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**WHY AUGUSTINIAN APOLOGETICS  
AND LOGICAL DIALECTIC ARE NOT ENOUGH  
TO DEFEND THE REASONABLENESS OF  
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN  
AN INCREASINGLY-FRAGMENTED WORLD**

Evident to many Christians today is that contemporary Christian culture exists within a condition of severe identity crisis. Because we cannot preserve the identity of any being, including that of ourselves, without first admitting that identities other than ourselves exist independently of us, the rational starting point for anyone seeking to solve this problem must consist in admitting three evident truths: (a) beings other than ourselves (real natures) exist; (b) like us, the identity of such beings consists in being organizational wholes (wholes made up of parts); and (c) organizational unity exists in and through the harmonious relationship of the parts of an organizational whole to each other and to some chief aim, or act, the organization seeks to generate or cause (like building a house, extinguishing a fire, fighting crime or disease, or fostering psychological perfection).

To preserve the identity of Christian culture, we must first recognize three things: (a) what is a Christian identity; (b) what is a cultural identity; and (c) how these two identities can be essentially merged to

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become a third identity, or organizational whole: a Christian cultural identity. More: Because cultural identities are cultural wholes, we cannot possibly hope to resolve such a problem without first understanding what constitutes a cultural whole.

Like every organizational whole, *a cultural whole is an essentially harmonious relationship existing within some multitude of parts to cooperate to effect some numerically-one, common chief aim, end, good, or act.* Hence, cultural wholes are essentially *action-improving* wholes: Organizational principles that exist within other organizations (natures) that incline to bring these somewhat harmoniously-existing organizations to more harmonious, better, more perfect, operation.

Cultures, in short, are principles, qualities, that exist within organizations that, by nature, incline to generate within those organizations firmly-possessed, healthy operation. Like the health and disease of the body—as Mortimer J. Adler has well observed—cultural health consists in organizational health, the harmonious functioning of its parts, and cultures die from lack of harmonious functioning of these same parts.<sup>1</sup>

In relationship to the chief topic of this paper, the crucial point to understand about cultures is that, while, by nature, they incline to improve the health and perfection of the organizations within which they exist, organizational cultures can become diseased; and when they do, the culture inclines to cause the organization to become diseased, die from within.

Equally crucial to understand is that human cultures are chiefly caused within human faculties by repeated acts of human nature, and more precisely, by repeated acts of a human, faculty psychology. Wherever human culture exists, an image of the human soul and the

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<sup>1</sup> See Mortimer J. Adler, “God and the Professors,” *Philosophy is Everybody’s Business* 9, no. 3 (Winter 2003): 7–24. To read its online version, visit the following website: <http://www.ditext.com/adler/gp.html>, accessed June 10, 2017.

way it inclines to operate exists. Human cultures exist within the habits, talents, virtues, of its members. A totally untalented, non-virtuous, human organization or culture is an anarchic, non-existent, one.

These habits, talents, virtues, moreover, exist within human faculties, and these human faculties exist within a human soul naturally seeking to achieve self-perfection. This is so true that, if we study the origins of Christian culture and its educational institutions, we find that both are born of the natural human desire by the human soul to perfect itself and its operations: for human beings to become happy. Indeed, like hospitals, the first Christian educational institutions were chiefly the product of, originally brought into existence by and within, Christian culture; and by a psychology peculiar to the Christian soul and its vision of happiness. Such being the case, to preserve the identity of Christian culture in an increasingly fragmented world, we need to comprehend the distinctively Christian understanding of the human soul and of the nature of happiness that Christian psychology chiefly envisions, and preserve it!

A helpful way to do this is to consider the general development of the state of Western Christian education centuries prior to the development of the first Christian universities. When we do this, we find that this education had chiefly consisted in attempts initially started by the early Church Fathers (and, among them in the West, mainly with St. Aurelius Augustine) to use the liberal arts (which these thinkers tended mistakenly to conflate with “philosophy”) to generate within the soul of Christian students a “Christian Wisdom.”

The chief aim of Christian education at its inception consisted mainly in pursuit of wisdom to achieve perfection in action of the human soul. During the middle ages this pursuit of wisdom often became verbally expressed by the Augustinian dictum that philosophy consists in “faith seeking understanding;” and the soul being perfected by this understanding tended to be considered to be an analogous transposition

into Christian culture of the Socratic and Platonic teaching about a human soul: *an intellect or spirit existing separate from the human body*.

Despite the brilliance of St. Augustine, strictly speaking, philosophy is not “faith seeking understanding.” Strictly speaking, nothing akin to such a notion (such as enlightening inspiration by the gods) had been what the leading Ancient Greek philosophers, especially Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the pagan Greek neo-Platonists, had chiefly understood by “philosophy” (which these same Greeks had identified with “science”).<sup>2</sup>

Despite this fact, following the lead of St. Augustine, Church intellectuals started to popularize the notion that Christian Wisdom consisted in the practice of a Christian philosophy (the nature of which they did not precisely understand) by a unifying cause (the human soul), which they also did not precisely understand. Consequently, for centuries after its inception, Christian educational institutions could never adequately apply philosophy to the human soul as a proximate first principle fully to develop a Christian Wisdom.

*Among several mistakes Augustine had made in attempting to use Greek philosophy, and especially the teaching of Plato, as an apologetic in the service of Christian wisdom, was that he never adequately connected the human soul to the human body as its intrinsic animating principle, nor to the bodily senses in one act of personal knowledge, and of a philosophical/scientific act of knowing. While he had recognized the human soul to be connected to the human body in some intimate way, in principle, he did not tend to consider the human soul to be the generating principle of life, growth, and development existing of the human body. Nor, in principle, did he consider the act of philoso-*

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<sup>2</sup> For a defense of the above claims about the nature of ancient Greek philosophy and the beginnings of Christian education, see Peter A. Redpath, *Wisdom's Odyssey from Philosophy to Transcendental Sophistry* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, B. V., Value Inquiry Book Series Volume 46, 1997), 1–62.

phy/science to be the act of what orthodox Christianity considers to be the whole human person, of a psycho-somatic composite.

Furthermore, unlike Aristotle, St. Augustine did not, *in principle*, tend to divide the human soul into higher and lower *faculties* participating in intellectual and sensory reason. He tended to consider the human senses and the human body to distract from knowing activity, which he considered to be entirely the work of the separated human soul, not of the human person as a composite of soul and body.<sup>3</sup>

One effect of St. Augustine's misunderstanding of the nature of ancient Greek philosophy, "Christian philosophy," and the human soul was that, at its inception, in its educational principles, Christian education in the West was born in a somewhat unhealthy condition: It was founded upon a *devastating mistake* of organizational self-misunderstanding, which essentially prevented it from comprehending how human reason could function both *abstractly* as a contemplative (or speculative) scientific intellect and *concretely* as a command and control prudential reason.

Despite the fact that Augustine was an intellectual genius and recognized the influence of human reason over the human appetites and emotions, *Augustine's psychology provided no adequate explanation of how human reason can straddle both speculative and practical activity so as to function as a principle of speculative and practical science and generate both the human intellectual virtue of speculative wisdom*

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<sup>3</sup> I am agreeing with interpretations of St. Augustine made by Vernon J. Bourke in his monograph *Aquinas' Search for Wisdom* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), 70–1, 95–7; and Étienne Gilson in his *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), 74–7. While Augustine accepted the Christian teaching that the human person as a composite whole of body and soul knows, the Platonic and neo-Platonic principles he used to explain how human being knows never enabled him essentially to connect the human soul to the human body and explain how this numerically-one person as a composite whole knows.

(*metaphysics*) and the moral habit of practical wisdom: prudence (*ethics*).

Unhappily, this flaw in Augustinian psychology of the human person continued to influence Christian education from the start of the Christian West until the Christian universities of today. And, due to the post-Reformation fracture of Christendom, and the development of the inception of the falsely-so-called eighteenth-century Western “Enlightenment,” the influence of this flawed psychology in the form of a secularized Augustinian theology masquerading as the whole of human philosophy and science has become especially pernicious in our time.<sup>4</sup>

No one can expect to be wrong about human nature and the way it generates action essentially related to it as an organizational whole and expect to be right about human education. Yet Augustine’s mistaken teachings about the nature of the human soul and what Aristotle called a “form” became entrenched within Christian education for nine centuries, until St. Thomas started to challenge these mistakes so as to provide the principles upon which a more perfectly healthy Christian organizational and educational psychology could be formed.

I call this initial misunderstanding a “devastating mistake” because it is just the sort of error to which Aristotle had referred when he wrote about “small mistakes in the beginning” eventually leading to bigger mistakes later on.<sup>5</sup> Like all education, Christian education consists in organizational activity. Christian education is organizational education of the human person: of numerically-one psycho-somatic unit performing many intellectual and sensory acts *through many facultative*

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed justification of the claims made in this paragraph, see Peter A. Redpath, *Masquerade of the Dream Walkers: Prophetic Theology from the Cartesians to Hegel* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Editions Rodopi: B. V. Value Inquiry Book Series Volume 73, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, bk. 1, ch. 5, trans. John L. Stocks (The Internet Classics Archive): “the least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold,” accessed June 10, 2017, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/heavens.1.i.html>.

*habits and acts* of one body/soul composite: one human person. Christian psychology of the human person does not understand a human being to be a spirit or an essentially separate intellect intimately connected to a human body as an external observer or motor. Nor does it conceive a human being to be an animal dispossessed of an intellectual soul. Like Aristotle, it considers a human being to be a soul/body (hylomorphic) unit.

While he considers human reason to be a faculty of an immortal human soul, St. Thomas Aquinas maintains the specific difference of a human being resides in the genus “animal,” not in the genus “spirit.” Strictly speaking, according to St. Thomas, *human beings are not incarnate spirits*. Human beings do not belong to the genus “spirit.” We are not differentiated in our genus by being on the lowest level of intellectual spirit, being the dumbest of angels. Essentially, we belong to the highest rank within the genus “animal” (the qualitative maximum [leaders, rulers] *in and of* the animal genus), which is specifically divided into rational and irrational. *St. Thomas locates our specific difference in an otherness within the sensitive, or animal, part of the intellectual soul!*<sup>6</sup>

In the case of the human soul, St. Thomas understands the soul’s relation to an animal body to consist in essentially connecting, through human sense faculties (like memory and imagination) of an animal body, an immortal intellectual soul and the activities of the whole human person to sense reality. He maintains that doing so enables the animal genus to become perfectly itself. The “sensitive soul” (the generic part of the human nature) causes *animal* rationality (a reason in touch with sense reality), not a disembodied, or abstract, syllogistic

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<sup>6</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, q. 77, a. 3, respondeo, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Bros. Bilingual edition, 1947), accessed June 10, 2017, <http://dhsprory.org/thomas/summa/>.

rationality, to overflow into the appetitive part of the soul, and, through its activity, into the whole of material creation.

During the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas recognized that only a faculty psychology, and especially recognition of the faculty of a sentient, particular, reason in touch with sense reality, can enable development of the kind of self-understanding human beings (acting persons) capable of generating healthy educational institutions, colleges, and universities

Unhappily, since the time of St. Thomas, Christian educational institutions have largely lost their self-understanding of the nature of the human soul, and that their chief aim as institutes of highest education is essentially to help bring to operational perfection in their students the psychological faculties of the human soul as St. Thomas has described these. While helping students to become employed, get a job, is a noble activity, it is not the chief activity of a university in general or of a Christian university especially. Properly understood, all university education chiefly aims at generating wisdom within faculties of the human soul: to bring into being men and women of perfect virtue, the best of world leaders, including the best of job creators—*employers*, *not employees*. It does not chiefly consist in aping utopian socialist propaganda and vocational-training institutes so as to produce technocrats to bring into existence a new world order run by robots directed by Enlightened, artificial-intelligence plutocrats.

Absent a human soul in which human psychological faculties and habits exist, no human talent or virtue can exist. More: No intrinsic principle of causation exists within human beings for which we can be honored, praised, or shamed; rewarded, ignored, or punished for generating human activities like science and wisdom, prudence and foolishness, virtue and vice.

If the human soul does not exist as the chief, proximate, cause of science and wisdom, prudence and foolishness, virtue and vice, where

do these qualities exist? If they do not exist within the talents and flaws and virtues and vices of scientists, if the psychological qualities, habits, of scientists are not the chief cause of science, what is? If, as some contemporary scientists “falsely-so-called” proclaim, science is an aimless pursuit having nothing to do with perfecting the human person, then contemporary science is essentially anarchic, humanly worthless; and universities that chiefly aim to produce scientists chiefly aim at generating anarchists: men without chests.<sup>7</sup> If science has nothing to do with perfecting the human soul and the psychological health of our human faculties, then, essentially, at best, the chief aim of contemporary science appears to be reduced to producing tools for the chief aim of perfecting tools.

If such be the case, then, as Gilson tells us in his work entitled *Terrors of the Year 2000*, the father of postmodern man’s existential project (and, with it, of the contemporary Christian university) is Sisyphus, not Prometheus (as postmodernists have thought). While Gilson had claimed that our contemporary destiny has become “the absurd” and “truly exhausting task” of perpetual self-invention without model, purpose, or rule, our contemporary situation appears to be worse than he thought.<sup>8</sup> Absent any soul, faculties, or natural abilities, because even tool makers presuppose tool users to make their natures intelligible, because, in the contemporary world of Enlightenment intellectuals, we human beings have no nature, we cannot be tool users; and, hence, we cannot be *self*-inventors, or any kind of inventor or tool-maker. We cannot have Prometheus or Sisyphus as our father and model to imitate.

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<sup>7</sup> See C. S. Lewis’s excellent observations about the nature of the human soul and its essential connection to the human body as rational command and control principle in Chapter 1 (“Men without Chests”) in his celebrated *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 1–26.

<sup>8</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Terrors of the Year 2000* (St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto, 1949).

Even exercise of acts of perpetual boredom exceeds our natural abilities, since we have no such abilities.

By making the mistake of imitating the European Enlightenment's reduction of the whole of science to productive knowledge generated by some abstract collectivist *neo-gnostic spirit*, or *general will*, aiming at perfecting some utopian-socialist will to power over the material universe, unwittingly, most contemporary Christian universities worldwide have lost their self-understanding.

Hence, to conclude, if Christians seriously want to preserve their identity in an increasingly-fragmented contemporary world, they need to displace as their chief measure of educational excellence the collectivist mass, disembodied spirit, and disordered understanding of scientific reason that Enlightenment intellectuals mistakenly claimed, always and everywhere, to be the metaphysical foundation of all philosophy, science, wisdom, and truth. They need to stop educating human beings chiefly to become a collection of mechanistically-, technocratically-controlled serfs. In place of this chief aim of human education, as St. John Paul II well understood, they need, once again, to recognize the distinctively Christian understanding of the human soul and of the nature of happiness that Christian psychology chiefly envisions, *and preserve it!* They need to follow the lead of St. Thomas Aquinas and return focus of Christian education on perfecting the habits and talents of the individually-existing *acting* person: *Perfection of the psychological faculties of the sentient, embodied, individual actively engaged in free, personal, living relationships must once again become the chief aim of the Christian university.*



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SUMMARY

From close to its inception, St. Augustine's misunderstanding of the nature of ancient Greek philosophy, "Christian philosophy," and the way the human soul essentially relates to human body caused formal Christian education to be (a) born in a somewhat unhealthy condition, (b) founded upon a devastating mistake of organizational self-misunderstanding, which essentially prevented it from comprehending how human reason could function both abstractly as a contemplative (or speculative) scientific intellect and concretely as a command and control prudential reason. This flaw in Augustinian psychology of the human person and Augustine's misunderstanding of the nature of ancient Greek philosophy continued to influence Christian education from the start of the Christian West until the Christian and secular universities of today. For contemporary Christian education to preserve its identity in an increasingly fragmented world, a psychology of the human person adequate to explain the essential connection between the human soul and body and the nature of philosophy must replace this flawed Augustinian psychology that continues to plague the contemporary world.

KEYWORDS

Christian, Christian philosophy, Christian cultural whole, culture, psychology, education, identity, organization, organizational psychology, principle, philosophy, self-understanding, soul.

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