheless he relates the corruption of the body to its mutability: ". . . the cause of this burdensomeness is not the nature and substance of the body, but its corruption, we do not desire to be deprived of the

²² Ibid., XIV, 15. Works, p.30.

²³ Ibid., XIV, 2. Works, pp.2-3.

²⁴ De Libero Arbitrio, III, 20, p.132.

²⁵ Enchiridion, II, 8, 24. Oeuvres, Vol.9, p.149.

body, but to be clothed in its immortality." ²⁶ Whereas a philosophy would require a proper analysis of the relations between the powers of the soul and the potentialities of the body both before and after original sin, a theology such as St. Augustine's may leave the question open, as we have seen. However this allows for a firm Platonically oriented disdain of the body.

Therefore St. Augustine's conception of the unity of the body and the soul arrives at the forefront of his interpretation of fallen nature. The soul is, after all, not merely an intermediate good; it is inherently superior to corporeality because its creator helps it to educate itself. ²⁷ While a man may desire to will a good, carnal habit will balk his aims, and this is a penalty of original sin. ²⁸ But this carnality, consisting of 'ignorance and difficulty' is sin in that through the flesh it frustrates the soul, and is to be attributed neither to the soul nor to its creator. ²⁹ The will has to perform with a body by which false judgement is perpetrated, and the soul must therefore be distinguished from "the opposition and torments of the bondage of the flesh." ³⁰ As such a conception of the body-soul bond develops from ideas of mutability and the absence of a theory of existence, so, in itself, it becomes the cause of St. Augustine's severe view of fallen nature and his drastic denunciation of corporeal potential.

Fallen nature is thus the condition of being born mortal, ignorant and slave to the flesh. ³¹ The same condition is, in De Natura et Gratia, referred to as

²⁶ Civitate Dei, XIV, 3. Works, Vol.2, p.4. Underlining mine.

²⁷ De Libero Arbitrio, III, 20, p.131.

²⁸ Ibid., III, 18, pp.127-128.

²⁹ Ibid., III, 20, p.132.

³⁰ Ibid., III, 18, p.128.

³¹ Ibid., III, 19, p.130.

being "carnally minded."³² Ignorance is caused by that very difficulty of being enslaved by the flesh, and difficulty is, in the main, concupiscence. The shame of concupiscence is dealt with at length in both De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione and Civitate Dei.³³ Concupiscence and carnality become central to the degradation in Augustinian fallen nature. As arising from sin it becomes sinful, and although in the regenerate it is not actually sin, when it conquers will it produces sin.³⁴ It is that wherein there dwells nothing good, and is always captive to "the law of sin."³⁵ What occurs, in fact, when St. Augustine writes of concupiscence, is that, in spite of references throughout his work that the soul has been the efficient cause of concupiscence, the latter assumes the proportions of the totality of the penalty of original sin: "Must not this bring the blush of shame over the liberty of the human will, that by its contempt of God, its own commander, it has lost all proper command for itself over its own members? Now wherein could be found a more fitting demonstration of the just deprivation of human nature by reason of its disobedience?"³⁶

An important adjunct to St. Augustine's attitude to fallen nature in general and concupiscence in particular is his theory of the transmission of original sin. While he insists that in the will of Adam all sinned, "since all were (in) that one man,"³⁷ he is not content to leave it at that. If fallen nature is not to remain merely a theological necessity or a logical conclusion, then a renewal of guilt

³² LXXXI. Works, Vol.4, p.305.

³³ II, 36; XIII, 13. Works, Vol.IV, pp.108-109; Vol.I, p.534.

³⁴ De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia, I, 25. Works, Vol.12, pp.123-124.

³⁵ Ibid., I, 35. Works, p.132.

³⁶ Ibid., I, 7. Works, p.105.

³⁷ Ibid., II, 15. Works, p.154.

must constantly occur in a radically physical manner. So from concupiscence whatever is born is naturally bound and tied by original sin.³⁸ Analogous to the lacuna discussed earlier between the relations of the affections of the body to the powers of the soul before and after the fall, is a similar lack of definition regarding the exact human stratum that bears the onus of penalty. Assuredly the will is defective; but more so it seems is the body. St. Augustine is not quite clear here. In the one Adam all man was contained as a germ. He speaks of a "seminal nature . . . from which we were to be propagated."³⁹ Elsewhere he is definite in castigating this "penalty which generates through the flesh."⁴⁰ None can be a man without a generation which is carnal, for, since the fall, our flesh is sinful as being born of the first parents:⁴¹ "For evil remains in our flesh . . . owing to that fault into which (man) fell of his own will, and in which . . . he has lost its powers of choice . . ."⁴² In this other direction, away, that is, from the natural movement of the soul towards its creator, the body renews fallen nature continuously; the concept of natural human procreation and generation is thus swamped by the overwhelming noxiousness of lust: "Man is moved (to begetting) by the concupiscence which is in his members, and because the law of sin is applied by the law of his mind to the purpose of procreation."⁴³

The soul it is, now, that from ignorance and difficulty works its way through knowledge and peace.⁴⁴ For this higher part of man is already aware

³⁸ Ibid., I, 27. Works, p.126.

³⁹ Civitate Dei, XIII, 14. Works, Vol.I, pp.534-535. See also De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione, I, 13. Works, Vol.4, p.15.

⁴⁰ De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione, I, 19. Works, Vol.4, p.20.

⁴¹ Ibid., II, 37. Works, p.109.

⁴² Ibid., II, 4. Works, p.75.

⁴³ Ibid., II, 11. Works, Vol.4, p.83.

⁴⁴ De Libero Arbitrio, III, 22, p.137.

of the "good of righteous action."⁴⁵ Once again we return to St. Augustine's central concern: the transcendent good. Fallen nature is its antithesis, not merely a pole of logical and theological necessity, but also one complementary rather than antonymous to the idea of the good. St. Augustine certainly believes that if man is not to be entirely lost, then error must be unavoidable, and that from this paradox wretched nature ensues. In the higher life of the soul, however, truth reigns supreme.⁴⁶

Herbert, unlike Donne, has not bequeathed to posterity any body of primarily theological works. While, therefore, a coherent theology of original sin will not be found, it is clear that, like St. Augustine, Herbert does not employ a specific theory of the relations of the powers of the body and the soul, and, consequently, avoids expressing the exact nature of the corruption of these relations through the Fall. It is, after all, the present and the future that matter. Fallen nature is our proper domain; to question further afield is simply a vain objective. Man has fallen. As a datum that must suffice:

"Busie enquiring heart, what wouldst thou know?
 Why dost thou prie,
 And turn, and leer, with a licorous eye
 Look high and low;
 And in thy lookings stretch and grow?
 Hast thou not made thy counts, and summ'd up all?
 Did not thy heart
 Give up the whole, and with the whole depart?
 Let what will fall:
 That which is past who can recall?

(The Discharge, p. 144)

Again we are presented with two states. Adam, when "he did not know / To sinne, or sinne to smother," was blessed with an ease that may have allowed him

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

⁴⁶ Enchiridion, V, 17. Oeuvres, Vol.9, pp.131-133.

to partake of both heaven and Paradise as simply as going "from one room t'another"; we, on the other hand, have no such ease. Flesh is turned to stone and "our lump to leaven." (The H. Communion, p.53) Not questioning the mutual dependence of soul and body, Herbert, like St. Augustine, must posit a communicative turmoil between them:

"His knowledge winks, and lets his humours reign;
They make his life a constant blot."

(Misery, p.102)

We are confronted with contrariety. Lusts "so oft divisions / . . . have made," and passions "have their set partitions." (An Offering, p.147) The tripartite power of the soul is in complete confusion: the mind suffers from "profaneness," the will from "defects and darknesse," and the sensibility "ringing . . . for dead." (Aaron, p.174)

The Platonic mode of Augustinian epistemology is more than hinted at in Herbert's verse. The passions of the body (as distinct from the power of volition) are especially to be disdained. Fallen nature is not merely a question of disordered and contrary powers, "crosse actions"; the will cannot rule the senses, which, in their turn, are dominated by the mutable world:

"Besides, things sort not to my will,
Ev'n when my will doth studie thy renown."

(The Crosse, p.165)

The Pilgrimage makes the hindrance of the sensible powers clear. The mind formulates an "expectation." But before it can be fulfilled, two barriers are erected:

"And so I came to Fancies medow strow'd
With many a flower . . .
That lead me to the wilde of Passion, which
Some call the wold;
A wasted place, but sometimes rich . . ."

(p.142)

It is instructive to note that passions are preceded by fancies; both choose unreal objectives, and neither is properly conducive to the end of the mind and the will "Where lay my hope, / Where lay my heart;" To Herbert, as to St. Augustine, the flesh is hierarchically inferior to the soul; fallen nature reverses the priority implicit in the lines:

"O that to thee
My servant were a little so,
As flesh may be;"

(The Odour, p.175)

Fallen man is, therefore, "disseized by usurping lust," (Love II, p.54) and the seat of joy "in the flesh condemn'd as unfit, / At least in lump." (The Size, p.138) The Platonic formulation of the bond between the body and the soul serves to reinforce Herbert's antagonism towards the vagrant lusts of the body before which the soul is indeed to be pitied:

"But I am lost in flesh, whose sugred lyes
Still mock me, and grow bold:
Sure thou didst put a minde here, if I could
Finde where it lies."

(Dulnesse, p.166)

It is true that both soul and body are fallen and corrupt, but the "ague" of the former is alleviated, paradoxically, by the infliction of "the memorie / What I would do for thee, if once my grones / Could be allow'd for harmonie." (The Crosse, p.165) As post-lapsarian man stands, the soul yearns for the good, but is defeated and saddled with the "care and pains" of the flesh. (Dialogue, p.114) Ignorance and difficulty, "loud complaints and puling fears," "wranglers," "noise of thoughts," epitomise fallen nature. (The Familie, p.136) Man is a foolish thing, "Folly and sinne play all his game." (Miserie, p.100) So it is not enough for the country parson to be well versed in the Schoolmen and the Fathers; he has to subdue and mortify lusts and affections, the "stupifying and deading of

all the clamorous powers of the soul." (pp. 226-227)

Herbert's extant work displays no theological discussion on the nature of the transmission of original sin. But St. Augustine's guilt consciousness and his need for the constant renewal of this consciousness that acutely expresses one aspect of his personality are clearly paralleled in Herbert. The country parson recognizes "continually" the spectacles of sin and misery, "God dishonoured every day and man afflicted." (p. 267) It is in this sense of a perpetual bent towards fault that one may argue a close comparison between Herbert's and St. Augustine's attitudes as regards concupiscence. "Original concupiscence is such an active thing, by reason of continual inward or outward temptations, that it is forever attempting, or doing one mischief or other." (p. 238) Although in the Considerations he distinguishes between fomes and accensio fomitis, and avers that while the "tinder of sin" remains, its inflammation is assuaged (p. 308) there remains a strong indication in his work that in the activeness of lust, the tinder of concupiscence is always incandescent, "because my lust / Hath still sow'd fig-leaves to exclude thy light . . ." (Sighs and Groans, p. 83, my underlining) Although one clearly acknowledges that it is concupiscence and not the institution of marriage that grieves him, Herbert, as the country parson, nevertheless considers virginity a higher state than matrimony, and if his will is firm and unbowed, he will hold fast to his virginity, fasting, praying and glorifying God for the gift of continency. (pp. 236-237) There need be no firmer indication of Herbert's distinctly Augustinian awareness of concupiscence than the fact that The Temple opens with the words "Beware of lust: it doth pollute and foul," and, in an earlier version of the opening stanzas, elaborates on that severe admonition in no less severe language:

"Abstaine or wedd: if thou canst not abstain
 Yet wedding marrs thy fortune, fast and pray:
 If this seem Monkish; think w^{ch} brings most paine
 Need or Incontinency:"

(p.6.n.)

For St. Augustine, then, the free choice of the will to accomplish the good must come to man from God,⁴⁷ for left to himself, he is obviously unable to achieve what is not evil or sin.⁴⁸ If one places on the one hand St. Augustine's eulogy of "the blessings with which the Creator has filled this life, obnoxious though it be to the curse,"⁴⁹ one must balance this with his assertion that even what one might term pre-christian virtues cannot in fact be considered virtuous.⁵⁰ The chasm between the natural and the supernatural can only be bridged by grace. Important consequences follow from this. Good works cannot merit grace, for the latter would then cease to remain gratuitous. Faith must precede grace, and together they must precede merit.⁵¹ Grace must become the result of an election,⁵² an election, moreover, that must be preceded itself by justification in order not to be meritricious.⁵³ This raises all over again the question of free will, and St. Augustine solves it by noting that Divine Foreknowledge, as omniscient, cannot be incompatible with the voluntary act.⁵⁴ When in conjunction, the former enables man to believe well and the latter to live well.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Retractionum, I, 9, 6. Oeuvres, Vol.12, p.325.

⁴⁸ In Joannis Evangelium, V, 1. Works, Vol.10, p.55.

⁴⁹ Civitate Dei, XXII, 24. Works, Vol.2, pp.522-529.

⁵⁰ Ibid., XIX, 25. Works, pp.340-341.

⁵¹ De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, I, 2, 2. Oeuvres, Vol.10, p.445.

⁵² Ibid., I, 2, 3. Oeuvres, pp.449-451.

⁵³ Ibid., I, 2, 6. Oeuvres, pp.455-459.

⁵⁴ De Libero Arbitrio, III, 3, p.92.

⁵⁵ Civitate Dei, V, 10. Works, Vol.1, p.196.

As containing the terms of justification and election, grace must become irresistible,⁵⁶ and the secret justice of God must be referred to as predestination, beyond which lies the inscrutable.⁵⁷ All the while, of course, St. Augustine is less concerned about our free will than our ability to love God. To him, this is liberty. Free choice is entirely worthless unless the will can achieve caritas; grace, therefore, aids the true liberty and function of the will. If fallen nature implies captivity, grace renders the will free.⁵⁸ What, with grace, the will must refrain from doing embodies this very liberty.⁵⁹ We have now come a full circle, for in the experiential fervour of St. Augustine's desire for participation in the Divine Essence, the will's role was of paramount importance. The abortion of its true liberty resulted from the predicament of fallen nature, which predicament is not abrogated but healed by freely bestowed yet irresistible grace.

We referred earlier to the naturalness of the constant sense of opposition that Herbert's attitude to fallen nature engenders. Loss and gain, sin and grace are not pairs of antithetical states. That would be a Manichean argument; rather, each term in the pairs implies the other:

"Since my sadnesse
Into gladnesse
Lord thou dost convert . . ."

(An Offering, p.147)

Fallen nature must be cured if it is to fulfil its potential, but the remedy, "Dropping from heav'n, which doth both cleanse and close / All sorts of wounds, of such strange force it is," (ibid) seems more to rectify nature than to heal it.

⁵⁶ De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, I, 2, 13. Oeuvres, Vol.10, p.471.

⁵⁷ Ibid., I, 2, 16. Oeuvres, p.479.

⁵⁸ De Gratia et Libero arbitrio, XXXIII-XXXVIII, Works, Vol.15, pp.48-54.

⁵⁹ Ibid., IV. Works, pp.17-18.

It is within the power of God either to "scatter" or to "binde" natural powers by grace. The plea to God for this "transsubstantiative" gift is accordingly firm and irrevocable:

"O fix thy chair of grace, that all my powers
May also fix their reverence."

(The Temper II, p. 56)

It becomes that which resurrects man from the condition wherein his "stock lies dead." (Grace, p. 60)

Both Joseph H. Summers and William Halewood have discussed at length the tone of predestination in Herbert's work, the former drawing the reader's attention to such lines as:

Who gives to man, as he sees fit, (Salvation.
(Damnation.

(The Water-course, p. 170) ⁶⁰

Halewood imputes this trend in Herbert to Calvinistic principles. Such a conclusion, however, need not follow. If grace changes nature, and this is what must happen if nature is so conceived as to preclude any possibility of good action, the implications of predestination and the irresistibility of grace become predictable. He further compares the prayer at the close of The Country Parson: "Thou hast elected us, thou hast called us, thou hast justified us, sanctified and glorified us: Thou wast born for us, and thou livedst and diedst for us . . ." (p. 290) to Calvin's statement implying God's free bestowal of grace: ". . . how comes it that God finds in us anything to reward, but because he bestowed it upon us by his spirit? . . ." ⁶¹ Now, to choose a line from Herbert implying a theory of election or justification and to assign thereby a Calvinistic basis to his beliefs

⁶⁰ George Herbert, pp. 57-60.

⁶¹ The Poetry of Grace, p. 96, 94.

may be to fall into critical error. This entire train of beliefs can be clearly subsumed within the general framework of St. Augustine's theology, and, more important, his philosophy. Indeed, these dogmas must follow; this is why, one must repeat, it is consummately natural that The Collar end in submission. Herbert does not accept or assent to the divine call. Irresistibly it claims him as it did St. Augustine himself, and, before him, St. Paul:

"Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!
And I reply'd, My Lord."

(p. 154)

It is necessary in order to understand Herbert's theological, philosophical and psychological expositions of the human and divine predicaments, to place his poetry, as, indeed, one places St. Augustine's personal quest, in the true liberty the will achieves when it conforms to the divine economy. This is the other face of St. Augustine's theories of predestination and the irresistibility of grace. The "sacred will" must prevent the individual from thinking "an action mine own way." (Obedience, p.104) But the change is one which assumes the quality of "delight." The human and the divine volitions are now mutually involved in caritas, so that the pervasive hope of Herbert's verse leads precisely to conclusions which as suppositions preceded his spiritual quest:

We acknowledge both thy power and love
To be exact, transcendent and divine;
Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,
While all things have their will, yet none but thine."

(Providence, p.117)

In fine, in an analysis of Herbert's dialectic, this will explain why so many of his poems end, in the sense that a poem is a personal experience, where they begin.

Because for Aquinas privation is antipodal to the good, and because it is also the negation of all becoming, his theology deals with levels of actuality and the degree to which that actuality is thwarted and threatened. While, therefore, theories of sin and evil retain essentially conceptualisations vouched for by the authority of St. Augustine, Aquinas' view of fallen nature is readier to accept a more positive stance with regard to post lapsarian man. One of the reasons for this is his insistence that evil, as a term, is wider than sin.⁶² Consequently every privation of good in a subject, a formal deficiency, is evil; sin occurs only in activity, voluntary and lacking in due order, that is, in terms of an operational deficiency.⁶³ Perceived from such a point of view, morality is necessarily subordinated to philosophical principles. It must have non-moral beginnings and non-moral consequences. The division of evil into pain and fault⁶⁴ is instrumental in defining this further. A corruption of the form in a subject and the pain thereof have the character of penalty and constitute a potential suffering. A failure in due activity under the aegis of the will is fault and is an actual loss. We have here a distinction between an 'essential' and an 'existential' loss which precludes all identification of mutability, fallen nature and sin with each other. Fault is the greater evil only because good finally consists in act and not in potential: "Since, therefore, fault consists in a mis-directed act of will and penalty in a deprivation of something employed by the will, the first more fully manifests the quality of evil than the second."⁶⁵ Therefore,

⁶² S.T., Ia IIae, 21, 1, resp.

⁶³ Ibid., I, 48, 5, resp.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., I, 48, 6, resp.

in reviewing fallen nature, while the moral act may be evaluated in terms of an autonomous morality, all evaluation must finally refer to the human act as an integral philosophic unit. This is consolidated by the datum that all evil is incidental, for in actuality, fault can only result when the form of an operation utilised by the will includes of necessity the privation of another form. So a man good by nature may cause an act bad by morals. It is important to realise that the deficient action is not itself the fault. To deny this would be to argue for a state of corrupt human nature. Fault results, rather, from the fact that the will acts with a defect. ⁶⁶

One result of Aquinas' Aristotelian formulation of the union of the body and the soul is his awareness of the totality of sense, intellection and volition involved in every human act. The fact that aggressiveness and desire may oppose reason does not argue that they disobey it. ⁶⁷ The intellect knows what is willed, and the will wills the intellect to understand. ⁶⁸ While volition achieves the human act, all powers of the soul share in its inception; the mind becomes the specifying principle and the will the first efficient principle within the series of human acts. This unity in action is central to Aquinas' moral theology which conflates St. Augustine's majestic concept of Eternal Law with Abelard's stressing of the importance of intention over the more impersonal categories of Roman law. ⁶⁹

There is, perhaps, no more explicit exposition of the distinction between pain or penalty and fault than the profound expression of contemptus mundi in The First Anniversary. The application of the phrase must, however, be

⁶⁶ Ibid., I, 49, 1, resp. and ad.3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., I, 81, 3, ad.3.

⁶⁸ Ibid., I, 82, 4, ad.1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Vol.18, introduction, p.xix.

carefully examined. Two ideas are presented early in the poem and following in quick succession. One asserts of the world, that "(Her) death hath taught us dearly, that thou art / Corrupt and mortal in thy purest part." (p.233) The other equally vehemently warns us: "Let no man say, the world it selfe being dead, / 'Tis labour lost to have discovered / The world's infirmities . . . / For there's a kinde of World remaining yet still, / . . . a glimmering light, / A faint weake love of virtue, and of good . . ." (*ibid.*) The first proposition insists that the penalty allocated to the world is a loss of its proper form. As such, this ^{is} a formal deficiency and is analysed at length in terms of the impossibility of health, shortness of life, smallness of stature, decay and deformity. Donne has explicated exactly what the state of fallen nature implies: privation, and, hence, evil. As distinct from such penalty is the notion of a more 'existential' loss, an actual loss as opposed to a loss in potency; this involves the accomplishing of good, a voluntary deficiency, which is properly fault. Formal perfections no longer "inanimate and fill," (*ibid.*) or, in other words, "Reward and punishment are bent awry." (p.240) The essential state of fallen nature is apprehended as conducive to fault and sin, "Poisoning the fountaines, whence our actions spring," (p.241) but the deformity of action may be identified with the formal corruption only in an analogical sense. For while moral and ethical criteria and the pursuit of objectives may be associated with each other, they evidently retain their individual properties:

"For good, and well, must in our actions meet;
Wicked is not much worse than indiscreet."

(*ibid.*)

It is in the light of this distinction that the Second Anniversary must be read. Donne's eulogy of the released soul is not a condemnation of the body, but an expression of the relinquishing of pain, the erasure of fault and the consequent

fulfilment of the soul's purpose when "reason still / Did not o'erthrow, but rectifie her will:" (p.261) In one of his sermons, he similarly distinguishes between two ways of conceiving fallen flesh, that is to say, man: caro corrupta, sinful flesh, flesh suffering from penalty, and caro corruptibilis, flesh "tending to defectiveness."⁷⁰ Moreover, he is aware that the evil of penalty is potentially wider than the evil of sin: "there was flesh," he avers, "before there was sin," and it is this flesh, cured of penalty, that will inherit the kingdom of God.⁷¹ The dignity of the body is given common expression in the work of Donne; the Resurrection is often cited as a surety with regard to this fact.⁷² But what, above all, this distinction between the pain of mutability as identified with fallen nature and the deficiency in the human act enables Donne to do is, as with Aquinas, to examine the nature of sin, not with reference to an autonomous code of morality, but with reference to the human act as a voluntary entity, in psychological terms sacrosanct, and, indeed, sacred. In accordance with his philosophical and theological training, 'existentialism' is identifiable with Christian deism, and the human act examined per se becomes in no wise an example of rational ethics. In very much a Thomistic vein, he affirms: "Reabridge man into his least volume, in pura naturalia, as he is but meer man, and so he hath the Image of God in his soul."⁷³ We have recourse, once again, to examine Donne's use of the word 'natural.' What God wishes of man he may know in himself, in his own nature.⁷⁴ This is why the human act can be

⁷⁰ The Sermons, III, 4, p.117.

⁷¹ Ibid., III, 4, ll.23-27.

⁷² Ibid., VI, 3, ll.116-126; VII, 3, ll.24-32.

⁷³ Ibid., IX, 2, ll.564-565.

⁷⁴ Ibid., IX, 7, ll.56-57.

scrutinised, even with reference to sin, from within its own God-given limits. The natural man, by acknowledging "his owne heart, and the law written there" can act well, thereby producing fiats which are proper in terms of their nature, matter and substance.⁷⁵ It is evident also that the involvement of all the powers of the soul in producing act helps, in no mean degree, to consolidate this formulation of Donne's, very much as St. Augustine's and Herbert's inability to quite accept this sharing of involvement leads them in a very different direction. Understanding, proceeding from the soul, presents us with the object of the will, bonum, which, being good "in our apprehension," moves the will to act.⁷⁶ Similarly, we sin rationally, for not only the members of our bodies, but also the faculties of the soul - will and understanding - are involved in each act.⁷⁷ It is in his belief in this integrity essential to every human act that Donne's temperament can always be recognised whether he avers it of a love act, wherein the soul 'doth unperplex / . . . and tell us what we love," or the final spiritual act when ". . . what I must doe then, thinke here before." (The Extasie, p. 52; Hymne to God my God, p. 368)

For Aquinas, therefore, moral good cannot connote good which bears no relation to other ways of being good, and every action which has something of the real about it, has something of the good about it as well.⁷⁸ Morality is thus located within the stream of causality. Any particular act of will, chooses as its objective a particular form, which gives it its specific nature.⁷⁹ The act of willing, itself, is also similarly ordained

⁷⁵ Ibid., IX, 1, ll.159-163.

⁷⁶ Ibid., III, 15, ll.552-554.

⁷⁷ Ibid., IX, 11, ll.275-277.

⁷⁸ S.T., Ia IIae, 18, 1, resp.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Ia IIae, 18, 2, ad.2.

towards an end, and this epitomises the property of intention.⁸⁰ The moral typology of human acts depends, therefore, on their objectives, which, in their turn, are set in a system of reference proposed by a standard of reason.⁸¹ It is within the particular, subordinate or external act of will (that is, not one ordained as to the end) that Aquinas allows for the choice of a wrong or right action. The very act of willing, however, which analogically constitutes the form of the particular act, has our final end as its proper objective; this is its overall intention, and this is the 'universal motive-power' for all our psychological activities.⁸² When Aquinas takes intention as the final determinant of morality, he relates it to the very raison d'être of the will as such. It springs not from choice, as does an external act of will, but from our nature.⁸³ What our choices accomplish is to bring our intention to its final end: God. This end is perceived by the mind, for while a good as attractive first engages the will, as truly being good it first engages the mind.⁸⁴ Only knowledge in the mind can give content to love in the will, and reason must become the rule for this inner activity of the will because it derives from the Eternal Law.⁸⁵ Where, therefore, human reason fails us, it is obvious that we must have recourse to Divine Reason through supernatural agencies.⁸⁶ Aided thus by divine assistance, the good measure of the will's intention streams into a particular act of the will.⁸⁷ But in subsuming objective under end and intention, Aquinas

⁸⁰ Ibid., Ia IIae, 18,4.

⁸¹ Ibid., Ia IIae, 18,5.

⁸² Ibid., Ia IIae, 18,7, resp.

⁸³ Ibid., Ia IIae, 19,1,ad.2; see also I,1,1,ad.2.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Ia IIae, 19,3,ad.1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Ia IIae, 19,4, resp.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Ia IIae, 19,4, resp. and ad.3.

⁸⁷ Ibid., Ia IIae, 19,8, resp.

leaves open to the possibility of acting well, albeit inadequately, the external or particular act of volition.⁸⁸ On the other hand, as has been indicated, intention must be ordered to the supreme good which is God.⁸⁹ Linking thus Eternal Law and the psychological nexus which must belong to a voluntary being in the actual process of becoming, Aquinas only strengthens this conviction that the fall of man left his nature radically intact and his natural powers for good confused rather than vitiated at the source: "It suffices for culpable sin, that one can avoid each individual experience."⁹⁰ This becomes the preamble to insisting that mortal sin deals more especially with the reason than with the sensual.⁹¹ In place of St. Augustine's "the will is the cause of sin,"⁹² Aquinas avers that sin has a direct cause only in the sense that it is an action.⁹³ Only because actuality is the central criterion, whatever accomplishes the human act can become the subject of sin. The will is a primary constituent here, but, by participation, so are the other powers of the soul.⁹⁴ Carnality is thus also overlooked as an irrepressible impetus in sinning. It is certainly to be understood as the spark that kindles desire,⁹⁵ but is not to be evaluated either as a sign of mutability, or as one of the corruptions of the body; it is merely to be referred to in its capacity of being able to influence the human act. The inordinate power that St. Augustine allows concupiscence in its ability to subvert

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., Ia IIae, 74, 3, ad. 2.

⁹¹ Ibid., Ia IIae, 74, 5, ad. 1.

⁹² De Libero Arbitrio, III, 17, p. 125.

⁹³ S.T., Ia IIae, 75, 2, resp.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Ia IIae, 74, 2, resp. and ad. 1.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Ia IIae, 74, 3, ad. 2.

the will is not something that Aquinas grants. In fact, it cannot be a serious cause of sin precisely because its working is irrational.⁹⁶ For it is, after all, reason that is oriented to the universal and the Eternal Law, and it is this that, in addition to human reason, regulates human behaviour.⁹⁷ It is probably this link between the Eternal Law and the degrees of probable existence available to the human psychological nexus as formulated by Aquinas, that distinguishes his conception of Original Sin and its effects from that of St. Augustine.

If there is any axiom that recurs more than frequently in Donne, it is that the will always chooses the good, and that choice, involving as it does an act of love, has something of the good about it. "Amor est primus actus voluntatis," he quotes from the Schoolmen. The will's initial movement is to love and to elect. To avoid the loving of anything is, to him, "idle" and "barren."⁹⁸ Implicit in the pursuit and embrace of the objective by the will is the dignifying of man's nature.⁹⁹ In this sense, the objective of any act of the will, "if I can desire it, wish it, it must necessarily be better (at least in my opinion) than that which I have."¹⁰⁰ The obverse of such a positivism is the conviction that it is of the nature of the soul's very existence that it detests and hates what is evil.¹⁰¹ Those who argue that man is no better than a worm or a fly, that man's actions, like himself, amount to nothing, "doe this but to justify or excuse their own laziness."¹⁰² The view Donne expresses is, of course, contingent on the

⁹⁶ Ibid., Ia IIae, 74, 5, ad.1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., Ia IIae, 74, 7, resp.

⁹⁸ The Sermons, I, 5, ll.218-223.

⁹⁹ Ibid., I, 9, ll.101-102.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., IV, 3, ll.435-438.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., V, 17, ll.360-368.

¹⁰² Ibid., VI, 15, ll.259-266.

fact that he recognizes that the will, in so far as it is a principle of existential acts, must perform in like manner as its nature decrees. Like Aquinas, he cannot aver that the will is the cause of sin; only considered as act can the sin be related to the will. So he insists: "sinfull courses are no wayes but continuall deviations,"¹⁰³ so that while error in choice is allowed, the reality of man's free choice being real and being from God is in itself a good. We are very far, here, from a theological outlook that might conceive of the freedom of the will as eternally inuring in itself the tendency to sin. "Why," he asks, "should we be loath to acknowledge that we have all our ability of doing good freely from God, and immediately by his grace, whenas, even those faculties of Nature, by which we pretend to do the offices of Grace, we have from God himself too?"¹⁰⁴ As Scholasticism acknowledges, however weak the means of willing ends and purposes, this is so designed by God and is therefore sufficient of itself in its ordained employment.¹⁰⁵ The end of activity is rightly beyond human ability; but the successive objectives of the will are not necessarily so: "though wee cannot make up our circle of a straight line, (that is impossible to human frailty) yet we may passe on, without angles, and corners . . ." ¹⁰⁶ From the philosophical and psychological unit that comprises the individual voluntary act, Donne, like Aquinas, moves inwards into the theological implications of the very movement of the will towards its end, what Donne refers to as "this fixation of the heart," the firmness of the will in pursuing its end.¹⁰⁷ Reason is particularly important here. The end is not merely a natural objective of volition.

¹⁰³ Ibid., II, 14, ll. 655-656.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., V, 15, ll. 710-717.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., VIII, 9, ll. 226-230.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., VII, 9, ll. 279-283.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., IX, 7, l. 58.

It is naturally known as well. For as the soul knows that its body tends to dissolution, it is also aware, naturally, that its resurrection in heaven is no less assured.¹⁰⁸ Knowledge, Donne avers, cannot save us, but neither can we be saved without it.¹⁰⁹ The bridge built between the understanding and the will with regard to our final end is one that connects the known truth, verum, to the bonum that is to be loved.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, disorder and perverseness in the will result from error in the understanding.¹¹¹ For this reason Aquinas had placed mortal sin especially in the reason, for it is this sin that not only subverts the achievement of a particular objective, but also turns the human act away from its end in God.¹¹² Donne reflects this opinion when he asserts that the worst sin of all is not committed out of infirmity or the "heat of blood," but rather from reasoning, consideration, deliberation and advice.¹¹³ The natural tendency of the human will to will the end is, of course, from God; it is a law of nature that is all pervasive in creation, a reflection of the Divine Law.¹¹⁴ Where Donne most resembles Aquinas is in his manner of noting the profound intercourse that exists between the inner and outer activities of the will. Through the reflection in us of the Eternal Law, the act of the will towards its end in God affects and is influenced by the particular individual acts, which, in their turn, instructed by natural reason, can achieve, however inadequately, their respective objectives. Psychology and spirituality are fused. Morality is rightly seen as emerging from and coalescing into the skein of actual existence:

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., VI, 2, ll.505-506.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., III, 17, ll.404-405.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., VIII, 9, ll.102-104.

¹¹¹ Ibid., VIII, 16, ll.354-356.

¹¹² S.T., Ia IIae, 74, 4.

¹¹³ The Sermons, I, 2, ll.114-117.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., VII, 8, ll.69-75.

"If we fine our naturall faculties rectified, so as that that free will that we have in Morall and Civill actions, be bent upon the externall duties of religion, (as every naturall man may, out of the use of that free will, come to Church, heare the Word preached, and believe it to be true) we may be sure, the other greater light is about us." ¹¹⁵

It should already be clear that in fallen nature as Donne sees it, concupiscence cannot play the overwhelmingly noxious role that St. Augustine often assigns it. Indeed, Donne once apologises for having to differ from what he calls the "rigidness of some of those blessed Fathers of the Primitive Church" with regard to their praise of chastity and continency. ¹¹⁶ He will not surrender the authority of the will and the mind to the dictate of the passions. They attract us, but they do not constrain us. If they did, volition would be in vain. "No man," he argues, "will bid me (fight against) a Cannon bullet that comes with an inevitable and irresistible violence." ¹¹⁷ If pride includes folly, licentiousness, indeed, does no less. ¹¹⁸ He does refer to man as a natural channel of "concupiscencies," but he is plainly referring to the word in its Thomistic and Aristotelian connotation of the passions relating to the concupiscible (as opposed to the irascible) appetite. ¹¹⁹ In general, what emerges when Donne speaks of concupiscence, is the width of the latitude that separates him from Herbert's and the European Reformers' attitudes to the flesh, and, further afield in time, from those of St. Augustine. Donne's characteristic awareness of the desires of the flesh and the fact of their naturalness may be gleaned from the following: "When

115

Ibid., III, 17, ll.678-683.

116

Ibid., VIII, 3, ll.272-277.

117

Ibid., I, 9, ll.425-427.

118

Ibid., IX, 17, ll.547-548.

119

Ibid., IV, 11, p.286.

God had made Adam and Eve in Paradise, though there were four rivers in Paradise, God did not place Adam in a Monastery on one side, and Eve in a Nunnery on the other . . . ;" or again: " . . . he must be a man, she must be a woman; And they must be no more; not a brother and a sister, not an uncle and a niece." ¹²⁰

Aquinas' conception of the transmission of Original Sin is at the heart of his formulation of its essence. Aristotelian principles are instrumental in depersonalising the fact of Original Sin. The voluntariness involved in participating in a common progenitor is not personal but natural. ¹²¹ It is because human nature is virtually (i.e. as effect in cause) in semen that Original Sin accompanies human nature. ¹²² Man did not act in Adam; neither is there a collegial unity. The unity is dynamic and not by participation. As actual sin is derived from a person's will to his other powers, so Original Sin is transmitted from Adam's will to posterity through generation. ¹²³ Two ideas are dominant in this analogy: humanity shares in a common nature, and human nature specifies the members of a race as the soul is the formal principle of the body. In a similar manner, Aquinas differentiates between generation as a principle and concupiscence as an individuation. While the semen is dispositionally determined in terms of fallen nature, complete flesh is already personally determined and consequently cannot infect the soul. ¹²⁴ The 'tinder of sin' is thus contained in generation and not in concupiscence or in libido. ¹²⁵ While St. Augustine concentrates on sinfulness,

¹²⁰ Ibid., III, 2, ll.40-42 and 75-76.

¹²¹ S.T., Ia IIae, 81, 1, resp.

¹²² Ibid., Ia IIae, 81, 1, ad.3.

¹²³ Ibid., Ia IIae, 81, 1, resp.

¹²⁴ Ibid., Ia IIae, 81, 1, ad.4.

¹²⁵ Ibid., Ia IIae, 81, 3.

Aquinas deals only with Adam's operative or actual link with posterity. The individuality of a person's will, as that of his flesh, is thus divorced from the onus of the transmission of Original Sin. Aquinas is now able to postulate the lack of actual damage done to the individual powers of the soul in fallen nature. While St. Augustine reminds us constantly of the sickness of nature, Aquinas recognises that the penalty or privation in fallen nature through Original Sin involves the deprivation of a gratuitous Original Justice, a concept present, but undeveloped, in St. Augustine.¹²⁶ Original Sin, therefore, does not add something to the soul and its powers; the latter are now disturbed,¹²⁷ resulting in "a disordered disposition growing from the dissolution of that harmony in which Original Justice consisted."¹²⁸ The reservation of the essentials of human nature even under Original Sin can be seen as respecting the "existential determinations of the divine economy."¹²⁹ Original Sin, on the one hand, becomes a habit or a disposition,¹³⁰ and Original Justice, on the other, not simply a preservation from defect. Fallen nature is that, therefore, where each power "follows its own proper impulse with a vehemence proportionate to its strength."¹³¹ What results is a man divided against himself, with his soul involved in fault and his body in penalty.¹³² Thus, in fallen nature, the natural inclination to virtue is lessened because the gratuitous gift of Original Justice is removed.¹³³ The possibility of failure becomes apparent when existence

¹²⁶ Enchiridion, XIII, 45. Oeuvres, Vol.9, p.187, reference to "l'intégrité de l'âme humaine."

¹²⁷ S.T., Ia IIae, 82, 1 ad.1.

¹²⁸ Ibid., Ia IIae, 81, 1, resp.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Vol.26, appendix 8, p.153.

¹³⁰ Ibid., Ia IIae, 82, 1, ad.3.

¹³¹ Ibid., Ia IIae, 82, 4, ad.1.

¹³² Ibid., Ia IIae, 83, 1, resp.

¹³³ Ibid., Ia IIae, 85, 1, resp.

involves a dispositive habit where vice, as contrary to virtue, consistently diminishes the inclination towards the latter.¹³⁴ When the good of virtue is understood as the natural intention of the will in its pursuit of the end, the necessity of healing grace becomes evident. This is to assert that healing grace and the integrity of the human act are entirely complementary.

A fairly lengthy, but a pertinent and essential passage from the Sermons makes Donne's position on the transmission and nature of Original Sin perfectly clear:

1 "In the generation of our parents, we were conceiv'd in sin: . . . we
 were submitted to sin, in that very act of generation, because then we
 became in part the subject of Originall Sin there was no sinne
 in that substance of which we were made; for if there had been sin in that
 5 substance that substance might be damn'd, though God should never infuse
 a soul into it; and that cannot be said here's no sin in that soul
 that God creates . . . no sin in the body alone . . . no sin in the soul alone;
 and yet, the union of this soul and body is so accompanied with God's
 10 Malediction for our first transgression, that in the instant of the union of
 life, as certainly as that body must die so certainly the whole Man must be
 guilty of Originall Sin."¹³⁵

Three points must here be noted: (1) It is evident that Donne, at the outset, brings one term into prominence - generation. The dogmatic distance between Donne and St. Augustine, on the one hand, and the proximity of Donne and Aquinas on the other, is, one may say, the difference involved in the distinction between generation and concupiscence as involving one between form and matter.

134 Ibid.

135 The Sermons, II, 1, pp.58-59.

Generation is a de-personalised term, and is to be seen as a natural dynamic link between Adam and posterity. As Donne avers elsewhere, propagation is not only the image of eternity and divinity in us, but also that which conduces to the preservation of our very esse.¹³⁶ This is to assert that the transmission of Original Sin occurs via a formal link. Undoubtedly concupiscence must be involved as a material medium of transmission, but for this very reason it is to be despised only when it abrogates its formal aspect which is having "the body corrupted and attenuated, shrunk and deformed with incontinency . . . to frustrate that, which was one of God's purposes" ¹³⁷ (2) Contingent on this very basic idea is Donne's rejection of individual onus as far as Original Sin is concerned, and especially that of flesh. The lack of soundness resulting from Original Sin is something that must be attributed to flesh as it is formally present in all creatures in the sense that "that flesh be our flesh."¹³⁸ (3) Aquinas' analogical parallel between Adam and the individuals of the race and the soul and powers of the body makes 11.7 - 12 much clearer. What Donne, like Aquinas, is offering is a concept of fallen nature that pertains to the human race and humanity in a non-historical sense. Identification with Adam, like identification with Christ, must be dynamic, operative and not personal. This is why Donne, in talking about sin, deals rather with what is left after the fall than, like Herbert, with what was taken away. If it is "I, that is, This Nature" that is in the man who sins, then it is "I, that is, This Nature (that) is in that Christ who is wounded by that sin." Donne is involving "all mankinde of one blood" in his view

¹³⁶ Essays in Divinity, pp.69, 71.

¹³⁷ The Sermons, VI, 13, ll.279-283.

¹³⁸ Ibid., II, 2, 285-287.

of fallen nature.¹³⁹ In this light one must accept his gloss on St. Augustine's Sicut omnium natura, ita omnium voluntates erant in Adam; as every faculty of man, so consequently the will concurred to Adam's sin,¹⁴⁰ not, that is, the individual will, but the will concomitant to common human nature. In this sense, too, he states: "We draw a corrupt Nature from our parents."¹⁴¹

This is exactly why Donne can postulate good of our human acts as Herbert cannot; and this must be asserted in spite of recurring passages on the destructive power of sin such as: "Man hath a dram of poyson, originall sin, in an invisible corner, we know not where, and he cannot choose but to poyson himself and all his actions with that; we are so far from being able to begin without Grace, as then where we have the first Grace, we cannot proceed to the use of that without more."¹⁴² That Donne has read Scholastic theology on Original Sin is obvious. His references to Aquinas settle that.¹⁴³ That he is also aware of Original Justice is evident in his understanding of man before, after the fall and resurrected. At the Resurrection, man shall have the same body, but made more pure, and this by dotes (and he, here, acknowledges Scholastic sources), endowments, whereby grace provides for a "spiritual agility, a holy nimbleness" enabling man to avoid temptations entirely.¹⁴⁴ Adam before the Fall certainly did not possess such abilities. There was a "first integrity" later to be "disordered."¹⁴⁵ But this first integrity is meant to indicate that, at his

¹³⁹ Ibid., II, 4, ll.114-117.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., II, 3, ll.402-407.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., V, 8, ll.191-192.

¹⁴² Ibid., VIII, 1, p.293.

¹⁴³ Ibid., I, 9, ll.552-558.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., IV, 1, ll.607-609; VI, 2, ll.415-417, 423-425.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., VII, 8, 534-536.

best, Adam had but a possibility of resisting temptation.¹⁴⁶ At another point in the Sermons he distinguishes "as in the School" between secundum passiones perfectivas and secundum passiones destructivas. All passions, he avers, cause the subject to be altered, and all alteration is to some degree a passion and a suffering. Adam was "passible," subject to alteration by certain natural passions even before the fall, but he was not subject to passions that "might frustrate the end for which he was made."¹⁴⁷ This is to argue a special grace lost by the Fall which impedes man's attainment of his final end. Original Sin, must, therefore, be the result of the loss of God's grace: this "putting away of a soule, is his leaving of that soule to it self."¹⁴⁸ The result is not infection, but disorder, a "cloud" upon serenity of conscience, an "interruption," a "discontinuance."¹⁴⁹ Our faculties are not destroyed; it is our use of them that is disordered, and it is in this spirit that he modifies St. Paul's dictum that for a sinful man it is impossible to be renewed.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, concupiscence is sinful in that it is a "rebellion against that sovraignty which God hath instituted in the soul of man."¹⁵¹ Man's powers are in conflict with each other. Original Sin, as related to the body, is Lex in membris, a constant "disposition to relapse into repented sins,"¹⁵² and, therefore, that by which our powers and our faculties are executed against us.¹⁵³ A theology which derives from a philosophical system arguing the essential order and unity of parts in a forward

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., VI, 5, ll.84-86.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., II, 2, p.79.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., VII, 2, ll.336-337.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., II, 4, ll.62-64.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., VII, 3, pp.110-112.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., II, 3, ll.782-783.

¹⁵² Ibid., VIII, 15, l.461.

¹⁵³ Ibid., VI, 5, ll.108-109.

progressing dynamism must reflect bitterly on the effects of Original Sin to the extent that they negate this very essential notion of dynamism. To Donne who speaks often (and scarifyingly) of sin, the results spell, not unsurprisingly, death. But it is not necessary to argue that herein his sin-consciousness is Augustinian. It may be so in degree, if what is being discussed is a form of Augustinian guilt as an affective quality. Philosophically and theologically, Donne's reaction to sin is so extensive because the commitment to God is, in the Thomistic sense, the very fabric of his existence. What Original Sin does is to deprive him of "the God of mercy, and the God of life," and as so being in opposition to life, "it is called death, Death enters by sin." ¹⁵⁴

Intrinsic to Aquinas' theology of grace is his conviction that the intactness of pre-lapsarian nature was itself the result of sanctifying grace - Original Justice, and that without it, the states of nature before and after the fall would have been identical in inchoateness. Related to this is Aquinas' acceptance of the Aristotelian concept of the prime mover by which every created reality depends on God both for the form by which it acts, and with regard to being moved by Him to act. ¹⁵⁵ God becomes the initiating and sustaining principle of action. Divine assistance, then, is both consummately natural and gratuitous. One may say that Aquinas' theory of grace is based on an ontology concerned with movement, esse, even as "understanding and willing are called movements." ¹⁵⁶ The effects of the Fall on nature predispose it to need both a gratuitous capacity to perform the supernatural good, supplementing, as Adam's nature required, the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., VI, 5, ll.93-97.

¹⁵⁵ S.T., Ia IIae, 109, 1, resp.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

the natural abilities of nature, and the grace to heal the disorder concomitant to post-lapsarian man.¹⁵⁷ As befitting his generally existential orientation, Aquinas conceives grace as required especially with respect to the mode of action.¹⁵⁸ As far as the substance of actions is concerned, man can perform some individual and properly directed acts without grace.¹⁵⁹ But the mode of action, the very function of willing is related to the final end, as has been shown, and "acts leading to an end have to be proportionate to the end."¹⁶⁰ Grace thus becomes indispensable to the meriting of eternal life for it is a "habitual disposition"¹⁶¹ and the principle of all meritorious action.¹⁶² We find in Aquinas a theology of grace generated by a vision of a universal order of movement, proceeding from a single origin and returning to that final cause, the grace itself operating strictly in proportion to a nature's ability to assimilate it in its individual act. Such a theory allows for an ordering of God's purpose in creating man to his purpose of bestowing grace on him,¹⁶³ and therefore allows for an identification of what is natural and what is predestined. It is precisely this identification which prevents Aquinas from adopting St. Augustine's dominant view of grace as "an election out of a massa damnationis due to the Fall."¹⁶⁴

It is clear in Donne also that Adam's integrity was a gift of grace. It is not grace that made him what he was; rather, it super-edified him. For Donne, nature is precedent to grace. The latter must find natural faculties to work on, be they disposed or antagonistic towards it. For this reason, natural faculties

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Ia IIae, 109, 2, resp.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., Ia IIae, 109, 4, resp.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Ia IIae, 109, 8, resp.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Ia IIae, 109, 5, resp.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., Ia IIae, 109, 6, resp.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., Vol.30, Appendix 1, p.233.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

must have been created prior to any gift of grace.¹⁶⁵ But the form and movement by, and according to which, the human composite acts is oriented by the Prime Mover, so that the "dignity of nature and all that it conduces to," that is, grace and future glory, is infused with God's assistance in the beginning, and sustained by Him for the duration as well.¹⁶⁶ This formal grace, the first grace given by God "meerly as a giver," and the "auxiliant graces," pertaining to mode of action,¹⁶⁷ set Donne's formulation of grace entirely within man's natural disposition. So Donne avers that "though it be but the natural faculty, (it) is a considerable thing, and hath, in part, the nature of the materials for God to worke upon."¹⁶⁸ In man's orientation towards his end, which to Donne, as to Aquinas, contains the essence of existing, the understanding is, as we have seen, of central importance. Donne will not allow grace to bend the will. Indeed, one must dispose oneself to the acceptance of it, so that "co-operation" and "post-operation," the confluence of man and God in act, presuppose a "good concurrent cause with that grace."¹⁶⁹ Disorder will not be rectified where a tractable disposition is absent in the soul.¹⁷⁰ As aiding the act of existing, grace and nature must be proportionate to each other; to think otherwise is to misconceive the efficacy of grace. From a personal point of view, he demands: "How long shall we make this bad use, of this true doctrine, that, because we cannot doe enough, for our salvation, therefore we will doe nothing?"¹⁷¹ Grace, he insists, cannot work

¹⁶⁵ The Sermons, V, 8, ll. 313-318.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., IX, 17, ll. 266-269.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., VII, 1, ll. 448-450.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., IX, 17, ll. 429-431.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., IV, 8, ll. 529-533.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., V, 8, l. 323.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., V, 8, ll. 334-336.

upon a "nothingness." Rather, it perceives man's natural faculties and perfects them to "a capacity and a susceptibleness of the working thereof," and through the understanding infuses faith.¹⁷² With regard to man's end, grace is absolutely necessary. Yet even this power of grace is to be conceived of as natural to man, for he is "that creature who onely of all other creatures can answer the inspiration of God."¹⁷³ The end contains, after all, the meaning of existence; and existence, to repeat, must be proportionate to the end. Donne argues this quaintly, but aptly. "In nature," he writes, "the body makes the place, but in grace the place makes the body." By grace the human composite proceeds from being a mere statue occupying a physical dimension to one who actuates (and this is Donne's word) himself, "extends" and "propogates" himself by fulfilling his proper resonsibilities.¹⁷⁴ He adds: "And so it is an improvement of the present, and an Instruction and a Catechisme to future times."¹⁷⁵ Grace, therefore, must be qualified as a disposition. For this reason it cannot be irresistible so as to imprint no necessity on the will.¹⁷⁶ Neither can it be averred that man has never resisted, or not always fully concurred with, God's grace.¹⁷⁷ And, indeed, this can present no problems to Donne, for grace and nature are intrinsic and interdependent participants in his existential approach to the final end. This is why he can severely warn: ". . . yet come not to . . . think, that grace works upon thee, as the sun does upon gold, or precious stones,

¹⁷² Ibid., IX, 16, ll.172-175.

¹⁷³ Ibid., I, 7, ll.127-128.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., VIII, 7, ll.140-147.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., VIII, 7, ll.171-172.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., I, 9, ll.415-416, 422-423.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., I, 6, ll.118-120.

to purifie them to that concoction, without any sense in themselves." ¹⁷⁸

A severe problem remains to be stated. If Donne is Thomistically oriented, why is the authority of St. Augustine so pervasive in his sermons? However, asking such a question implies suppositions that tempt one to make rash generalisations on the nature of Thomism as William Halewood does. Grace, he declares, comes not to sinners but to the virtuous in the Thomistic analysis, and is therefore unlike the efficacious grace of the Reformation theologians. ¹⁷⁹ If one relates such a statement to Metaphysical poetry, one is apt to err in one's conclusions. The problem with the Metaphysical poets is that they are, each of them, both philosopher and theologian, as, indeed, were most educated men in that extraordinarily literate age. Now, Halewood has related virtue to morality but has left unexplored their philosophical nature. As far as the Metaphysicals are concerned, any primarily religious theme - sin, or evil, or caritas, or any other - must be related, if one is to find a correct perspective, to a philosophic school. The question itself takes for granted an erroneous supposition. The authority of St. Augustine is pervasive in Donne because the authority of St. Augustine is pervasive in Christianity. To speak, as might Luther, of the devil, Aquinas himself has scarcely a question in the Summa Theologiae where he does not invoke some aspect of Augustinian theology. As the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation clearly showed, much, if not all, depended on how St. Augustine was interpreted. Luther interprets him from the point of view of one who rejects the nominalist Scholasticism of Duns Scotus. Aquinas interprets him from an Aristotelian position. Once more, then, we return to philosophic

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., I, 7, ll.150-153.

¹⁷⁹ The Poetry of Grace, p.54.

training, and there is little question that the Oxbridge curriculum of the late sixteenth century was entirely Aristotelian. Evelyn Simpson, whose knowledge of the sermons must surely be unequalled, notes that Donne often reinterprets Augustinian dogma.¹⁸⁰ But, finally, if one discards a philosophic critique of seventeenth-century religious poetry, one is apt, all too easily, to enmesh the poets' thinking, to an unnecessary degree, in the polemics that epitomise that age: Protestantism and Catholicism, Anglicanism and Lutheranism, Anglicanism and Calvinism, Puritanism and the High Church, Elizabeth and James - the list is endless. What one has to bear in mind is that St. Augustine's extraordinary account of his conversion makes for a body of writings that reflects the Christian drama of sin and grace as unfolding within his very soul. Couple this magnetic personalism with the overwhelming discovery of humility that his work displays, and any question as to why Donne, or anyone, should honour him so constantly, becomes irrelevant.

¹⁸⁰ The Sermons, Vol.X, p.355.

CHAPTER III

MEDITATION: EPISTEMOLOGY AND DIALECTIC

1

Two theological and philosophical modes have thus far been examined: one based on the principle of existence, the Aristotelian definition of body and soul, form and matter, and the dynamic heart, the 'is' of Thomistic theory; the other based on the principle of essence, the soul's dependence on the apprehension of subsistent ideas (Plato) or the Divine Ideas (St. Augustine), and the consequent transcendence implicit in man's dealings with the world. There follow, as has been shown, distinctions in the ways in which sin, grace, will and God are conceived. Both these trends may be seen in the emergent Anglicanism of the seventeenth century. I consider it necessary to read Donne in the light of one mode and Herbert in the other, to examine their work by the evidence of their respective philosophical and theological orientations rather than by their allegiance to a specific church. In such a context, then, one must now examine man's conscious attempt to address what is eternal to him, his need to investigate truth, to conceptualize, to judge and to express himself to his Maker. Metaphysical poetry is peculiarly suited to be investigated in such a way; it revolves, as

James Smith asserts, around the problem of the many and the one,¹ and it is pervaded by epistemological and ontological references in its constant attempt to achieve a dialectic. And with this in mind one must ask of the poetry of Donne, the Songs and Sonnets and the Divine Poems: does it offer us the ingredients of a dialectic or does its apparently logical structure collapse in the final instance, because to approach truth is, in the Christian context, to approach God, and the achievements of the human intellect must at that zenith crumble?

Louis L. Martz seems to believe that this is in fact what happens. Donne, he argues, will arouse the temptation to sin and in the light of the urge to conform to God's will will subsequently abrogate this temptation. Herbert's The Collar is also subject to this critique.² The poet regards a situation "dealt with . . . repeatedly" and one which presents a rebellion, the curbing of which is anticipated. Thus Professor Martz feels a predetermined end implicit in the beginning of the poem. What he admires in the verse is the blending of the "tense coexistence of the conflicting elements" into the disciplinary nature of the predetermined conclusion.³ However, insofar as a poem is an autobiographical unit, it offers a retrospective experience. In this sense the end of a poem is implicit in the very writing of it. Does Martz believe, then, that this predetermined end exists within the poem's autonomous structure? And would this imply that the sense of opposition in a poem by Donne is merely some sort of charade testifying to the poet's excellence of wit and sophistry? Indeed, if one is not to accuse Poetry herself of insincerity, one must equate Donne's meditative via with

¹ On Metaphysical Poetry, in Determinations, ed. F. R. Leavis (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934), p.26.

² The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962, rev. ed.), pp.132-133.

³ Ibid., p.135.

one that supplies a divine disciplinary alternative to the contrariness present in the soul and in the mind's comprehension of the natural world as a whole. A poem would then chart the process of a form of meditation which commences at the confusion in the will and which is subsequently converted by God into reconciliation with His will. William Halewood certainly seems to think so: "Man's determination to go one way is negated by God's determination that he shall go another, and the decisiveness in the poems of God's determination is a dramatization of His reconciling power."⁴ In such a process, Halewood argues, the normal development of givens is ignored (this with reference to A Hymn to God My God, In My Sickness), and what opposition there is is in fact contained within the parameters of "a ready made stabilizing and unifying apparatus of belief" (with reference to Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward).⁵ Halewood comes to these conclusions because he sees reconciliation with God constantly in terms of a "correction" effected by "access of new information." In part this results from a Platonic interpretation of Donne's poetry when he asserts, for example, that there exists no true opposition of opposites in seventeenth-century poetry. So evil necessarily becomes a withdrawal from God.⁶ But I have shown that for Donne at any rate this is simply not so. Negation exists as a true philosophical opposite to God because God is conceived of as 'becoming.' But for Halewood the only "activity of God in the world of man that is fully considered is his activity in reconciliation and redemption."⁷ His interpretation of Donne's dialectic seems to emerge from the premise that Donne understands grace exactly as St. Augustine

⁴ The Poetry of Grace, p. 24.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 25, 26.

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

does,⁸ though he is entirely correct in averring that the Augustine whom Donne most admired was the St. Augustine of the Confessions.⁹ Therefore in attempting to correlate Ignatius Loyola and Donne, Halewood makes assertions such as: Loyola provides for only another form of "dualism, miraculism and conversion," and that the Spiritual Exercises depict a non-Aristotelian method of using and dispensing with the things of the world.¹⁰ Such criticisms are quite unfounded. Martz certainly saw in Loyola a "hitherto unparalleled integration of feeling and thought, of sensuous detail and theological abstraction."¹¹ Yet Patrick Grant, though aware of this, can interpret Donne's spirituality in Franciscan terms, insisting on "the very dichotomy between reason and revelation, philosophy and the scriptures, that Aquinas tries to eliminate."¹³ He is aware that St. Augustine's theory of Original Sin produces a very definite mode of spirituality,¹⁴ and from what has been discussed in earlier chapters such a spirituality must centre upon the consciousness of the necessity of conversion. Transcendence will become the keynote and dialectic a dramatized charade.

In the Aristotelian-Thomistic world-view (and Loyola was well schooled in it¹⁵) there exists a linear tension throughout creation effected by the intelligibility of every object, and Donne's verse reflects the metaphysical problems involved in ascending the interlocked chain from res naturae to the abstraction

⁸ Ibid., pp. 37, 44-45.

⁹ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 75, 76.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 79.

¹² The Transformation of Sin (Montreal & London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), p. 73.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁵ F. Charmot, Ignatius Loyola and Francis de Sales, tr. Sister M. Renelle (St. Louis & London: B. Herder Book Co., 1966), p. 25.

that truth is and thence beyond it. It is very clearly not entirely a philosophical problem in the works of the religious poets, for meditation is exactly such a via, religious, epistemological and ontological in its characteristics; and insofar as even Donne's love lyrics deal with such matters they too work very much like meditations. There has, however, been no intensive critique of Donne's dialectic either in terms of Aristotelian and Thomistic principles or in terms of Ignatian meditation - and one subsumes the latter under the former as the Spiritual Exercises themselves argue for:

" . . . To praise Positive and Scholastic doctrine, because as it is more proper to the Positive doctors, as for instance St. Jerome, St. Augustine and St. Gregory, etc., to move the affections in all things to love and serve God our Lord, so it is more proper to the Scholastics, as St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and the Master of the Sentences, etc., to define and explain for our times the things necessary for eternal salvation . . ."

(p. 222)

Indeed, while Martz noted the descriptive similarities between the Spiritual Exercises and the Holy Sonnets and the prevalence of the trinitarian motive (memory, understanding and will) in both, he has not undertaken to examine Donne's dialectic in terms of the Ignatian dialectic which is geared to an epistemology ending in a judgement and a consequent volitional response or 'Election' with all that such an epistemology requires - the ontological concept of dynamic 'becoming,' sensibility, intellect and psychological intensity. Patrick Grant can demonstrate, quite wrongly I believe, that the descriptive elements of Donne's Holy Sonnets are Augustinian. It is simplistic to identify the sin-conscious Donne (or the sin-conscious Loyola, for that matter) with the sin-conscious Augustine; the similarity remains purely psychological, and Loyola was certainly aware of this as the quotation above shows. Aquinas and Loyola, theologian and mystic, suffuse the dialectic present in Donne's verse, enabling it

to proceed with a constant and linear directive towards truth which has nothing of conversion or Platonic transcendence about it.

At the heart of the matter is the processional source of this directive: the Imago Dei, the triumvirate of memory, understanding and will. Loyola's use of this in his Spiritual Exercises is hardly singular. Aquinas derived his theoretic from St. Augustine, but his epistemology differs radically from the latter's Neo-Platonic one, and insofar as the Imago Dei is to be found in Donne's dialectic, it will be seen to be derived from Ignatius, Aquinas and Aristotle rather than from St. Augustine. One of the basic differences between the two interpretations lies in the role assigned to the memory in its relation to the understanding on the one hand, and on the other to the senses and res naturae. The reference is being made not to habitual memory but to memory in epistemological act, the passive intellect. As Professor E. Gilson notes, despite St. Augustine's espousal of the divinely created world in the Christian sense, his epistemology is Neo-Platonic. Plato's Ideas form the nexus of any excursion into ontology. The memory becomes the storehouse of images taken from the world but corrected by reference to the world of subsistent ideas. Reminiscence is of central concern.¹⁶ However, as St. Augustine's discussion in the Confessions X. xxiv, 35 and xxvi, 37 makes clear, he is adamant on rejecting reminiscence in his insistence that the knowledge of God is learned distinctly in time.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Plato's problem of bridging the gap between the ideal and tangible worlds is bequeathed to St. Augustine. For Plato this duality was reflected in the problem of knowledge. The mind knows intelligibles, and it is the Ideas that are, as pure intelligibles,

¹⁶ Marcia L. Colish, The Mirror of Language: A Study in the medieval theory of Knowledge (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 5.

¹⁷ Works, Vol. 14, pp. 262, 263. See also The Mirror of Language, p. 51.

proportionate to being known rather than res materiae. St. Augustine's attitude towards the world of res has been examined. They cannot be essentially allowed to affect knowledge. The object does impress itself on the sense but "it is not a true parent" for the species impressa "is not altogether born therefrom, since something else is applied to the bodily thing in order that it may be formed from it, namely, the sense of him who sees . . . the vision which comes into existence in the sense, has something spiritual mingled with it, since it cannot come into existence without the soul." Moreover, in the thought-forming process the imagination further refines the memory by a method of a priori invalidation. "For the sight of the mind which is formed from memory . . . does not proceed from that species which we remember as seen . . . the eye of the mind, . . . existed also before we saw the body that we remember . . . (and this so that) the inner and truer things may appear more practically and certainly."¹⁸ When, therefore, St. Augustine restricts the Imago Dei in man to the ratio superior, he does so because to him it is part of the higher reason to judge of these corporeal things according to the eternal and incorporeal reasons which, unlike res materiae, are immutable.¹⁹ Knowing to St. Augustine consists therefore in confrontation in which the mind somehow sees and consults the eternal reasons. A dialectic epistemologically concerned with res materiae and founded on such a trinity of memory, understanding and will would necessarily flounder without the intervention of a reconciling factor. There would otherwise exist a serious duality between the knowledge of the mind and corporeality. It is already evident that the Spiritual Exercises which make so

¹⁸ De Trinitate, XI, 5,9; 7,11. Works, Vol.7, pp.272,275.

¹⁹ Ibid., XII, 2,2. Works, p.285.

intrinsic and dramatic a use of the senses and the natural world cannot be assimilated to such an interpretation of the Imago Dei. Donne's insistence too that the senses have an indelible relationship to knowledge for "they thus, / Did us, to us, at first convey . . ." (The Ecstasie, p.52) must be derived from a radically different epistemological argument.

For the Aristotelian and Thomist confrontation is secondary. Due to the distinction of matter and form, act and potency, Aquinas is able to assert that a material object is actually sensible and potentially intelligible. It is this potential intelligible that is imprinted via the sense on the passive intellect. This phantasma is the real object of the intellect and sensible knowledge becomes the material cause of intellectual knowledge. It also follows that incorporeal bodies are known only by analogy to sensible bodies.²⁰ (This is not so for St. Augustine because, although the soul is attached to the body, it is only proportionate to incorporeal nature.²¹) Thus the memory and the imagination which house the phantasm are integrally a part of an umbilical connection between res materiae and the agent intellect which 'illuminates' the phantasm, rendering actual its potential intelligibility. The agent intellect thus achieves an insight into it.²² What results has been called a metaphysic of sensibility, "a finite experience in which a finite being reveals itself and is 'taken in.'"²³ This intellectual light, which replaces St. Augustine's vision of the eternal truth, is "a participation, a resultant, a similitude, an impression of the first and

²⁰ S.T., 1a, 84, 6, resp. and 84, 7, ad.3.

²¹ De Trinitate, IX, 3,3. Works, p.226.

²² S.T., 1a, 85, 1, ad.4.

²³ Karl Rahner, Thomas Aquinas on Truth, in Theological Investigations (London; Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-1979), Vol.13, p.19.

eternal light and truth." ²⁴ There exists a real difference between the two theologies as well; for St. Augustine argues that we know truth not by going outwards but inwards and actually upwards. The Platonism in this is palpable because it ultimately argues for something we see. For Aquinas, the ultimate ground of knowing is indeed God, but knowing is but the common ground of being which all creation shares in Him. This mode has been described as being 'existential.' Indeed, the agent intellect becomes the source of man's dynamism. In knowing the other the mind knows itself "according as it is made actual by species abstracted from sensible realities by the light of the agent intellect." ²⁵

Because part of the uncreated light, our intellects have a dynamic orientation, a truly 'hydroptique' desire, that nothing short of the final vision of God can totally satisfy. As Bernard Lonergan avers: "For Augustine our hearts are restless until they rest in God; for Aquinas, not our hearts, but first and most our minds are restless until they rest in seeing him." ²⁶ In positing the analogy to the trinity in the inner word (principium verbi or intellectus in actu intelligens et dicens, verbum and amor ²⁷) Aquinas is arguing for a wholly intellectual trinitarianism. Amor for him is not Augustinian love but rational appetite. Not conceiving God as the subsistent idea of being he can also posit the intellect in act as being coextensive with the universe, and in it what can be understood. If, as the supreme intelligible, God lies beyond the grasp of the mind, it is not because He is out of range of sight but because his excessive light blinds the agent

²⁴ Bernard J. Lonergan, Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas, ed. D. B. Burrell (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), pp. 83-84. See also S.T., 1a, 12, 11, ad. 3; 16, 6 ad. 1; 84, 5 and 88, 3, ad. 1.

²⁵ S.T., 1a, 87, 1.

²⁶ Op. cit., p. 90.

²⁷ S.T., 1a, 93, 6 and 7.

intellect.²⁸ Confrontation involves inherent limit. St. Augustine's ratio superior finally reaches its limits. Now not intellect, but love, must breach the gap. Throughout the relevant sections of De Trinitate the will is the central concern. Thomistic self-knowledge is intellectual. St. Augustine's nosce te ipsum becomes rather more affective.

2

At the very outset it may be useful to examine the argumentation in Herbert's verse in the light of such an interpretation of Donne's (prose) style as Joan Webber has to offer: "Donne becomes both the subject and object of his meditations."²⁹ Her central thesis is that, while the Puritan writer turns art into life, the Anglican turns himself into art.³⁰ Limited by this theme Donne's free and associative style in, for example, the famous meditation on the tolling of the bell works for Miss Webber through a concatenation of symbols, augmentation from microcosm to macrocosm and finally to elevation to universality.³¹ While it may help to see Donne as she does, as "his own creation, an artificial and symbolic character,"³² it is not sufficient to argue that for him ritual and symbol unite world and spirit because this is an Anglican trait. If one has to trace (High, I presume) Anglicanism to a theologian, he may well be Richard Hooker, and from Hooker to Aquinas is a very small step. The fact is that the Thomistic via, in evolving an epistemology which unites res

²⁸ S.C.G., III, 54, 8.

²⁹ The Eloquent 'I': Style and self in seventeenth-century prose (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p.42.

³⁰ Ibid., p.10.

³¹ Ibid., p.40.

³² Ibid., p.44.

materiae and abstractions (world and spirit), contains an intermediary product of overwhelming significance: self-awareness, and it is indeed from his intellection that Donne's personality erupts.

Although Herbert's personality is certainly not Puritan (his Christ, as William Halewood notes, softens and liberalises Reformation doctrine, especially such as is found in Calvin³³), I believe that he can be placed in the second of Miss Webber's two camps: that in which the cult of personality is denied, and that in which art tends to approximate to life. What, then, of Halewood's assertion that Herbert's 'enthusiasm' is largely the cause of the appearance of his poems in the Dissenters Hymnal, where "vivid personal experience would be appreciated by individualist religious groups . . ." ³⁴ The fact is that the Herbert 'I' certainly exists - as The Collar amply proves - and it is as powerful as Donne's; nevertheless, it is shortlived, and what generally ensues is a 'not I, but Thee.' In part, this tendency is noted by Louis Martz as expressing another (as opposed to the Ignatian) current in spirituality, which he describes as 'Salesian.'³⁵ As an example he cites such a work as the Spiritual Combat, where, with all the clear evidence of Jesuit influence, we are frequently warned that the Christian in combat must take care to avoid disturbing his "tranquility of mind."³⁶ What is being referred to here is the suppression of the vigour of thinking and feeling that one might consider the personality. That this necessarily involves a suppression of argument and dialectic as well is clear. While, then, Barbara Leah Harman, in her aptly titled article, The Limits of

³³ The Poetry of Grace, p.104.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Poetry of Meditation, pp.145-146.

³⁶ Ibid., p.147.

Representation,³⁷ does not introduce Augustinian criteria in her discussion of the disruption of dialectic in Herbert's Affliction (I), her analysis of the poem clearly depicts a human being who embraces the philosophical and theological codes that have been defined as being Augustinian. In this context, her central thesis goes, it seems to me, a step further than does Miss Webber's. Within the religious mode in which Herbert writes, the poem suggests "the compatibility of life and impaired consciousness. For life flourishes as long as consciousness fails, and it comes to a dead end when consciousness is achieved."³⁸ In terms of Herbert's dialectic, Martz's 'predetermined end' seems hardly to be the point here, for, as Rosamund Tuve pointed out, "truth to an experience which led to an end is not the same as driving conflicting elements with a steady hand towards a known end." Stanley Fish's description of such poems as "self-consuming artifacts"³⁹ is also irrelevant. Self-consuming they are, but it is not the poem as poem, but the poem as experience, that dictates the form of its argument. Miss ^{Harman} ~~Leah~~ notes the stages of such argument perfectly.⁴⁰

Affliction (I) (pp.46-48) commences with a man who genuinely believes that choice is possible in the world, "naturall delights, / Augmented with thy gracious benefits." (ll. 5-6) Stanzas 6-9, however, are a lesson in the pointlessness of such a belief. God's strategy is, to begin with, a mode of diminution, whereby "thinne and lean without a fence or friend, / I was blown through with ev'ry storm and winde." (ll.35-36) There exists, in fact, no sanction to act. His story

³⁷ E L H, Vol.44, 1977, pp.267-285.

³⁸ Ibid., p.275.

³⁹ Ibid., cited p.268.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.270 ff.

never was his own, and he is a man without means: "Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me / None of my books will show . . ." Where Miss ^{Harman} ~~Leah~~ comes face to face with the real meaning of such an experience is in her assertion that the true difficulty the poem imposes is the obligation to revive itself (and I understand this in terms of a poem as experience) beyond the humiliation of its end. For one may add, the annihilation of personalised history - individualistic argumentation and voluntarism - marks the passing over of the threshold to a more fully realised life. The mode of spirituality requires that dialectic be broken in order that life may continue:

"Well, I will change the service, and go seek
Some other master out.
Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not."

(ll.63-66)

Indeed, Herbert's mode of spirituality is so constant throughout The Temple that almost any poem may be cited to show a reversal in argument. But it is important that one realises that within such a spirituality it is not reversal that occurs, but resurrection. The Pilgrimage, (p.141) which works as a metaphor for life, expresses the futility of human endeavour, that, as The Holdfast (p.143) declares, "to have nought is ours, not to confesse / That we have nought." It is at the dialectical absolute zero that true life begins: "There is no articling with thee: / I am but finite, yet thine infinitely." (Artillerie, p.139) In such a via the understanding and sensible knowledge are little more than useless. Man is "a lump of flesh, without a foot or wing / To raise him to a glimpse of blisse . . ." (Miserie, p.102) What, then, does happen at this dialectical absolute zero? Dialogue (p.114) answers this. When the path is beyond one's "savour," resignation is countered by God's love. There is nothing sine ratiociniis or mystical about this. The heart is overwhelmed: "Ah no more:

thou break'st my heart." Indeed, the quidditas of the soul is Jesu, that is to say, I ease you. (Jesu, p.112) The Agonie (p.37) describes best the effect of love:

"Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine."

Thus affective spirituality becomes effective. Natural knowledge being by confrontation, truth is achieved through love, and in this, Herbert's experientiae are essentially Augustinian.

What has now to be examined is the extent to which Donne's verse is indicative of a Thomistic and intellectual orientation as regards self knowledge and judgement (verbum), and the extent to which he found in the Spiritual Exercises a meditative analogue to the Thomistic via; for the Spiritual Exercises' primary concern is the process of self-knowledge terminating in a Verbum, a judgement, an election, a concern that one hardly finds elucidated in contemporary critiques of seventeenth-century meditative poetic styles. It may help to bear in mind Donne's own formulation of one aspect of the Imago Dei: "The Understanding is the Image of the Father, that is, Power. For no man can exercise power, no man can governe well without understanding the natures and dispositions of them whom he governs. And therefore in this consists the power which man hath over the creature, that man understands the nature of every creature . . ." ⁴¹

The central Thomistic position that knowledge is by identity and not by confrontation is most apparent in the love lyrics. Many of these poems are as much about love as they are about knowing the object of love and in the knowing of that, knowing the subject as well. At a cynical level the object may not be intelligible at all: "Hope not for minde in women . . ." (Loves Alchymie, p.40) The more positive lyrics revolve, in fact, around the moment of knowing, that

⁴¹ The Sermons, IX, 2, ll.573-578.

immersion into intelligibility that is coextensive with the universe, penetrating the central mystery of existence itself:

" . . . for Man into himselfe can draw
All; All his faith can swallow, 'or reason chaw.
All that is fill'd, and all that which doth fill,
All the round world, to man is but a pill, . . ."

(To S^r Edward Herbert at Julyers, ll. 37-40)

Elsewhere he exclaims: "My thoughts reach all, comprehend all. Inexplicable mystery."⁴² When, then, he declares,

"Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time . . ."

(The Sunne Rising, p.11)

he is uttering no incidental Petrarchan or Neo-Platonic hyperbole. Love as knowing (and the relation between love and intellection is at the heart of trinitarian theology, the will being rational appetite), approaches the formal ground of being and intelligibility and is thus "all alike." So it is that this particular ground of being is part of the universal ground of intelligibility; Donne therefore insists, "Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere." (*ibid.* p.12) It seems futile to read The Sunne Rising as one vast exercise in rhetorical exaggeration. The intellectual light of their souls is formidable:

"I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink . . ." (l.13)
"If her eyes have not blinded thine . . ." (l.15),

and expresses precisely in inversion how God cannot be fathomed because His light blinds that of the agent intellect. And if in the moment of loving this comprehending of the object of love reaches out to the totality of existence, it hardly counts as overstatement for Donne to exclaim: "Nothing else is." (l.22) He is expressing the same concept of identity in knowing when he describes the office of the God of love

⁴² Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal & London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), Meditation IV, p.20.

" . . . to fit
 Actives to passives. Correspondencie
 Only his subject was; It cannot be
 Love, till I love her, that loves me."

(Loves Deitie, p.54),

or in describing a kiss as that "which sucks two soules." (The Expiration, p.68)

In fact, Loves Deitie presents the religious connotations of such an interpretation of love as intellection, for insofar as the God of love will not promote this correspondence of subject and object Donne will become "Rebell and Atheist."

(1.22) In Loves Exchange this theme is further detailed. True love must "for a given Soule give something too." (p.34, 1.2.) That "Soule" implies intellection is clear from the third stanza, for the force with which he rejects a false love reflects proportionately the knowing that it brings:

"Give mee thy weaknesse, make me blinde,
 Both wayes, as thou and thine, in eies and minde;
 Love, let me never know that this
 Is love, or, that love childish is;"

(p.35)

Helen Gardner notes that the treatment of Cupid parallels the devout Christian's treatment of Christ;⁴³ he desires His weaknesses. In terms of love as knowing, this is particularly poignant. The eyes as senses present the object to the mind; the mind reflects on the phantasma to achieve a concept. To avoid the knowing that false love apprehends Donne implores the muting of both the senses and the intellect. That love as knowing includes or, indeed, antecedes sense knowledge is clarified in Loves Growth (p.33), where it is described as "no quintessence, / But mixt of all stufes, paining soule, or sense . . ." It is "elemented." As conceptually "pure and abstract" it may indeed be "greater," but such as natural man's is, it is "more eminent," if only because it "endure / Vicissitude,

⁴³ John Donne: The Divine Poems (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), p.169.

and season, as the grasse." Abstraction may be first in formal terms, but sense knowledge is first in the order of generation. Donne's metaphysical approach to love as knowing is expressed quintessentially in A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day. (pp.44-45) As Sir Herbert Grierson indicated,⁴⁴ Scholastic doctrine posited that the animal soul is perceptive enough to choose "some ends, some means;" the vegetative soul instinctual enough to accept or discard, "detest / And love;" but it is only the soul of man that, as rational, knows itself in the act of knowing. Without the object of knowledge the mind lacks actuation: "Were I a man, that I were one, / I needs must know" refers directly to the nothing that the mind must become when deprived of its inherent and dynamic property of wanting to know and of wanting to love what is known. Donne's assent to knowledge being by identity is explicit when he declares: "All others, from all things, draw all that's good, / Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have . . ." The opening of The First Anniversary (p.231) reflects no less this Thomistic epistemological mode. Frank Manley interprets the "death (that) did wound and tame thee" (l.25) as the loss of wisdom as defined by Aquinas: "lumine intellectus agentis et cognitione primorum principiorum, sic praecedit verbum . . .,"⁴⁵ the light of the agent intellect that precedes the actual word or expressed concept or what has been referred to as principium verbi or, again, intellectus in actu. The wound caused by the reduction of the agent intellect to "a glimmering light" (l.70) is compounded by disabilities in the senses and their complementary factor, memory. (l.28) It is the weakness of sense, memory, and agent intellect that inhibits man in the production of verbum,

⁴⁴ The Poems of John Donne (Oxford University Press and London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1912), Vol.II, pp.38-39.

⁴⁵ In Sententiarum, 1, 34, 2; cited by Frank Manley in John Donne: The Anniversaries (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1963), p.129.

the inner word, the concept, by which alone he can know himself. Hence "Her name defin'd thee, gave thee forme, and frame, / And thou forgett'st to celebrate thy name." (ll.37-38) Donne is clearly set in an epistemological mould in which awareness of self is concomitant on sense knowledge, intellection and volition, for "who is sure he hath a Soule, unlesse / It see, and judge, and follow worthinesse." (ll.3-4) What becomes apparent is this wholly intellectual temper of Donne's sensibility.

This is perhaps the place to examine the criticism made by Stanley Archer about the correlation seen by Helen Gardner and Louis Martz between the tripartite divisions in the Holy Sonnets and the Ignatian meditative exercises.⁴⁶ What Mr. Archer queries is the fact that many of the Songs and Sonnets exhibit similar triadic stanzaic structures corresponding to the trinitarian Imago Dei, a correspondence in poems that were written much too early to reflect the influence of meditation literature. He contends that the source of such structure must be sought elsewhere. The answer offered here, that it derives from a proper schooling in Aristotelian and Scholastic metaphysics, certainly vindicates his interpretation of A Valediction: of weeping. (pp.38-39) The first stanza presents the memory re-creating the physical world and the actual sensations of the lovers: "Let me powre forth / My teares before thy face . . ." (ll.1-2) The second stanza recounts the significance of the tears; the third proposes a volitional response in the form of a petition invoking a future course of action. But, further, there are numerous indications in the poem that depict a subject immersed in the dialectical stream referred to above. As res the tears materially depict the image of the lover for "thy face coines them," and the poem

⁴⁶ Meditation and the Structure of Donne's "Holy Sonnets", in ELH, vol.28, 1961, pp.137-147.

could remain at the level of sophisticated wit: "For thus they be / Pregnant of thee." (ll.5-6) Alternatively, the tears could become a symbol of the mistress. Neither happens. In order that a concept be reached, both abstraction and universalization have to occur; the 'all' of intelligibility has to be attained, "And quickly make that, which was nothing, All . . ." (l.13) The tear, now an intelligible, can express the very ground of his being, "my heaven." This is why the third stanza does not revolve around the tear. As a material object it has played its part. Self-awareness and the awareness of the object of love have both been realised ("thou and I sigh one another's breath" (l.26)) and the purpose of the experience the poem expresses has been achieved. Knowledge has become identity. If, then, one is to examine Donne's religious verse in the light of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, it is necessary to find a Thomistic epistemological basis in its dialectic.

The problem with the Spiritual Exercises lies probably in the way in which one interprets an annotation offered at the very start: ". . . it is not abundance of knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the inward sense and taste of things." (p.4) Loyola is referring to the need to describe first and foremost the historical realities that encircle the exercitant. The annotation in this context in no way instigates one towards a mystical apprehension of things. He seems to be urging a reconstruction of the historical facts of Christianity which in the mind as species impressa, the inward sense, urge the actuation of the understanding resulting in a verbum and a volitional response. Indeed, the following annotation discusses precisely these factors. The well-known application of the senses (p.41) must therefore not be confused with memory proper or it may easily be mistaken for an excess of imaginative behaviour rather than as a referent to sense knowledge in an epistemology essentially dramatic and dynamic. Aquinas would

accordingly distinguish between imaginativa, the representation of sense images in perception, and memorativa, sense remembered, both being functions of the memory.⁴⁷ The composition of place makes this indelible link with sense knowledge even more explicit: ". . . to look at the place and house where I have lived . . ." (p.33) The imagination (memory) is being involved according to its special relation with past physical fact and the awareness of time. The antecedence of memory to sense apprehension is made clear in the very first exercise, where the first prelude requires a composition of place which is then followed, in the first point, by an invoking of the memory and the understanding. (pp.23-24) Loyola's description of the imaginative re-creation of the invisible strengthens this antecedence. In the case of the meditation on sin, for example, it becomes: ". . . to see . . . my whole compound self in this vale of tears as in a banishment among brute animals . . ." (my italics, p.23) exemplifying Aquinas' dictate that incorporeal realities are known only by analogy to sensible realities. St. Augustine's quite different epistemology declares: "As the mind, then, itself gathers the knowledge of corporeal things through the senses of the body, so of incorporeal things through itself."⁴⁸ The Thomistic via expresses the dynamic activity of the physical texture of the world and the dynamic texture of the mind to render it ordered. The Augustinian via assumes the essential passivity of the world of res materiae. True actuation for him results only from the transcendent presence to the mind of a supernatural reality.

3

An extended explication of two of Donne's poems may show, even at this

⁴⁷ S.T., 1a, 85, 2, ad.3; See also Vol.12, Appendix 1, pp.168-169.

⁴⁸ De Trinitate, IX, 3, 3. Works, Vol.7, p.226.

early stage of the argument, the epistemological direction that he inherited from Scholasticism and the Ignatian meditative technique. The Extasie and Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward demonstrate, in their very different ways, an underlying similarity in the attainment of knowledge.

As meditative verse it may be called composition of place, but the opening lines of The Extasie (pp.51-53) serve to show that all our knowledge begins with the physical world:

"Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest
The violets reclining head,
Sat we two, one anothers best."

(11.1-4)

This is immediately followed by an application of two senses, touch, "Our hands were firmly cimented" (1.5), and sight, "Our eye-beams twisted" (1.7). It is at this stage of the experience that a hiatus seems to occur, for the lovers' souls now "Were gone out, hung 'twixt her, and mee . . ." (1.16). The immediate response is a series of inquiries: Where are the souls gone? Why, and what do they "negotiate" (1.17)? Above all, there seems to be no obvious connection between the physical vividness of the opening lines and the meta-physical speculation which follows on its heels. The link, I believe, (and it is necessary to find one) is located later in the poem. It is not so much contained in the assertion that the senses are of initial, though secondary, importance in that they "did us, to us, at first convay" (1.54). The real bridge is to be found even later:

"As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like Soules as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man:
So must pure lovers soules descend
T'affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies.

(11.61-68)

Helen Gardner makes a supremely important change here. Her reading, admittedly a personal emendation, of l.67 is entirely neo-Platonic. Her gloss from Leone Ebreo reflects a Platonic epistemological process which indeed decrees that the mind "must issue from the body to its external parts and to the organs of sense and movement in order that man may approach the objects of sense in the world . . ." Hence she replaces the relative 'which' by 'that.'⁴⁹ It seems very unlikely, from what has been shown of Donne's thinking, that he would assume so Platonist a stance. In the Aristotelian-Thomistic mode, the senses, as faculties, are essentially passive, recording impressions 'which' motivate the mind into activity. The lines in paraphrase should read: '. . . powers of the soul which sense impressions can reach and activate.' There are two other reasons why one should accept the version of the 1633 edition. The 'As . . . So' construction clearly presents a converse parallelism. I fail to see how, in Professor Gardner's reading, this antithetical parallel would exist if, on the one hand, the blood tries to 'reach' the soul while, on the other, the soul does not try to 'reach' physical reality. Moreover, Donne closes the argument with an analogy. The prisoner is the soul; a prisoner cannot be liberated by himself; a prisoner is a passive subject. Liberation must actively come from without. Physical sensations are 'written' on the sensitive faculties of the soul and the soul metamorphoses them into intelligibles. Hence:

"Loves mysteries in Soules doe grow,
But yet the body is his booke."

(ll.71-72)

The army metaphor earlier in the poem now works clearly;

⁴⁹ John Donne: The Elegies and Songs and Sonnets (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), p.187.

"As 'twixt two armies, Fate
 Suspends uncertaine victorie
 Our soules, (which to advance their state,
 Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee.
 And whil'st our soules nogotiate there . . ."

(11.13-17)

Two physical realities confront one another and are each being recorded and being "refin'd" (1.21) into intelligibility until they are "growen all minde." (1.23) Clearly, what the vicarious intruder in 1.21 may apprehend is apprehended by the lovers themselves. The reference to "concoction" (1.27) is helpful. Helen Gardner notes that it refers to the refining of metals by heat.⁵⁰ No conversion is implied. If identity in knowing, the "interanimation of two soules" (cf. 1.42), is to be achieved, then the material coordinates must be dispensed with ("Wee see by this, it was not sexe" (1.31)) to achieve an intelligible unity whence arises both the knowledge of the object in attention and, concomitantly, knowledge of the subject:

"Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
 And makes both one, each this and that . . .
 Wee then, who are this new soule, know,
 Of what we are compos'd, and made . . ."

(11.35-36, 45-46)

The defect of isolation or, "loneliness" (1.44) is hardly the lack of a mistress. It is, as has been shown in the Nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, the direct result of existing in an ontological vacuum, for the conscious presence of the mind is dependent on its aim to conceptualise potential intelligibility which "no change can invade." (1.48)

The theological similarity between Aquinas and Loyola is paralleled in the uniformity of epistemological direction between The Extasie and Goodfriday,

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.184.

1613. (pp.336-337) The opening of the latter describes, as Louis Martz identifies, a composition by similitude.⁵¹ It may be more pertinent to the course of this chapter to conceive of it as a composition of incorporeal reality by analogy to a physical one. The role of the imagination is thus essentially the same:

"Let man's Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
The intelligence that moves, devotion is, . . ."

(11.1-2)

The parallel with the physical 'now' of the opening of The Extasie is made clear a little further on:

"Hence is't, that I am carryed towards the West
This day, when my soules forme bends toward the East."

(11.9-10)

The physical act of riding westward is presented as a metaphysical and formal act of the soul, the result of a misdirected intelligence or "devotion." (1.2)

A. B. Chambers has investigated the tradition behind the natural movements of the sun and the stars and shows how Plato's theories in the Timaeus are adumbrated by Aristotle, Aquinas and the Scholastics, the idea of essential motion being now placed in an ethical and metaphysical framework involving rationality and volition.⁵² That intelligence must be re-aligned before a volitional act can seek to alter the physical entirety of the situation. The essence of the Thomistic epistemological process requires, above all, that the liberty of the intellect be respected. Conversion is alien to intellection. Joseph Hall, for example, who makes use of the same analogy denies exactly this: ". . . so,

⁵¹ The Poetry of Meditation, p.53.

⁵² Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward: The Poem and the Tradition, in ELH, Vol.28, 1961, pp.31-53.

though I have a will of mine own, yet let me give myself over to be ruled, and ordered by the Spirit in all my ways." ⁵³ Goodfriday, 1613, however, indicates the sense of a process in its concern with re-alignment, correction (1.38), restoration (1.41) and burning off of rust (1.40) rather than with sudden and intrinsic change. The will is clearly involved, and not as an irrelevant factor, in the process. This is made clear in the syntax of the last two sentences: "I turne my backe to thee, but to receive / Corrections . . . Restore thine Image, . . . and I'll turne my face." (11.37-42) This is why, as an alternative method of arriving at a knowledge of his mis-direction, the visio beata is rejected: "Who sees God's face, that is selfe life, must dye." (1.17) As a scriptural commonplace this is not original. It is Donne's interpolation, "that is selfe life," that gives us an insight into this alternative process. The mind cannot conceive of a pure existent. It can learn only insofar as its own light is activated, the mode by which God reaches us. There is a strong resemblance between "Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace, / That thou may'st know mee," (11.41-42) and Aquinas' "Et ideo, quod aliquid per certitudinem sciatur, est ex lumine rationis divinitus interius indito, quo in nobis loquitur Deus." ⁵⁴ Hence the appeal, in the poem, to habitual knowledge, which Aquinas also relegates to memory - and this is clearly what Donne is referring to when he declares: "Though these things, as I ride, be from mine eye, / They'are present yet unto my memory, / For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards me," (11.33-35) When the aim of the meditation is seen as the refining of the intellect, the 'form' of the opening lines, it is natural that at no point in the poem is any

⁵³ Ibid., cited p.41.

⁵⁴ De Veritate, 11, 1, ad.13. Cited in Verbum, p.81.

appeal made to an affective mode of introspection. The Augustinian epistemological gap is altogether absent. Therefore not love, but dynamic co-existence, is the keynote of the poem; in fact, it does much good to bear in mind that the poem is being created while Donne is actually riding. The dominant tone is pure intellection. It is that of the last great Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse:

As I come
I tune the instrument here at the dore,
And what I must doe then, thinke here before.

(p. 368, ll. 3-5)

It is indeed the intellectual nature of the meditation that provides us with the insight into the major problem of Donne's dialectic. Does the latter dissolve and crumble and is it abrogated when the soul yearns for communion with the Divine Spirit? Is the intellection, then, a red herring, false to the conclusion of the poem? Is it a case of:

Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!
And I reply'd, My Lord."

(The Collar, p. 154)

In Goodfriday, 1613, there are two elements that distinguish the poem from such a one as Herbert's poem cited above, and these two elements are integrally related: the intellect and the will. We have already seen that the poem offers a positive volitional response. It must also be noted that the two acts of the will that hold in parenthesis the entire experience, complement the intellectual formulation of the state of his soul in terms of celestial alignments. Intellectual cosmography is interwoven in volitional geography. It is the speaker who will change (metaphorical and literal) direction when his mind or his soul - which is what looks towards Christ - is purified by Him. There is no hint of conversion, no voice calling suddenly as in Herbert's The Collar. The mind in Thomism is naturally open to God. Goodfriday, 1613, thus respects the liberty of both the

intellect and the will. It is important that one relates this aspect of the poem to the very considerable accusations that Loyola himself faced regarding what some saw as the similarity of the Spiritual Exercises to the beliefs of the Alumbrados who "abandon themselves totally to God, . . . so that he may place in their minds what they have to do." ⁵⁵ One has to examine closely what Loyola exactly understands by the 'consolation' that God puts in the soul. At this point it will suffice to assert that it is in no sense a divine imposition. One has only to be constantly aware of the continuous stress that he places on the positive involvement of the intellect and the will: ". . . arguing the matter out well and faithfully with my understanding and choosing conformably to the will of His most holy good-pleasure." (p.153) For what Goodfriday, 1613, offers, is just the strategy that Loyola would require in the making of an 'Election' to a way of life - an intellectual and volitional movement towards the source of redemption. The attitude of Francois de Sales, for example, is totally different and exemplifies the other half of meditative literature: "Let us renounce this unfortunate liberty, and let us forever subject our free-will to the heavenly love; let us make ourselves slaves for the love which makes slaves happier than kings." ⁵⁶

4

What the Spiritual Exercises imply is the sense of a process involving the psychological whole of the human entity, and before one examines the heart of the Ignatian dialogue with God, it is necessary to describe many of its intrinsic facets which it shares with the modes of Donne's and Aquinas' psychology. The

⁵⁵ Hugo Rahner, Ignatius the Theologian, tr. M. Barry (London: Chapman, 1968) pp.158-159.

⁵⁶ Cited in F. Charmot, Ignatius Loyola and Francis de Sales, p.23.

Spiritual Exercises consistently present the use of the will in terms of a constant choice of alternatives pertaining to an end. The end is an 'Election' to a way of life and the means to it cannot be expressed in a more utilitarian manner: "And so, whatever I choose ought to be a means to aid me to the end for which I am created, not ordering or drawing the ends to the means . . ." (p.149) The 'Foundation' at the outset stresses the all-encompassing efficacy of the choice of the free will in terms of the more perfect and the more useful: "And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake and to help him in the following out of the end for which he was created." (p.18) That Donne thought very much like this has already been shown; nevertheless, the Ignatian tone strikingly resembles:

"You have refin'd mee, and to worthiest things
 (Vertue, Art, Beauty, Fortune,) now I see
 Rarenesse, or use, not nature value brings;
 And such as they are circumstanc'd, they bee.
 Two ills can ne'er perplexe us, sinne to'excuse;
 But of two good things, we may leave and chuse.

(To the Countess of Bedford, p.191)

When Donne declares:

There's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
 Of every quality comparison,
 The onely measure is, and judge, opinion.

(The Progresse of the Soule, p.316),

or when Loyola urges man to choose the use of things in his own way with the one stipulation that it be in what "is left to the liberty of our free will, and is not forbidden it," (p.18) neither is arguing for a moral ambivalence surrounding a particular choice; rather the will and the intellect when working at their best create a volitional dialectic that, as has been seen in Aquinas, weaves its own moral fabric. So Loyola informs a director of the Exercises: "Thus to each according as he seeks to dispose himself there should be given that whereby he may better help himself and make profit." (p.11) Karl Rahner interprets the

Ignatian universe from exactly such a point of view: ". . . what is particular and individual, at least when it is the personal spiritual decision of a spiritual subject, possesses a uniqueness that is not merely negative in relation to a universal . . ." ⁵⁷ In the section on 'The Discernment of Spirits' Loyola charts the progress of a series of choices in terms of psychological changes in consolation, desolation, remorse, repose and so forth. (pp.67ff. and 143ff.) What emerges is a picture of increasingly profound introspection that clearly imposes severe tests on one's skill in spiritual discernment. The Jesuit Dávilla referred to it as "a supernatural birth in which pain and travail and involuntary sadness are experienced." ⁵⁸ But lest it be thought that Loyola is here indulging in an extreme form of affective meditation, he reminds the exercitant: ". . . we ought much to attend to the course or current of thoughts . . . if the beginning, middle, and end are all good, tending to entire good . . ." (p.144) Indeed the third kind of Election, the final stage of the meditation, requires a "time of calm" when "the soul uses its natural powers freely and calmly." (p.152) Loyola is clearly assigning an important role to prudence, Aquinas' treatise on which illuminates the 'reasonableness' constantly required by the Spiritual Exercises. It accrues not in the will but in the reason; assesses, as in Aristotle, the action of individual matter, and is composed of memory (in the sense of Aristotelian experience), intelligence, teachableness, acumen, reasoned judgement, foresight, circumspection and caution. Aquinas follows Aristotle in committing the intelligence to the shifting world of the occasions and opportunities for human virtue and vice but further elevates moral philosophy into

⁵⁷ The Dynamic Element in the Church (London: Burns & Oats, 1964), p.11.

⁵⁸ Ignatius the Theologian, p.140.

moral theology by linking prudence with counsel, the gift of the Holy Ghost.⁵⁹

The speculative reason thus becomes an integral part of the introspection required in the Spiritual Exercises, although it is by no means the essential factor.

Much is made of the emotional violence of Donne's verse, but little of the importance he gives to just this sense of prudence. According to Aquinas the reasoning of prudence may be cast in the form of a syllogism.⁶⁰ Many of Donne's sonnets end with so fine a sense of spiritual discernment couched in very like syllogistic terms:

"Beauty, of pittie, foulnesse onely is
A signe of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde."

(Holy Sonnets XIII, p.328)

Often the syllogism is condensed:

"That sufferance was my sinne; now I repent;
'Cause I did suffer I must suffer paine."

(ibid., III, p.323)

The Hymne to God my God, in my sickness (p.369) - a meditation on death - calms emotional clangour by a series of similar syllogisms demonstrating the defeat of death in terms of the Resurrection and, therefore, of Adam in terms of Christ. The culmination of these terms is the rightly consoling: "Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down." In this context, I fail completely to see why William Halewood sees this particular line as abrogating the "givens of the situation."⁶¹

⁵⁹ S.T., IIa IIae, 47, 3, ad.1; 52.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Ia IIae, 13, 3; 76, 1.

⁶¹ The Poetry of Grace, p.25.

Discretion is a byword in Donne's verse. The series of opposing forces that affect the soul from despair to "thinking us all soule" are exhaustively listed in The Litanie (Stanzas XV-XVII, pp.343-344), which prays for nothing more than the ability to discern more prudently. But the precise location of prudence between moral philosophy and moral theology is averred in a letter to the Countess of Bedford:

"Discretion is a wisemans Soule, and so
Religions is a Christians, and you know
How these are one; her yea is not her no.

Nor may we hope to sodder still and knit
These two, and dare to break them; nor must wit
Be colleague to religion, but be it."

(pp.219-220)

"A lower principle of motion is sustained and perfected above all by being moved by a higher principle of motion, like body when quickened by soul."⁶² In thus relating divine counsel to prudence Aquinas highlights the cooperation of will and grace that is integral to both Loyola's and Donne's spiritual points of view. It is necessary to find no mystic nebulosity in the importance that Loyola places on counsel. Human acts which are already meaningful within the world become elevated beyond the ordo legis naturae into the life of God itself.⁶³ The object of the individual meditations in the Spiritual Exercises is to learn to "wish solely to will that thing, or will it not, according as God our Lord shall put into the will and according as shall seem better to the person concerned for the service and praise of His Divine Majesty." (p.118, my italics) On the one hand, grace is not irresistible; on the other, no basis is allowed for individualistic election. Loyola will not allow for a conversion of the will. In the words of one

⁶² S.T., Ila Ilae, 52, 2, resp.

⁶³ Karl Rahner, Thomas Aquinas on Truth, p.289.

annotater, one does not seek what God will permit, but what He prefers for you.⁶⁴

The 'take and receive' of the Spiritual Exercises consists, then, in a disposition on God's part and the disposing of the self to receive grace.⁶⁵

The implications of such an understanding of grace-in-cooperation are enormous in terms of a discussion of Donne's meditative dialectic. A bending of the will in the purification of the soul would result in a total disarray of his metaphysical and intellectual character. This is why in Goodfriday, 1613. it is important to realise that what grace achieves is correction and restoration. Not only is there no change of intrinsic or elemental worth, but also the change that is desired is interposed, as has been argued, between two volitional responses that dispose the self to accept the healing nature of grace. The Crosse likewise presents the final gift of Christ, the cross itself, as that which will purge the dross and reveal the true and essential part of the human soul:

"As perchance, Carvers do not faces make,
But that away, which hid them there, do take.
Let crosses, soe, take what hid Christ in thee, . . ."

(p.332, ll.33-35)

And in much the same vein Donne cries: "O Father, purge away / All vicious tinctures . . ." (The Litanie, p.338, ll.8-9)

What in fact Donne is expressing in his self-remonstrations is a desire for the resumption of order in disorderly activity. Donne's conception of sin as disorder has been elucidated. There is nothing about it of the abasement and castigation of human endeavour that much of the effective meditation popular in the age advised. The Spiritual Exercises, despite its powerful urging of an imagistic and visual evocation of sin, constantly reminds the exercitant that the

⁶⁴ The Spiritual Exercises, p.158.

⁶⁵ Ignatius the Theologian, p.112.

final purpose of such evocation is to correct and order such misguided act. Its purpose is, after all, exactly the same species of thing - an act, an Election. The opening injunction states this explicitly: ". . . because as walking, going and running are bodily exercises, in like manner all methods of preparing and disposing the soul to remove from herself all disorderly attachments . . . and, after their removal to seek and find the divine will in the laying out of one's life to the salvation of one's soul, are called Spiritual Exercises." (p.3) Sin is 'confusion' (p.45), and the example that follows, of a knight being arraigned before a king, underlines the lawlessness of disorder in very much the same way as do the images of the soul being treasonous and committing theft in the Holy Sonnet, Oh my black Soule! (p.323) Perhaps, though, the contrariness of sin is best expressed in that most personal of sonnets:

"Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
Inconstancie hath unnaturally begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotione."

(p.331, ll.1-4)

What the Summa, the Spiritual Exercises and Donne's world view have in common is that unbroken line from the world of res materiae, through man and then the angels, to God. A universe is presented by each of them which is linked together by the bonds of Aristotelian science and Christian theology in a way in which St. Augustine could neither philosophically nor theologically formulate. And the chain is firm throughout because it arises out of the dynamism of things in act. It is the formal act of the soul that leads Loyola constantly to lay stress on order and disorder in God's plan and on the necessity that, in order that His plan may come to fruition, "all the lower parts be more subject to the higher." (p.49) This is why Loyola's attitude towards res materiae has nothing of an otherworldliness about it, for the "other things on the face of the earth were

created to praise, and to do reverence to and to serve God . . . " (p.18)

Res materiae and abstractions, nature and grace, work within a configuration of an above, a middle and a below (in Donne, often an East-West geographical syndrome), indicative of the peculiarly Scholastic tendency to work from the knowable middle, upwards and downwards. Hugo Rahner suggests that the theology of Loyola defines and describes the 'above' by understanding the 'middle.' and quotes a letter from the 'mystical diary' for March the seventh, 1544:⁶⁶

"It seemed to me as though I had no right to look upwards - and this very contemplation, not of what was above, but of the middle, caused intense devotion to grow in me, accompanied by abundant tears, for I both had and felt increasing within me awe and reverence in face of what was revealed from above."

This, of course, is to argue for a profoundly trinitarian view of the world; but it is not a mystic's trinitarianism. When in The Litanie (pp.338-348) Donne presents the angels as "Native in heavens faire Palaces" (l.48), the apostles as "thy illustrious Zodiacke" (l.73), "Thy sacred Academie above / Of Doctors" (l.109), the Virgin "whose wombe was a place / Of middle kind" (ll.55-56), he is invoking an image of a dynamic universe, interwoven and pervaded by a dynamic God. This is a Creator who is existence itself:

"Swimme, and at every stroak, thou art thy Crosse;
The Mast and yard make one, where seas do tosse;
Looke downe, thou spiest out Crosses in small things;
Looke up, thou seest birds rais'd on crossed wings;
All the Globes frame, and spheares, is nothing else
But the Meridians crossing Parallels."

(The Crosse, p.332)

In Goodfriday, 1613. his fear of the visio beata stems from the awful horror of "having to behold those hands which span the Poles" and "that endlesse height

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.11.

which is / Zenith to us, and our Antipodes, / Humbled below us . . ."

(pp.336-337). When Donne avers in the Hymne to God my God in my sicknesse that Adam's tree and Christ's tree, that sweat and blood, that East and West can be brought into synchronisation by the divine presence and promise, he, like Loyola (who requires us to remember that "God dwells in creatures, in the elements giving being, in the plants giving vegetation, in men giving understanding" (p.209)), is concerned with a God above the world, but one really so, and not merely an ontological antithesis of what the world is. He is to be found in the world. This is a world truly 'existential' and one that is continuously oriented towards the fulfilment of formal act.

One sees, then, that the via in both the Spiritual Exercises and the poetry of Donne is composed of knowing and doing within the parameters of the created world and divine counsel. Epistemology and activity supplement each other to produce a coherent metaphysic and dialectic. This is why both their approaches towards nosce te ipsum are grounded not in edifying devotion, but in what Loyola calls gloria in labore, the conjunction of human nature at work and the radiance of the godhead that comprises the hypostatic Christ. Knowledge becomes a part of action. The Call of Christ in the Exercises requires this ". . . he must labour as I do by day and watch at night . . ." (p.77) It is a call to battle, to imitate the historic fact of Christ's essential role. Election becomes a discovery of this central law of existence in facts, a notion that Donne, always the man of action, wholeheartedly embraces: "Since to be gracious / Our task is treble, to pray, beare and doe . . ." (The Litanie, p.343, ll.123-124) The accent is not so much on the importance of good works, a dogmatic bête-noire at the forefront of Reformation theology, but rather on the acknowledgement that activity to a purposeful end is the measure of the value of the soul in act: "For to choose is to do; but to be no part of anybody, is to be nothing." In the same

letter Donne emulates the monks, for each of them "cultivated his own garden and orchard, that is, his soul and body, by meditation and manufactures."⁶⁷ The Ignatian assent to the world is based finally on the recognition that he who lives the vita contemplativa must be aware that the vita activa is its proper counterpart, and, further, that he must acknowledge that the active life is a sharing in the pure act that is God. When Grierson speaks of effort in Donne's verse, "the effort to realise the majesty of God, the heinousness of sin, the terrors of hell, the mercy of Christ,"⁶⁸ he is, I believe, referring to precisely this constant sense of knowing, choice and action.

The apotheosis of proper act is, as Loyola describes it, the most perfect mode of humility, "the better imitation of Christ our Lord and the more actual likeness to him." (p.138) The requirement is the assimilation of human act to the act which is God Himself, one's existence tending to Existence itself, the imitation of Christ. There are intimations throughout the Divine Poems of Donne's awareness of the necessity for a parallel between Christ's and his life. La Corona seeks to exchange the poetic coronet for the crown of thorns and the life of salvation:

"But doe not, with a vile crowne of fraile bayes,
Reward my muses white sincerity,
But what thy thorny crowne gain'd, that give mee,
A crowne of Glory, which doth flower alwayes;"

(p.318, ll.5-8)

The one-to-one correspondence is markedly similar to the Devotions: "This Child of mine, this Booke, comes into the world, from mee, and with mee. And therefore, I presume (as I did the Father to the Father) to present the Sonne to

⁶⁷ The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: The Modern Library, 1952), pp.375, 376.

⁶⁸ The Poems of John Donne, Vol. II, p.li.

the sonne; This image of my Humiliation, to the lively Image, of his Maiesty,
 . . ." ⁶⁹ The parallel exists between James I's presentation of Donne to God,
 and Donne's presentation of his book to the prince, soon to be Charles I. It is the
 last phrase that demonstrates Donne's awareness that the imitation inherent in
 his action can only be proper if it is conceived in humility. As Joan Webber
 suggests, the original can then justify the copy. ⁷⁰ This humility is exactly
 what imitating Christ involves in the Spiritual Exercises. The Modes of Humility
 are meant as annotations to the meditation on the Passion. The exercitant is
 incited to violent "grief, pain and heart-rending, bringing into memory frequently
 the labours, fatigues and pains of Christ our Lord . . ." (pp.173 and 174) Such
 violence is, as often noted, a vital part of the Holy Sonnets. Sonnet III depicts
 his desire for punishment, clearly bringing to mind that of Christ's which, unlike
 his, had no self-induced cause: "Oh might those sighes and teares returne againe
 / Into my breast . . . I must suffer paine." (p.323, ll.1-2, 8) Sonnet IX
 invokes a parallel between Christ's blood and his tears, implying the dwarfed
 efficacy of the latter:

"Oh! of thine onely worthy blood,
 And my teares, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
 And drowne in it my sinnes blacke memorie;"

(p.326, ll.10-12)

"Batter my heart, three-person'd God" (Sonnet XIV, p.328) brings to mind "O
 strong Ramme, which hast batter'd heaven for mee . . ." (La Corona, Ascention,
 1.9). But the central sonnet to this argument is, of course, XI, "Spit in my face
 you Jewes, and pierce my side . . ." The interpretation that Patrick Grant
 offers of Donne's personality as it exists in the Holy Sonnets seems wholly to

⁶⁹ Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, p.3.

⁷⁰ The Elequent 'I', p.18.

escape dealing with precisely this aspect of Ignatian meditation, the aspect that clearly has its source in imitative dynamism. It is by this that one distinguishes between attitudes towards Christological spirituality. As Professor Martz asserts, the striking characteristic of Ignatian meditation is that the vivid apprehension of the physical scene is not coupled, as in medieval meditation such as is to be found in St. Bonaventure, with simple theological abstractions. The understanding explores and elaborates the theological significance of the scene.⁷¹ Mr. Grant cites a hymne by Bonaventure, Laudimus de Sancta Cruce:

"Jesus crucified, support me,
That so long as life is in me,
I with joy may mourn your death . . .
That with you I may be wounded,
And may hunger to embrace you
On the Cross till end of breath."

Noting that Donne, unlike Bonaventure, does not merely seek to join Christ, but to 'replace' him, he infers that Donne begins the sonnet with 'a misconception,' for to wish to replace Christ is to wish to "supplant, and with gainful intent" (IX, 1.12). I fail to see how this claim can be substantiated. To begin with, 'replace' is not what Donne has in mind, and this is where Mr. Grant misconceives the spirituality behind the sonnet. The reference to Jacob and 'gainful intent' works in terms of typical Christian exegesis, very much as Herbert's Joseph's Coat parallels Christ's body. Discounting the trend of such an intellectually oriented christology, Mr. Grant assesses the Holy Sonnets in terms of affective piety, and assuming (that to Donne, at any rate), Aquinas and the Dominicans to be 'upstarts' he characteristically assumes that the Donne who repudiates the harsher doctrines of Reformation Augustinianism is either latitudunarian or an enlightened neo-Platonist. Consequently, there is no attempt to correlate the

⁷¹ The Transformation of Sin, pp.40-43; The Poetry of Meditation, p.75.

picture of a poet in meditation involving the full force of his intellect in act, his will in act and his violent use of his sensible powers with the evident and unique totality of man that the Spiritual Exercises presents.

Thus far two aspects of a dialectic have been discussed - the search for truth through knowledge and the attainment of truth through action, an epistemological and an ontological goal. Knowing and becoming are unified and, in the Christian sense, elevated, the former through that agent intellect's natural orientation towards esse, God, the latter through the link between nature and supernature effected by a cooperation between God and man. In both cases the below-above configuration is held in tension by the theology behind the hypostatic Christ. The 'more' perfect of the choice in Election, in fact, the series of choices and actions available to man, are exemplified in the act of Christ's death, which is understood, in the context of the Spiritual Exercises, when seen as the formal principle of the introductory Foundation. For only Christ is that exemplar of activity that the exercitant must seek identification with. This is the purpose of every exercise on the life of Christ. When Donne announces "Salvation to all that will is nigh," he is equating the Christ who is the exemplar and principle of existence with the Christ who, as man, suffered death. Indeed, La Corona (pp.318-321) continuously measures "selfe-life's infinity to a span" (V, 1.8), synthesizing the 'All' and the specific in Christ's act. The "All, which alwayes is All éverywhere" (II, 1.2) is seen in conjunction with the womb; "He / Which fills all place" (III, 1.10) with the inn; the Word, knowing all, with the temple. The temporal must tend towards the eternal, as the specific to the universal, as potency to act. This is as Loyola implies when he advises that call of the temporal king helps to understand the call of the Eternal King. (p.77) One at the sepulchre, argues Donne, "issuing from the sheet, this body seen, / He would have justly thought this body a soule, / If not of any man, yet of the

whole." (Resurrection, Imperfect, p.334, ll.20-22) Christ, in his death, becomes the formal principle of the world. The Passion and Death become less of an affective symbol. They imply an effective one, one that Donne yearns to approximate:

"This treasure then, in grosse, my Soule uplay,
And in my life retaile it every day."

(Upon the Annunciation and Passion, p.336, ll.45-46)

This is why sin, both in Donne and in Loyola, is always tempered. On the one hand, the end of the Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises expresses the purpose of the meditation: the return of creation to God. On the other, the Contemplation to Obtain Love at the end of the Spiritual Exercises expresses God's descent into all things. The lack of contrariness in the fulfilment of this plan is achieved by Christ's death. Sin, that is to say, is held in parenthesis by the whole of salvation history. As Hugo Rahner expresses it, "the theology of ascent to the Father . . . presupposes the theology of descent from the Father to all things on earth."⁷² The accent thus falls not on violent self-abasement, though both Loyola and Donne experience it, but on the dynamic Christ who achieves the fruition of the Divine plan. Donne, in not a few poems, sees this majestic Anima mundi: "Hasting to Heaven, would that he might allow / Himselfe unto all stations, and fill all, / For these three dayes become a minerall;" (Resurrection, Imperfect, p.334, ll.10-12) to Him belong those hands which "tune all spheares at once." (Goodfriday, 1613, p.336, l.22) In fact, the latter poem presents the exercitant's own personal sinfulness completely dwarfed by the majesty of the salvific Christ and by the history of God's dealings with man. Sonnet XVI (p.329) seems, indeed, to take the Scotist side of the Scholastic

⁷² Ignatius the Theologian, p.64.

debate as to whether Christ was intended as a sacrifice even before the fall of man or only after it: "This lambe, whose death, with life the world hath blest, / Was from the worlds begining slaine . . . ," but is imbued throughout with the conviction that the act of Christ harnesses the fury of sinfulness. What Donne is expressing is what Loyola believes, the notion of "a living King, actively at work here and now . . . ," ⁷³ one who must be imitated, therefore, in terms of the Thomistic movement from the partially realised to the absolutely real. Thus imitation (and the debt to Aristotle is plain here) concerns especially modes of acting, knowledge being the principle of operation. In this sense the Spiritual Exercises can be set apart from the Devotio Moderna of a Kempis, St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure and, the precursor of all such, the meditative tone of St. Augustine as well as the affective piety of the numerous meditative treatises from the late fourteenth century. Loyola speaks finally of knowing the "Idea of Christ our Lord . . . and how we ought to dispose ourselves to come to perfection in that state of life . . ." (p.109) It is in this theological light that one must understand the urge to be allowed "actual poverty . . . insults and injuries, the better to imitate him," (p.112) or again, to ask for "grief with Christ grieving, broken with Christ broken . . ." It is only as expressing a movement towards fuller act that the violence of "Spit in my face ye Jewes" can be subsumed within Donne's acknowledged intellection and ferocity of purpose:

"Who can deny me power, and liberty
To stretch mine armes, and mine owne Crosse to be?"

(The Crosse, p.332, ll.17-18)

For it is in the attainment of act that the intellect and will fully realise their potential, in being, in other words, "his (Christ's) image, or not his, but hee."

⁷³ Ibid., p.97.

(ibid. 1.37) Indeed, from the days of Donne's 'idolatrie' the lovers in A Valediction: of the booke (p.30), who are "Rule and example" and "the worlds forme," though in a far different vein, represent the same philosophical argument.

A Valediction: of the booke also presents the apotheosis of such a metaphysic. The book, as containing the esse of love, becomes sacramental. The bracelet of bright hair in The Relique (p.62) achieves the same status because it connotes a spiritual reality far beyond its material limits. Thus neither The Primrose nor The Blossom can be called nature poems in the least. They deal with meaning within things. Loyola is aware throughout the Spiritual Exercises of this sacramental nature of the res surrounding the life of Christ: "We must consider all creatures . . . bathed in the blood of Christ, as images of God, and the temple of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁴ This is a trinitarianism that seeks to restore the balance with natural experience. On the one hand, the senses become 'divinized'; one must "taste sadness and the worm of conscience" and "smell and taste the infinite fragrance and sweetness of the divinity." (pp.41, 94) And the ecstatic emotion of Sonnet XIV is hardly less than this:

"Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee."

(p.328, ll.12-14)

On the other, the senses and the sensible world are intrinsically woven into the fabric of salvation. Creation is unified in one purposeful intent. In the movements from the world to spiritual realities and thence back to the world sensible nature has its place, as Donne avers:

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.126.

"And crosse thy senses, else, both they, and thou
 Must perish soone, and to destruction bowe.
 For if the'eye seeke good objects, and will take
 No crosse from bad, wee cannot scape a snake.
 So with harsh, hard, sowre, stinking, crosse the rest
 Make them indifferent all;"

(The Crosse, pp.332-333, ll.43-48)

5

One can see at work, then, an epistemology that includes, in the attainment of knowledge, the whole universe from res materiae to the Divine Light to which the mind orients itself. One also perceives that, in the framework of a Scholastic conception of the will and of its relation to grace, an uninterrupted and dynamic ontological process towards fuller actuation is possible. These two skeins, knit together, should produce a proper dialectic. However, there is a problem, and it lies in the domain of epistemology. The process of knowing that has been outlined is essentially a secular one. The agent intellect performs a perfectly natural role. The ontological impulse, however, is spiritual. True being is Christ Himself. What is required is an epistemology that, while respecting the powers of natural man, yet enables him to attain a closer and more intimate experience with God. The Spiritual Exercises at its very heart offers this, a mode of intellection sine ratiociniis, a mode which, I believe, infuses some of the richest poetry of Donne.

The Exercises refer to it as "consolacion al anima sin causa precedente," consolation to the soul without previous cause. (p.143) While the mode of this rapprochement on the part of God is neither conceptually expressible nor rationally discursive, it remains both intellectual and grounded ultimately in ordinary knowledge. It presents a nexus between man and God that is only advised in the meditation after the exercitant has been thoroughly schooled in the demanding

and methodical use of the senses, understanding and prayer. Moreover, to stress the sense of continuing process, Loyola allows for this form of intellection only after the cultivation of an individualistic and experiential aptitude, and only as divine guidance for "the peculiar circumstances and character of the person concerned." (p.8) In terms of the general framework of the Spiritual Exercises, the meditations act very much as a "field conditioning possible choice," "a previously guiding knowledge marking out the domain on principles of the objectively relevant and ecclesiastical kind."⁷⁵ Likewise, the Discernment of Spirits (especially pp.143-146), that most important and psychologically profound section of the Exercises, indispensably requires rational reflection; for Loyola, like Aquinas, was aware that impulses have a rational structure that can be expressed and verified. The point Loyola makes about a divine influence is not the possibility of recognizing it while it lasts, but the necessity of its recognition for subsequent reflection.⁷⁶ "We ought much to attend to the course or current of the thoughts," the Exercises advise, "and if the beginning, middle and end are all good . . ." (p.144)

The impulse itself is qualitatively different from the dynamic orientation of the mind to being in general with reference to a particular object. Indeed, as Karl Rahner notes, the dynamism now becomes more and more essential.⁷⁷ As the Exercises put it: ". . . it is proper to the creator to come in, to go out, to set up a movement in the soul . . . without any previous sense or knowledge of any object, whereby any such consolation should come by her acts of understanding and will." (p.143) God is always seen as coming rather than

⁷⁵ The Dynamic Element in the Church, pp.101,102.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.128.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.145.

having come. In this sense the impulse is freedom itself, for the question of assent or dissent does not arise because without cause or object there is no self-awareness. In terms of its being pure dynamism, the 'finger of God,' it is non-conceptual, but it cannot be seen as the sign of the divine origin of a sudden conversion.⁷⁸ It possesses content, being as it is a form of intellectual transfusion, and it is this content that the elevated mind confronts with its own will towards the object of its choice according to the rules of rational introspection which the Exercises refer to as the Discernment of Spirits. The consolation is not, therefore, the final stage of the meditative process. That stage is synthesis, and relates accordingly to a process and the discovery of what Aquinas called 'connaturality,' a kinship with divine things.⁷⁹ There is no nebulosity here. The experience seeks to distil "the fundamental concrete tendency of an individual person as actualised in the experience of consolation."⁸⁰

One would have been grateful for a record of Donne's actual election to the ministry. We do, however, have an equally personal interpretation of such an event in To Mr. Tilman after he had taken orders (pp.351-352). From the title it is clear that the actual moment of divine impulsion is past, but the rational mind must now ascertain its rationality in terms of psychological change:

". . . how is thy mind
Affected since the vintage? Dost thou finde
New thoughts and stirrings in thee? And as Steele
Toucht with a loadstone, dost new motions feele?"

(11.5-8)

The term 'motions' distinctly brings to mind that realignment of form and act that Goodfriday, 1613. presents. The impulse, moreover, is wholly intellectual

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.140-142.

⁷⁹ S.T., IIa IIae, 45, 2.

⁸⁰ The Dynamic Element in the Church, p.165.

and spiritual, being "new feather'd with coelestiall love." (1.22) And the close of the poem refers back to normal experience as the Exercises would require:

"And so the heavens which beget all things here,
And the earth our mother, which these things doth beare,
Both these in thee, are in thy calling knit,
And make thee now a blest Hermaphrodite."

(11.51-54)

Two of the Songs and Sonnets may be helpful in this context. Loves Exchange (pp.34-35) has to be read carefully, inverting as it does the respective roles of God and man. Cupid is a disinterested, almost uncaring, divinity, but the central experience closely resembles that in the poem to Tilman. The mutual activity between God and man opens the poem:

"Love, any devill else but you
Would for a given Soule give something too."

The desire for imitation of the divine (here, what one might even call Cupid's stigmata: blindness and folly) has already been discussed, and the actual contact between the divinity and man is similarly conceived as that in the poem to Tilman:

"If thou give nothing, yet thou art just,
Because I would not thy first motions trust . . ."

(11.22-23)

Realigning the ironic mode of the poem, it becomes clear that in its true sense the divine impulse is so natural to the human intellect that the desire for 'dispensation' (1.8) from it or having to 'condition' (1.25) simply does not arise. It is not a 'Non obstante on natures law' (1.11). Indeed, the opposition to Cupid's invasion conversely parallels the co-operation with God's coming that is the corner stone on which, for example, La Corona is built: with the refining of his mind by God, he can offer back to God the creations of his own personality:

"And if thy Holy Spirit, my Muse did raise,
Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise."

(Ascention, p.321, 11.13-14)

It is The Dream (pp. 37-38) which can be said to describe a perfect analogue to the event of such an impulse. It is clearly a late love lyric, and Helen Gardner links it with Donne's most philosophic poems.⁸¹ The poem presents a moment in time in which the waking into reality can hardly be distinguished from the passing into dream: "My dream thou brok'st not, but continued'st it." (l.6) It is also clear that the 'love' who enters the dream has all the capabilities of a divine power: "Thou art so truth . . ." (l.7) Professor Gardner prefers to emend 'truth' to 'true' despite Grierson's assertion that Donne attributes to the lady two other Scholastic divine characteristics: the identity of being and essence ("thoughts of thee suffice / To make dreames truths" (ll.7-8)), and knowledge by thoughts and not by the signs that angels are restricted to ("Knew'st my thoughts beyond an angels art" (l.16)).⁸² While the poem is not a religious one, the lady is treated very much like Dante's Beatrice or the Countess of Bedford in a letter from Donne:

"Reason is our Soules left hand, faith her right,
By these wee reach divinity, thats you."

(p.190, ll.1-2)

And The Dreame has all the properties of the species of experience that the Exercises describe, in particular, the sheer dynamism implied in the effortless coming and going of the divinity:

"As lightning or a Tapers light
Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd mee . . . (ll.11-12)

"Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come;" (l.29)

Characteristically, the poem's central event, the coming and going of the lady is limited by two terms: at the outset, the assertion that the experience is avowedly

⁸¹ The Songs and Sonnets, p.lv.

⁸² Ibid., p.209; The Poems of John Donne, Vol.2, p.34.

intellectual in kind ("It was a theame / For reason" (ll.3-4)), and, towards the end, the intense expression of rational debate concerning the psychological nature of the experience:

"But rising makes me doubt, that now,
 Thou art not thou.
 That love is weake, where feare's as strong as hee;
 'Tis not all spirit, pure, and brave,
 If it mixture of Feare, Shame, Honor, have."

(ll.22-26)

The poem is nevertheless positive in its conclusion, and what must be noted is that while the conclusion may not seem at first to be derived from what precedes it, it is the logical termination to an experience of a mystical nature. For if while he dreamed, the divinity came to him and departed, then it did so of its own accord, 'sin causa,' and consequently all he can do is to acknowledge the experience and hope that it recurs:

"Thou cam'st to kindle, goe'st to come; Then I
 would dream that hope againe, but else would die."

(ll.29-30)

Above all, the poem demonstrates the absence of any coercion within such an experience. It exhibits the same sense of the welcome giving and taking that pervades A Hymne to Christ (pp.352-353):

"Thou lov'st not, till from loving more, thou free
 My soule: Who ever gives, takes libertie . . ."

(ll.21-22)

Within such an experience there is no awareness of self, and so no awareness of sinfulness either; the tone is subdued:

"Churches are best for Prayer, that have least light:
 To see God onely, I goe out of sight:"

(ll.29-30)

It is this sense of process, involving as it does an epistemology, the liberty of the will and its Scholastic relationship with grace, and the gift of

And while this too is a form of the love between God and man, it markedly differs, for example, from Francois de Sales' expression of it: "Après l'action de l'imagination, s'ensuit l'action de l'entendement que nous appelons méditation, qui n'est autre chose qu'une ou plusieurs considérations faites enfin d'émouvoir nos affections en Dieu . . ." ⁸⁴ For, like St. Augustine, he sees the function of meditation thus: "La méditation repand des bons mouvements en la volonté ou partie affective de notre âme comme sont l'amour de Dieu . . ." ⁸⁵ Donne, like Loyola, always proposes a truly experiential solution to the admission of failure with which so many of his Divine Poems begin. In the sonnets, the intellectual formulation which terminates at the fourteenth line only opens out a vista of future action. There is a conviction that the poem ends with both God and himself on the same side, and in this sense they are indeed effective:

"Then turne
O pensive soule, to God, for he knowes best
Thy true grief, for he put it in my breast."

(Sonnet VIII, p.325),

or again,

" 'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
But, that God should be made like man, much more."

(Sonnet XV, p.329)

⁸⁴ Francois de Sales, Introduction à la vie dévote, ed. Etienne-Marie Lajeunie (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1962), II, 5, p.73.

⁸⁵ Ibid., II, 6, p.74.

'consolation' sine ratiociniis that the Holy Sonnets present. Martz sees some of the sonnets as condensed versions of a single spiritual exercise. They can also be seen as condensed but complete meditations in the sense that many of them begin with a spiritual problem and end with its solution, no whit of human liberty having been lost in the process; that is to say, they end in an avowal to espouse a certain way of life. It is a critical commonplace that the sonnets suffer from a break in mood. Una Nelly, for example, misses the subsequent "tension, ambiguity . . . absence of stress."⁸³ Whether one accounts this a fault or not, it is certainly noticeable. Perhaps the reason for this is that one applies one kind of dialectical scale against a different sort of experience. If one perceives similarities between the Spiritual Exercises and the Holy Sonnets, then one must agree that Donne understands Loyola's central thesis - the impulse of God. It cannot be expressed as a concept because it is sin causa. In chronological time, therefore, it must exist as a hiatus. It has, as has been argued, content, the effect of which can be expressed - the sense of calm, consolation, intellectual questioning and synthesis. Sonnet VII (p.325) presents the sensible recreation of the tumult of the Last Judgement. The hiatus occurs at the end of the octet:

"But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space.
For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
When wee are there, here on this lowly ground,
Teach mee how to repent; for thats as good
As if thou'had'st sealed my pardon, with thy blood,"

The sense of consolation is evident; it is something more perceived than felt, and this is why it takes very much the shape of a logical investigation - If above all these . . . then here on . . . because thats as good. The hiatus, sine ratiociniis,

⁸³ The Poet Donne: A Study in his Dialectic Method (Cork: Cork University Press, 1969), p.141.

has provided the exercitant with the logical framework within which the meditative inquiry into the Last Judgement may be solved and rationaly assented to. The violence of Sonnet XI (p.327) is followed after the ninth line by an assent (rationally formulated) to the true meaning of Christ's intentional humbling of himself:

"God cloth'd himselfe in vile mans flesh, that so
Hee might be weake enough to suffer woe."

(ll.13-14)

If there exists what one might even call a credibility gap between the two sections of the sonnet, the mood of consolation testifies to the healing nature of a superior knowledge given to the speaker of the poem. The frequent octet-hiatus-sestet divisions seem more often than not to parallel the major movements of the Exercises: the exercise itself - consolation - discernment, and both, the Exercises and the sonnets, obey the same trinitarian formula implying process. In Sonnet I (p.322) the movement into the sestet quite literally looks upwards:

"Onely thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;"

and the sense of cooperation in the entire process is apparent, for when Donne implores God: "like Adamant draw mine iron heart," he refers to a mutual attraction. In Sonnet XII (p.327) the movement into consolation and the subsequent intellectual discernment and formulation is delayed, coming at the eleventh line, but the immediate mood of exhilaration and inquiry referring back to and solving the initial problem is undeniable. Sonnet XVII (p.330) does actually depict Donne praying for, and achieving, consolation:

" . . . my mind did whett
To seeke thee God; so streames do shew their head;

But the actual content of the consolation, the value of His love, is not yet realised, until the sestet presents the movement into synthesis and rationality

when, as Loyola puts it, "the soul is not agitated by diverse spirits." (p.152)

"But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett.
But why should I begg more love, when as thou
Dost wooe my soule for hers, offering all thine:"

The rules for the discernments of spirits note frequently that great care must be taken when evaluating the effect of the divine impulse "because often in this second period, by her own proper activity, working upon her habits and consequences of concepts and judgements, (the soul) comes . . . to form various purposes and opinions which are not given immediately by God our Lord." (p.146) Thus in Sonnet IV, (p.323) "O my blacke soule . . .", the consolation of "Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lack" is quickly abrogated by "But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?", and followed swiftly with a purpose whose harshness only resembles the earlier lines of the poem:

"Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,
And red with blushing as thou art with sinne;"

He is on the verge of despair again. And only after this does the quieter tone of the real solution intrude into his mind:

"Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red soules to white."

The "But oh it must be burnt" of Sonnet V (p.324) reveals the same confusion of spirit that only abates with further rational argument:

". . . alas the fire
Of lust and envy have burnt it heretofore,
And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,
And burne me ð Lord, with a fiery zeale . . ."

Indeed what can be seen in the Holy Sonnets is an effective rather than an affective mode of meditation. This is why the sense of process is pervasive. "Sentire" it has been noted is a key word in Ignatian prayer, but it does not connote emotional responses; rather it is entirely intellectual, a spiritual sense.

CHAPTER IV
CONCEIT AND EMBLEM

1

The use of the conceit and the emblem as imagery reflects a poet's orientation to the world of things. It arises out of his self-awareness, for this is only achieved in the knowing of something else. Therefore, in dealing with the Metaphysical poets' use of the conceit and the emblem, one has not only to ascertain their ontological orientations; their understanding of essence or quidditas is part of their epistemological direction. To a certain extent both ontology and epistemology have, as far as Donne and Herbert are concerned, been discussed; but it is now necessary to examine these factors in more depth and from a more philosophical point of view.

Scholasticism propounds two parallel but opposing directions in which knowledge substantiates itself: the order of abstraction, the genetic order of knowing, in which knowledge moves progressively from natures to sensible species to universals; and the order of the intellect in which the movement is in the reverse. "Our Intellect both abstracts species from sense images - in so far as it considers the natures of things as universal - and yet, at the same time,

understands these in sense images, since it cannot even understand the things from which it abstracts species without turning to sense images . . ." ¹

Gradually, the literal determinants are dropped by an increasing remotion of attributes. It is at this primary and basic stage that Scholastic Aristotelianism differs from Augustinian epistemology, for to the Scholastic, res naturae are essential to knowledge which must proceed from the senses. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, sensation "is an activity not of the soul alone, but of the body-soul composite. . . (and so) there is no difficulty in the fact that sensible objects outside the soul should have an effect on the composite." ² However, since nothing corporeal can make an effect on an incorporeal thing, the 'agent intellect,' as has been shown, is posited, which, by a process of abstraction renders images received from the senses actually intelligible. Obviously, knowledge thus generated is contingent on numerous circumstantial phenomena and is therefore always relative.

In St. Augustine, now, what can be noted is the apparent dismissal of the world of sensation and res naturae in the absorption in the inner world of the soul and the end it seeks. The mode of such a tendency is exactly credo ut intelligam. St. Augustine will only seek the reason for things where faith has already established their veracity. He joins St. Paul in believing that God is naturally present in man, a belief cementing the relationship between, as we have seen, the object and subject of desire. ³ Of the three terms: existence, life and knowledge, it is undoubtedly the last which will be superior, for the other two are proved to

¹ S.T., 1a, 85, 1, ad.5.

² Ibid., 1a, 84, 6, resp.

³ In Joannis Evangelium, 106, 4. Works, Vol.11, p.434.

exist only in terms of the self-reflection that knowledge allows.⁴ Within knowledge of the mind, likewise, reason will dominate the external and internal senses, becoming the criterion for valid judgement.⁵ However, in admitting this, one realises that St. Augustine's scale of comparison is always arranged according to the scale of perfection. In the very different method of Aquinas, the term of perfection is evaluated as equivalent, though contrary, to the term of generation: what is initial in any one of the terms is only superior in so far as that term is relevant. St. Augustine is not concerned with the term of generation; he seeks to attain to whatever is superior even to reason, and his convictions assure him that this exists. As Etienne Gilson indicates, since the problem of God's existence is inseparable from the problem of knowledge, knowing the existence of truth is identical to knowing how we comprehend the truth.⁶

Therefore, St. Augustine's entire dialectic can and must take place within the mind. Although he often stresses the importance of the senses and the world (and he is certainly aware of the proof of God's existence a contingentia mundi), res naturae are intrinsically dispensible in any movement of the mind towards the immutable permanent truth that is God. Martz notes this tendency in meditative literature. Citing as an example: "When the beauty of mankind impresses you, you should immediately distinguish what is apparent to the eye from what is seen only by the mind. You must remember that all corporeal beauty flows from an invisible principle, the uncreated beauty of God . . . ," he comments: "The result must have been . . . a universe and a daily life

⁴ De Libero Arbitrio, II, 3, pp.40-41.

⁵ Ibid., II, 3, pp.42-44.

⁶ The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine, p.18.

electrical with imagery, where every commonest event wore a glow of transcendental power." ⁷

It is necessary in discussing the characteristics of the emblem to be aware of how much Augustinianism owes to Platonism. Plato himself inherited from Socrates a mode of thinking that sought knowledge as a means to virtue. Like St. Augustine, Plato, at least until the Republic, viewed everything in a practical light. The meaning of the world had to approximate to the supreme Good for which it strives. The morality inherent in Plato's notion of participation in the Ideas is therefore remarkably similar to Augustinian participation in God, for both forms of participation reflect "an intense desire to escape from a world where moral distinctions could be altered to suit men's taste or interest, and all knowledge was a groping after temporary truths." ⁸ The Imago Dei in St. Augustine is to be located within the ratio superior; likewise Platonic division and dialectic must end at the 'atomic form' after which one must allow the numerous individuals to be relegated to the undetermined. For although Plato, in the later works, agrees that memory, coinciding with sensations, produces images in the soul, he begins his analysis with the image produced. ⁹ Any process of knowledge thus remains within the mind, and particulars are real in so far as they are known to belong to an Idea. ¹⁰ Julius Stenzel notes a related and important aspect of Platonic Ideas: Good is an object to be seen; 'Idea' is etymologically related to 'seeing,' and the soul has only to be turned to the idea

⁷ The Poetry of Meditation, p.129.

⁸ Julius Stenzel, Plato's Method of Dialectic, tr. and ed. D.J. Allan (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p.xxvi.

⁹ Philebus, 16d, 33d ff., tr. J. C. B. Gosling (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp.7, 27 ff.

¹⁰ Plato's Method of Dialectic, pp.xxxviii-xxxix.

of the good to 'apprehend' it. Thus the essential operations of Plato's logic show undeniably a fondness for an intuitive manner of understanding.¹¹ Platonism thus works in favour of innate ideas and infused knowledge or illumination, where everything pertaining to the activity of the intellect has reference not to the world of materia but to the separate immaterial objects in the world of Ideas and Forms. It is content to know the order of entia rationis; but its relation to entia naturae is left a mystery. Scholasticism, following Aristotle, would reject such a theory simply because "in seeking knowledge of things that are evident to us, to bring in as a means other realities which could not be of the essence of these evident things since they are of an essentially different order,"¹² would be illogical.

2

At the very outset, one may perceive a link between an ontological orientation and the usage of English grammatical categories in the work of Donne and Herbert. While quidditas is the object of both poets, for Donne the world of materia is essential to a state of awareness; not so for Herbert. In a poem by Donne, entia naturae are approached as objects to be known, and are therefore invariably preceded by the indefinite article:

"And all your graces no more use shall have
Then a Sun dyall in a grave."

(The Will, p.58)

or, again,

"Yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love: All, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, a light and body must be here."

(A Nocturnal . . ., p.45),

¹¹ Ibid., pp.37-38.

¹² S.T., 1a, 84, 1, resp.

where the indefinite article is understood, the sense being plural. The "stiff twin compasses" (p.50) are referred to in the same way. In A Valediction of weeping it is clearest:

"On a round ball
A workman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia . . ."

(p.38)

Three quotations from some of the early grammarians explain Donne's ontological motivations. John Wallis regards A as an equivalent to one (as in "one little roome an everywhere"): "A idem omnino significat ac one, unus, sed minus emphatica." Richard Brown explains more precisely that a and an "extend the Signification of a Noun to any one particular, and so to all, one by one of its kind." Chronologically much later James Harris provides us with a more ontological expression: "A respects our primary Perception, and denotes Individuals as unknown."¹³ Donne's approach to entia naturae is clear; he is interested in them in their immediacy, a primary perception of an object not in its potency, but in its act. The picture that will emerge in the course of his epistemology is that of an original broad vista being progressively narrowed down and filled in with more and more details. Aquinas indicates the process thus: "both in the senses and in the intellect more general precedes less general knowledge."¹⁴ Thus begins the process of abstraction directed at evaluating the essence of bodies. It may be objected that while Donne is concerned with objects in their immediacy, he is not interested in them as individuated in any one particular case (as a Scholastic should be), wherein the use of 'the' might seem more suitable. Aquinas is particularly useful here. He denies that the intelligible species of a

¹³ Cited in Ian Michael, English Grammatical Categories (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), pp.359-360.

¹⁴ S.T., 1a, 85, 3, resp.

natural thing is all form. Matter is indeed included in it. Nevertheless, he posits a necessary differentiation between 'common' and 'designated' or 'individual' matter: "Common would be, for instance, flesh and bones, and individual, this flesh and these bones. The intellect abstracts the species of a natural thing from individual sensible matter, but not from common sensible matter. Thus it abstracts the species of man from this flesh and these bones, which do not pertain to the definition of the specific nature."¹⁵ D.J. Allan notes that Plato's *Philebus* (16D) implies exactly the opposite of this.¹⁶ Certain things, however, as being, oneness, and actuality which are the products of an intellectual operation can be extracted from even common sensible matter. This seems to be why the products of Donne's most complex intellectual structures concerning bodies, the conceits, all terminate with entire abstractions such as images of the circle, the word 'all,' and other synonymous expressions. We shall return to these later.

An appraisal of Herbert, on the other hand, clarifies an entirely different orientation to objects. Whereas for Donne, the compasses and the globe, to name his most well-known conceits, are an integral part of the course of his epistemology, for Herbert, objects-as-images, the emblems, precede his mode of ontology, that is to say, his poems. The pulley, the collar, the bunch of grapes, these seem to be known before the poem commences, and the use of the definite article "respects," as James Harris notes, "our Secondary perception and denotes individuals as known."¹⁷ Donne can also refer to objects thus; but when he does, he is quite definitely using them as emblems:

¹⁵ Ibid., 1a, 85, 1, ad.2.

¹⁶ Plato's Method of Dialectic, p. xxxiii.

¹⁷ Cited in English Grammatical Categories, *ibid.*

"He is the tyrant Pike, our hearts the Frye."

(The Broken Heart, p.49)

Emblematic objects seem to be known with all their ramifications of associations and are, in fact, drawn upon as sources of points of reference in the pursuit of knowledge. They are, in other words, the Ideal Forms of Platonic reality, the given in a poem, against which is measured the world of man and nature. The form and matter of materia are, therefore, both of lesser importance than, and subservient to, the Ideal Forms. Grace, falling from Heaven, is, thus, a superior form of dew:

"And shall the dew outstrip thy Dove?
The dew, for which the grass cannot call
Drop from above."

(Grace, p.60)

The essence being apprehended here is not achieved through the primary Scholastic-Aristotelian stage of sensation, but by reference to, and participation in, an idealised form of material things. The Starre, likewise, is a

"Bright spark, shot from a brighter place,
Where beams surround my Saviour's face . . ."

It is clear that Herbert must ask:

"Canst thou be anywhere
So well as there?"

(p.74)

This very different ontological process is described when he avers that his verse will forsake the myriad quotidian items of the world; instead it will remain that

". . . which while I use
I am with thee, and most take all."

(The Quidditie, p.70)

Middleton-Murry's gloss here requires qualifying: "The titles to esteem which verse is not are first detailed; then it is declared that verse is nevertheless the quiddity of them all, in the very real sense that Herbert in his poetry comes

nearest to God and most partakes of the creative power that sustains all these excellencies." ¹⁸ This places Herbert soundly in the Platonist camp. But a point regarding religious poetry needs to be clarified here, for it may be argued that in any religious verse entia rationis must take precedence over entia naturae if any beings at all are to aid the course of knowledge, the final aim of which, in this case, would be God. Not so in Scholasticism. Aquinas is aware of the problem when he asks if the human soul knows everything in the Divine Ideas. In one sense only the souls of the blessed are able to do this; in another, "a thing is spoken of as known in another as in a principle of knowledge; for instance, we might say that things seen in the sunlight are seen in the sun. In this sense we must say that the human soul knows everything in the Divine Ideas . . . For the intellectual light in us is nothing more than a participating likeness of the uncreated light in which the divine ideas are contained." ¹⁹ The first section of this quotation has a Platonic ring to it; but it is the dynamism of the agent-intellect (the intellectual light) shedding its light on the sensible species of individual objects that allows Donne, for example, to examine the world as he sees it. While Donne's attitude to res materia is epistemological, Herbert's is moral, and in this he is both Augustinian and a Platonist.

For Donne, in fact, the absence of sensible objects in an epistemology leads inevitably to a distorted series of assumptions. Much of his ironic presentation of the Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic approach to objects-as-images can be seen as a Scholastic derision directed towards an ontological process which denies the absolute necessity of sensory knowledge. Loves Alchemy should be read less as a misogynistic diatribe against women or love, and more as a

¹⁸ The Works of George Herbert, p.500.

¹⁹ S.T., 1a, 84, 6, resp.

disenchantment with an order of thinking. To a Scholastic mind, lovers who "dreame a rich and long delight" will naturally get "a winter-seeming summers night." The key word in the poem is "shadow play," 'shadow' long a poetic synonym for Platonic forms. A denial of sensation can only lead to hyperbolic, erroneous and unscientific value judgements:

"That loving wretch that swears,
'Tis not the bodies marry, but the mindes,
Which he in her Angelique findes,
Would swears as justly, that he heares,
In that dayes rude hoarse minstralsey, the spheares."

(p.40)

The poem seems in fact the corollary to Aquinas' argument that "if any of the senses is lacking, knowledge of what is apprehended by that sense is also lacking."²⁰ The Flea satirizes those who will judge before they have taken account of actual sensation, and the lesson to be learnt, despite the playful wit, is: "'Tis true, then learne how false feares bee." (p.41) Epistemologically, intellectual resolution in Donne's verse is essentially an inductive and empirical process involving synthesis. The conclusion contains more information than the verifiable premises. In Herbert the process is strictly inferential, rather like Platonic dialectical division. From assumed premises or significances - and, in his case, assumed to be true because they deal with the world of Ideal Forms in the Divine Intelligence - he infers the incompleteness and insufficiency of the post-lapsarian world. In The Collar, it is against the divine yoke that the other very real (in the natural sense) images of freedom, "lost with cordial fruit," are compared and eventually rejected. Similarly, in Ungratefulnesse, (p.82) it is against the 'ideal' 'cabinets' of the Trinity and the Incarnation that man, in "his poore cabinet of bone," is judged. The danger of reading the world otherwise is,

²⁰ Ibid., 1a, 84, 3, resp.

and St. Augustine would certainly agree, that had God "let us runne, / Gladly had man ador'd the sunne . . ." I would hesitate before implying that such an imagistic bias is merely one aspect of contemptus mundi. It reflects also the general movement of Protestant Augustinianism away from corporate emphasis. Mario Praz gives us a clue as to the link between interior devotion - such as is found for example in Francois de Sales - and imagery. Writing on the proliferation of great mystics and emblematisers in the seventeenth-century, he says: "Perhaps because their imagination was too vivid, they sought shelter in a world emptied of perception, in the ineffable."²¹ The emblem, one remembers, confirms; it does not disturb. It is not surprising, then, that Christmas, (p.80) which opens: "All after pleasures as I rid one day," re-defines the objects of the world in ideal terms. The exegetical shepherd that the soul is compared to is very much part of an Augustinian world-view, where the flock of "thoughts and words and deeds" are fed on the pasture that is "thy word" and at streams which are "thy grace." This is in no sense an analogical metaphoric mode; it is a superimposition of the ideal over the literal. The motivation displayed at the commencement of the poem is now rejected, and Herbert will continue his journey "searching, till I finde a sunne / Shall stay, till we have done." The denouement, with its obvious religious pun on 'sunne,' is indicative of an epistemological process that has its extremest statement in the Platonic and Hermetical mysticism of Vaughan and his world that is "a ring of pure and endless light, / All calm, as it was bright . . ." ²² If, as we shall see, Donne's Scholastic orientation perceives images in terms of analogical relations, Herbert's

²¹ Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery (Rome: Edizioni di storia e Letteratura, 1964), p.15.

²² The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, 2nd ed.), p.466.

very practical Augustinianism escapes the mystical apprehensions of Vaughan's natural world and produces instead an allegorical framework of imagery, where the intricacy of natural detail, albeit visualised with a Platonic imagination, retains a sense of vividness:

"The starres his tire of light and rings obtain'd
The Cloud his bow, the fire his spear,
The sky his azure mantle gain'd."

(The Bag, p.151)

It is not surprising then that Herbert's view of art and poetry is what it is in the Jordan poems, where the natural world can only appear worthy when perceived in the world of Divine Forms,

"When all perfections as but one appeare,
That those thy form doth show,
The very dust, where thou dost tread and go,
Makes beauties here."

(Dulnesse, p.115)

This, of course, has the authority of St. Augustine: "Now he is in bondage to a sign who uses, or pays homage to, any significant object without knowing what it signifies: he, on the other hand, who either uses or honours a useful sign divinely appointed . . . does not honour the sign which is seen and temporal, but that to which all such signs refer."²³

3

An epistemological process like Herbert's, which is oriented to Being, Essence, God, is inevitably a process that arrives at conclusions which must hold true - at least, insofar as the poem is an independent and self-sufficient unit. It is a method that might even be called didactic, were it not for the fact that it is an entirely personal poetry. Donne's method of analysis and

²³ De Doctrina Christiana, III, 9. Works, Vol.9, p.89.

subsequent synthesis invariably leads to conclusions that may not be strictly true - and this is a critical commonplace - but that may yet suffice to satisfy the needs of a personal dialectic. Indeed, the personalities of the two poets are distinct because they proceed from imagery drawn from entirely different sources. For Donne the source is, as we have seen, the natural world; for Herbert, the world of iconography. Erwin Panofsky distinguishes three major strata of iconographical subject material. The primary or natural subject matter may be factual or expressional - representational of natural objects or expressional qualities, apprehended "by identifying their mutual relations as events."²⁴ It is, therefore, not the particular individual that is important, but the world of forms as seen in an historical perspective. This is so simply because our own insight into entia naturae may be eclectic. The object represented in an emblem must be traditional; it must, in this sense, be an Ideal Form. Secondly, in apprehending, for example, that "a female figure with a peach in her hand is a personification of veracity"²⁵ we are defining secondary or conventional subject matter; the pure forms are now connected by themes or concepts. The forms now become images and emblems, and combinations of them become allegories. If the first stratum required formal stylisation, this one requires typification, a traditional manner in which themes or concepts are expressed by objects and events. The third stratum ascertains these connections as revealing a specific cultural tradition, such as Medieval, Renaissance, Quattrocento Italian or even, simply, Christian. This is the stratum of which Rosemund Tuve remarks: "All metaphors operate like symbols, but not all

²⁴ Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York, Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962), p.5.

²⁵ Ibid., p.6.

metaphors imply as symbols do a whole system of traditional and publicly known correspondences." ²⁶ Gradually, symbolical values are being applied to natural objects, and the entire process of gleaning subject-material in this essentially neo-Platonic mode is one of synthesis rather than one of analysis. If this latter presupposes an individualistic order of epistemology, based on the apprehension of particulars, the former requires what Panofsky terms "a synthetic intuition." While originality is not negated, the synthetic intuition is inevitably controlled by the manner in which "general and essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts." ²⁷ This is particularly applicable to Herbert, because "he sees (the world) as a web of significances . . . , and he uncovers rather than creates these meanings." ²⁸ That this outlook is primarily Platonic may be verified by referring again to the fact that for Plato the Idea was an ideal picture, grasped by the mind in a vision or intuition. This characteristic of the Idea remained even when dialectical division arrived at the logical 'atom' closest to sensory phenomena: the 'atomic form.' While sensation and opinion may deal with the same object as does the 'atomic form,' it is still the mind's vision which determines truth and falsehood. ²⁹ So what Platonic division allows is the uncovering of layer after layer of formal significance. The resemblances in the poetry of Herbert to this iconographical and Platonic outlook are quite clear. A poem like Justice - II can only make sense, as Rosemund Tuve also notes, ³⁰ if the reader can go beyond secondary or conventional subject matter to the third stratum of intrinsic meaning. It is not sufficient to visualise justice in the

²⁶ A Reading of George Herbert (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p.104.

²⁷ Studies in Iconology, p.16.

²⁸ A Reading of George Herbert, pp.103-104.

²⁹ Plato's Method of Dialectic, pp.119-121.

³⁰ Op cit., p.162 ff.

conventional emblematic form of a pair of scales wherein "sinne and errour" are weighed, and the complementary image of a pulley where:

"Thy scales like buckets, which attend
And interchangeably descend,
Lifting to heaven from this well of tears."

(p. 141)

One must also read the poem from within a specific culture - in this case the Christian one. Only the added significance of Christ's cross as balance makes the poem coherent throughout. The levels of meaning in such poetry are only comprehended by familiarising oneself with each layer of such formal absolutes. Moreover, it is not by discursive reasoning that this Platonic synthesis is achieved. Rather, it is visually apprehended. This is where sensation in Herbert differs from sensation in Donne, for "the mystic depends on his senses as purveyors of visual images and emotional stimuli, whereas the nominalist relies on them as conveyors of reality."³¹ Now, Herbert is not a mystic, and Donne is no nominalist; nevertheless, the differentiation is valid. Whether the intuitus is mystic or Platonic, it refers to a rejection of Thomistic epistemology in favour of an immediate participation in Absolute, Divine Forms. Herbert presents just this:

"But now that Christ's pure veil presents the sight,
I see no fears:"

(Justice II, p. 141, my italics)

Donne's images, however, derive directly from the natural world. The pivotal term, now, is analogy, for it is through this that Donne can continue to use the same objects-as-images as points of reference in his religious verse as he did in the Songs and Sonnets, e.g. the map image in Hymne to God my God, in

³¹ Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), p. 15.

my sicknesse. To arrive at a raison d'être for analogy, the first stage of abstraction requires to be discussed further. We have seen that Platonic theory posits a world of ideal forms. To Aquinas the reason for this is that Plato, albeit aware that all knowledge comes by way of likenesses, believed that "the form of the thing known must necessarily be in the knower as it is in the thing known."³² And since the form of a thing known is in the intellect in an immaterial way, the thing understood must also exist in such a way, and hence the theory of Forms. In Aristotelian abstraction the mode of the recipient is the crux of a new ontology, and it is now in no sense fallacious if "the mode of understanding in the one who understands is different from the mode of existing in the thing . . . (for one is) according to the mode of the intellect and not in a material way, (and the other) according to the mode of a material reality."³³ Thus it is that Donne's peculiar style is seen to be Scholastic and metaphysical both at once. A line like: "We are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die," (p.15) is metaphysical because it is Scholastic. The image has nothing to do with wax or matter; it is the Form of the taper as existing in the recipient's understanding, that is, its operation, its act, that is being drawn into an analogy. Yet, because the sensory similitude or phantasm (which will give place to the intelligible similitude or species), abstracted from the matter of the sensible thing according to the mode of the recipient, is still expressive of the material conditions of the sensible thing as individuated in this or that nature, Donne's images will necessarily retain their vivid realism while being 'metaphysical.' When the human soul, for one, though recognised as immortal, is held to be the organizing and unifying principle of the body itself and not an independent substance, the

³² S.T., 1a, 84, 1, resp.

³³ Ibid., 1a, 85, 1, ad.1.

literal and the figurative must be fused in every image. In Donne's sermons there is often an ambivalence between the literal and the metaphysical implications of images: "Art thou able to dispute out this Fire, and to prove that there can be no reall, no materiall fire in Hell, after the dissolution of all materiall things created? (n)or to give a figurative signification to the Worme, and to say, It may bee a paine, a remorse, but it can be no worme after the generall dissolution If there bee a figure in the names, and words, of Fire and Wormes, there is an indisputable reality in the sorrow, in the torment" ³⁴

Aquinas explains the theory of this aspect of Scholastic ontology thus: "The phrase 'what is actually understood' involves two points: namely, the thing that is understood and the being understood. And likewise in the term 'abstracted universal' there are two, namely, the nature of a thing and its state of abstraction or universality. Thus the nature to which 'being understood' and 'being abstracted' are applied, exists only in individuals, whereas 'being understood' and 'being abstracted' exist in the intellect." ³⁵ Thus the universal as universal can only be known reflexively, in the knowing of something else, ³⁶ and hence the analogical relationship between image and mind is generated. It is because of the distinction between these two modes of understanding that Donne's imagery achieves its ambivalence between the literal and the 'metaphysical.' When Donne says "My name engrav'd herein, / Doth contribute my firmnesse to this glass, / Which, ever since that charme, hath beene / As hard, as that which grav'd it was" (A Valediction: of my name, in the window, p.25) he is already balancing the act of engraving with the understanding

³⁴ Sermons, IX, 18, p.398.

³⁵ S.T., 1a, 85, 2, ad.2.

³⁶ Ibid., 1a, 85, 2, resp.

of the act of engraving (the significance of which is the expression of indelible firmness). Hence the line "The diamonds of either rock" (ibid.) does not merely express a likeness; it uncovers an analogical ratio which may be expressed thus: sense : intellect :: sensible species : intelligible species. When in

A Valediction: of the booke (p.29) we are told:

"Here Loves Divines, (Since all Divinity
Is love or wonder) may finde all they seeke,
Whether abstract spiritual love they like, . . .
(or) Something which they may see and use;
For, though minde be the heaven, where love doth fit,
Beauty a convenient type may be to figure it"

we are likewise aware that the book is one pole of an analogical relationship, the other being Donne's intellect and self-awareness.

Apprehension according to the mode of the recipient allows, in fact, the distinction to be made between further tendencies of (neo-)Platonic emblematic poetry and a Scholastic-Aristotelian imagery. A corollary of this mode runs thus: ". . . sensible images are not what is sensed . . . (but) that by which sensation takes place . . . (and so) species is not what is understood but that by which the intellect understands."³⁷ What this rejects is representationalism, the theory averring that objects of our knowledge are ideas or images impressed on the mind of the knower. For the Scholastic, the species are emphatically not the thing known; in a Platonic ethos, however, the ideal form is very much the thing known. To Donne, the name in the window and love's indissolubility are distinct parts of a logical analysis. For Herbert, Christ's cross-as-balance is justice, and a rainbow is "the lace of Peace's coat." (p.124) Rosemary Freeman defines this tendency in Herbert as "an habitual cast of mind, a constant readiness to see a relation between simple, concrete, visible things and moral ideas, and

³⁷ Ibid.

to establish that relation in as complete a way as possible without identifying the two or blurring the outlines of either." ³⁸ She is correct in placing Herbert on this side of representationalism, but the distinction I posit does not rest at that. There results a definite lack of naturalistic observation, something that Miss Tuve refers to Renaissance rhetorical modes. She identifies this tendency from Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie as an embellishment of particulars, "things nature could not doe without man's help and arte." It is a process of amplification that presents particulars "that wear universals in their faces." ³⁹ Particulars are perceived as universals, with universal significance. In Herbert, there is no conscious process of granting significance; rather, as we have seen earlier, the natural world becomes alive, through intuitus, with abstract meanings. Each sensuous detail becomes a metaphor, and a series of such details will give rise to allegoria.

An allegorical poem is formally, and structurally, metaphor. There is, always, in Herbert's poetry an inherent tendency to assimilate to it. What seems like an emotional discovery of a series of particulars is actually an intuitive perception of a series of significances. Panofsky describes the process thus: "Motifs thus recognized as carriers of a secondary or conventional meaning may be called images, and combinations of images are what the ancient theorists of art called invenzioni; we are wont to call them stories or allegories." ⁴⁰ There is obviously a difference between what Bunyan does in Pilgrim's Progress and what Herbert does in his poetry; for Herbert's images do not form a sequential series. They are only a series insofar as they constitute one whole

³⁸ English Emblem Books (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), p.155.

³⁹ Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p.148.

⁴⁰ Studies in Iconology, p.6.

- the emblem itself, which exists then as a composite synthesis of probable and possible allegorical significances. Perhaps this is what Miss Freeman refers to as the "focus of ideas."⁴¹ At the simplest, but clearest, level, the anagram poem reflects this mode:

Ana- (Mary)
 (Army) gram

How well her name an army doth present,
In whom the Lord of Hosts did pitch his tent!

(p.77)

The anagrammatical element presents the Incarnation as metaphor. But what is clear is that each image of war has its allegorical equivalent in a religious image. This is reinforced by our knowledge that Mary is part of the Church Militant; that the Heavenly Hosts are an army; that the phrase 'pitch his tent' is a biblical phrase. The effect of all this is to force the parallel much closer than mere tropism would allow. This is, in fact, the extremest form of allegoria, the point at which allegory merges into representationalism. The Bag (p.151) is another excellent example. As an emblem of containing, it can signify the body of Christ, His clothes, His flesh (as eternal food), the hypostatic union, the mystery of the Incarnation and His heart (symbolising caritas). The poem will make use of all these significances, linking them together in the emblem of the bag, and presenting them as elements of a story, a fable or an allegory. It must be repeated that at no point is Herbert creating these significances. Miss Tuve suggests that he is "seriously interested in the idea that his case too is covered, taken count of, in an eternally true series of events that preceded him in time; in other words, he reads history and biblical story as one great web of metaphor."⁴² Reviewing The Bunch of Grapes, (p.128) we

⁴¹ Op. cit., p.146.

⁴² A Reading of George Herbert, p.117.

can rephrase what has been said earlier: Herbert's own particular circumstances are intuitively understood by an appeal to a series of archetypal particulars, contained within an allegorical framework. The framework, in this case, is the story of the Exodus with its implications of sea, blood, wine, the old and the new dispensations, all of which are drawn upon in the poem. This poetic method is, indeed, much nearer representationalism than Miss Freeman notes, for such symbolic images will break into details which are certainly physical or sensuous, but which must be seen immediately as what they signify:

"Then I went to a garden, and did spy
 A gallant flower,
 The Crown Imperiall: Sure, said I,
 Peace at the root must dwell.
 But when I digg'd, I saw a worm devoure
 What show'd so well."

(Peace, p.125)

Donne's images, however, do not 'signify.' In Miss Tuve's words, they are used for "argument, not pointing-to."⁴³ For this reason, there is remarkably little sensuous detail in his poetry. The series of similarities (Elegy VI, p.88) between his mistress and himself on the one hand, and a stream and its channel on the other, remains just that: a series of correspondences. The images are entirely functional and subservient to the main argument, which is, nevertheless, resolved only through them. Every image in Donne is a potential conceit, the concepto⁴⁴ not itself experienced as abstract, being apprehended directly in objects, but explained and expressed only in abstraction. The function of imagery in Donne is thus the converse of that in Herbert. The argument in a poem by Herbert has been resolved extra-poetically and predates the poem, the emblem containing the resolution in its multitudinous significances.

⁴³ Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p.64.

⁴⁴ The reason for using the Spanish equivalent of 'conceit' will become clear later in the chapter.

The details into which the emblem breaks, serve to clarify, modify and describe the emotional and intellectual contingencies, the truth of which have been held as an a priori fact. For Donne, resolution is necessarily a posteriori, arrived at through the analogical use of objects-as-images. Indeed, when Donne does use emblematic material, he will proceed to question the a priori concept, in order to bring it and his own reasoning into conformity with each other:

"Since there must reside
Falsehood in woman, I could more abide,
She were by art, then Nature falsify'd.

Live primrose then, and thrive
With thy true number five;
And women, whom this flower doth represent,
With this mysterious number be content;"

(The Primrose, p.61)

The appreciation of a poem by Donne depends, then, on a comprehension of analogy. This must now be further explained. We have seen that the sensible species and the intelligible species are not that which is known but that by means of which the sensible object is known. Moreover, the sensible object can only be known when it is in act, whence it becomes identical with the sense in act. Similarly, the actualization of the potential intelligibility of a thing is the same as the actualization of the passive intellect, in so far as a likeness of the thing understood is in the form of the intellect.⁴⁵ Abstraction, as we have seen, shows that the mode of reciprocity in the order of the intellect, and that in the order of sense are analogous to each other, that is, it is by the mode of reciprocity in the order of abstraction that a body is continuous with its sensible species, which, in its turn, is continuous with its intelligible species. The passage from matter and form to potency and act is, therefore, a series of

⁴⁵ S.T., 1a, 85, 2, ad.1.

analogous proportions, the inner bonds of which have a term in common. As an extension of this, things which differ and yet are similar, in that they are disposed to act and potency, become mediated into one thing by the assimilation of the act to the potency. "Primary matter gets its substantial existence from form; it must then necessarily be created in conjunction with some form, otherwise it could not actually exist. Once joined to a form, however, it is potential with respect to others."⁴⁶ George Leckie explains this process of analogy as it would apply to a Christian ontological scheme thus: "The order of continuous proportion is the analogical principle according to which God distributes His justice, or merits and awards. But the essence or nature of each created thing, that is, the delimiting and limiting mode of its production, is the proper act of creation assigned to that thing, causing it to be what it is, and differentiating it from other modes. Accordingly, an immediately superior thing in the continuous order of creation has yet a term in common with its immediately inferior thing, and by this they stand to each other as a conatus of act and potency."⁴⁷ From Aristotle's claim that the soul never thinks without an image,⁴⁸ Aquinas deduces in terms of a practical epistemology the importance of the imagination in producing images, for, "as anyone can experience for himself, if he attempts to understand anything, he will form images for himself which serve as examples in which he can, as it were, look at what he is attempting to understand. This is the reason, indeed, why, when we want to help someone understand something, we propose examples to him so that he can form images for himself in order to understand."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1a, 84, 3, ad.2.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas: Concerning Essence and Being (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, Inc., 1965), introduction, p.ix-

⁴⁸ De Anima, III, 7, 431a, 16.

⁴⁹ S.T., 1a, 84, 7, resp.

At its simplest level, Donne's poetry demonstrates just this. In fact, he often indulges in a succession of images, each contributing an area of significance:

"Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us finde the 'Eagle and the Dove.
The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us . . ."

(The Canonization, p.15)

A poem like A Valediction: of my name, in the window (p.25) exists entirely as a series of analogous characteristics, each expanded into a stanza. The poetry of Donne abounds in 'ands' and 'ors,' by composition and division indicating the variety of possible analogous relations the intellect may assess in the resolution of an ontological problem.

Nevertheless, this is not to confuse Donne's imagistic reasoning with an exegetical technique or to imply that, for Aquinas, the use of images is only marginally functional. An exegetical technique separates the concepto from the explicating image. In Donne, the object-as-image itself generates the argument. It is held in a tension that is naturally created by its position in the analogical chain of being, polarized between essence and existence, abstraction and concretion, and, in so being, is assimilated to everything else. The book as an image of love in A Valediction: of the booke exhibits the duality by means of which it is integral to the process of knowledge:

"Here Loves Divines, (since all Divinity
Is love or wonder) may finde all they seeke,
Whether abstract spiritual love they like,
Their Soules exhal'd with what they do not see,
Or, loth so to amuse
Faith's infirmitie, they chuse
Something which they may see and use;"

(p.31)

The lovers in the poem are, as are all things, "instruments" in a larger scheme. Each thing is therefore both an apotheosis of one process and an indication of another: so, as has been shown, the tears in A Valediction: of weeping (p.38), are "Fruits of much grief . . . , emblems of more . . ." It is in this light that one must read the opening lines of A Hymne to Christ:

"In what torne ship soever I embarke,
That ship shall be my embleme of thy Arke;
What sea soever swallow mee, that flood
Shall be to mee an embleme of thy blood;"

(p. 352)

Donne is not here simulating rhetoric around Christian symbols in the manner of Herbert; rather, ordinary ship and sea can approximate to 'Arke' and Christ's blood because analogically they are linked proportionately together. 'Shall be' is thus used in the sense of 'shall become,' and 'my' indicates that the approximation of image to significance is produced by an individual intellect in actuation. This is why both the imagery and the dialectic of the love poetry are retained in the Divine Poems. Platonism requires a participation in the Divine Ideas; Scholasticism is content with participation in the essences of the natural world, which are themselves part of the Essence that is God.

The detailed nature of the analogical link that forms the base of the conceit will be examined later. First, however, a distinction has to be made. Miss Tuve describes it thus: "A mystical poem sees all sensible phenomena as metaphor; an allegorical poem is, formally and structurally, metaphor. Both are written in the language of correspondences; neither requires ingeniously tropical figures."⁵⁰ Correspondence is the kernel of both emblem and conceit, but correspondences in Donne's verse are wholly intellectually perceived; indeed,

⁵⁰ Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p.219.

naturally so, as they form a stage in the process of abstraction. A seventeenth-century Spanish critical study, Agudeza y Arte de Ingenio, by Gracian, makes this quite clear. Writing from the point of view of the highly conceited sonnets and Solitudes of Gongora, Gracian identifies the conceit's very essence as the analogical link itself: "(El concepto) es un acto del entendimiento que exprime la correspondencia que se halla entre los objetos."⁵¹ (The concepto is an act of the understanding that expresses the correspondence that exists between objects) Or, again, "consiste, pues, este artificio conceptuoso, en una primorosa concordancia, en una armónica correlación entre dos o tres conocibles extremos, expresado por un acto del entendimiento."⁵² (This conceptual artifice, then, consists in an exquisite concordance, a harmonious correlation between two or three knowable extremes, expressed by an act of the understanding) The conceit is a product of the understanding, a 'conceptuous artifice' correlating two or more knowable extremes. In this lies its unique intellectual quality which differentiates it from ordinary similes: "Comunmente toda semejanza que se funda en alguna circunstancia expecial, y le da pie alguna rara contingencia, es conceptuoso; porque nace con alma de conformidad, y le saca de la misma especialidad del objeto."⁵³ (Generally, any similarity that is based on some special circumstance and arises out of a particular contingency can be the grounds for a concepto; because it is one with the soul of conformity, and it arises out of the very essence of the object) The relation between 'special circumstance' and 'proper nature of the object' that forms the analogical base

⁵¹ In T. E. May, An Interpretation of Gracian's 'Agudeza y arte de ingenio,' Hispanic Review (University of Pennsylvania Press), Vol.16, 1948, p.277.

⁵² Ibid., p.276.

⁵³ In T. E. May, Gracian's Idea of the Concepto, Hispanic Review, Vol.18, 1950, p.34.

which differentiates a conceit from a simile is neither questioned nor explicated. I shall attempt to do so later. What needs to be stressed now is Gracian's insistence that a conceit's chief role is to express the intellectual symmetry between the objects of the understanding and therefore the terms of a thought.⁵⁴ In a simile the comparison is what matters - as it does in emblematic, symbolical or allegorical poetry; in a conceit only the sense of proportion matters. For this reason, the conceit is a "sutileza objetiva," an objective work of art.⁵⁵ The differences in the operations of emblems (or by allegories) and conceits now become clearer.

Donne does not require extensive sensuous detail in his poetry. His concern is not with sensation per se. Miss Tuve notes this when she corrects the view that Donne achieves an identification of sensuous perception with reflection in transmuting idea into sensation in, for example:

"He is starke mad, who ever sayes,
That he hath beene in love an houre, . . .
Who would not laugh at mee, if I should say,
I saw a flaske of powder burne a day?"

(The Broken Heart, p.48)⁵⁶;

but the sensation has ceased to be of importance once it has been transmuted into the sensible species. The emotion of such poetry must then arise out of the intellection itself - if at all. As such, it is one of the effects of the poem. In Herbert, where the emblematic resolution predates the poem, emotion and sensuous detail exist within the emblem as part of the a priori assumptions, each Christian symbol having its attendant emotive power embedded in its

⁵⁴ Hispanic Review, Vol.16, p.280.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.277.

⁵⁶ Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, pp.168-169.

sensuous delineation and contributing to its intellectual force. The conceit is, therefore, essentially objective. The emblem or allegoria, while remaining part of the vast superstructure of Christian iconography, is essentially, and most so in Herbert, a symbol approached emotively, and, therefore, personally apprehended and subjective. It is an emotive visual logic that unifies a poem by Herbert. Critics have referred to the 'collapse' of Herbert's poetry; dialectically this case has been argued, emotionally the poem cannot collapse. Dialectic is not the raison d'être of an allegorist or an emblematiser. Of conceited poetry, however, it is the sole progenitor.

4

In the assimilation of the act to the potency, in the metamorphoses of the body from sensible species to intelligible species, by abstraction and by analogy, matter and form are translated into genus and species. For as matter is differentiated by formal act in the order of nature, genus is so differentiated in the order of intellect by the rational act: ". . . the class aspect is taken from a thing's common matter and the specific difference from the form."⁵⁷

Abstraction proceeds, therefore, from knowledge of singulars by sense to knowledge of universals by intellect. Genera are abstracted first, and, bearing in mind the properties of matter, genus can be seen as the first qualification of substance as a something potential to differentiation. The concept of potency is of primary importance in the poetry of Donne. Aquinas explains Aristotle's dictum that we must advance from generalities to particulars⁵⁸ thus: The intellect, as all other things, goes from potentiality to actuality. Complete

⁵⁷ S.T., 1a, 85, 5, ad.3.

⁵⁸ Physica, I, 1, 184a, 24.

actuality is complete knowledge in which things are known distinctly and definitively. There has to be a stage, then, when the intellect is midway between potency and actuality, where what is known is partly potentially known and partly actually known. And so the general will, in one sense, be known before the specific.⁵⁹ Moreover, there will be a continuous intellectual movement towards complete actuality, where ideas, situations and the subjects of knowledge get progressively more distinct and the intellect indicates clearly its potential with respect to knowing a potential difference. A glance at the order of nature reveals this as a natural temporal process, wherein things that are imperfect and potential come first, working towards perfection and complete actuality.

Donne is hardly a 'nature poet,' requiring, as we have seen, little sensuous detail. But in the few instances where pastoral elements are part of the poem, this state of potentiality can be clearly apprehended at the very outset of the poem:

"Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest
The violets reclining head . . ."

(The Extasie, p.51)

The in medias res opening is perfectly conceived to communicate the concept of natural potency. The bank is 'pregnant,' preparing the way for the continuing sequence of words and images pertaining to nativity. Birth is an apt analogy of the process towards actuality:

"So to entergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the meanes to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation."

(ibid.)

⁵⁹ S.T., 1a, 85, 3.

Another image, non-pastoral, but fairly common in Donne, serves just as well to express this universal natural intention:

"Where can we finde two better hemispheares
Without sharpe North, without declining West?
What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;"

(The Good-morrow, pp.7-8)

The third line here acts as an excellent gloss to the basic image. Sir Herbert Grierson has identified its origin in the Thomistic article that posits the indissolubility of things, between whose elements there exists no contrariety.⁶⁰ Plato's Phaedo 78 maintains much the same thing. But the article, which deals with the nature of the soul, goes on to declare that there can be no contrariety in the intellectual soul because in the instance of abstraction, the mind can hold contraries together in one relationship: composition and division, after all, is essential to the order of intellection. We shall deal with composition and division in due course. Meanwhile, the article implies that things in potential with regard to a state of actuality, and in the process of achieving it, take no account of contraries in physical terms. "A sign of this is that everything desires to exist in the manner proper to it. And in things that have awareness, desire depends on awareness. Now sense knows being only as here and now, but the intellect knows being as such, and timeless. Hence whatever has intelligence naturally desires an existence that is always. Now a drive of a nature cannot be objectless. So no intellectual substance can pass away."⁶¹ The image now becomes much more significant. Nature herself is in the process of achieving such actuality. And Donne finds in her an analogically perfect example for the actuality that the lovers, as intellectual beings, also seek: the image of the globe,

⁶⁰ The Poems of John Donne, Vol.2, p.11.

⁶¹ S.T., 1a, 75, 6, resp.

where North does not begin, nor West end, for things achieving act do not belong to a temporal scheme. The attendant images to this central one are numerous:

" . . . tell mee,
Whether both the 'India's of spice and Myne
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee."

(The Sunne Rising, p.11)

The image is explained further on:

"Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us;"

Princes, states, the Indias - these are but potential, being attached to matter.

Donne seeks a state of pure act, pure being, pure essence and hence his

exclamation: "Nothing else is." It is interesting to compare this particular use

of the geographical image of the globe with an image in Herbert:

"The Sunne arising in the East,
Though he give light, and th'East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume."

(Easter, p.42)

There is a chasm between Herbert and the ordinary world. Donne can bridge this even in his religious poetry. The analogical paradigm of pure act will now be Christ (and we have already seen how this works epistemologically), all the more reason why Nature should attempt to attain to, and, indeed, parallel, his action:

"This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the East.
There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget;
But that Christ on this Crosse did rise and fall,
Sinne had eternally benighted all."

(Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward, p.336)

Essence and act, being out of the temporal scheme of things, must deny the delimiting modes of hours or days. And so the poetic moment of Donne's poetry must exist, and often literally so (the present tense of The Sunne Rising is a fair example), between or outside temporal distinctions. There is no fitter way

to express this half-way-house between potency and act than:

"This, no to morrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day."

(The Anniversarie, p.24)

What has been seen, then, as the shock and irony of the openings of Donne's poems is, in fact, a natural stage in Scholastic epistemology. In terms of human situations, this potential position is expressed most calmly in the Hymne to God my God, in my Sicknesse:

"As I come
I tune the instrument here at the dore,
And what I must doe then, think here before."

(p.368)

In The Extasie, it is crystallized in the image of fate suspending "uncertaine victorie" between two equal armies. The opening stanzas of A Valediction: forbidding mourning (p.49) are worth a closer look:

As Virtuouse men passe mildly away,
And whisper to their soules, to goe,
Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no:
So let us melt, and make no noise,
No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
T'were prophanation of our joyes
To tell the layetie our love.
Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheares,
Though greater farre, is innocent.
Dull sublunary lovers love
(Whose soule is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it."

(pp.49-50)

The first stanza presents the moment between potency and act in two ways. There is the ambivalence of time at the instant of death itself, which expresses the non-temporality that Donne always seeks. The situation of death is, however, even

more indicative of this state, when the soul leaves the body, the moment just before pure act is achieved (the soul being the form, and the body matter). The second stanza thus urges the assimilation of the potential of the lovers to such act. Noise, tears and sighs, like floods and tempests, belong, rightly, to the sensible world and must be shed in love's transmutation into the intelligible species. The reference to music of the spheres is, likewise, a gloss on the relation between matter and form, and potency and act. The soul is like the musician "who produces the accord upon the string," the earth often considered as "the lowest string of the harp," and Heaven as "the archetype of musical instruments."⁶² Very much in the mood of the Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse quoted above, Donne discloses the analogy between the attaining to heavenly music and the achievement of pure act: the movement, that is, from body and the senses to soul, to one "growen all mind." (The Extasie, p. 52)

This analogical use of music is pervasive in Donne's verse:

"Faire soule, which wast, not onely, as all soules bee,
Then when thou wast infused, harmony,
But did'st continue so; and now doth beare
A part in Gods great organ, this whole Spheare."

(Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, p.271)

Again, however, the implication remains that the attainment to such music is indicative of the state interposed between potency and act:

"If looking up to God; or downe to us,
Thou finde that any way is pervious,
Twixt heav'n and earth, and that mans actions doe
Come to your knowledge, and affections too,
See, and with joy, mee to that good degree
Of goodnesse growne, that I can studie thee,
And, by these meditations refin'd,
Can unapparell and enlarge my minde,
And so can make by this soft extasie,
This place a map of heav'n, my self of thee."

(ibid.)

⁶² G. L. Finney, Musical Backgrounds for English Literature: 1580-1650 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1961), p.4.

The accent, one notes, is on the personal endeavour to achieve this state of actuality. The musical analogy is referred, in other words, to the self. This is where similar references in Herbert differ. The image is, of course, an ancient one. But in Herbert's case it does not take the form of an analogy, with its implication of an epistemological process. Rather, as one would expect, Christ is presented as the archetype of the musical image, a paradigm which we must participate in:

"The crosse taught all wood to resound his name,
 Who bore the same.
 His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
 Is best to celebrate this most high day."

(Easter, p.41)

To return to the Valediction, the movement from potency to act, and from matter and form to genus and species, is clearly a de-'elementing' process, and in this sense a state of 'absence.' But it is necessary not to confuse this natural urge towards actuality with the statements of contemptus mundi (and this has been examined) of the Anniversaries or Platonic transcendentalism, for there is a difference between a state of transcendental mysticism and the logical concept of a universal, which as a univocal sign of many can reduce two soules to one without achieving a miracle, rather, creating instead "an expansion, like gold to ayery thinness beate."

It is at the investigation into particular species, then, that a Scholastic ontology finally arrives. And it is at this stage that Donne's images evolve into what have been called 'conceits.' Now the genus is to the species as matter is to the form because species are differentiated from genus by a proper distinction of act. That is to say, the differentiating operation as actualised is the ground of the specific individual. Specific unity, then, expresses the formal similitude of a universal as referring to multiple primary substances which as individuals of a

species are themselves related in a ratio of similitude to one another in terms of their actualized proper operations. Here we return to composition of species, the final complex act of the mind: the human intellect does not immediately, in first apprehending a thing, have complete knowledge; rather it first apprehends only one aspect of the thing - namely, its whatness, which is the primary and proper object of the intellect - and only then can it understand the properties, accidents and relationships incidental to the thing's essence. Accordingly, it must either combine one apprehension with another, or separate them, or else it must go from one combination or separation to another (which is the process of reasoning).⁶³

The conceit can be clearly seen (in Donne's verse, that is) to be the verbal or written equivalent of this process of combination or separation - a process, moreover, that concerns the proper operations of things, things experiencing motions in the acts which are necessary to them. This is where one realizes that the essential nature of Donne's conceits and the general trend of his theological and philosophical orientation complement each other, for both arise out of the dynamism of an 'existential' world-view. So it is not merely the feet of a pair of compasses that are brought into intellectual combination in A Valediction: forbidding mourning, but their proper action wherein:

" . . . the fix't foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the'other doe.
And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth rome,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect as that comes home."

(pp.50-51)

It is in their proper operations that individual things become assimilated to each other, "both one, each this and that." (p.52) The two conceits in A Valediction:

⁶³ S.T., 1a, 85, 5, resp.

of weeping (p. 38) likewise combine and separate two specific operations. The conceit in the first stanza does not lie in the 'coining' of a tear by the reflection that it bears; that is only the prelude to the conceit. The conceit itself lies in the proper action of a tear: that it falls.

"When a teare falls, that thou falst which it bore,
So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore."

This is how the conceit forms part of the weave of the poem, which is about weeping and its relation to dissolution. The example is also instrumental in showing us how easy it is to view the conceit as an emblem. To do this is to equate the tear with a coin, and to treat that equation as the actual conceit. It is only if one reads a conceit in this way, that it will appear far-fetched, as will, indeed, a comparison, quite simplistically, of love to a pair of compasses, or, as in the poem above, the tear to a globe. This last conceit is actually a case of separation. The workman, as his proper act might suggest, can create and perpetuate the world as globe, while the mistress who can repeat the act of creation, could equally destroy it, and, in doing so, deny herself her proper act:

"So doth each teare,
Which thee doth weare,
A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
Till thy teares mixt with mine doe overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so."

(ibid.)

The emotional and intellectual force of the Hymne to God my God . . . entirely emanates from a series of combinations and separations: west and east, the Pacific and the Eastern riches, Jerusalem and the three straits, and finally, Paradise and the tree and Christ and the cross. Again, the final conceit is not a comparison of images or emblems; not Adam and Adam, but their proper acts, the shedding of blood and the shedding of sweat. The fact that the latter 'act' parallels the situation of Donne himself in my sicknesse, only gives the conceit a greater validity.

Some important distinctions have now to be made. The analogous nature of the proper operation of a body, which is the core of a conceit by Donne, must not be confused with the Renaissance rhetorical tropes based on manner of doing, or Scholastic essence with quality. Both these are often the bases of Elizabethan conceits, as Miss Tuve explains.⁶⁴ It is purpose, of course, that differentiates these two modes of locating and creating images. Speaking of the criterion of decorum in Elizabethan poetics, Miss Tuve writes: "Attention is centered on the cogency and illuminating power of the relation between two terms; if this outshines the stubborn irrelevancies present in every comparison, then the image is decorous. On such considerations depend the defenses we find of the radical and far-fetched image. They are praised because they surprise the attention into alertness and because they give a more vigorous intellectual pleasure."⁶⁵ This reads very much like sections of Aristotle's Rhetoric: Men admire what is remote; we should give our language a foreign air; and yet, a metaphor must not be far-fetched or strange, for then it is difficult to take it in at a glance, or superficial, for then it does not impress.⁶⁶ Both Aristotle and Miss Tuve are really speaking of the relation of images to descriptio. She also notes that the images based on manner of doing occur with great frequency in allegorical writing,⁶⁷ and here the distinction is clear. Allegory, unlike analogy, is concerned with description, and is therefore explanatory. The example from Donne that Miss Tuve chooses - the river image in Elegy VI - is indeed descriptive and works metaphorically by similitudes both in property or

⁶⁴ Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, pp.284 ff.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.211.

⁶⁶ 1404 b, 10; 1405 a, 12; 1410 b, 6 ff.

⁶⁷ Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, pp.296-297.

quality and in manner of doing. But Donne's conceits, as are essence and specific operation, are concerned not with describing, but with defining.

Elizabethan images work as definitions only insofar as they are typical rhetorical descriptio, and Miss Tuve notes this in discussing poems concerning definitions of love.⁶⁸ They amplify what is already known; they clarify and colour previous definitions and descriptive adjuncts. The element of descriptio is clearly seen in the Miltonic 'conceit' that Miss Tuve quotes:⁶⁹

"So when the Sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an Orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th'infernal jail . . ."

This and other Elizabethan conceits share iconographical sensuous detail; those of Donne are quite bare. Donne's conceits are definitive, but do not seek to amplify; they verbalize and affirm a judgement of the intellect.

In this context it can be seen that the Elizabethan conceit requires inventio, "the invention of proper matter, finding a way to make one's purpose articulate."⁷⁰ Since, however, the purpose is one of amplification, such a conceit tends to become an allegoria, which works, like the icon and the emblem, through sensuous detail. Marlowe's conceit based on manner of doing is a fair example:

"For as a hot proud horse highly disdains
To have his head controll'd, but breaks the reins,
Spits forth the ringled bit, and with his hooves
Checks the submissive ground: so he that loves,
The more he is restrain'd, the worse he fares . . ."⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.362.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.315.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.310.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp.106-107.

Another example from Marlowe, this one seemingly more 'metaphysical,' will serve to describe more clearly this differentiation of purpose that I posit:

"Like as the sun in a diameter
 Fires and inflames objects removed far,
 And heateth kindly, shining lat'rally;
 So beauty sweetly quickens when 'tis nigh,
 But being separated and removed,
 Burns where it cherish'd, murders where it loved." ⁷²

This is from a purely literary point of view a better conceit, but the detail is still sensuous, in fact, psychologically so, the underlined words clearly pertaining to a state of mind rather than to a process of thought. Donne's conceits are less concerned with inventio than with subtlety of intellect, being, as they are, the alpha and the omega of the very moment of definition.

It is John Hoskins, in 1600, who stresses the importance of "inventing matter of agreement in things most unlike," ⁷³ intending thereby to refer the matter to the understanding and the wit. However, his example of equating London to a tennis court because "in both all the gain goes to the hazzard," simply reduces the whole thing to a rather pernicious variety of Elizabethan vagary. One returns inevitably to Gracian and the Agudeza. Gracian's word for inventio or even intuitus is ingenio and is used to mean the understanding in its production of wit. It is the ingenio (and the difference between this and (neo-)Platonic intuitus must be stressed) that discovers the concepto on which the conceit is constructed. This places it entirely within the confines of Scholastic epistemology and its express purpose can be referred to the study of ontology. Gracian speaks of it in the loftiest of terms: "Si los materiales objetos dicen una cierta agradable simpatia y una gran conformidad con sus inferiores potencias, cuanta mayor

⁷² Ibid., p.262.

⁷³ Directions for Speech and Style (1600), p.18.

alcanzara una ingeniosa sutileza con la que es reina de todas ellas?; digo el ingenio." ⁷⁴ (If material objects have an intimate sympathy and an infinite conformity with objects in inferior potentiality, how sovereign must be the ingenious subtlety (which uncovers) this relationship?; call it ingenio)

Nevertheless, if the ingenio is not to be confused with inventio or intuitus, it must have an external regulating principle. We have seen earlier that the concepto refers to the 'special circumstance' and its relation to the 'proper nature of the object.' In evading the discussion of this, Gracian finds it difficult to account for any validity for the ingenio. However, since he is writing in an age of the re-awakening of Scholasticism, it seems quite reasonable to relate the 'special circumstance' and the 'proper nature of the object' to proper operation and essence respectively. If this is allowed, the ingenio is given logical precision, Gracian's insistence on proportion becomes clear, and the concepto is seen to be an essential result from the process of cognition. Applying this to an example from the Agudeza clarifies the issue. The reference is to St. Peter and his denial:

"No habia de cantar el gallo, viendo tan grande gallina?" ⁷⁵

This translates as: how could the cock not crow on seeing such a big hen, with the complication of a pun on gallina which also means coward. While in ordinary metaphorical terms, this would seem like a simile between St. Peter and the hen, no ingenio would be required to take note of that. Gracian himself is unconcerned with the trope on gallina. For him the proportion arises between the cock's crow and St. Peter's fear. ⁷⁶ The concepto is thus isolated in the crowing of the cock,

⁷⁴ Hispanic Review, Vol.18, p.20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Vol.16, p.278.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

its proper action, so relating the two extreme terms of the conceit: St. Peter and the hen. The proper operation as the ground of the concepto seems to be to me more precise than either proporcion or correspondencia, though it seems likely that, writing, as he did, during the age of Jesuit ascendancy, Gracian may have taken the whole question of analogy for granted.

5

It remains now to place the emblem and the conceit in an epistemological perspective. A universal can be considered in two ways. We have seen, how, in the order of nature, the universal is known first, in a general way. But when the universal nature is considered together with the intention of universality, it must be posterior, for the intention of universality concerns the fact that one and the same thing has a relation to many particulars. It is at this concept of the universal that the entire process of epistemology ends. The universal thus considered is indeed a principle of knowledge, for it is by abstraction that the intellect arrives at an understanding of it.⁷⁷ Platonism and Augustinianism, however, would posit principles of knowledge as equivalent to principles of being, since Platonic universals are Ideal Forms which actually exist. This is where Donne's and Herbert's apprehensions of the universal differ.

For Herbert, the bunch of grapes, the pearl, the bag and so on are indeed universals which are principles of being and which are therefore appealed to in their myriad connotations as principles of belief:

"For as the Jews of old by God's command
Travell'd and saw no town,
So now each Christian hath his journey's spann'd:
Their storie pennes and sets us down."

(The Bunch of Grapes, p.128)

⁷⁷ S.T., 1a, 85, 3, ad.4.

This works clearly as an a priori method of knowledge, one that develops from the conviction that all universals are necessarily principles of being. Therefore, in the same poem,

"But where's the cluster? where's the taste
Of mine inheritance?"

is not a true question, but tends to assimilate to the rhetoric of the next question, which is clearly its own answer:

"But can he want the grape, who hath the wine?"

Herbert, as Miss Tuve remarks, is not concerned with "a collection of phenomena which we may either endow with significance or leave unendowed. He writes not of events and facts but of meanings and values . . ." ⁷⁸ It is not only because his emblems are Christian, but because the emblem per se is a Platonic principle of being, that belief is intrinsic to Herbert's poetry. For this reason he will mourn a situation where "Reason triumphs and faith lies by." (Divinitie, p.134) The facets of the emblem in Divinitie, the coat of Christ, his blood, wine, serve to make "cleare as heav'n" what intellection cannot do, being faced with "Gordian knots." Emblem as principle of being is not obscure in this sense. A more precise identification of principle of knowledge with principle of being can be read in The Windows (p.67):

"Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and aw: but speech alone
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
And in the eare not conscience ring."

Doctrine as principle of knowledge must combine with life, which, as the soul (hence light), becomes principle of being. The identification of one with the other arises from the emblematic use of stained glass windows in which colour is light

⁷⁸ A Reading of George Herbert, pp.103-104.

and vice-versa.

The result of this identification in this particular poem is awe. What we see here are two modes of the operation of the emblem in Herbert. The first is that it works by an intuitive visual logic. The second follows from the first: the movement from such visual logic to awe (inspiring belief) is instantaneous, and does not require the circumlocutions of speech or the verbalization of a thought-process. The first mode is clearly apparent in a poem like The Agonie. Miss Tuve shows that when Herbert seeks to define sin, he is urging precisely this intuitive form of visual logic:

"Who would know Sinne, let him repair
 Unto Mount Olivet; there shall he see
 A man so wrung with pains, that all his hair,
 His skinne, his garments bloudie be,
 Sinne is that presse and vice, which forceth pain 79
 To hunt his cruel food through ev'ry vein."

(p.37; Miss Tuve's italics)

Unlike the mode of a conceit, that of an emblem does not require the logical processes that clarify the essence of something through a study of that thing in act or the thing's specific operation. Through what is entirely a visual confrontation, sin is defined and hence 'see,' and later, "taste that juice." Miss Tuve adds "As usual, it is the symbol rather than the more direct statements about the Christian dispensation which makes the poem mean something even outside the domain of believed Christian dogma." 80

So much for the relation between visual symbol and principle of being. The second mode of operation, instinctive knowledge, follows from what has been said earlier about the relation between sensuous detail and emotion. When the

79 Ibid., p.127.

80 Ibid.

sensuous as emblem is perceived as principle of being, emotion grants an immediate and impulsive affirmation of belief. It may be awe as in Divinitie, or love (and St. Augustine's emphasis on this has been noted) as in The Agonie; the effect, in any case, reveals the "presence and operation of central impulse (impulse rather than concept) which gives the many and varied poems of Herbert's book an organic though not a methodical unity."⁸¹ This impulse to believe is especially apparent in a series of poems where the dialectic either breaks down (purposely so) or is absent altogether. In Love-Joy (p.116) an attendant, mysterious figure questions the poet on the 'JC' inscribed on each bunch of grapes. The same figure agrees with the protagonist's answer:

"Sir, you have not miss'd,
The man reply'd; It figures Jesus Christ."

No reason is given for the link between the poet's interpretation of joy and charity and the mysterious figure's interpretation of Jesus Christ, yet belief is immediate and unavoidable. Principle of being and sign ("bodie and the letters both") are identified with each other. Emblem precipitates belief. The denouement of The Collar (p.153) describes an even more sudden and impulsive assent to belief:

"Methought I heard one calling, Child!
And I reply'd My Lord."

Perhaps the clearest indication of the close relation between emotion and belief comes at the close of A True Hymne (p.168):

"Whereas if the heart be moved,
Although the verse be somewhat scant,
God doth supply the want.
As when th'heart sayes (sighing to be approved)
O, could I love! and stops: God writeth, Loved."

The difference between this approach and that of Donne may be seen in the following conceit:

⁸¹ Ibid., p.112.

"As the trees sap doth seek the root below
 In winter, in my winter now I goe,
 Where none but thee, th'Eternal root
 Of true Love I may know."

(A Hymne to Christ. . . , p.353)

The universal here, "th/Eternal root," is not being appealed to; it is being arrived at in a very definitely a posteriori manner. What is being discovered is the relation of particulars to each other and their relation to the universal whole. I have shown in Chapter III how and why Christ must be regarded as a regulating and dynamic principle. The 'Eternal root' is the ontological complement to that epistemological principle. In both cases proper act or operation is what is being invoked. This is where the Agudeza breaks down, at least according to T. E. May. Having granted the ingenio self-sufficiency and independence of morality in the uncovering of beauty (Aquinas would have termed it clarte), Gracian is left with the difficulty of finding an external regulating principle that might bridge the gap between beauty and truth or affirmation. May suggests that he is in the "situation of a believer in pure poetry who yet needs to relate poetry to something outside itself" without recourse to the "neo-Platonist's belief in affective poetic knowledge of the Absolute as a theoretical guarantee of his art." ⁸²

If the conceit is considered as essentially enigmatic, then it can always tend to distort or obscure reality. An attempt to posit truth as subjective is, surely, to clutch at a last and potentially unreliable straw. If, however, while allowing the ingenio clarte in constructing the conceit, it is recognised that the conceit is grounded upon a logically sound base, as I have tried to show, then the conceit ceases to be eccentric while continuing to be enigmatic. It seems strange that Gracian, living at a time when Jesuit Scholasticism in Spain was all-pervasive,

⁸² Hispanic Review, Vol.18, p.23.

did not argue his case thus. As it reads in the Agudeza, Mr. May is quite justified in his doubts of Gracian's credibility: ". . . the act of the understanding is a subjective and relatively slow experience which starting from some obscure and no doubt intuitional source, reaches its final form and therefore its truth by way of a kind of choice. But a choice excludes other choices. As this situation develops, there arises the need of a criticism which will guarantee the choice by attributing to the kind of sublimated practical intelligence which is the ingenio the traditional certainty granted to the understanding as a whole."⁸³ In creating a conceit in the manner of Donne, the ingenio certainly makes a choice and the greater the clarte of the correspondence, the more beautiful the conceit. But the correspondence itself is an entirely valid choice. This is why it is futile - in a logical sense - to conceive of a conceit of Donne's other than as it exists in its specific position in a specific poem. Beauty is thus assimilated to truth.

There is still one more step to be taken. Donne is not satisfied with mere logical truth. He seeks belief, especially so in the Divine Poems. Principle of knowledge is accepted as principle of being, but not from a Platonic perspective. If the universal must also claim to be a principle of being, it is because a formal principle is being evoked. "If we consider the natures corresponding to class and subclass as these are found in individuals, then in a sense they stand in relation to the individual as their formal principle since singularity is accounted for by matter, the specific nature by form."⁸⁴ This is certainly what the conceit built around the 'Eternal root' expresses: a formal principle. And it is because it affirms something that one tends to confuse its operation with that of an emblem.

83 Ibid.

84 S.T., 1a, 85, 4, ad.4.

What Donne's poems invariably terminate in, then, is a universal concept or a verbalization of 'oneness.' The universal is now indivisible in the sense that it is now neither confused knowledge nor generality. It is all-embracing. We have seen earlier that Aquinas equates such universals to words like point, one and other mathematical expressions, "because the indivisible in this sense stands in opposition to corporeal reality, the whatness of which is primarily and essentially received by the intellect."⁸⁵ Mathematical unity, that is, will express the oneness of the numerous individuals constituted according to their similar specific acts. It expresses the material multiplicity of essences having the same secondary substance. This is how Donne conceives of the universal:

". . . this bed thy centre is, these walls thy sphere."
 "Let us possess one world, each hath one and is one."
 ". . . quickly make that which was nothing, all."

(pp.12, 7, 38)

This last complex act of the mind combines two operations: ". . . a synthesis of concepts (in an entitatively simple reduction-to-unity) and an affirmation."⁸⁶

It is this combination which most perfectly describes the close of what is, perhaps, Donne's most well-known poem:

"Thy firmnes makes my circle just,
 And makes me end, where I begunne."

(A Valediction: forbidding mourning, p.51)

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1a, 85, 3, ad.1; 85, 8, resp.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Vol.12, appendix 3, p.174.

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