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Florian Wöller • Ueli Zahnd (eds.)

Dominican Culture, Dominican Theology

The Order of Preachers and Its Spheres of Action (1215 – ca. 1600)

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Between Philosophical and Christian Contemplation
The Role of Dionysius in the Writings of Albert the Great

Samuel Baudinette

In a monograph that offers a genealogical analysis of the relationship between reason and faith in Christian thought Alain de Libera admonishes historians who study the German Dominican philosopher and theologian Albert the Great (1193–1280) "to forget Thomas Aquinas or the Albertist paradigm."[1] De Libera means by this that scholars ought not to place Albert within those scholastic traditions that responded to his work where non-Christian philosophy and Christian theology were synthesized and reconciled, but must instead account for Albert's attempt in his many writings to systematize their difference and relative autonomy.

Following de Libera's suggestion, I introduce in the following article Albert's lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and on the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, as well as his account in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Liber Sententiarum* of the affective nature of Christian theology, to explain how the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite informed the fundamental difference Albert came to posit between philosophical and Christian contemplation. I demonstrate that Albert believed that syllogistic reasoning could capture philosophers, compelling them to think and feel in a way that is oriented toward the world of being and the truth partially apparent within it, rather than toward the beatifying end of Christianity, God Himself. Only the Christian theologian, Albert consequently argues, who is moved by the Truth to articulate the Truth itself, can disrupt the flow of concepts and the proliferation of errors that compel philosophical belief, even as the Christian theologian does not explicitly aim to counter every truth which is articulated by each philosopher. This is because Albert maintained that Christianity alone is grounded in and authorized by a light from God that directs the Christian beyond ratiocination toward the truly salvific and beatifying knowledge that enables them to will to strive for God, whom the intellect cannot attain without divine assistance.

At the heart of Albert's account of the difference between Christian and philosophical contemplation, I argue, one uncovers a debate not only about the nature of intellection and the limits of philosophy. One also discovers an account about the production and circulation of conflicting affects—a debate, that is, about the true object of desire and one's capacity to be directed toward and into it through wonder and love. Both the Christian theologian and the philosopher are affected or driven by something, Albert contends, whether this is the light poured out by God which the Christian "suffers", or the world itself which lets

[1] De Libera, Alain: *Raison et Foi: Archaelogie d'une crise d'Albert le Grand à Jean-Paul II*, Paris 2003, pp. 35–82.

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the philosopher grasp God as He is determined by being. The philosophers, Albert ultimately concludes, can only err because they lack the piety requisite for the reception of Christian truth and because they fail to concede the limits of their own knowledge and morality.

1. The Affect of Wonder According to Peripatetic Philosophy

The lectures *Super Ethica* which Albert delivered in Cologne at the newly founded Dominican *studium* in the early 1250s offer a useful and programmatic point of entry for my argument about the role of Dionysius in Albert's writing. As is well known, Albert's decision to lecture upon the Nicomachean Ethics as the central work of Peripatetic moral philosophy (newly available in a translation from the Greek by Robert Grosseteste) alongside the Dionysian Corpus at Cologne was a radical departure from the course of theological instruction becoming standard at the universities. The lectures are also representative of Albert's overall commitment to the Aristotelian tradition, which he would eventually paraphrase and interpret for his Dominican confrères.[2]

In the sixth question of the sixteenth lecture dedicated to Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Albert examines whether contemplation—the perfect act of the soul which is most felicitous and delightful according to Aristotle—is the same in philosophy and theology. In the initial arguments of this question Albert suggests that philosophical and theological contemplation are the same.[3] Yet Albert offers two key objections to these claims, which are decisive for his ultimate conclusion that philosophical and theological contemplation are not identical but similar. In the first objection, Albert argues that philosophical contemplation involves an acquired habit whereas the theological occurs through an infused light.[4] In the second, Albert asserts that philosophical contemplation is without wonder, due to Aristotle's claim from the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that one who is not a geometer wonders at those things which the geometer comprehends.[5] "Yet theological contemplation is with the greatest wonder", Albert continues, "whence Augustine says that he was not satisfied by contemplating the profundity of the divine plan."[6] This reference to the account of Augustine's

[2] Mulchahey, M. Michèle: *"The Use of Philosophy, Especially by the Preachers... " Albert the Great, the Studium at Cologne, and the Dominican Curriculum* (The Etienne Gilson Series 32), Toronto 2009; Senner, Walter: "Albertus Magnus als Gründungsregens des Kölner *Studium generale* der Dominikaner", in eds. Jan A. Aertsen/Andreas Speer: *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert* (Miscellanea mediaevalia 27), Berlin 2000, pp. 149–169.

[3] Albertus Magnus: *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, ed. Wilhelm Kübel (Opera Omnia 14.1/2), Münster 1968–1987, p. 774.

[4] Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, sed contra, ed. Kübel, p. 774, l. 70–72: "contemplatio est per habitum acquisitum, sed theologica per lumen infusum; ergo non sunt idem."

[5] Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, sed contra 2, ed. Kübel, p. 774, l. 73–76: "contemplatio philosophica est non cum admiratione; unde dicitur in PRINCIPIO METAPHYSICAE, de quibus admiratur non-geometer, non admirari geometricam", citing Aristoteles *Metaphysica* 1.2 983a19–20.

[6] Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, sed contra 2, ed. Kübel, p. 774, l. 76–79:

initial delight after his baptism in the *Confessions*, which prefaces his extended treatment of the joy he felt and tears he shed during the hymns and songs introduced by Ambrose into the worship of the Milanese Church, signals that Albert takes a certain affective experience to be central to his definition of Christian theology insofar as it is directed toward Christianity's contemplative end.

Albert's solution to the question focuses on the significance of these two arguments, even as he begins by asserting what philosophical and Christian theological contemplation have in common. Theological contemplation, Albert explains, like the philosophical, is thus "an inspection by the intellect of certain spiritual things, which is ordered toward resting in God, who is the height of felicity, without impediment from the passions on the side of the subject and of doubt on the side of belief."[7] But they differ in habit, end and object. They differ in habit, as Albert had already asserted in his objections, because the philosopher contemplates through the acquired habit of wisdom while the theologian's contemplation is the result of a specific light infused into the contemplative by God alone.[8] In the end, however, they differ "because the theologian places their final end in the contemplation of God *in patria* but the philosopher places it in the vision through which God is seen to a restricted degree *in via*."[9] Finally, they differ in their object, Albert argues, "not so much according to substance as according to mode, because philosophers contemplate God according to how they possess him to some extent as a demonstrative conclusion, but the theologian contemplates him as existing above reason and the intellect."[10] In other words, the philosopher and the Christian theologian contemplate the same entity—the God who is beyond the limits of merely human thought—in different ways. This leads Albert to conclude that "there is a diverse mode of contemplating, since the philosopher has the certainty of demonstration, which he rests upon, but the theologian rests on the First Truth itself and not according to reason (even if he may have that) and thus the theologian wonders but not the philosopher."[11]

"sed theologica est cum maxima admiratione, unde dicit Augustinus, quod non satiebatur contemplari altitudinem consilii divini", citing Augustinus Hipponensis: *Confessiones* 9.6.14, ed. L. Verhejen (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 27), Turnhout 1981, p. 141, l. 22–23.

7 Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., ed. Kübel, p. 774, l. 82–87: "Convenit enim in hoc quod etiam in theologica est inspectio per intellectum aliquorum spiritualium sine impedimento passionum ex parte subiecti et dubietatis ex parte fidei ordinata ad quiescendum in deo, quod est summa felicitas."

8 Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., ed. Kübel, p. 774, l. 88–90: "In habitu quidem, quia theologica contemplator per lumen infusum a deo, sed philosophus per habitum sapientiae acquisitum."

9 Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., ed. Kübel, p. 774, l. 90–p. 775, l. 3: "in fine, quia theologica ponit ultimum finem in contemplatione dei in patria, sed philosophus in visione, qua videtur aliquatenus in via."

10 Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., ed. Kübel, p. 775, l. 3–8: "in obiecto etiam non quantum ad substantiam, sed quantum ad modum, quia philosophus contemplatur deum, secundum quod habet ipsum ut quondam conclusionem demonstrativam, sed theologus contemplatur ipsum ut supra rationem et intellectum existentem."

11 Albertus Magnus *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., ed. Kübel, p. 775, l. 8–13: "Et ideo est diversus modus contemplandi, quia philosophus habet certitudinem demonstrationis,

What exactly does Albert mean here by 'wonder'? In his *Metaphysica* written sometime between 1264 and 1267 Albert provides a late definition of this affect and its relationship to the philosophical enterprise that builds upon Aristotle's own and which elucidates what is at stake in his earlier lectures *Super Ethica*.[12] In a chapter meant to determine whether metaphysics as wisdom is a practical or speculative science, Albert argues that its contemplative character is evident because all those who are moved to philosophize, both in the past and in the present, were driven by wonder. Wonder is therefore constitutive of the act of contemplation, a feeling that accompanies and motivates thought itself, a mood or affective orientation which arises because of the desire to comprehend something. Wonder, Albert accordingly explains, is "an agony and suspension of the heart in a stupor of great prodigy after the perception of something apparent so that the heart suffers dilation."[13]

In this way wonder is akin to fear, Albert extrapolates, and represents a movement that the heart undergoes because of a cessation of the desire to know the cause of whatever entity appears before the one engaged in speculative contemplation.[14] Yet the one who wonders, Albert concludes, also seems to be ignorant, "for wonder is the movement of one who does not know proceeding toward what must be examined in order that they know the cause of that about which they wonder."[15] This means that the one who wonders categorically does not yet possess any certain or determined knowledge of that which they seek. They are characterized by their movement toward what must be known rather than their satisfaction with an understanding that has been attained. It is a state of incomprehension, but one which calls for explanation and which encourages inquiry.

This is demonstrated, Albert argues, by the fact that a lover of fables is a kind of philosopher, who composes poems about those things which generate wonder in order to excite others to seek knowledge insofar as poetry is a type of argumentation that is comparable to syllogistic reasoning.[16] Although the

cui innititur, sed theologus innititur primae veritati propter se et non propter rationem, etiamsi habeat ipsam, et ideo theologus miratur, sed non philosophus."

12 See Bynum, Caroline Walker: "Wonder", in *The American Historical Review* 102 (1997), pp. 1–26 and Park, Katharine/Daston, Lorraine: *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150–1750*, Princeton 1998, pp. 109–133 on the role wonder plays in medieval Christian philosophy and theology, including important discussion of Albert.

13 Albertus Magnus: *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, ed. Bernhard Geyer (Opera Omnia 16.1/2), Münster 1960–1964, p. 23, l. 13–16: "Admirationem autem vocamus agoniam et suspensionem cordis in stupore magni prodigii in sensu apparentis, ita quod cor systole patitur."

14 Albertus Magnus *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, ed. Geyer, p. 23, l. 16–20: "Propter quod etiam admiratio aliquid simile habet timori in motu cordis. Huius igitur motus admirationis in agonia et systole cordis est ex suspensione desiderii ad cognoscendam causam eius quod apparet, prodigii."

15 Albertus Magnus: *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, ed. Geyer, p. 23, l. 40–43: "Qui autem dubitat et admiratur, ignorare videtur; est enim admiratio motus ignorantis procedentis ad inquirendum, ut sciat causam eius de quo miratur."

16 Albertus Magnus *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, ed. Geyer, p. 23, l. 46–53, 60–65: "Cuius signum est, quia ipse philomythos secundum hunc modum philosophus est, quia fabula sua construitur ab ipso ex mirandis. Dico autem philomython poetam amantem fingere

tales which those dedicated to the poets composed witness their commitment to error rather than truth Albert's main point here is to highlight how wonder directs and has directed the mind toward the causes that underlie whatever is perceived and which are not immediately evident to the senses. And because wonder is the motive force that accompanies the desire to know and a feeling of stupefaction before what cannot readily be comprehended, Albert aligns it in his earlier *Super Ethica* with Christian contemplation rather than a philosophy that comes to rest in a demonstrated truth about the divine, where the desire to know God has ostensibly ceased.

2. Dionysian Mystical Theology as the Paradigm for Christian Contemplation

It was Albert's commitment to the *Corpus Dionysiacum* which explains his argument about how philosophical and Christian contemplation ought to be conceived through their difference rather than their similarity. As Alain de Libera and Henryk Anzulewicz have each argued, in their own way, this is because Dionysius offered Albert the structural principles that governed both his philosophy and theology.[17] Bernhard Blankenhorn, for this reason, rightly insists against those who have overemphasized Albert's optimistic assessment in his explicitly Aristotelian writings of the union with God the philosopher is naturally able to attain, that

> Albert's constant emphasis on the grace-nature distinction to explain Dionysian union, the explicitly theological character of his Dionysian commentaries, and the centrality of revealed divine names as the ladder toward union demonstrate the impossibility of reducing Albert's early Cologne mysticism to a philosophical ascent of the mind to God or [the] separate substances *in abstraction from* the Christian mediations of Scripture and the sacraments.[18]

James A. Weisheipl and M. Michèle Mulchahey have amply demonstrated, moreover, that Albert had begun his lectures *Super Ethica* in Cologne after he had already completed his courses on *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* and *De divinis nominibus* of Dionysius so he must have recognized how Dionysius complement-

> fabulas. Mython enim, prima producta, fabulam sonat, et philomython sonat amatorem fabularum, si penultima producatur. Sicut enim in ea parte logicae quae poetica est, ostendit ARISTOTELES, poeta fingit fabulam, ut excitet ad admirandum et quod admiratio ulterius excitet ad inquirendum et sic constet philosophia [...] Sed aliae partes logices modum dant probandi propositum argumentatione perfecta vel imperfecta, poesis autem non, sed modum dat admirandi, per quod excitatur inquirens. Licet ergo quoad mensuram metri poetria sit sub grammatica, tamen quoad intentionem logicae est poesis pars quaedam."

17 De Libera, Alain: *Métaphysique et noétique. Albert le Grand*, Paris 2005, pp. 178–84; Anzulewicz, Henryk: "Die Rekonstruktion der Denkstruktur des Albertus Magnus. Skizze und Thesen eines Forschungsprojektes", in *Theologie und Glaube* 90 (2000), pp. 602–612.

18 Blankenhorn, Bernhard: *The Mystery of Union with God. Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas*, Washington, D.C. 2015, p. 207. Emphasis present.

ed and corrected the former.[19] In the first chapter of his commentary on *De mystica theologia*, in the Latin translation by John the Saracen produced during the twelfth century, Albert therefore discusses at length the difference he had articulated in his *Super Ethica* between the contemplation proper to the Christian and that which characterizes the philosopher insofar as this difference related to the account of mystical theology that Dionysius had composed. Whatever argument that Albert developed about the difference between philosophical and Christian contemplation in his lectures on Aristotle must accordingly be situated against his subsequent account of philosophy and description of the philosophers in this Dionysian treatise.

Albert opens his commentary on *De mystica theologia* with a short exegesis of Isaiah 45:15, "Truly God of Israel, the Savior, you are a hidden God", whose four parts, he claims, signify the form, material, audience, and end of the teaching conveyed by the work. Albert first explains that Christian doctrine, like the Scriptures, which is signified by Isaiah's "truly", is "established by undoubtable truth" because "it is not grasped by human arguments, which contain many a mixture of doubts and error, but from divine inspiration, which cannot contain what is false."[20] The student of this Christian doctrine, on the other hand, who is properly signified by the name "Israel" (which Albert takes to denote "someone most straight or a man who sees God") must have a twofold perfection according to Albert, if they want to learn or receive the mystical knowledge contained in Dionysius's treatise. That is, the Christian who wants to access the hidden truths of mystical theology ought to possess "clarity of intellect in order to see God and rectitude in works, through which they are to come to this aforesaid clarity or insight."[21] Finally, Albert demarcates the goal of this divine science from the disciplines of philosophy. Albert accordingly concludes that

> the end of this doctrine is not only that we may know, nor that 'we may become good' through works, as in ethics, but that, even further, we may come to that eternal salvation, where what is hidden from us now about God is left behind through negations and may be openly exposed to us without any veil.[22]

[19] Mulchahey 2009, pp. 13–17; Weisheipl, James A: "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great", in *id.: Albertus Magnus and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays 1980,* Toronto 1980, pp. 13–51: 28–30. The lectures on *De mystica theologia* would have been delivered sometime before he left Cologne in 1254, perhaps after he had completed his lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics.*

[20] Albertus Magnus: *Super Dionysii Mysticam Theologiam* I, ed. Paul Simon (Opera Omnia 37.2), Münster 1978, p. 453, l. 10–14: "quae quia non rationibus humanis plurimum dubietatis et erroris mixtum habentibus accipitur, sed divina inspiratione, cui non potest subesse falsum, indubitata veritate firmatur."

[21] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 453, l. 36–41: "'Israel', quod interpretatur 'rectissimus' et 'vir videns deum'. Unde ostenditur duplex perfectio, quae requiritur in auditore huius scientiae, scilicet limpiditas intellectus ad videndum deum et rectitudo operis, per quam ad dictam limpiditatem vel acumen devenitur."

[22] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 454, l. 4–9: "Non enim finis huius doctrinae est tantum, ut sciamus neque ut solum per opera 'boni fiamus', sicut in ethicis, sed ut ulterius ad aeternam salutem perveniatur, in qua quod hic occultum de deo nobis relinquitur per negationes, sine aliquo velamine et aperte nobis obiciatur."

The parameters that Albert lays out here—that mystical theology's truth lies beyond a human reason capable of producing error, that the auditor should stand in intellectual and moral rectitude, and that mystical doctrine is directed toward the attainment of eternal salvation and not just the speculative and practical goals of apodictic knowledge and moral perfection—explicitly establish how the ultimate end of Christian mystical theology ought to be differentiated from that of the philosophers. And it is these strictures which I shall attend to in the following analysis to the extent that they relate to Albert's attempt to specify, following Dionysius, how philosophy differs from Christianity.

Albert also outlines at the outset of his commentary, however, another important way that such mystical doctrine differs from all the other sciences in its fundamental principles. Albert explains that whereas "a science which proceeds from the principles of reason openly lays out the things to which it leads"—i.e., involves a syllogistic or symbolic way of speaking that aims to affirm or disclose demonstrably and rhetorically a truth that is properly hidden—"doctrine of this kind [i.e., the mystical] does not proceed from such principles." Instead, mystical doctrine ensues "from a certain divine light, which is not an enunciation by which something is positively asserted [i.e., a syllogism], but something that convinces the intellect so that the intellect adheres to it [i.e., the light] above all things."[23] That which conveys the principles that inform and ground Christian truth, Albert determines, is not a mode of argumentation or even a way of speaking but a real entity or force that enters into the theologian. This divine light, Albert adds, also leaves the intellect in a state quite different from the determined knowledge that demonstrative reasoning produces insofar as it lifts the mind up to what lies beyond its grasp.[24]

Albert therefore argues that a mystical teaching like that which Dionysius describes is produced by a specific kind of illumination by a real divine light that operates in a way comparable to but different from the demonstrative work a syllogistic procedure is supposed to affect. In other words, this is an understanding of divine things that is given to the knower rather than a knowledge that simply advances toward God by means of an argumentative procedure. This is also why the divine light, Albert ultimately suggests, is more like the material light that enables bodily vision by illuminating all that is sensible, since it cannot produce any determinate knowledge of what is visible because it lacks a proper *species* or visible form, than it is like the light of reason, which produces a specific understanding of the particular concept it illuminates.[25]

[23] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 455, l. 12–17: "scientia, quae procedit ex principiis rationis, ponit in aperto ea ad quae ducit. Huiusmodi autem doctrina non procedit ex talibus principiis, sed potius ex quodam lumine divino, quod non est enuntiatio, per quam aliquid affirmetur, sed res quaedam convincens intellectum, ut sibi super omnia adhaereatur."

[24] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 455, l. 17–19: "Et ideo elevat intellectum ad id quod excedit ipsum, propter quod remanet intellectus in quodam non determinate noto."

[25] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 455, l. 19–28: "Et hoc lumen proportionatur lumini, quo corporalis visus confortatur ad videndum, quod tamen non facit alicuius visibilis deteminatam cognitionem, cum nullius species propria sit. Lumen autem

This difference relates to a further difference that Albert draws in the following section of his commentary, where he attends directly to the supplicatory prayer that opens Dionysius's *De mystica theologia* itself:

> Super-substantial Trinity! Both beyond God and the supremely good custodian of the divine wisdom of the Christians! Direct us to the super unknown, the super-resplendent and most sublime peak of the mystical utterances, where the most simple, absolute and unchangeable mysteries of theology have been concealed according to the super-resplendent darkness of a silence that secretly instructs![26]

In a direct gloss clarifying the precise meaning of Dionysius's words, Albert explains that Dionysius in his prayer had specified "the divine wisdom of the Christians" so as "to differentiate it from the divine science about God that even the philosophers held, which was mixed with many errors on account of the feebleness of human reason."[27]

Continuing on to a consideration of the actual instruction that follows this opening prayer, which Dionysius had composed for his disciple Timothy, the companion of Paul, who was the supposed recipient of *De mystica theologia*, Albert explains that a Christian mystical theologian "ought to rise up to the imitation of God who is above all being and knowledge, insofar as a mind actually imitates God when the image of God is reformed by the habit of grace or glory."[28] Such an imitation is a union with God, as the alternate translation of *De mystica theologia* by Eriugena confirms, which involves a "rise to unity or simplicity", where the contemplative "who is conducted up on high according to the ray of divine darkness [...] unrestrainedly goes out of himself, as if he does not hold himself back among the principles of reason."[29]

principiorum rationis assimilatur magis ipsis speciebus propriis rerum visibilium, quibus visus determinate apprehendit hoc vel illud; et ideo ducunt in determinatam cognitionem rei."

[26] Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita: *De mystica theologia* I, ed. Philippe Chevallier: *Dionysiaca. Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traditions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopagite, vol. 1,* Bruges 1934, pp. 565–566.

[27] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 457, l. 7–11: "Et dicit 'Christianorum' ad differentiam scientiae divinae, quam de deo philosophi etiam habuerunt, quae plurimis erroribus mixta fuit propter imbecillitatem rationis humanae."

[28] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 457, l. 52–55: "et sic debet consurgere ad imitationem dei, qui est super omnem substantiam et cognitionem, secundum quod mens, in qua est imago reformata per habitum gloriae vel gratiae, actu deum imitatur."

[29] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 457, l. 56–61: "ALIA LITTERA: unitionem, ut scilicet deo uniatur: et haec concordat ALTERI TRANSLATIONE, quae habet unitatem, idest simplicitatem –, et sic sursum agatur ad radium divinarum tenebrarum [...] excedendo seipsum irretentibiliter, quasi non retinendo se intra principia rationis." The force of the "quasi" here is significant as Albert does not claim that Christian ecstasy eliminates the need to deploy syllogisms. Rather, his argument seems to imply that the syllogisms the theologian deploys rationally have been subordinated to a higher disposition the theologian now inhabits *as if* they are no longer necessary.

The theology of the Christians, which is ultimately directed toward complete union with God and not just knowledge about God, "is the total perfection of divine science [and] requires a greater perfection in the hearer", calls the theologian to "give up the intellectual operations that are connatural to us", and confirms that "the power [of the mind] can be extended above itself insofar as it is carried over to an object that is elevated above it."[30] To the extent that Christian contemplatives relinquish everything, according to Albert, they consequently attain God in another way and their mind is both deified and illuminated, even if they actually fail to adequately comprehend the divine majesty.[31]

After clarifying this point Albert proceeds to interpret Dionysius's instructions to Timothy to keep Christian theological instruction a secret, and hence to explain why not only philosophers but also idolaters must not partake of the mystical instruction proper to Christians alone. The philosophers, Albert begins, are "unlearned" according to Dionysius since "they believe that nothing exists super-substantially above beings, that is, exist without some proportion to what exists." This is because they are "affectively and intellectually formed by those things that exist, by which we attain knowledge."[32] This led the philosophers to assert, Albert continues, "that the first mover is proportioned to the first thing moved" and "to suppose that they are able to know [...] God by that knowledge which is their own, that is, through rational principles."[33] Albert accuses the philosophers here of enframing the divine within being by reducing God to the mere fact of His existence and consequently implies that their speculative approach, as metaphysical or ontotheological, cannot conceive of a transcendent God irreducible to the dictates of reason and radically separate from what He created.[34]

The philosophers' affective and intellectual lives are entirely overdetermined by the world of apparent being and hence they may only correlate what

[30] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 13–15: "Et ideo haec est tota perfectio divinae scientiae; unde requiritur maior perfectio in auditore;" *Ibid.*, l. 16–17: "monet relinquere intellectuales operationes connaturales nobis;" *Ibid.*, l. 24–26: "sed virtus sua potest extendi supra ipsum, inquantum fertur in obiectum, quod est elevatum ab ipso."

[31] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 457, l. 28–30: "deficiamus a comprehensione divinae eminentiae, tamen ex hoc quod attingimus aliqualiter ipsam relictis omnibus, mens deificatur et illuminatur."

[32] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 34–38: "Dicit enim illos indoctos qui, cum sint informati et secundum affectum et secundum intellectum existentibus, a quibus scientiam accipimus, nihil credunt esse super entia supersubtantialiter, idest sine proportione ad ipsa."

[33] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 38–42: "Unde etiam PHILOSOPHI dicunt, quod motor primus est proportionatus mobile primo; sed putant se posse scire [...] deum, ea cognitione quae est secundum ipsos, idest per principia rationis."

[34] De Libera 2003, pp. 283–86; de Libera 2005, pp. 61–74. In this regard, it is significant that Albert will open his *Metaphysica* with a digression that argues that God, although the creator and cause of all, is not strictly speaking the subject of first philosophy, which investigates instead being qua being, defined following the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis* as the first thing created by God.

exists with what can be known. This is an error that had even been attributed to Augustine, Albert reports, who supposedly "wanted, while swollen with conceit by an inane philosophy, to comprehend with human reason what a pious mind labors to apprehend with the vigor of faith."[35] By indicating that Augustine was seen to be guilty of theologizing through reason alone at one point—presumably during the Manichaean or Academic periods prior to his full conversion to Christianity—Albert indicates how philosophical speculation divorced from faith and based purely on human reason without divine illumination is by definition "impious". Evidently Albert, following Dionysius, considers these arguments sufficient grounds to forbid philosophers from partaking of Christian instruction, seeing as they are not adequately prepared to open themselves up to a knowledge that goes beyond their own.

Yet Albert qualifies his criticism of the philosophers by highlighting two difficulties presented by the words of Dionysius. First, Albert asks why these philosophers should not be instructed in the mystical theology of the Christians as this forecloses in advance any attempt to correct their errors.[36] He then acknowledges, following Aristotle, that many people act in ways that contradict their knowledge and that nothing suggests that those whose understanding and affect are shaped solely by existing things should not be instructed how to think otherwise.[37]

Albert replies to these difficulties by insisting "that divine things are not received through rational principles but in a certain experience through 'compassion toward them', as Dionysius says about Hierotheus, who acquired knowledge of the divine things 'by suffering the divine'."[38] By evoking once again Eriugena's translation of Dionysius's text, Albert therefore explicitly identifies the difference between philosophical practice and the experience that founds and grounds Christian contemplation as primarily *affective*. The Christian suffers or is moved by God through the influx of a divine light, Albert declares, and not only by the world of existing things or the discursive reason that affect or drive the philosopher. Just as he had suggested in his lectures *Super Ethica* that the philosopher's contemplation is limited insofar as it lacks the wonder which accompanies the contemplation of the Christian theologian, Albert here

[35] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 42–45: "sicut dicitur de AUGUSTINO, quod tumens inani philosophia volebat humana ratione comprehendere, quod pia mens vivacitate fidei nititur apprehendere."

[36] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 46–49: "Sed videtur, quod isti qui non sic sunt formati secundum existentiam, sint iam docti, et docti non sunt docendi, et ita videtur, quod potius eos qui sunt formati, docere debeat."

[37] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 50–53: "Praeterea, sicut dicit PHILOSOPHUS, multi sunt scientes et contraria operantes; ergo nihil prohibit aliquos posse scire divina, quamvis sint secundum affectum existentibus formati."

[38] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 54–56: "Dicendum, quod divina non accipiuntur per principia rationis, sed quodam experimento per 'compassionem ad ipsa', sicut de HIEROTHEO dicit DIONYSIUS, quod didicit divina 'patiendo divina'." See Blankenhorn 2015, pp. 94–97 and pp. 201–203 who argues that Hierotheus represents the privileged model that the scholastic theologian is called to emulate in Albert's Dionysian commentaries.

emphasizes how the experience of God available to the Christian orients them toward a truth and an affective state beyond the philosopher's grasp.

This brief mention of Hierotheus thus led Albert to an important conclusion that has significant implications for his view of those philosophers who do not share in the fundamentally Christian experience of suffering or receiving God that Dionysius describes. "If the affect is infected by the illicit love of things", Albert argues, "it does not feel the sweetness of divine inspiration."[39] This means, Albert continues, that any knowledge lacking this experience, "although able to form syllogisms and enunciate propositions, does not have the real knowledge which is a part of beatitude."[40] In other words, Christian theology differs from the divine science of the philosophers not only because its subject exceeds metaphysics, but also because it is grounded in and moved by a divinely given experience that conveys beatifying knowledge. The Christian theologian, unlike the "unlearned" philosophers, are consequently those "who are prepared for divine instruction by being affectively and intellectually purged of errors and concupiscence."[41] Paradigmatically, Christians are those who are no longer emotionally and noetically determined by the world or reason alone because they receive that which lies beyond their limits and which cannot be adequately reduced to the experience or knowledge that they enable. Philosophers and Christian theologians differ not only because of what they know, according to Albert, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, because of what and how they feel.

3. The Role of Piety and Love in Christian Theology in the Commentary on the *Sentences*

Albert had already explained what this affective understanding of Christian theology entailed prior to the delivery of his lectures *Super Ethica* and *De mystica theologia* in his commentary on the first book of Peter Lombard's *Liber Sententiarum* which he began while *magister in actu regens* at the University of Paris in the 1240s. In fact, as Christian Trottman has explained in an important study, attending to Albert's understanding of the beatifying end particular to Christian theology in this work clarifies the limits he sought to impose on the philosophical perfection he described elsewhere.[42] In a question that sought to determine whether theology is primarily speculative or practical—comparable to the question he had raised in his *Metaphysica* which I discussed above—Albert asserts that the an-

[39] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 57–59: "Sed affectus infectus illicito rerum amore non sentit dulcedinem divinae inspirationis."

[40] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 59–62: "et ideo deficiente cognitione, quae est per experimentum, potest quidem formare syllogismos et dicere propositiones, sed realem scientiam non habet, quae est pars beatitudinis."

[41] Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 458, l. 64–66: "illi qui sunt praeparati ad divinam doctrinam per purgationem affectus et intellectus ab erroribus et concupiscentiis."

[42] Trottman, Christian: "La théologie comme pieuse science visant la béatitude selon Albert le Grand," in *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998), pp. 387–410.

swer to this question must be solved based on the specific end of Christian theology, which he identifies by citing the beginning of the Epistle of Titus, where the Apostle Paul addresses his disciple "in acknowledgment of the truth, which is according to piety, in the hope of everlasting life."[43] Albert explains, citing the *Glossa Ordinaria*, that the piety mentioned here signifies "the religion of Christ" and is introduced by Paul "because there is truth in the liberal arts, but these do not pertain to the Christian religion."[44] But the truth which is according to piety, Albert explains, is twofold:

> There is one truth, namely, according to the worship of God in itself and in its members, to which everything advancing that worship pertains, and another that is the end of its intention, and this is to conjoin through intellect, affect and substance with that which is worshiped, insofar as this is the end that beatifies. And, therefore, this science [i.e., Christian theology] strictly speaking is affective, that is, it is of a truth which is not separated from the principle of the good and it thus perfects both the intellect and the affect.[45]

Albert's consideration of piety as a religious disposition or habit in his response to this question is accordingly differentiated into a description of its true practice and the true end that this practice is meant to cultivate or realize. He consequently claims that the beatifying end revealed to Christian piety "is not found in created things and thus the philosophers have not discussed science in this way, but divided it into one science directed to the truth which is in things and another which is directed toward the good which is in themselves."[46]

Whereas Christian theology in its properly religious orientation holds the aims of metaphysics and ethics together while also going beyond them, Albert argues that the philosophers atomize these into separate disciplines, one that is primarily speculative and another which is ultimately practical, predicated on their belief that being is divine and the good is human. But Christian theology, Albert concludes, not only conjoins the theologian intellectually to what is true, but also orders the intellect toward a specific affect as toward an end, namely a desire for eternal life as well as the commitment to seek it, because it recog-

[43] Albertus Magnus: *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ed. Maria Burger (Opera Omnia 29.2), Münster 2015, p. 14, l. 22–5: "Dico quod ista scientia ex fine determinanda est. Finis autem dicitur ad TIT. 1 (1sq.), ubi dicitur: 'In agnitionem veritatis, quae secundum pietatem est, in spem vitae aeternae.'"

[44] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 25–8: "et ibi dicit GLOSSA: 'secundum pietatem', idest Christi religionem, et hoc ideo dicit, quia 'est veritatis in liberalibus artibus, sed quae nihil pertinent ad christianam religionem.'"

[45] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 29–36: "unum scilicet secundum pietatem cultus dei in se et in membris, ad quod pertinent omnia promoventia cultum illum; alterum autem est finis intentionis, et hic est coniungi intellectu et affectu et substantia cum eo qui colitur, prout est finis beatificans; et ideo ista scientia proprie est affectiva, idest veritatis, quae non sequestratur a ratione boni, et ideo perficit et intellectum et affectum."

[46] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 36–40: "Talis autem finis in rebus creatis non invenitur, et ideo philosophi non tractaverunt huiusmodi scientiam, sed diviserunt unum ad verum, quod est in rebus, aliam autem ad bonum, quod est in ipsis."

nizes that the divine is the true source of what is good.[47] The philosophers, by contrast, separate out the speculative and practical dimension of religion that Christianity unifies and hence their piety is fragmentary and cannot attain the completely beatifying end available to Christians alone. The implication here is that the philosopher can be demonstratively correct while remaining an impious person and that the practical and speculative ends that the philosopher pursues cannot prepare them to reach God even if they do allow one to become virtuous or to understand the world.

This affective definition of Christian theology enables Albert to respond to two problems posed by the speculative and practical sciences of the philosophers. First, Albert identifies Christian theology specifically with wisdom insofar as it deals with the highest thing, God, according to the highest way, the principles of faith.[48] However, Albert continues, "the other wisdoms which the philosophers invented, even if these can be called wisdom insofar as they are about the highest things, nevertheless are not according to the highest way [i.e., faith] but rather through principles which are subject to reason."[49] Albert concludes from this, in an attempt to specify and demarcate the exact role of the liberal arts, that only Christian theology as an affective science according to piety is properly free or at least freer than the other sciences, because like a person who is free "it exists for its own sake and not because of another."[50] This is so, Albert concludes, because the beatifying end sought in it—"the God whom everyone desires to know"—is desired for itself alone and not because of some other thing.[51]

Albert also insists that Christian theology as a practical science is not, nor should be subordinated to, moral philosophy, because the habits that ethics produce are not theology's ultimate goal.[52] Hence ethics is one of the many

47 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 2, ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 56–60: "quod non quaeritur coniunctio ad veritatem per intellectum tantum, sed etiam per affectum et substantiam; et ideo non est intellectiva sed affectiva, quia intellectus ordinatur ad affectum ut ad finem." On Albert's understanding of the Good see Anzulewicz, Henryk: "'Bonum als Schlüsselbegriff bei Albertus Magnus", in ed. Walter Senner: *Albertus Magnus. Zum Gedenken nach 800 Jahren: Neue Zugänge, Aspekte und Perspektiven* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens, N.F. 10), Berlin 2001, pp. 113–140.

48 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 1, ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 41–44: "dicendum quod ista scientia principalissime dicitur sapientia, eo quod ipsa est de altissimis et altissimo modo, quia de deo et per principia fidei."

49 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 1, ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 44–47: "aliae autem sapientiae, quae a philosophis sunt inventae, et si sapientiae dicantur, quia sunt de altis, non tamen sunt altissimo modo, sed potius per principia, quae sub ratione sunt."

50 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 1, ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 47–50: "Sic dico etiam quod ipsa sola libera est vel aliis liberior [...] sicut dicitur homo liber, scilicet quia gratia sui et non propter alterum est", citing Aristotle, *Metaphysics* L.1.2 (982b25).

51 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 1, ed. Burger, p. 14, l. 50–55: "Et hoc est propter scitum, quod quaeritur in illa, quod per se desideratum est. Hoc autem praecipue deus est, quem omnes scire scientia beatificante desiderant et ideo libera est, quia hoc scitum non quaeritur propter aliud, sed propter se."

52 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 3, ed. Burger, p. 15, l. 7–10: "Nec tamen sequitur quod ipsa sit moralis philosophia vel illi subalternata; moralis non est, quia mores non sunt ultimus finis in ea, ut HABITUM EST."

sciences that serve Christian piety, which "has its own principles of faith and its own causes according to its focus on merit."[53] Philosophical metaphysics and ethics can only work beneath a Christian theology that transcends them. They are subalternate sciences in the classically Aristotelian sense, whose goals and principles are used by the superior science that they serve but which cannot attain the end of that science, although they may assume it. Hence, even if they can possess a limited autonomy according to Albert,[54] metaphysics and ethics ultimately lack the capacity to fully articulate the Truth and attain the Good without some correction from the hegemonic force that Christian theology exerts over them, insofar as it is the only divine science that can save.

In a question dedicated to whether beatitude is adequately described by Aristotle in his commentary on distinction 49 of Peter Lombard's fourth book of *Sentences*, recently analyzed by Katja Krause, Albert aims to specify further this difference or seeming discontinuity between philosophical and Christian contemplation.[55] Likely composed sometime in 1248, it represents a significant moment in the development of Albert's thinking about this issue as he draws upon the arguments of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for the very first time in order to demonstrate how the felicity granted by philosophical contemplation does not attain the beatitude which alone is properly Christian. Albert accordingly contrasts Aristotle's claim that "felicity or beatitude is an act or activity according to a perfect virtue of the soul" with Boethius's argument from *De consolatione philosophiae* that "beatitude is a state perfected through the gathering together of every good" to establish precisely how the philosophers defined the final goal of contemplation.[56]

In his solution Albert insists that beatitude is a state that can be defined in several analogical rather than equivocal ways according to how what is prior relates to what is posterior, as well as according to how it names a state of human perfection either *in via* or *in patria*.[57] Aristotle's definition of beatitude in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Albert therefore explains, concerns moral and intellectual perfection but only refers to the felicity that occurs in this life rather than the

[53] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad 3, ed. Burger, p. 15, l. 11–14: "sed ista scientia non accipit ab aliqua, sed propria habet principia fidei et proprias causas secundum intentionem meriti, et ideo non accipit ab aliis, sed aliae famulantur ei."

[54] Marenbon, John: *Pagans and Philosophers. The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz*, Princeton/London 2015, pp. 128–137.

[55] Krause, Katja: "Albert and Aquinas on the Ultimate End of Humans: Philosophy, Theology, and Beatitude", in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (2013), pp. 213–229: 219–221.

[56] Albertus Magnus: *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum*, d. 49, B, a. 6, ad 1, ed. Auguste Borgnet (Opera Omnia 29–30), Paris 1894, p. 672: "Primo Aristotelis diffinitio, quae in primo *Ethicorum* continetur sic : "Felicitas sive beatitudo est actus sive operatio secundum perfectam animi"; *ibid.*, d. 49, B, a. 6, ad. 8, ed. Borgnet, p. 673: "Sed Boetius aliter videtur diffinire dicens, quod 'beatitudo est status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus'."

[57] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* IV, d. 49, B, a. 6, sol., ed. Borgnet, p. 674: "Ad haec solvenda praenotandum est, quod beatitudo, dicitur multipliciter, et non aeqivoce, sed secundum prius et posterius. Dicitur autem secundum statum perfectionis viae, et secundum statum perfectionis patriae."

one that takes place in heaven.[58] Boethius, on the other hand, offers a definition of beatitude that describes the perfection that takes place after this life, and hence Albert concludes that such beatitude "is to inhere in God and to possess in Him all those things which are sought after."[59] If Aristotle describes accurately how the philosopher may attain moral and intellectual perfection, Albert therefore concludes that the Christian alone may inhere in God Himself through a heavenly beatitude that transcends and is thus logically prior to the philosophical felicity that lies beneath it. The contemplative beatitude enjoyed by the philosophy on the way to God only provides a felicity that is *not quite* the full enjoyment which awaits the Christian in the life to come even if it is similar to it.

The nature of this divine inherence had been described by Albert much earlier in the second chapter dedicated to the first distinction of Peter Lombard's first book of *Sentences*, where Albert insists that beatitude is attained primarily through the love of God.[60] Albert does so in response to Augustine's claims from *De doctrina Christiana* that "those things which are to be enjoyed make us blessed" and "to enjoy something for its own sake is to inhere in it by means of love", which the Lombard had introduced as part of his own account of the relationship between the use and enjoyment of signs and things according to Christian theology. Albert in his solution to this question determines that "it must be said [...] that to enjoy is an act of the affect that follows an act of understanding [...] and I call the will 'affect' and this is the highest power of the soul, because the soul's joy is perfected in it as in what's completed and the entire affect is quietened."[61] Such joy, Albert continues, is also not grasped so that one may simply remain in speculation, which cannot provide the inherence attained in beatitude, since, even if the intellect itself is placed in a higher part of the soul, for the Christian it is accompanied by volition and the perfection of inherence.[62]

58 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* IV, d. 49, B, a. 6, sol., ad 1, ed. Borgnet, p. 675: "Dicendum enim ad primum, quod perfectionem viae contingit habere in via, et ad quaedam, licet non ad omnia, sicut ad felicitatem morale, vel contemplativam, licet non ad felicitatem patriae."

59 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* IV, d. 49, B, a. 6, sol., ed. Borgnet, p. 675: "Beatitudo autem secundum statum patriae est inhaerere Deo, et in ipso habere omnia quae appetuntur: et sic diffinitur a Boetio beatitudo."

60 I owe my recognition of the importance of the relationship between Albert's two discussions of beatitude in his commentary on the *Sententiarum* to Meghan Duke, who demonstrated how they inform each other in a paper titled "Understanding Theology in Light of Beatitude: Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Theology, Vision and Beatitude" delivered at the *Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Studies Conference* held at Villanova University, Oct 15–17, 2021.

61 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 1, ed. Burger, p. 23, l. 25–30: "Dicendum [...] quod frui est actus affectus sequentis actum intellectus [...] Et voco affectum voluntatem, et haec est vis altissima animae, quia in illa ut in completivo perficitur gaudium eius et quietatur totus affectus."

62 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 1, ed. Burger, p. 23, l. 30–38: "Verum enim non accipitur ut tantum in speculatione remaneat, quia speculatio de se non ponit inhaesionem, sed potest esse per distantiam rei a speculante, sed fructus ponit unionem et gustum dulcedinis substantialis interius in rei complexione et natura fundatae, et ideo licet intellectus sit in altiori parte animae, non tamen solus est ibi sed etiam voluntas, et perfectio inhaesionis in fructu est penes actum voluntatis."

The Christian contemplative must therefore go further than mere speculation and proceed to full enjoyment. This is also why Albert grants that inherence and joy do not belong to the conceptualizing activity of the intellect but must be defined according to the habit of the will insofar as the will perfects the conception of the intellect in enjoyment.[63]

Despite Albert's overall commitment to Peripatetic epistemology and the "intellectualist" interpretation of Dionysius which arose from it—a commitment that is often positioned as a characteristically Dominican aspect of his thought—his arguments here are more in line with those of the early Franciscan tradition represented by Alexander of Hales, Eudes Rigaud and Bonaventure.[64] Albert's emphasis on the co-operation between the will and the intellect which is characteristic of beatitude and his insistence that Christian theology is primarily affective and practical may therefore complicate narratives which seek to distinguish sharply between Franciscan and Dominican scholastic approaches to theology, at least in their formative stages, even if it is true that Albert was ultimately much less critical of Aristotelian philosophy than his Franciscan contemporaries.[65]

In a further question about the nature of the love that provides the inherence and joy characteristic of the Christian beatitude that goes beyond philosophy Albert argues that it ought to be considered a perfected love related to the theological virtue of charity.[66] This is because, unlike the vision of faith, which describes a conversion to a presentiment of God, and the contemplation proceeding toward hope which describes an adherence to God, Albert argues that "love describes inherence, since it is a band drawing tight and a moveable thing made acute that penetrates the beloved, as Dionysius says."[67] Dionysius accordingly authorizes a definition of Christian theology that in the final analysis is affective and oriented toward love, rather than solely toward understanding.

63 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 2, ed. Burger, p. 23, l. 39–44: "Ad aliud dicendum quod habitualiter vel actualiter secundum naturam intellectus prius concipit et contemplatur, tamen penes concipere illud non est perfectio inhaesionis et gaudii, sed penes actum voluntatis; et ideo per habitum voluntatis diffinitur frui, quia etiam actus voluntatis complet ipsum."

64 Trottman 1998.

65 This is not to suggest that Albert, like some Franciscans, followed the interpretation of Dionysius offered by Thomas Gallus, who maintained that the goal of mystical theology entailed an affective rapture where the activity of the intellect is suspended. In fact, Albertus Magnus *Super Dion. myst. theo.* I, ed. Simon, p. 462, l. 85–91 explicitly refutes this conception of rapture, as Blankenhorn 2015, p. 144–148 and Lawell, Declan: "Ecstasy and the Intellectual Dionysianism of Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great", in eds. James McEvoy/ Michael Dunne/Julia Hynes: *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher and Scholar*, Dublin 2012, pp. 155–183: 172–180 both demonstrate.

66 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 6, ed. Burger, p. 24, l. 5–8: "Sed melius videtur nobis quod amor perfectam ponit amorem caritatis, quia ille solus amor perfectam causat inhaesionem, quia enim ille completivus est fruitionis, ideo ponitur in diffinitione eius."

67 Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 6, ed. Burger, p. 24, l. 5–8: "Visio enim dicit conversionem super praesentiam tantum; comprehensio autem quae succedit spei, dicit adhaerentiam; sed amor eo quod est vit<t>a stringens, et acutum mobile, penetrans amatum, ut dicit DIONYSIUS, dicit inhaerentiam."

Faith, hope and charity, Albert consequently insists, are all different ways to touch the divine, each more intimate than the last. Whereas the touch afforded by faith is comparable to the astrological conjunctions where higher entities influence the lower and the touch of hope is like the clasping of hands in agreement, Albert describes inherence as a touching "where one thing enters as if it were the other" and love as similar to "the natural touching where the things that touch act and undergo by turns and mutually imprint their own characteristic qualities onto each other."[68] Christian beatitude *in patria*, insofar as it is an enjoyment of God by means of love, is thus a state of mutual interpenetration, a back and forth between the lover and the beloved that Albert presents in highly eroticized, conjugal terms. And this is why it is a total consummation, "a taste of sweetness that quiets desire", which is informed by Augustine and Dionysius's insistence that Christian theology ends in love and not just understanding, because it requires an act of the will that responds to and perfects the intellect.[69]

4. Dionysius's *Epistle VII* and the Christian Response to Philosophical Error

Albert's commentary on *Epistle VII* of Dionysius represents a further instance where the German Dominican articulates Christianity's departure from philosophy through the authority of the Areopagite in a way that ties many of the claims I have previously discussed together. Significantly, Albert also offers an extended account of how the philosopher and the Christian ought ideally to engage each other that builds upon Dionysius's own.

This letter, which is addressed to a hierarch named Polycarp whom Albert understands to be the martyr traditionally recognized as the disciple of John the Evangelist, relates Dionysius's encounter with his former teacher, the sophist and astrologer Apollophanes, who had critiqued his philosophical credentials and who had accused Dionysius of parricide for "using those things which are of the Greeks in an unholy way against the Greeks."[70] Dionysius writes to Polycarp

[68] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 7, ed. Burger, p. 24, l. 17–31: "Est enim duplex coniunctio, scilicet per meritum et per quemdam quasi contactum [...] per contactum tripliciter accidit coniunctio: scilicet secundum praesentiam [...] unde assimilatur quasi tactui mathematico, in quo ultima tangentium sunt simul tantum. Secunda est quasi per adhaerentiam et tentionem et habere, et hic tactus est eius quod succedit spei, et assimilatur quasi tactui compactorum. Tertia est inhaerentiam, quando unum quasi ingreditur alterum, et contrahit impressiones et affectiones a natura eius, et hic est tactus amoris, et assimilatur tactui naturalis, in quo tangentia agunt et patiuntur ad invicem, et imprimunt sibi mutuo suas proprietates." One cannot help but suspect that Albert's description of the mutual back and forth between lover and beloved in this text, as well as his earlier description of the movable thing in the lover that is sharpened or hardened in love, is supposed to evoke the erection of the phallus as well as the erotic play between two partners that takes place in heterosexual coitus ("natural touching").

[69] Albertus Magnus *Sent.* I, d. 1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol., ad 6, ed. Burger, p. 24, l. 34–36: "et hoc patet ex nomine eius quod est fructus, quia hic est gustus dulcedinis quietantis."

[70] Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita: *Epistula* VII, ed. Philippe Chevallier: *Dionysiaca. Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traditions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopagite, vol. 2,* Bruges

instead that "I am not against the Greeks or against anyone else, and I say that it suffices for holy men to judge if their truth is able to be known and declared as such insofar as it is true."[71]

Albert takes these words as an opportunity to gloss the intent of the entire letter by commenting on the closing verses of the first Epistle to Timothy, where the Pauline author advises his protégé to "guard what is deposited with you, avoiding the profane novelties of words and the oppositions of knowledge falsely so-called, which have cut off those who prophesy against the faith."[72] This verse exhorted Timothy to three things, Albert explains: that the faith be preserved and guarded among Christians and others "as much as we are able"; that "quarrelsome disputations" which do not benefit the listener and which are against ecclesiastical custom ought to be avoided; and that one must withstand the assaults against the faith forwarded "under the name of science".[73] Albert concludes from this that Dionysius himself in this letter followed these instructions, "excusing himself from the contention [with Apollophanes] assigned to him [by Polycarp] and inciting him to faith through its proper practice."[74] That is, Albert concludes, Dionysius did not aim to refute Apollophanes by engaging him in a philosophical argument in order to demonstrate the truth of Christian faith, but tried to convert him by merely presenting the truth to Polycarp as it appears (or is given) to him as a Christian.

Albert accordingly explains why Dionysius in this letter insists that struggling to correct the error of a single individual like Apollophanes is not worth the effort. Albert notes that "one must not inquire into the cognition of some matter, except so that the truth may be located and the false be condemned and the appearance of that which is not true may be exposed."[75] Dionysius consequently insists that demonstration is able to do this when it follows its appropriate method. This is because when principles are ordered to their conclusions a

[1949], p. 1486: "Tu autem dicis improperare mihi Apollophanem et partum verberatorem appellare, sicut his quae sunt Graecorum, contra Graecos non sancta utentem."

71 Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita *Epistula* VII, ed. Chevallier, p. 1482: "Ego quidem non sum adversus Graecos aut adversus alios dicens, sufficere arbitrans sanctis viris, si verum ipsum in seipso possint et cognoscere et dicere, secundum quod vere habet."

72 Albertus Magnus: *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, ed. Paul Simon (Opera Omnia 37.2), Münster 1978, p. 501, l. 1–5: "O Timothee, depositum custodi, devitans profanes vocum novitates et oppositiones falsi nominis scientiae, quam quidam promittentes circa fidem exciderunt,' I AD TIM. ULTIMO."

73 Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 501, l. 6–18: "In verbis istis hortatur Apostolus discipulum suum ad tria, scilicet ad custodiendam fidem, quae est thesaurus nobis a deo commissus et apud nos depositus, ut quantum possumus, custodiamus eam et in nobis et in allis, et maxime ad quos pertinent ex officio praelationis [...] Secundo hortatur, ut abstineatur a contentiosa disputatione, quae ad nihil valet nisi ad subversionem audientium [...] Tertio hortatur, ut eis qui sub nomine scientiae fidem impugnant, resistatur [...]."

74 Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 501, l. 28–32: "Et ideo Dionysius rescribit per hanc epistulam in qua fidem custodire principaliter intendit, excusando se a contentione sibi imposita et invitando illum ad fidem ex propriis disciplinis eius."

75 Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 501, l. 58–62: "In cognitione alicuius rei non sunt inquirenda, nisi ponatur veritas et reprehendatur falsitas et detegatur apparentia eius quod non est verum."

truth is produced that is "purified from all suspicion of contraries" and the false, like an opinion, is shown only to appear true.[76] Given that the demonstration of truth alone is sufficient to make that truth itself properly known, Dionysius consequently suggests that engaging in disputation for the purpose of refuting everyone who errs is superfluous. This is because, according to Albert's interpretation of Dionysius's argument, every demonstration refutes in advance every possible error.[77]

Dionysius even offers an illustration of how continuous refutation is not only ineffective, Albert explains, but also potentially damaging as it may confirm the opponent in their error: a confrontation between several people about true and false coinage. A quarrelsome disputation is therefore

> like if someone held a true coin, on which there was a royal image, and he wanted to prove this to someone else who held a false coin, on which nevertheless there was a partially true image (for otherwise it would not be a deceptive image), and although he convinced him, yet another person rose up against him who held a different partial image, and it would be necessary to contend again with him, and this would never have an end, until it was made clear to the one to whom this was shown that his coin was true, that all others were false.[78]

In other words, just as in the debate about the coin that Dionysius sketches in his letter, because philosophical errors are enough like the truth known to the Christian theologian and may even be true in their own right, Christian polemic against the philosophers would never end if Christians had to refute every philosopher who appeared to be true.

In fact, Albert adds, the philosophers' desire to contradict others by debating their own questions and formulating compelling arguments is one of the main reasons that they fell into error and away from Christianity.[79] The implication here is that it is because of the philosophers' own affection for disputation—their need to refute others rather than their zeal for the truth—that they

[76] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 501, l. 63–p. 502, l. 4: "Quia si verum demonstretur, quicquid sit illud secundum legem veritatis, idest secundum propria principia, recte, ut principia debito modo ordinentur in conclusiones, et existat purum ab omni suspicione contrarii, qualis est in opinionibus, simul cum hoc reprehendetur omne quod aliter habet, idest falsum, et quod veritatem simulat, idest apparens, esse alterum a vero quantum ad falsum, et esse dissimile et magis apparens illud, scilicet verum, quam existens; similitudo enim ad veritatem causa est apparentiae."

[77] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 502, l. 10–12: "sed per ostensionem veritatis sufficienter depelluntur omnes errores, ut ostensum est; per contentiones autem ad hoc non potest deveniri."

[78] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 502, l. 13–21: "Sicut si aliquis haberet verum numisma, in quo esset imago regalis, et vellet redarguere aliquem qui haberet falsum numisma, in quo tamen esset aliqua pars verae imaginis, quia aliter non esset imago deceptiva, quamvis eum convinceret, insurgeret alius qui haberet aliquam aliam partem, et oporteret iterum cum eo contendere, et hoc numquam haberet finem, sed ostenso, quod suum numisma verum esset ostenderetur, quod omnia alia falsa essent."

[79] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 502, l. 37–41: "Unde dicit PHILOSOPHUS in II CAELI ET MUNDI, quod hoc fuit causa erroris philosophorum, quod non studebant ad inveniendum veritatem, sed ad contradicendum aliis, et hoc sibi sufficere putabant, si deducebant quaestionem ad hoc quod non posset eis resisti."

turn away from the Truth Itself and are captured by a proliferation of partial or apparent truths determined solely by their own arguments. This is even a fault, Albert laments, which persists among several of his contemporaries and its natural conclusion is a deleterious skepticism about the validity of any demonstrative knowledge and a tendency to get caught up in inconsequential debates.[80]

At a key moment in his commentary on *Epistle VII*, however, Albert does concede (as did Dionysius) that the Christian theologian may advocate for the faith by deploying arguments like those of the philosophers, but "it must be said that while asserting the truth of the faith philosophical reasons must not be introduced as the principal ones."[81] This is because, Albert continues, the truth of Christian faith "is proven *a priori*, as it were, from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit [...] and *a posteriori*, as it were, from the miracles which manifest the divine power and the truth of prophecy."[82] Albert means by this that philosophy can be deployed because the very *secondariness* of its truth allows it to confirm and augment the truth *primarily* known to and demonstrated by Christians through divine inspiration and the miracles of the prophets without any recourse to reason. Philosophy can function as propaedeutic to and protreptic for Christian truth but, as something secondary, is not necessary for that truth.[83]

However, Albert also holds that the use of philosophy is particularly effective against the philosophers themselves who have been habituated to logical investigation of the truths conveyed through disputation because it has the power to generate the requisite state that ought to lead to conversion.[84] Albert consequently concludes, in a fiery aside well known to students of his thought, that philosophy has a role to play in Christian life "although some, because they are ignorant, wish to fight by all means the use of philosophy, and especially among the Preachers, where no one resists them, just as if they were brute animals blaspheming in those things which they do not understand."[85]

As such, Albert turns to the final part of *Epistle VII* where Dionysius attempts to affirm the faith against Apollophanes. In particular, Albert explains, Diony-

[80] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 502, l. 41–43: "Et ideo etiam nunc videtur de quibusdam quorum tota intentio est, ut contradicant dictis aliorum."

[81] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 504, l. 11–13: "Dicendum, quod in asserenda fidei veritate non sunt introducendae rationes philosophicae sicut principales."

[82] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 504, l. 13–16: "sed probatur tamquam vero ex priori ex inspiratione spiritus sancti, tamquam vero ex posteriori ex miraculis, quae divinam ostendunt potentiam et prophetiae veritatem."

[83] Jordan, Mark D.: *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers*, Malden, MA 2006, pp. 88–115 offers a similar account of philosophy in its relation to theology according to the *Summa contra gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas.

[84] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 504, l. 19–26: "Sed sicut secundariae induci possunt et sunt utiles, maxime contra philosophos, qui propter hoc quod sunt nutriti in verbis perscrutatis, versum est eis quasi in naturam, quod non possunt recipere sine sermone perscrutato. Et ideo sancti utuntur contra eos ad assertionem fidei rationibus propriis ipsorum; et hoc non est inconveniens, et concedimus rationes ad hoc."

[85] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 504, l. 28–32: "quamvis QUIDAM, quia nesciunt, omnibus modis velint impugnare usum philosophiae, et maxime in praedicatoribus, ubi nullus eis resistit, tamquam bruta Animalia blasphemantes in his quae ignorant."

sius "shows how Apollophanes through his very own wisdom [...] is able to be led to God."[86] Turning Apollophanes' own critique against him, Albert shows, after citing 1 Cor 1:21 and Rom 1:21, how Dionysius accuses his accuser of "indecently" using philosophy against the faith and proves that "it was necessary that the true philosophers be driven up on high to knowledge of God."[87] Albert accordingly concludes with a strong normative judgement that philosophy as the examination of what exists should lead to the Christian knowledge of God "because from existing things someone ought to come to the cause of existing things" and because "one ought from knowledge to come into the giver and cause of knowledge."[88]

Yet this statement presents Albert with a series of problems, which he articulates as objections to Dionysius's claim about the necessity of this philosophical conversion, because "the principles of divine things are not sufficient for philosophy." This means, according to Albert, that a cause of knowledge and being like God that is hidden in and through what it causes cannot be ascertained rationally, because "God infinitely exceeds every creature [and] is not fully manifest in any effect."[89] If this is so, a philosopher like Apollophanes cannot be driven up on high by philosophy as Dionysius himself had argued!

Albert's solution to this problem is to isolate the two ways someone may be driven up on high to God and he proceeds by explicitly highlighting how this relates to the limits of ratiocination. Albert accordingly explains that one can be driven into something "either simply as in that which is concluded by demonstration [...] or through wonder, when something is approved where an account is not able to produce comprehension."[90] The former way, Albert concludes, can only maintain the philosopher within reason whereas according to the latter "it is necessary that they be driven up on high to divine things." The philosophers "ought to wonder at, rather than attack" Christian doctrine, Albert continues, for "although philosophy proves nothing against the divine truth which faith hands over, it nevertheless does not reach it, but has some boundary up to which it comes and knows that it cannot comprehend it fully through itself."[91]

[86] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 504, l. 75–78: "quomodo Apollophanes per propriam sapientiam [...] in deum duci poterat."

[87] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 504, l. 90–p. 505, l. 2: "et ideo oportebat, quod veri philosophi sursum agerentur in dei cognitionem."

[88] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 505, l. 2–5: "et ex his de quibus est philosophia, quia ex existentibus debet quis venire in causam existentium, et ex ipsa philosophia, quia ex cognitione debet devenire in datorem et causam cognitionis."

[89] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 505, l. 12–17: "Ad idem: ad causam, quae non manifestatur tota in effectu, non potest deveniri per suum effectuum; sed deus, cum sit in infinitum excedens omnem creaturam, non manifestatur totus in aliquot effectu; ergo ex effectibus eius, de quibus est philosophia, non potest sursum agi in ipsum."

[90] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 505, l. 25–30: "Dicendum, quod sursum agi in aliquid est dupliciter: aut simpliciter sicut in id quod demonstratione concluditur, et sic philosophi non possunt sursum agi in divina, aut per admirationem, dum probatur aliquid in cuius comprehensionem ratio non potest, et sic oportebat eos sursum agi in divina."

[91] Albertus Magnus *Sup. Dion. Ep.* VII, ed. Simon, p. 505, l. 30–35: "Quamvis enim philosophia nihil probet contra divinam veritatem, quam tradit fides, tamen non pertingit ad

Albert's suggestion is therefore that the philosopher can achieve such wonder when they authentically grant reason's limits and recognize that some part of the truth known to and felt by the Christian according to divine inspiration cannot be attained or refuted by them through demonstration. What is wonderful about theology, it seems, is that it orients the philosophers toward the real, certain knowledge that will beatify and divinize their minds and which leads to actual salvation.

'Wonder' here is therefore not at all the response to the world of existing things that appears before the philosopher, and which calls them to determine the causal structure beneath the confusion that the senses perceive. It is the direct result of the divine light that God imparts to the Christian contemplative alone, irrespective of their ability to reason. The very difference between philosophical and Christian contemplation that Albert introduced in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* is consequently deployed here to good effect. This is because the reason that drives philosophy and enables it to conceptualize the divine, Albert suggests in all the texts considered above, must give way to a theological wonder that affectively orients the will and the intellect of the Christian toward true beatitude, where God is enjoyed and loved by a pious mind, not only in this life but also in the next.

5. Conclusion

In the texts I have analyzed in this article I have shown how Albert interpreted the arguments of Dionysius the Areopagite in order to systematize the fundamental differences between philosophical and Christian contemplation in his early lectures *Super Ethica*, *De mystica theologia*, and in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Liber Sententiarum*. Employing the various claims about the proper relationship between Christian theology and the disciplines of philosophy that he understood Dionysius to forward in his treatises, Albert contended that Christian contemplation differs from the philosophical insofar as it lifts the theologian beyond reason and results in an enjoyment of God more perfect than that achieved through philosophical demonstration alone.

Albert consequently maintained that the singular privilege of Christian rather than philosophical contemplation is that it is grounded in the reception and experience of a divine light which perfects both the affect and the intellect by making it God-like and thus adequately prepares the theologian for the beatific vision in the next life, where the pious mind reinforced by a reformed will inheres in the divine through love. Albert's is consequently a definition of contemplation, I have argued, that instituted a separation between philosophy and Christian theology while also establishing philosophy as its own autonomous, if subordinate, epistemic domain with speculative and practical ends that are not necessarily integrated like they are in the Christian religion. Finally, I have suggested that Albert also believed that philosophy and the affective disposition

ipsam, sed habet aliquem terminum, usquequo devenit et scit se tamen non totum comprehendere, et ideo debet admirari, non impugnare."

that it affords foreclosed the philosopher's capacity to accept the Christian truth itself or receive the divine light which communicates it.

For this reason, I conclude, Albert would come to argue in his commentary on *Epistle VII* in the Dionysian Corpus that the Christian theologian had a duty to try and convert the philosopher to Christian theology, even if they were obliged to safeguard the Christian mysteries or refuse to contest the philosophers directly on their own terms. Unlike the Thomists and Albertists who followed him (whether they be medieval or modern), Albert the Great refused to definitively reconcile reason and faith into a Christian philosophy. Instead, as Alain de Libera has compellingly demonstrated and as I have tried to show, Albert outlined a Peripatetic philosophy and a Christian theology that were held in productive tension and which nevertheless emphasize the limits of syllogistic reasoning and the desire for certain, demonstrative knowledge which motivates the philosopher whose search for God lacks the faith that informs the Christian religion.