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Wholeheartedness and Acquaintance with God

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I demonstrate that wholeheartedness is a constitutive intellectual virtue. Wholeheartedness consists of a definite and unified volitional structure in which one's desires are integrated around union with God and which contributes to one's personal intellectual worth by positively orienting her toward acquaintance with God. Since wholeheartedness consists of a hierarchy of the will that prioritizes a desire for union with God, wholeheartedness aims towards the epistemic good of acquaintance. By desiring that one have a will that wills union with God, she cooperates with God toward wholeheartedness. As one becomes aware of her volitional structure changing, she also becomes aware of God's presence. This sanctification produces a pattern of interactions with God overtime that constitute an acquaintance with God, where acquaintance is an aptitude of recognition, belief formation, and understanding carried via memory and other faculties that is consequent on and subsequent to an earlier immediate cognitive contact or awareness of an object of knowledge. It is in and through one becoming wholehearted that she comes to know God.

Wholeheartedness and Acquaintance with God

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To Naomi Florene Dickmeyer, an exemplar of everyday holiness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What role does wholeheartedness play in acquiring knowledge of God? In this thesis, I argue that wholeheartedness is a constitutive intellectual virtue that yields knowledge of God by acquaintance. I advance this thesis in three major steps. First, I demonstrate that wholeheartedness is an intellectual virtue insofar as it has its own unique psychological characteristics and aims at knowledge of God by acquaintance. I will then illustrate how the process of becoming wholehearted is indispensable to becoming acquainted with God. Lastly, I will conclude with a response to Paul Moser's volitional theistic evidentialism by demonstrating how my account of wholeheartedness streamlines his religious epistemology.

However, before moving onto to the primary claim of this thesis, I want to define certain terms that the project presupposes. In the following pages, I will lay out the theory of intellectual virtue into which I situate wholeheartedness and discuss acquaintance with God as an epistemic good at which wholeheartedness is aimed. I will also explain how my question arises from the confluence of three areas of conversation: efforts within epistemology to show a connection between the formation of the self and the acquisition of knowledge, the role spiritual formation plays in the life of the mind, and current projects that deal directly with the role Christian spiritual formation plays in acquiring knowledge of God. Lastly, I will explain my methodology, including the flow of argumentation, the reason for incorporating certain thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and

Eleonore Stump, and any necessary caveats to keep the primary aim of this project at the fore.

Intellectual Virtue as Personal Intellectual Worth

I will be situating wholeheartedness into Jason Baehr's theory of intellectual virtue, that is, his account of the basic nature and structure of an intellectual virtue.¹ The advantage of utilizing Baehr's theory is that it endorses a pluralism concerning kinds or concepts of intellectual virtue. Under Baehr's theory of intellectual virtue, there is more than one way in which a character trait can qualify as an intellectual virtue or more than one substantive criterion for the possession of an intellectual virtue. This pluralism in conceptualizing different traits as intellectual virtues paves the way for making the case that lesser known traits such as wholeheartedness have an epistemic dimension.²

This theory states that intellectual virtues can be understood as "personal intellectual excellences," or traits that contribute to their possessor's "personal intellectual worth."³ Traits such as inquisitiveness, attentiveness, carefulness, thoroughness in inquiry, open-mindedness, fair-mindedness, and intellectual rigor, honesty, and courage are typically understood to be the primary traits that constitute intellectual virtues.⁴ The conceptual basis of intellectual virtue, or what ultimately makes

1. Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47. Baehr fits his theory of intellectual virtue into what he calls Weak Conservative Virtue Epistemology (VE), which states that there are at least some conceptual connections between intellectual virtue and traditional epistemology, although these connections do not overhaul the central questions and concerns of traditional epistemology.

2. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 89.

3. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 47. As a virtue "responsibilist," unlike that of a virtue "reliabilist," Baehr conceives intellectual virtues as excellences of intellectual *character*. So the intellectual virtues considered by Baehr and me do not include and cannot be reduced to natural cognitive faculties such as memory, reason, vision, introspection, or the like.

4. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 89.

a trait such as open-mindedness or intellectual courage substantial intellectual virtues, is the notion of “personal worth,” that is, the notion of being a “good person” or of being good *qua* person. In other words, intellectual virtues can be understood as “offshoots or manifestations” of personal excellence. From this point of view, the traits in question are virtues, not merely from the standpoint of truth or reliability, but also from the standpoint of personal worth or excellence.⁵

It is already a part of ordinary discourse and thinking to make judgments aimed at marking a contrast between a person’s worth or excellence *qua* person and his excellence in some other respect. For example, a person can be perceived as a terrific X (athlete, musician, artist, philosopher, theologian, etc.), while he is also perceived as a rotten *person*. This general formulation can also be reversed, where an individual is considered good or admirable *qua* person but weak or defective with one or another respect. As such, the notion of personal worth picks out a distinctive kind of excellence—one that may or may not be accompanied by various other kinds of excellences.⁶

At first glance, it may seem that personal worth is merely a moral notion: that to be good is just to be morally good in some respect. However, personal worth or excellence has an intellectual dimension as well, and this is best demonstrated through examples of intellectual admiration.⁷ The examples of intellectual admiration with which we are most concerned are instances where one is admired for his deep and abiding desire

5. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 91.

6. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 92.

7. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 92.

for knowledge and understanding.⁸ We admire this person because as a result of this desire, he is regularly willing to give a fair and honest hearing to the “other side,” to persevere in his search for the truth, to entertain counterevidence to his beliefs in an open and patient way, and to refrain from caricaturing or distorting positions he rejects. We could so much as claim that he is a better person *qua* person and that he functions epistemically well on account of the qualities just noted. Yet at the same time, we would not be compelled to say that he is a *morally* better person on account of these qualities.⁹ So the value in question is distinctively intellectual or cognitive, for it pertains to cognitive ends such as truth, knowledge, evidence, rationality, and understanding. But at the same time, it is also relevant to personal worth.¹⁰ Therefore, intellectual virtues are just character traits that make their possessor good or excellent in the relevant intellectual and personal way.¹¹

Personal intellectual worth is also clear from instances of intellectual admiration where the basis of these relevant qualities is a matter of what one desires, loves, or identifies with. More specifically, it is a function of the extent to which one, in a psychological sense, is positively oriented toward or loves what is good and negatively

8. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 92-93. There is also a sense in which we admire a person for her excellent cognitive faculties and capacities for things like formal or abstract thought. However, since one can have an extraordinarily high IQ and still be a vicious person, these examples do not fall into the domain of value we are concerned with.

9. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 93.

10. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 94-95. Baehr strongly maintains that there is a fundamental difference between personal worth in this sense and a kind of inherent value or dignity ascribed to every human person, in virtue of them being persons. Personal worth refers to a further and distinct way in which persons can (but need not) be good or excellent. Baehr is not suggesting that some people are “worth more” or “more valuable” than others.

11. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 93.

oriented toward what is bad or wrong.¹² This formulation suggests that the relationship between oneself and the relevant kind of value is principally an “internal” or psychological one.¹³ Thus intellectual personal worth is a matter of “loving” what is good or desiring that it obtain and “hating” what is bad or desiring that it not obtain.¹⁴

Furthermore, this orientation considers strength or degree. If a person has only a weak preference for the good, then this orientation may not have any bearing on her personal worth. As such, the orientation in question must be strong enough that it actually motivates its possessor to choose or act on behalf of the good.¹⁵ Additionally, this basis for personal intellectual worth should be understood as requiring that a person be positively oriented toward the good and negatively oriented toward the bad for her own sake. In other words, one cannot be oriented towards a particular good merely because this end happens to be causally related to some other end that is bad or neutral.¹⁶

This formulation is specifically epistemic in nature when one is said to be positively orientated around what is intellectually good. This means that a person enhances her personal intellectual worth when she desires epistemic goods such as true

12. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 96.

13. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 97. This is opposed to the suggestion that the principle relation between these two is a causal one. As Baehr points out, this is problematic mainly because whether we succeed in bringing about the good consequences or states of affairs at which we aim is often largely a matter of luck and not entirely within our immediate control. So what seems relevant to the basis of personal worth is not what a person obtains but what she aims at.

14. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 98.

15. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 98-99. However, this condition must be qualified because there are various ways in which desires that do contribute to personal worth might fail to be motivating. Baehr cites the presence of countervailing values that may be at stake or external forces that might prevent one from acting on the relevant desire. Therefore, the orientation appealed to should be understood as being reasonably strong or intense, so that, when considered in its own right, it will likely prove motivating.

16. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 99.

belief, understanding, and acquaintance in a way that is motivating and intrinsic.¹⁷ This also applies to the inverse, so that a person who desires epistemic goods also desires to avoid epistemic failures such as false belief, ignorance, and irrationality.¹⁸ So the account of intellectual virtue operative in this thesis can be summarized as follows: “an intellectual virtue is a character trait that contributes to its possessor’s personal intellectual worth on account of its involving a positive psychological orientation toward epistemic goods.”¹⁹

This account of intellectual virtue sets up a viable framework in which wholeheartedness may be considered an intellectual virtue that yields knowledge of God by acquaintance. According to this theory, it is reasonable to regard character traits as intellectual excellences that contribute to their possessor’s personal intellectual worth. Secondly, this account covers a wide range of putative virtues. If it is entirely plausible to consider traits such as inquisitiveness, attentiveness, intellectual courage, honesty, fairness, and openness as contributing to their possessor’s personal intellectual worth, then we can proceed confidently with our consideration of wholeheartedness as an intellectual virtue.²⁰

Knowledge by Acquaintance as an Epistemic Good

Another important aspect of an intellectual virtue is that, like any other intellectual activity, it has aims that are considered epistemic goods. Generally accepted

17. In the section that follows, I will explain what is meant by acquaintance and why I consider it an epistemic good on par with true belief and understanding.

18. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 101.

19. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 102.

20. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 105.

epistemic goods include things such as true, justified belief; warrant; truth; knowledge; and rationality. However, in our consideration of wholeheartedness as an intellectual virtue, there is good cause to expand upon these traditional, belief-oriented epistemic goods because not all epistemic goods are concerned with the warrant or justification of beliefs.

We sometimes seek to enhance our epistemic life by way of the immediacy of experience, which yields knowledge-for-oneself. We can contrast this to instances of second-hand knowledge, where an item of knowledge has been acquired from another person, or speaker.²¹ It is sometimes the case that our knowledge of any given object or subject can be supplemented by experience of the object of knowledge. For example, I can be an expert on the architectural design and engineering of the Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família without ever having been to Spain. Yet it is intuitive to most that, if I were to hop on a plane to Spain and visit the Sagrada Família, I would somehow be supplementing even my expert knowledge.²² It could be the case that such immediate experiences do, in fact, give me new beliefs or improve the warrant for my incumbent

21. Benjamin McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 46. Typically, we take testimony to be an instance of second-hand knowledge. For example, imagine that I am waiting for the 5:00 pm train at the station but there is no clock near me, and I am without a watch. However, I need to know what time it is in order to determine if I have missed my train or not. I lean over to the person next to me, who I noticed is wearing a watch and ask him what time it is. He informs me that it is 4:55 pm. It turns out that it actually is 4:55 pm and therefore, I know second-hand from the stranger next to me that it is 4:55 pm. In this scenario, the stranger at the station plays an epistemically significant role in my knowing what time it is. So when pressed on how I know what time it is, through my epistemic right of deferral, I am justified in claiming that I know what time it is. Epistemologists still debate whether testimony generates knowledge. Some epistemologists have gone the Locke/Hume route and reduce testimonial knowledge to other epistemic capacities such as inference. However, other epistemologists have taken the Reidian route and compare testimonial knowledge to irreducible and basic capacities such as perception. For purposes of this thesis, it suffices to say that second-hand knowledge, in contrast to knowledge-for-oneself, is mediated by another person, or speaker. For further reading on the epistemic issues of testimony, see McMyler's *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*.

22. Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33.

beliefs about the Sagrada Família, but this does not fully encompass the aim for wanting to experience the church for myself. Consequently, through this immediate experience of the church, I become acquainted with the building, design, and architecture, so that I understand and perceive the richness and aesthetics of the church better.

Since this experience contributes to one's understanding, the experience and level of perception that results from it carries with it an epistemic dimension. Even if this acquaintance does not contribute to mere knowledge, it is still considered an epistemic good insofar as it contributes to one's understanding and perceptual judgments. This is because intervening personal experiences contribute to one's perspective so that it becomes deeper, broader, and richer than before those experiences took place.²³ So the epistemic goods that we aim for must encompass more than mere propositions or true, justified beliefs.

Although there is a distinction between epistemic goods such as knowledge, understanding, acquaintance, and wisdom, they are not isolated from each other. While these goods cannot be collapsed together, they are interrelated and build upon one another. While something such as acquaintance cannot be reduced to propositional knowledge, it is not entirely separated from it in either the warrant of beliefs or in understanding.²⁴ In other words, these epistemic goods are considered aspects of

23. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 33. This intuition echoes the classical thought experiment first penned by Frank Jackson of Mary, the neuroscientist, who is omniscient regarding facts about the human brain and how it processes color, but has never experienced color for herself (Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," *Philosophical Quarterly* 32, no. 137 (April 1982): 127-36). The question to ask is, would the perceptual experience of color add anything to Mary's already omniscient knowledge of color?

24. There are philosophers, such as Hintikka, who will disagree that ascriptions of acquaintance can be considered as anything but reducible or otherwise dependent on ascriptions of propositional knowledge. However, this is neither here nor there, as it is not my aim to debate whether this is the case.

knowledge rather than isolated kinds or types of knowledge.²⁵ However, for the sake of brevity, in this thesis I will use the terms “knowledge of God by acquaintance” and “acquaintance” as umbrella terms that encompass these epistemic goods (i.e., knowledge, understanding, acquaintance, and wisdom) while maintaining their distinctiveness. I do this to avoid dismissing the role and importance of mere knowledge (i.e., propositional, memorial, and sensory knowledge). Yet the emphasis of this thesis will be on those epistemic goods that one acquires in degrees, such as understanding and perceptual judgments. Therefore, when I refer to “knowledge of God by acquaintance,” or “knowing God,” I am mainly concerned with one’s understanding and spiritual perception of God. So when the claim is made that wholeheartedness aims at knowledge of God by acquaintance, I am not necessarily referring to mere knowledge of God.²⁶

Specifically, acquaintance is an aptitude of recognition, belief formation, and understanding carried via memory and other faculties that is consequent on and subsequent to an earlier immediate cognitive contact or awareness of an object of knowledge.²⁷ This expresses the intuition we hold when we say a person has a cognitive advantage because she is experienced in a field or trade of some kind. A simple example of acquaintance includes sensory perception, but acquaintance is not exhausted by or

25. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 33-34.

26. Just as in the example of the Sagrada Família, personal experience of God could yield propositional knowledge or improve the warrant of incumbent beliefs about God. This knowledge-for-oneself of God may even correct or change one’s beliefs about God. Regardless, the epistemic goods entailed within acquaintance that I am most concerned about in this project will primarily be understanding and nonsensory perception.

27. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 42-49. I am also operating with Roberts and Wood’s definition of understanding, where understanding has a similar relationship to truth and can be directed at propositions, but also encompasses non-propositional things. In this thesis, I am predominantly interested in the deepening levels of perceptual judgments that result from immediate experience.

limited to this immediate cognitive contact.²⁸ What appears to be mere deliverance of perceptual inputs to the senses may actually be complex constructions of beliefs, propositions, perceptions, and traits that exhibit something more like understanding. For example, when I become aurally acquainted with a Brahms theme, it is not clear that I come to believe anything new. However, the training of the senses to identify a particular object or the attunement of concerns and desires conditions what is perceived or paid attention to.²⁹

For example, there are two equally intelligent people witnessing a member of a racial minority group being subtly directed away from a majority-race neighborhood where he would like to buy a home. Both observers know that what is happening in the scenario is an instance of racial discrimination. However, one observer feels indignant because he clearly perceives the injustice of the situation. The other observer does not feel indignant and so does not perceive or understand the situation in the same way as the indignant observer. The indifferent observer does not appreciate the injustice, feel it, or perceive it. She has a notional understanding of the action as an injustice, but in a moral or spiritual sense there is something she is not “getting.” Roberts and Wood claim that the emotional response, along with its perception and understanding, is an indispensable vehicle for acquaintance.³⁰ In this case, the perception of the indignant observer depends upon a complex background of beliefs, understanding, and concerns (i.e., desires,

28. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 51.

29. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 52. This is assuming that one meets the basic conditions for knowledge, which entails fully functional and reliable cognitive faculties.

30. I understand that this point brings up the issue of epistemic emotions or the role emotions may play in the epistemic life. Many others have written in depth on this subject and it is not my goal here to go into any detail, as that would be an entirely new thesis project. For further reading see, Michael S. Brady, *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

volitional orientation, inclination, etc.) that we can assume has been refined and cultivated over time.³¹ Furthermore, due to the indignant observer's acquaintance, he will be ready and willing to act in a praiseworthy way.

By this acquaintance we come to a greater perceptual awareness, recognition, and understanding of God. In this sense we come to "know" God. Since the perception entailed within acquaintance depends upon a complex background of knowledge, beliefs, and concerns, the understanding it yields can be indefinitely more right, more adequate, and progressively closer to the truth. This is certainly the case given that God, as the object of acquaintance, is infinite. Therefore, knowledge of God by acquaintance comes in degrees.³²

The conception of acquaintance as an epistemic good that encompasses knowledge, understanding, and wisdom provides a helpful clarification to a popular oversimplification of the Christian apophatic tradition. There is an assumption that since God is infinite, he cannot be fully known; thus, all intellectual inquiry of God becomes suspect.³³ However, operating under the assumption that one can increasingly become acquainted with God over a lifetime (and perhaps beyond) undermines this assumption. In addition, since acquaintance encompasses a complex array of desires and dispositions, it debunks this myth by suggesting that intellectual inquiry of God is not simply a matter of well-functioning, reliable cognitive faculties. We would be rash and incorrect to say

31. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 52-53. This acquaintance is a perception that is not necessarily a sense perception, though sense perception is involved. So acquaintance is analogous to sense perception but is not equivalent to it.

32. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 44.

33. I am thinking that when this phrase is used, one is referring to understanding rather than mere knowledge. When used in daily discourse, the terms, "knowledge," "know," and "known," do not possess the distinction between knowledge and understanding that epistemologists make.

that we cannot come to know or understand God at all simply because God is infinite. Sometimes objects may have no limit to the quantity of depth, insight, and understanding that acquaintance yields.³⁴ Since knowledge by acquaintance comes in degrees, I see no reason why one would not continue to seek a deeper acquaintance with God simply because there is no end to what one may come to know. It seems that this very seeking is what characterizes the spiritual and epistemic life in the first place. I take the oversimplified statement “No one can really know God” to be an invitation for further investigation into the spiritual depth of knowing God that is cultivated through acquaintance. It is towards this knowledge of God that wholeheartedness aims.

Contexts

The question this thesis is concerned with initially grew out of current conversations in virtue epistemology that reveal a strong correlation between the formation of the self and the acquisition of knowledge. Some responsibilist virtue epistemologists have claimed that the formation of different character traits can manifest in one’s cognitive functions, so the traits themselves improve upon the epistemic function of the agent.³⁵ This means that one will more reliably acquire knowledge due to the manifestation of these character traits in her cognitive functions. The idea is that certain

34. Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 44.

35. Virtue epistemology has historically been comprised of two major approaches: a faculty-based or “reliabilist” approach and a character-based or “responsibilist” approach. A virtue reliabilist, such as Ernest Sosa, conceives of intellectual virtues as reliable or truth-conducive cognitive faculties, or competencies, such as memory, vision, hearing, reason, and introspection (Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 7-8). Sosa describes the virtue reliabilist as holding more closely to the original Aristotelian list of intellectual virtues, while virtue responsibilism correlates with Aristotle’s moral virtues and builds its account of epistemic normativity on the subject’s responsible manifestation of character traits (Sosa, “How are Virtue and Knowledge Related?” 62). As such, responsibilist virtue epistemologists, such as Jason Baehr, conceive of intellectual virtues not as natural, innate cognitive faculties such as memory, reason, vision, and introspection but as character traits manifested in cognitive functions such as inquisitiveness, attentiveness, carefulness, and courage (Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 89).

traits train and attune our senses and perceptual faculties to pick up on certain realities. Therefore, one's perception will penetrate through a greater depth of reality. This is the difference between the expert birdwatcher and casual hiker. Both individuals may have propositional knowledge that a bird is sitting on that branch over there, but one has a perceptual depth that the other lacks due to her formation as a birdwatcher and acquaintance with the skill of birdwatching. The expert birdwatcher will be able to distinguish that particular bird from other, similar-looking birds. My exploration of the role wholeheartedness plays in acquiring knowledge of God by acquaintance will show how this insight may be relevantly appropriated for themes within religious epistemology.³⁶

Another source of inspiration for this project comes from broader conversations in philosophy of religion that seek to connect spiritual formation with philosophical inquiry. Philosophers such as John Cottingham, Mark Wynn, Steve Porter, Michael McGhee, Robert C. Roberts, William Wood, Meghan Sullivan, and James K. A. Smith have made the case that philosophical inquiry and spiritual formation are alike in the goals to which they aim. The work of these scholars has demonstrated that there are several branches of philosophy germane to matters of spiritual formation and thus reveal the deeply relevant and practical aspects of philosophical inquiry for the religious life. The relevance of the philosophical analysis for spiritual formation becomes more obvious in the subfield of religious epistemology, which includes treatment of how best to understand what it means to know and experience God, approaches and conditions for a deeper

36. Fred Aquino and Paul Gavrilyuk, eds., *Sensing Things Divine: Towards a Constructive Account of Spiritual Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

understanding of God, the nature of religious faith, religious belief-formation.³⁷ Since understanding better what it means to know and experience God is part of this new philosophical focus, these writers have gone so far as to reimagine these questions in more existential terms. This is to ask not what difference religious belief makes in evidential or epistemic terms, but what difference does it make to human life, in existential terms?³⁸ Therefore, I see this project as addressing, at once, theoretical and pragmatic concerns for the Christian layperson and philosopher alike.

Finally, the argument of this thesis is largely building off the previous work of Paul Moser, John Cottingham, and Frederick Aquino. These scholars' work has laid the groundwork for this thesis because they have already begun an in-depth inquiry into how one's spiritual formation may condition the religious realities that are perceived. Cottingham, for example, makes the case that epistemic transformation is imperative for inquiring about God because our interior maturation bears weight on how we perceive reality.³⁹ Cottingham understands saints to be those whose epistemic situation is progressively transformed and purified so that they understand themselves, their relation to others and to God in a new light.⁴⁰ Therefore, saints' becoming perfected in love is best construed as a kind of shift in perception.⁴¹ Furthermore, one comes to this new level

37. Steve L. Porter, "Philosophy and Spiritual Formation: A Call to Philosophy and Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (2014), 249.

38. Mark R. Wynn, *Renewing the Senses: A Study of the Philosophy and Theology of the Spiritual Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 81.

39. John Cottingham, "Saints and Saintliness," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, eds., William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79.

40. Cottingham, "Saints and Saintliness," 85.

41. Cottingham, "Saints and Saintliness," 87-88.

of perception through immersion within the spiritual practices of the church. Spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and meditation have an epistemic dimension insofar as they cultivate a receptivity to operative grace and facilitate ongoing growth in wisdom.⁴²

Aquino also shows that deep immersion in a set of practices, materials, processes, and people is fundamental to the formation of spiritual knowers. In his analysis of John Cassian's *Conferences* and *Institutes*, Aquino demonstrates that Cassian's specific methodology of spiritual formation reveals a complex but inextricable relationship between the cultivation of the self and the pursuit of the relevant epistemic goods.⁴³ Aquino's project concludes that traits that spiritual formation cultivates are epistemic in nature, as they play a crucial role in developing a positive orientation towards cognitive states such as illumination, contemplation, and the vision of God.⁴⁴ When it comes to spiritual formation, what matters epistemically is the way one loves or the orientation of one's desires.

Aquino also seeks to read Maximus the Confessor with a focus on the role that ascetic character traits play in the cognitive economy of the spiritual life.⁴⁵ Aquino claims that virtues contribute to the formation of a deep and abiding desire for the relevant epistemic goods (e.g., perceptual knowledge of God).⁴⁶ Christian writers such as

42. Frederick Aquino, "Spiritual Formation, Authority, and Discernment," in *Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, eds., William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 159.

43. Aquino, "Spiritual Formation, Authority, and Discernment," 168.

44. Aquino, "Spiritual Formation, Authority, and Discernment," 164.

45. Frederick Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, eds., William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 369.

46. Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor," 369-70.

Maximus have already gone to great lengths to illustrate how the formation of virtuous dispositions is a precondition for correctly perceiving the divine. Vices bring about a state of disintegration in which the self does not properly use its cognitive faculties and so hinders the pursuit of the relevant epistemic goods. Consequently, any given subject is unable to properly decipher the truth indicators of God's presence.⁴⁷ As such, Maximus integrates virtue and knowledge in epistemological terms: "where there is 'purification' of the soul by the virtues, there is also 'illumination' by knowledge. . . . This illumination raises up the soul to the understanding of God, and unites its desire with the ultimate object of its desire, which is God."⁴⁸ This current literature carves out the approaches that this thesis will then build upon and clarify just how a virtue such as wholeheartedness can yield knowledge of God by acquaintance.

Methodology and Caveats

In the course of this thesis, I will employ some basic metaphysical assumptions found in the thought and writings of Thomas Aquinas, such as an objective standard of value, human flourishing as union with God, and the structure of the human will as a hierarchy of desires. I have chosen to employ some of Aquinas's metaphysical concepts because these principles provide grounds for the contemporary philosophical approaches to love, virtue, and acquaintance used in this thesis. Aquinas's medieval worldview (i.e., God as the grounds for an objective standard of goodness) and his theological anthropology (i.e., human beings are rational creatures with access to the objective good), which prioritizes union with God as the ultimate human good, help clarify the aims

47. Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor," 374-75.

48. Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor," 376.

toward which virtues such as wholeheartedness aim. This foundation is important to this project because it prioritizes relationship with God as an axiomatic good toward which all human life aims. Secondly, Aquinas also provides a metaphysical framework for the connection between the formation of the self and the perception of religious realities. Aquinas's conception of the human person as a rational creature with a body and soul highlights the role desires and volitional dispositions play in acquiring knowledge of God by acquaintance.⁴⁹ I also employ much of Eleonore Stump's exegesis on Thomas Aquinas because she carefully unpacks Aquinas's thought on love, desire, and union. Her work has allowed me to demonstrate exactly what union entails and the role the human will plays in that union. Additionally, I build off Stump because she has also begun an effort to illustrate how union with God can constitute a nondiscursive knowledge of God and what role that knowledge may play in the life of the Christian believer.

Although I employ some metaphysical concepts, this project is not concerned with debating the details of these metaphysical concepts. While I utilize certain insights from Aquinas, my goal is not to exegete Aquinas, nor is it to enter any contemporary debates about Aquinas. I employ certain aspects of Aquinas insofar as they help me advance my claim that wholeheartedness is a constitutive intellectual virtue. Furthermore, my goal is not to enter a discussion about the relationship between metaphysics and epistemology. The aim of the thesis is not to demonstrate how metaphysics and epistemology may or may not be related, but to unpack the conditions for coming to

49. It is important to note here that I do not employ or rely on any of Aquinas's conceptions of knowledge. I build off Aquinas's conceptions of the human will, desire, and union. The concept of knowledge that I will employ in this thesis is indebted to virtue epistemologists such as Roberts and Wood rather than any medieval thinker.

know God through acquaintance. This means that this project is a project in religious epistemology.

Additionally, this is not to say that metaphysics is necessary for doing epistemology. The use of Christian thinkers such as John Cassian, Maximus the Confessor, and Thomas Aquinas only highlight how helpful their insights may be for developing questions within religious epistemology. As such, this project makes good on the principle of epistemic fit, where our epistemic evaluations are fit in an appropriate way to the subject matter under investigation.⁵⁰ In the case of this thesis, since the subject matter at hand is God, the conditions by which one comes to know or understand God will be unique and distinct. Coming to know God requires more than reliable cognitive faculties and entails a volitional element. These conditions will not necessarily hold for other subject matters under epistemic investigation. However, traditional epistemic rules such as conditions for mere knowledge and knowledge as justified, true belief still hold for the religious epistemology developed within this thesis. The project is mainly concerned with what is entailed in becoming acquainted with God, specifically, as an object of human inquiry.

50. William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino, *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

CHAPTER II

THE INNER PSYCHOLOGY OF WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

Introduction

The primary task of this chapter is to describe what wholeheartedness is and what it entails. This meticulous depiction of the trait will demonstrate the unique, internal psychology of wholeheartedness and distinguish it from other character traits that may appear synonymous or similar to it. Thus this chapter will mainly be concerned with the ways in which wholeheartedness meets the second criterion for intellectual virtue. By illustrating wholeheartedness as a firm and definite volitional integration around the objective good, this chapter lays the ground for the second chapter, which argues that wholeheartedness is aimed at knowledge of God by acquaintance.

Drawing upon Harry Frankfurt's general account of love and Thomas Aquinas' objective standard of value, I will show that wholeheartedness is a firm and definite volitional integration around one's ultimate flourishing or union with God. A more detailed description of wholeheartedness will reveal three important characteristics. First, wholeheartedness positively orients one toward epistemic goods, such as union with God because it constitutes a volitional structure that is definite and clear. Second, wholeheartedness also entails a trumping feature that renders its orienting capacity to be sufficiently motivating.

The last and distinguishing feature of wholeheartedness is that it entails an integration of one's desires toward union with God. A wholehearted person is someone

who has a clear and definite volitional structure that aims at union with God. This last feature of wholeheartedness illuminates the epistemic good to which wholeheartedness is aimed and paves the way for the next chapter's discussion on how wholeheartedness yields knowledge of God by acquaintance.

An Account of Love

Baehr's theory of intellectual virtue has provided a roadmap for determining how different character traits can be considered intellectual virtues. Baehr maintains that each intellectual virtue has a two-tiered psychological structure. First, the trait must be based upon a volitional orientation toward epistemic goods, and second, the trait must have its own unique characteristic psychology that differentiates it from other intellectual excellences. This section will explore the unique characteristic psychology of wholeheartedness as a way of demonstrating its status as an intellectual virtue.

Harry Frankfurt, more than any other contemporary philosopher, has gone to great lengths to demonstrate the nature and importance of wholeheartedness for one's practical life. However, in order to understand what wholeheartedness is, we must first consider the general structure of love. Frankfurt lays out four distinctive features of love that demonstrate the fundamentally volitional character of love. The first distinctive feature of love has to do with the object of love. When a person loves, she cares about the object of her love not merely as a means, but as an end. As such, it is in the nature of love that the object of love has intrinsic value.¹

Second, love consists of a disinterested concern for the well-being or the good for the beloved (or object of love). This means that the lover desires that her beloved flourish

1. Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 42.

and not be harmed. Again, this desire for the good of the beloved must be intrinsic in order to constitute an instance of genuine love. The implication of this feature is that love is fundamentally volitional in nature. Love has more to do with a certain configuration of the will than with feelings of affection or attraction. This volitional configuration shapes the dispositions of the lover with regard to what she loves and guides her in the ordering of her relevant priorities.² This means that if love is to persist, it depends upon the will or volitional disposition of the lover towards the beloved rather than any characteristic within the beloved.³

At first blush, it may seem that a disinterested desire for the good of the beloved means that love is somehow impersonal. However, as Frankfurt points out, disinterested does not mean impersonal; love is anything but impersonal.⁴ The third feature of love is its particularity. The beloved's importance is not generic to the lover but is particular to the lover. For a lover, there can be no equivalent substitute for her beloved.⁵ Frankfurt clarifies, "It cannot possibly be all the same to the lover whether he is devoting himself disinterestedly to what he actually does love or—no matter how similar it might be—to something else instead."⁶

2. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 44.

3. Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96.

4. Frankfurt uses the example of someone who cares about the poor and devotes her time to their well-being. What qualifies others to be beneficiaries of her concern is not that she loves them. This person's generosity is not a response to the individual identities of those whom she helps. Rather, it is induced merely by the fact that she regards them as "poor" and in need of her help. For someone who cares for the poor, any poor person will do (Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 43).

5. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 44.

6. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 44.

Finally, love is not necessarily under our immediate control. For example, a person may discover that she cannot affect whether or how much she cares about a certain person or thing merely by her own direct and immediate decision.⁷ Frankfurt has in mind those instances where one cannot help but care about staying alive, about remaining physically intact, about not being radically isolated, etc. In matters such as these, a person is subject to a necessity that forcefully constrains the will and that she cannot elude merely by choosing or deciding to do so.⁸ Therefore, love consists of a volitional necessity, which consists essentially of a constraint of the will.⁹ In other words, our *prime facie* desires are not entirely up to us. One does not suddenly decide that she cares about staying alive, nor does she care about staying alive one day only to wake up the next morning and suddenly not care about staying alive.

Frankfurt further explains the nature of this necessity by claiming that the restraint upon the will does not originate in any external source but within a person's own will. This is why someone who is bound by volitional necessity is unable to form a determined and effective intention to perform or to refrain from performing the action that is at issue simply because he loves what he loves and does not love what he does not love. Furthermore, this means that love comes in degrees. A person will love some things more than other things, so the necessity that love imposes on the will is rarely absolute. As such, the interaction between the will and action becomes a little more complex given

7. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 44. However, Frankfurt does concede that under certain circumstances it is possible for a person to decide whether or not she loves or how much she cares. It is possible at times for a person to bring it about that she cares about something or that she does not care about it, simply by making up her mind about it.

8. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 44-45.

9. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 46.

certain circumstances. For example, we cannot say that a person who sacrifices her life to protect her country from catastrophic harm does not love living. Nor does her sacrifice demonstrate that she wholly accepted and willed that she die. This simply reflects the particular ordering of one's priorities in a given situation.¹⁰

As such, love is vulnerable to disruption. Alternatives are always conceivable, so it is possible for a person to imagine herself loving things other than those she does indeed love and to wonder if it is preferable to love an alternative. One's volitional structure or psychic integrity can be ruptured by unresolved conflicts among the various things that she loves. Conflicts such as these undermine the unity of the will and puts a person at odds with herself. It is possible that the necessities that certain loves place upon the will are incompatible and thus it makes it impossible for one to plot a volitional course.¹¹ As such, if one's love of one thing clashes with her love of another, she may well be unable to accept herself as she is. What makes it psychologically relevant is that one disposition is ruling out another.

Ultimately, this means that a person's ability to love rests upon the confidence she has in her own volitional character. A person's readiness to be satisfied with loving what she actually loves does not depend upon evidence, arguments, or one's cognitive faculties. What ensures that a person accepts her love without equivocation, and what thereby secures the stability of one's final ends, is that she has confidence in her own volitional character. This is to say that the configuration of one's will—the ordering of her priorities and loves—is what expresses and defines exactly who this individual is. As

10. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 47.

11. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 50.

such, a person identifies herself with what she loves. The configuration of one's will defines the shape of her practical life and what she is willing or not willing to do. Furthermore, it determines what she may or may not be willing to accept as a reason for acting or not acting. So any anxiety or uneasiness that she experiences on account of recognizing what she is constrained to love goes to the heart of her attitude toward her own character as a person. Any sort of disturbance a person experiences with regard to what she loves, then, is symptomatic of a lack of confidence in who she is as a person.¹²

A consequence of these features is that what counts as normative for love does not lie in the transient incitements of human emotion or the universality of logic. Rather, normativity for love lies in the contingent necessities of love. The necessities of love express something that belongs to the most intimate and most fundamental nature of an individual. We also recall that these necessities are not impersonal but are embedded within the structures of the will through which or with which the specific identity of the individual is defined or identified.

Wholeheartedness

What is important about wholeheartedness is the fulsome manner in which we love our "true self."¹³ A human being's true self is to be identified with those desires that reflect what she judges to be ultimately good for her. Therefore, a person's wholehearted love of her true self fulfills the conditions of love by protecting and advancing what she takes to be that which truly promotes her own flourishing or well-being. In this way

12. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 50.

13. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 77-78.

wholeheartedness adheres more closely to the four criteria of love and more accurately gets at the heart of what love essentially is.

Initially, it is clear that wholeheartedness conforms to the third feature of love. For example, when a person loves herself, the identification of the lover with her beloved is distinctively robust and unambiguous. For a person who loves herself, her own interests and those of her beloved are identical. It is also obvious that a person who loves herself is devoted to her beloved as a particular individual rather than an instance of an archetype. In other words, there really is not a conceivable substitute for the self. This wholehearted love toward the true self is also not outside our immediate voluntary control. Frankfurt believes that we are more naturally moved to love ourselves than anything external to ourselves. This leads to the last feature of love: in wholeheartedness, a person is dedicated to a greater degree to the flourishing of the beloved for its own sake.¹⁴ As such, wholeheartedness is entirely disinterested, in the sense of being motivated by no interests other than those of the beloved.¹⁵

An initial objection to this understanding of wholeheartedness is that it necessarily collapses into nothing more than a love of things one loves. However, the situation is less straightforward than that. The case can be made that a person may, in fact, love herself even though she does not love anything else. For example, a person could simply be ignorant of what she loves, or she could truly not have found anything or anyone to love. For her to love herself, then, she simply needs to make a determined effort to discover or understand what truly is important to her. It is by this determined

14. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 81-82.

15. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 82.

effort to become clear about what a person loves and thus plot a volitional course that one identifies with, she demonstrates wholeheartedness. Being concerned for the true interests of the beloved could simply mean that the lover is moved by an elementary desire to identify what those interests are and to identify them correctly.¹⁶ Furthermore, a person can also demonstrate wholeheartedness by overcoming any conflict within her volitional structure that would impair her capacity to love in a strenuous sense. In other words, wholeheartedness consists of a person's desire to have final ends that she can accept as her own and to which she is dedicated for their own sakes.¹⁷

Another possible objection to this conception of wholeheartedness is that it is impossible for one person to constitute both the lover and the beloved. If we take individuals to be single metaphysical realities, how can we begin to separate out the lover and beloved within the self? This seems self-defeating. Yet as hinted at above, it is possible for a person to be divided within her own volitional structure. A person can possess contradicting desires that divide the self, so a person can be at odds with herself regarding which desires she should identify with. Since humans are rational creatures with reflexive capabilities, a person can desire to have a certain will or volitional structure other than what she has. So a person can identify with certain desires she has while, at the same time, possess desires with which she does not fully identify or want to identify.

16. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 88.

17. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 9.

The Characteristic Psychology of Wholeheartedness

Current objections aside, we have a sufficient description of wholeheartedness to determine the unique, internal psychology of it. The wholehearted person is wholly settled as to what she wants and what she cares about. She has no doubts or reservations as to where she stands regarding any conflict of desires or inclinations within herself. One who is wholeheartedly committed to an epistemic good, such as acquaintance with God, has decided that this is indeed what she aims at. This means that being wholehearted is a matter of personally identifying with what one desires in such a way that it becomes a trumping desire and allows one to function epistemically well. She can pursue the epistemic goods toward which she aims without conflict or hindrance. This is to say that wholeheartedness consists of a clear and unified volitional structure that contributes to one's personal intellectual worth by positively orienting her toward the epistemic goods she identifies as the desires of her true self. By being wholeheartedly integrated around an epistemic good such as acquaintance with God, she would then be to be considered to have a deep and abiding desire for knowledge of God by acquaintance.

Otherwise, a person who is indeterminate or unsure about her volitional course will not be able to function epistemically well due to the degree of conflict within her. For example, someone who believes herself to love or desire a first-hand knowledge of God but at the same time does not want to be close to God will be at odds with herself. This person would not be admired with regard to her personal excellence given that she is divided against herself. This person will not have the volitional disposition for possessing a deep and abiding desire that would contribute to her personal intellectual worth. Her

reluctance to do what it takes to come to know God may at times trump that of her desire for knowledge of God by acquaintance and render her, in a sense, epistemically vicious.

The first defining feature of wholeheartedness is a volitional structure that is definite, firm, unreserved, and unified. This first feature entails the second unique characteristic of wholeheartedness as being sufficiently motivating. A person who wholeheartedly loves epistemic goods can be said to be positively oriented towards them to a degree that is strong enough to be motivating. In fact, wholeheartedness constitutes that very strength of motivation. We would be able to admire a person who is wholeheartedly committed to acquaintance with God so that it proves consistently motivating for her. This strong motivating feature of wholeheartedness puts one at an epistemic advantage when she is confronted with hostile deterrents to her commitment to such epistemic goods.¹⁸ Once wholeheartedness is established, then it can produce further confidence in one's volitional character. When one's volitional character is questioned, she will be able to defeat such doubts in and through her wholehearted love of epistemic goods. Wholeheartedness constrains her volitional structure so that she is compelled to remain persistent in her commitment and pursuit of epistemic goods. This volitional aspect of wholeheartedness is what makes it unique as an intellectual virtue and is what separates it from other virtues such as intellectual courage and firmness.¹⁹

18. I take these deterrents to encompass both internal and external actors. For example, a competing first-order desire in one's own volitional structure can pose a threat to one's second-order desire for an epistemic good. Perhaps more controversially, an external threat to one's wholehearted pursuit of epistemic goods could include instances of epistemic injustice. For example, minority groups who are not represented in the authoritative structures of a community's epistemic economy may be deterred from a wholehearted pursuit of relevant epistemic goods. Since these groups are not respected or seen as epistemic authorities, there may be no sufficiently motivating desire cultivated within these groups for further pursuit of epistemic goods.

19. Robert Roberts and Jay Wood discuss extensively the trait of firmness. While their account of firmness and my account of wholeheartedness are similar, the trait of wholeheartedness is distinct from

Yet there remains a massive lacuna in our account of wholeheartedness as an intellectual virtue. First, the given definition of wholeheartedness does not seem to give us much of a basis on which a person would love epistemic goods rather than epistemic vices. That wholeheartedness would necessarily lead one to love what is intellectually “good” rather than “bad” is imperative to establishing it as an intellectual virtue. Otherwise, wholeheartedness would appear neutral concerning one’s orientation toward the good. If a person could be wholeheartedly committed to what is vicious, then it is not clear as to how wholeheartedness on its own could contribute to one’s personal intellectual worth. Even Frankfurt claims that “Being wholehearted is quite compatible not only with being morally somewhat imperfect but even with being dreadfully and irredeemably wicked.”²⁰

In order to consider wholeheartedness as an intellectual virtue, then, it must have value content. If a trait is an intellectual virtue insofar as it positively orients one toward epistemic goods, then wholeheartedness cannot remain neutral. So this current account of wholeheartedness needs to be supplemented. Eleonore Stump’s exegesis of Thomas Aquinas’s conception of the desires of love, the philosophy of personal identification, and integration of the will shall provide further clarification to our account of wholeheartedness. Stump’s unpacking of Aquinas’s thought on union will help illustrate that a will can only be whole or integrated around the objective good. This illustration

firmness in that it describes one’s volitional structure, not her epistemic life in general. I understand wholeheartedness to be foundational to firmness and as an expansion upon Roberts’ and Wood’s account. Roberts and Wood focus on the role firmness plays in one’s epistemic life while I focus on the volitional aspect or required structure of one’s will for an optimal epistemic life. It is in this way that wholeheartedness is foundational to and antecedent of intellectual firmness.

20. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 98.

will then fill out my definition of wholeheartedness so that it fits within our framework for intellectual virtue.

Wholeheartedness and the Objective Good

Much like Frankfurt, Aquinas believes that one of the two foundational desires of love is a desire for the good of the beloved. It bears a striking resemblance to Frankfurt's first feature of love where one must have a disinterested concern for the well-being or flourishing of the beloved. However, where Frankfurt is light on his metaphysical definition of "flourishing," Aquinas is less so. To desire the good of the beloved is to desire for the beloved those things that actually contribute to the beloved's flourishing. This "good" desired by the lover is to be understood in the broader sense of "good," which encompasses metaphysical as well as moral goodness. It seems that for Frankfurt, if we ask the lover, "why do you love the beloved?" the answer may justifiably be, "I just do; it's a final end for me. It gives my life meaning." For Aquinas, the answer to the question, "why do you love the beloved," ought to be, "because it's good." This is because it is good that the beloved should have what is good for him.²¹ So love necessarily entails a desire for the objective good of the beloved.

Since Aquinas holds that there is an objective standard of goodness, the measure of value for the goodness at issue in the first desire of love is also objective. This means that the good of the beloved must be understood as that which truly leads to the ultimate good or flourishing of the beloved.²² This ultimate good or flourishing entails union with God. The "good" for the beloved will be those things that bring the beloved closer to

21. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 93.

22. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 93.

God. The reason for this is due to the classical attributes of divine nature, where God is, in a sense, ultimate goodness, or at the very least, is the grounds for this goodness.²³ The strong connection between God and goodness means that anything that contributes to the objective good or flourishing of a human person also brings her closer to God.²⁴

Aquinas's conception of the first desire of love carries implications for wholeheartedness. If wholeheartedness entails love of the true self, then the lover must desire what is ultimately good for the beloved. This means that for one to love herself, she must desire her own ultimate flourishing, or union with God. For this reason it does not appear possible for a person who is wholeheartedly committed to any evil or vice to actually be so. A person who is committed to evil even in her first-order desires will invariably be divided. Thus a person cannot be arbitrarily wholehearted but necessarily wholehearted toward objective goodness. A case of the sort endorsed by Frankfurt, where a person is internally integrated wholly around evil, would not be possible.

One's desires can be integrated only by bringing one's first-order desires into harmony with her second-order desires. A person's first-order desires reflect her reasons relating to the goodness of some particular action in some particular circumstance. However, a person's second-order desires relate to the kind of volitional structure, or will, she wants to have. Second-order desires reflect a person's all-things-considered reasons about what would be good in general to do in circumstances generally of this sort

23. I do not wish to enter any contentious debate concerning divine attributes or the doctrine of divine simplicity. I am merely presupposing a classical conception of divine nature.

24. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 94.

and these desires are correlated with her all-things-considered determination about the sort of will it is good for her to have.²⁵

In the psychological sense, a human being's true self is to be identified with her second-order desires because they reflect the all-things-considered judgment of her rational faculties, and these rational faculties are constitutive of what she is in the metaphysical sense.²⁶ An individual is to be identified with her second-order desires because they entail the determination of her entire intellect in a way that her first-order desires do not. When a person is divided against herself, her true self is to be identified with her second-order desires because that part of her divided psyche reflects most the considered determinations of her own intellect.²⁷ For these reasons when a person's first-order desires conflict with her second-order desires, she can unify them by bringing her first-order desires into harmony with her second-order desires. A person will not be able to integrate her desires by bringing her second-order desires in harmony with her first-order desires for a certain evil. She will always have second-order desires not to have certain first-order desires in virtue of the fact that her intellect repudiates them as not good.²⁸

25. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 134.

26. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 133. A person is an individual substance of a rational nature, where rational nature is comprised of both intellect and will. No matter what internal divisions there may be in a person's psyche, if those divisions do not render the person mentally nonfunctional, she is still just one person, metaphysically speaking. She is one agent and one "self."

27. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 134.

28. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 138-39. Furthermore, Aquinas thinks that the moral order is so accessible to ordinary reason that no normally functioning human intellect is ever totally ignorant of it. For Aquinas, no one ever gets so evil that there is nothing in the intellect or will that holds back from the evil she is immersed in or that desires something better. Therefore, a person who takes to be good something that is objectively evil will always be double-minded and this duplicity within her reason will correspond with a division in her will. Since a person will always identify somewhat with the objective good, no one can be said to love wholeheartedly what is evil.

Thus the third defining feature of wholeheartedness is a unified volitional structure in which one's desires are integrated around the objective good as union with God. The desires of a wholehearted person are ordered toward this end and integrated around the good that is objective for her. This desire for union is authoritative to her in the sense that she has identified it as her ultimate aim or ends. In this way wholeheartedness gets at the core of what it means to love one's true self.

Furthermore, this unique characteristic of wholeheartedness reveals the epistemic good to which wholeheartedness aims. If wholeheartedness necessarily integrates one around union with God, then one is essentially aiming toward an acquaintance with God. Consequently, this acquaintance with God yields a first-hand knowledge of God. Therefore, the unique psychology of wholeheartedness reveals that wholeheartedness aims at knowledge of God by acquaintance. This aspect of the argument will be taken up in the next chapter.

Conclusion

By positively orienting one toward knowledge of God by acquaintance in a sufficiently motivating way, wholeheartedness constitutes an intellectual virtue. If wholeheartedness is a matter of being confident about one's volitional structure and being confident about one's volitional structure places one in a position in which they are fulfilling all four criteria of love, then wholeheartedness is also a matter of loving the self. This means that a wholehearted person has a particular volitional structure that is definite and unified. Since wholeheartedness constitutes a firm and resolute volitional structure with a confident volitional course, then a wholehearted person is positively oriented toward her desires in a sufficiently motivating way. This means that a

wholehearted person is able to overcome any doubt of ambivalence that may pose a threat to the wholehearted unity of her desires. A wholehearted person will function epistemically better than a divided or ambivalent person. A wholehearted person will remain resolute and sufficiently motivated in her volitional course.

Not only does wholeheartedness describe the unity of a person's volitional structure, but also the direction of one's volitional course. One can only be wholeheartedly integrated around the objective good, where an individual's objective good constitutes union with God because God is goodness itself. Therefore, wholeheartedness, more specifically, describes a person whose desires are integrated around union with God. Wholeheartedness is paramount to one's closeness and experience of God, or first-hand knowledge of God. As such, wholeheartedness carries great implications for one's capacity for religious experience and knowledge of God by acquaintance. It is to this discussion that we shall turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD BY ACQUAINTANCE

Introduction

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that wholeheartedness is a constitutive intellectual virtue. Wholeheartedness not only aims at knowledge of God by acquaintance, but wholeheartedness actually constitutes one's acquaintance with God.¹ In order to advance this claim, I will first illustrate the relationship between union with God and knowledge by acquaintance. I demonstrate that union is an acquaintance with God that yields a knowledge of God for oneself. This union entails a shared attention and closeness with God that requires a wholehearted desire for union with God. Second, I clarify how this union and shared attention is an instance of acquaintance by likening coming to know God as coming to know another person. By characterizing knowledge of God as analogous to knowledge of persons, one can better see how this union constitutes acquaintance with God.

The third section will expound upon the previous two by demonstrating how becoming wholehearted constitutes acquaintance with God. If shared attention is an instance of knowing God and shared attention requires wholeheartedness, then one must be wholehearted in order to be acquainted with God. However, most human wills are divided by conflicts of desires and must move toward integration. This process of

1. This account of wholeheartedness does not encompass a comprehensive and exhaustive theory of acquaintance with God but merely showcases that becoming wholehearted is an instance of acquaintance with God.

becoming wholehearted is assisted by God's cooperative grace, and it is through this that one becomes acquainted with God. The last section will take up the knowledge-constitutive nature of this process by demonstrating just how becoming wholehearted constitutes knowledge of God by acquaintance. This section will demonstrate that wholeheartedness is an epistemic contributor, which is to say that it is knowledge constitutive. As such, I will illustrate that it is in and through one's wholeheartedness that she comes to know God by acquaintance. This ultimately supports the claim that wholeheartedness is a constitutive intellectual virtue.

Union with God and Knowledge by Acquaintance (KA)

If wholeheartedness is a matter of being integrated around the objective good and the objective good for every human person is union with God, then wholeheartedness aims at union with God. At first blush, there does not seem to be anything epistemic about union with God. This objection begs the question: how can wholeheartedness be considered an intellectual virtue if it is not clear that wholeheartedness aims at any epistemic good? I propose that union with God, however, yields knowledge of God by acquaintance. This is because the conditions that constitute union are instances of the acquaintance described by Roberts and Wood. Acquaintance encompasses a knowledge-for-oneself, where one's own personal experiences of the object of knowledge contribute to the depth and richness of one's perception of the object.² In union with another agent,

2. Acquaintance encompasses a knowledge-for-oneself, which adds *qualia* to one's belief-formation process. Acquaintance communicates that perception, understanding, and wisdom may deepen through the immediacy of experience. It is also the case that while immediate experience of an object of knowledge may yield new beliefs or improve warrants for current beliefs, it also broadens and enriches one's own perspective. So the knowledge-for-oneself involved in acquaintance is unique insofar as the experience and perception of an object of knowledge cannot be transferred onto another.

one becomes perceptually aware of that agent in a way that another person outside of this union will not be.

In this section, I will demonstrate that union with God yields a knowledge of God by acquaintance. The significant personal presence and closeness that is entailed within union with God constitutes an acquaintance with God, which produces a knowledge-for-oneself of God. A brief description of the conditions entailed within union will also reveal the role wholeheartedness plays in union with God. Therefore, I will conclude by demonstrating that wholeheartedness is required for union with God. In order to illustrate the relationship between union with God and knowledge by acquaintance, I will rely on and build upon the account of love, desire, and union developed through Eleonore Stump's reading of Aquinas.³

The sort of union a wholehearted person would be concerned with requires two things: personal presence and mutual closeness.⁴ The relationship between presence and closeness encompasses both minimal and significant personal presence. Minimal personal presence is understood as a generic connection between persons. For example, "the doctor himself was present and available to her only in the early morning."⁵ In contrast, significant personal presence requires that one also be close to another person and not

3. I want to reiterate that I am not trying to exegete the writings of Thomas Aquinas, nor am I trying to establish a comprehensive historical account of what Thomas Aquinas thought about love, desire, and union. I am simply employing Stump's work because she also brings some of Aquinas's important distinctions within concepts such as love, desire, and union into a conversation about nondiscursive knowledge of God.

4. Furthermore, Stump claims that Aquinas uses the concept of union quite extensively but that he does not offer a philosophical treatment of it. As such, the philosophical account of union provided is one of Stump's own making, but one that she draws out from her reading of Aquinas and the medieval world view she ascribes to him.

5. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 110.

simply “present” to her. These conditions also hold when the other subject of union is God.⁶

For our purposes, we need only to focus on what significant personal presence entails. For significant personal presence to obtain, there needs to be an experience of shared attention, or dyadic shared attention. Shared attention is a second-person experience where a person *shares* awareness of the sharing of focus or attention on another subject.⁷ The object of awareness in shared attention between two subjects is simultaneously the other person and their mutual awareness of one another. It is a kind of naked attention. For example, joint attention between two friends, Sarah and Chance, is where Sarah is both aware of Chance and Chance’s awareness of her and vice versa.⁸ Furthermore, it is not enough for a person to merely be aware of another person and attentive to him, where this attentiveness is a direct and unmediated cognitive contact.⁹ The shared attention in significant personal presence must be mutual.¹⁰

This shared attention between a person and God within union constitutes a kind of acquaintance. Once this shared attention has an established pattern over time, it will yield an experiential knowledge of God’s presence and actions within one’s life through those interactions. The knowledge by acquaintance produced by union is much like the knowledge one gains of her spouse or a close relative. Over time, one begins to pick up

6. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 111. It is for this reason we can affirm the claim that God is present to everyone everywhere, while at the same time, affirming the claim that God is hidden.

7. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 112-16.

8. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 116.

9. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 117.

10. This is what distinguishes minimal personal presence and significant personal presence.

on and recognize the tiny idiosyncrasies of her partner: what he likes or does not like, what irritates him, or what calms him. However, this knowledge by acquaintance is not exhausted by a list of another agent's likes or dislikes. The agents in an intimate union will also be able to anticipate the decisions, thoughts, or feelings of one another. In this way one's perception is deepened by acquaintance.

For example, I can describe my mother's likes and dislikes so that a second-hand knowledge of my mother may be obtained. However, I would be much harder pressed to transfer knowledge by acquaintance of my mother's love for me to another agent.

Another person simply cannot possess that acquaintance in the same way that I do. For another person to have a first-hand knowledge of the love of my mother, he must enter a union with her because this knowledge can be transferred only through a first-hand experience yielded by an acquaintance with my mother. Therefore, significant personal presence is not merely an unmediated, non-doxastic, cognitive contact. It is more aptly described by the established patterns of recognition, belief formation, and understanding carried via memory and other faculties that constitute acquaintance. In this way union with God constitutes an acquaintance with God that yields an experiential knowledge of God.

Secondly, we must consider what it means for one person to be close to another. A certain level of self-revelation is needed for the closeness of union. For example, Sarah is close to Chance only if Chance shares thoughts and feelings that are revelatory of Chance and of which Chance himself deeply cares. Chance would not be close to Sarah if he shared only his most trivial thoughts but nothing of what was important to or revealing of him. So it is that Sarah's closeness to Chance requires self-revelation on the part of

Chance, not Sarah. This means that Chance must be actively engaged in self-revelation. Chance's *choosing* to reveal his thoughts and feelings is necessary for Sarah's closeness to him. Furthermore, Sarah must *receive* Chance's self-revelation in the sense that she can comprehend what he is trying to reveal to her.¹¹ In an analogous sense, for God to be close to a person, she must choose to reveal the thoughts and feelings that are most important to her and that are self-revelatory of her to God.

There is also a sense in which *need* or vulnerability is also required for closeness. One person can need another person in the sense that the need is simply to fulfill the desire for that person.¹² When Augustine says to God, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you," he is expressing the sort of need necessary for closeness and thus union.¹³ Augustine's needing God in this sense, then, is a matter of God's fulfilling Augustine's desire *for* God. In other words, Augustine needs to have God, given his desire for God. If he had no need for God, he would not care whether he had God in his life or not. As such, it would be counter-intuitive to say that God is close to Augustine if Augustine had no need for God. Furthermore, insofar as the fulfillment of Augustine's desire for God is at least in part dependent upon God rather than Augustine, Augustine's having a need for God makes him vulnerable to God. This vulnerability is also requisite for closeness. Closeness must include one person desiring in another person those volitional states that are necessary for her being close, that is, her

11. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 120. By "comprehend," it is meant that Chance, even in his self-revelation, is not entirely enigmatic to Sarah. For example, he does not reveal himself in a language that Sarah does not speak.

12. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 122.

13. Saint Augustine, *the Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

comprehending of the other person's self-revelation to her and her willingness to have him need her and reveal his mind to her.¹⁴

This analogy, for the purposes of this project, is to illustrate the reciprocity and mutuality that is entailed within union. Union is not unilateral. The point is that God cannot be close to a human person if that human person does not meet the conditions for closeness or significant personal presence. This analogy is also pointed toward human beings, so when the analogy is directed towards God, it begins to break down. Since God is always present to human beings and wholly perfect, God already meets the conditions for union. Furthermore, God already knows the hearts of human beings, so what is it that human beings reveal to God that God does not already know? Again, human beings must be volitionally open to God through their vulnerability and self-revelation. It matters that a person chooses to do these things for union with God, even though God is not necessarily receiving any new knowledge. God cannot have what God wants in union unless the object of his desire (creation) also meets the conditions for union.¹⁵

What we can draw from this characterization of union is that its success is dependent upon the state of one's will. For union and closeness to obtain, it is not enough for either the beloved or lover to have certain desires. Rather, these desires must be prioritized within the hierarchy of the will in such a way that both the lover and the

14. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 122-23.

15. The primary focus on the analogies I draw between union with and knowledge of another person is the state of the human will with regard to acquiring knowledge of God by acquaintance. I am not concerned with the nature and state of God's will. I do not intend to debate the relationship between the metaphysics of God's reality and epistemology. The epistemic dimension of wholeheartedness is a purely human one and does not necessarily translate over to that of God's knowledge. Again, the focus of this thesis is to enumerate the conditions by which a human being comes to know God by acquaintance and not the inverse. If these conditions are met, then one can come to know God by acquaintance even though God is metaphysically different.

beloved may have what it is they want in love. In other words, one must possess the second-order desire to have the will that is attentive, self-revelatory, and vulnerable. One cannot simply desire that another be close to her; she must also desire all of which is required for closeness, such as significant personal presence, self-revelation, and vulnerability. For a person to be close to God then, it is necessary for her to will her attentiveness to God, her own self-revelation to God, and her vulnerability to God.

However, these are strenuous conditions for union with God and can be quite difficult to achieve. Human beings do not typically desire an open vulnerability and self-revelation to a perfectly moral, omnipotent being. Any inquiry into a knowledge of God for oneself will be cut through with an array of complex volitional attitudes and dispositions. If one is to be unified with God, then the hierarchy of her desires must prioritize the attentiveness, self-revelation, and vulnerability needed in significant personal presence and closeness. Yet, the human will can be broken or divided by conflicting desires or by vices such as pride, envy, and sloth. The divided will can inhibit a person from achieving union with God, and thus, the knowledge of God yielded by this acquaintance. This is because a person who desires to be vulnerable to God but at the same time is prideful or believes that she does not need God, will not achieve union with God to a degree that would establish a strong pattern of acquaintance.¹⁶ This person will be unable to recognize or perceive the actions of God in her life or how God might relate to her.¹⁷ In this way wholeheartedness, as an intellectual virtue, brings one to union with God.

16. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 124.

17. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 125.

A wholehearted person will have an unreserved, unequivocal volitional course aimed at union with God. The wholehearted person will not have the divided will that alienates her from God. As one becomes more wholehearted and integrated around the objective good of union with God, she will be able to overcome any divisions or conflicts within her will. The healing of her volitional structure will bring her to a wholehearted course toward union with God. Therefore, a person who is wholehearted becomes progressively acquainted with God and gains an epistemic advantage regarding understanding, perception, and recognition of God through this intimate union.

Shared Attention as Religious Experience

If this union is an acquaintance and acquaintance yields a knowledge that is a deepening of one's perception and awareness of God, then union with God constitutes this knowledge of God.¹⁸ This is to say that one does not become unified with God and then only subsequently comes to know God by acquaintance. It is in and through this union that one comes to know God. For instance, it is through being my mother's daughter that I come to a knowledge by acquaintance of her and her love for me. As such, knowing God is much like coming to know another person, where one's relationship constitutes one's acquaintance. Drawing an analogy between knowledge of God by acquaintance and knowledge of persons helps clarify the epistemic advantage one gains through experience of God and how this experience constitutes knowledge of God by acquaintance.

18. I want to reiterate that this knowledge of God by acquaintance is primarily non-propositional but acquaintance with God does not rule out the possibility that one could come by propositional knowledge of God through acquaintance.

In the Christian tradition, this union with and knowledge of God has been characterized as mystical or religious experience. In contemporary epistemology, philosophers have traditionally characterized this religious experience of God as analogous to sensory perception of a material object.¹⁹ However, epistemologists such as Adam Green have demonstrated that the perception involved in religious experience is more likened to acquaintance, which is to say that religious experience is less like seeing an apple and more like experiencing a person.²⁰ Although knowledge of persons does involve sensory perception, the perception that acquaintance involves is a rich and robust recognition and awareness of the inner world of the agent one is acquainted with. For example, after years of being acquainted with my mother, I will be able to recognize whether my mother has been in a room because of little clues she leaves behind. Say that my experience of my mother tells me that she is easily irritated by clutter and I return to a tidy room that was once messy. I will recognize my mother's "mark" on the room and perceive her presence there.²¹

19. William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1991).

20. Adam Green, "Hiddenness and the Epistemology of Attachment," in *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*, eds., Eleonore Stump and Adam Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 143. Other epistemologists, such as Paul Moser, make a similar point. Sarah Coakley also critiques and expands upon Alston's understanding of religious experience, although I would argue that her religious epistemology makes the "apophatic turn," while I am trying to find more of a middle ground within epistemology by building upon Roberts and Wood's concept of knowledge of acquaintance.

21. Another pertinent example that illustrates this principle is that of spiritual direction. It is the primary task of the spiritual director to help one better perceive the movements, actions, and presence of God in her day-to-day experience. In order to do this, the spiritual director must have a greater depth of acquaintance with God and thus a broader and richer perception of God. The spiritual director will have more experience in being able to recognize God and better able to determine whether a judgment, intuition, or event actually constitutes God's presence. In this way, a spiritual director would recognize God's mark on the life of another and perceive God's presence in her life.

As such, what one perceives of another person depends on the level or depth of interaction between the two subjects. As the interaction and shared attention between two subjects deepen, their perception of each other deepens as well. Therefore, there are levels of shared attention that correspond to degrees of acquaintance. The first level of shared attention occurs when one person is engaged in an act of attending to something and, in doing so, is coordinating with another on what both are attending to. In dyadic shared attention, the something that each party is attending to is each other. This kind of shared attention would be recognized by two lovers gazing into one another's eyes. In triadic shared attention, the center of attention is something other than each person's attention, but the feel of the experience includes its jointness. This experience would include something such as two people enjoying a concert of their favorite band or participating in a worship service of a faith tradition in which they are both believers.²²

These types of shared attention also interact with one another in such a way that shared attention becomes a diachronic process. In dyadic shared attention, the experience of one another gets taken up into the triadic experience, coloring the background of the experience and transforming what would otherwise be a private experience into a relational one. This progressive shared attention has the capacity to deepen or widen one's perception of other objects and persons. The triadic process is one of making a connection with another person and then having the point of that connection widen more and more until one is able to experience the wider world together.²³ It is this level of shared attention that we would ascribe to a holy person, such as a saint. A saint who has

22. Green, "Hiddenness," 143.

23. Green, "Hiddenness," 143.

experienced shared attention with God at this level would have such an epistemic transformation that she would be able to perceive the wider world around her in conjunction with God.²⁴ In this case, the saint would have an epistemic advantage not only when it comes to knowledge of God but also when it comes to knowledge of God's actions in the world. It is in and through the saint's acquaintance with God that she is better able to perceive the nature and aim of God's will for creation.

These different levels of shared attention provide a framework for better understanding the gradation of acquaintance with God that one may experience. First-level religious experience of the divine would be much like an infant picking out persons as objects in her environment. Second-level religious experience involves building a sense of how to think about what this divine person is doing. This is analogous to when an infant shifts her perception of a person from that of an object to that of an agent. She understands that the person within her perception is a "doer" rather than a passive object.²⁵

In the third level, God's presence is communicated, but the experience of that communication is shallow. This level of experience is more vulnerable to alternative interpretations or doubts. However, once this interaction is secured, perception of God will track a history of interaction. As such, the fourth level of religious experience involves sharing attention with God on objects of local interest to the human person.²⁶

24. Cottingham, "Saints and Saintliness," 79-88. It is this level or kind of shared attention that I believe John Cottingham describes in his discussion of saints as being epistemic exemplars, whose perception of the world has been transformed.

25. Green, "Hiddenness," 145.

26. Green, "Hiddenness," 145.

These two levels of religious experience would constitute one's progressive union with God. In the fourth level of religious experience, the hierarchy of one's desires becomes the center of focus for both the individual and God. In this instance, both God and the individual will the will that desires union. The person in the fourth level of religious experience is progressively becoming wholeheartedly integrated around union with God and becoming acquainted with God through that process.

Finally, the fifth level of religious experience corresponds with triadic shared attention. This is when a person moves beyond a focus on only objects tied to her narrow interests of herself to encompass items of wider concern to herself and God. Thus the deepest level of religious experience is a kind of shared attention that takes up a history of interaction into the meaning and affect conveyed between oneself and God.²⁷ This would describe John Cottingham's saint who not only knows that one of the greatest commands is to love one's neighbor as oneself, but can appreciate and understand the grounds for that claim.²⁸ The person in the fifth level of religious experience is wholehearted, meaning that she has the volitional structure that prioritizes presence and closeness with God and has obtained union with God as a result of that wholeheartedness.²⁹

27. Green, "Hiddenness," 145-46.

28. Cottingham, "Saints and Saintliness," 88.

29. The main point of distinction between my project and the thinkers I am indebted to is that I do believe that we begin the process of unification with God in this life. Moreover, this process is continuous and progressive so that it will be completed in the afterlife. If this unification process begins in this life, then human beings do obtain knowledge of God by acquaintance in the here and now. My thought is more constructive in that I am claiming that this acquaintance can be experienced now, to some degree, and not only in the eschaton. Therefore, this aspect of my thesis is not deliberately representative of thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and Maximus the Confessor. I am more in debt to the analytic concept of acquaintance here.

Since the levels of religious experience are built upon one another, then the special qualitative features of the fifth level are not entirely independent from the everyday patterns present at the very first level. This means that there is no a priori reason to suppose that the realm of common experience and ecstatic, mystical experience are widely separated. The experience of coming to know God can be as common as coming to know another person. This also suggests that one's efforts to wholeheartedly desire union with God constitutes an acquaintance with God that is a part of a progressive religious experience. Therefore, in one's becoming wholehearted, she is acquainting herself with God.

Characterizing union with God as a shared attention that is analogous to knowing another person helps clarify the epistemic dimension of union. It is in and through different levels of shared attention that one becomes acquainted with God. This acquaintance then yields an established pattern of interactions that deepens one's perception of God's presence in her own life and in the world. Knowledge of God by acquaintance as analogous to knowledge of persons further demonstrates how union with God yields knowledge of God by acquaintance.

Wholeheartedness and Acquaintance with God

Thus far I have demonstrated that union with God yields an acquaintance with God that constitutes a knowledge for oneself. This union with God entails a shared attention, vulnerability, self-revelation, and closeness that requires a volitional structure that prioritizes one's desire for union with God over other possibly conflicting first-order desires. This volitional structure describes a wholehearted person whose desires are in harmony with the second-order desire for union with God. Furthermore, the shared

attention between a wholehearted person and God within union characterizes a religious experience where knowing God is much like knowing a person. Therefore, it is in and through this union and shared attention that one comes to know God.

This seems to suggest that one must be wholehearted before she can be unified with God and thus know God through acquaintance. Yet it is intuitive to say that even a person who may be conflicted about her desire to be in union with God comes to know God to some degree for herself. So it is through the process of becoming wholehearted that one also becomes acquainted with God. This is because in becoming wholehearted one desires to have the will that desires union with God and asks God's aid in willing the volitional structure needed for a strenuous union. For the purposes of brevity, I will refer to this process of becoming wholehearted as *sanctification*.³⁰ The remainder of this section will demonstrate how becoming wholehearted within one's sanctification constitutes an acquaintance with God. This will also help clarify just how wholeheartedness may be considered a constitutive intellectual virtue.

The acquaintance with God one obtains through her sanctification is a common religious experience because, as I noted before, it is not typical of most people to already possess wholeheartedness. The will is usually divided by conflicts between one's first-order and second-order desires. So one must progressively become wholehearted in order

30. I am using the term *sanctification* as a shorthand term for the process of becoming wholehearted with the aid of God's cooperative grace. This shorthand use of the term by no means encompasses a comprehensive or robust concept of sanctification. I am also forgoing any traditional Christian understanding of sanctification and am merely using it for the purposes of demonstrating that in the process of becoming wholehearted one comes to know God. It is in this way that one does not have to be completely wholehearted before she can experience God's presence for herself. I do not mean to provide an exhaustive definition of the term or limit what it encompasses.

to obtain union with God, but it is in and through this process that one is acquainted with God. This is because sanctification involves the cooperative grace of God.

It is possible for a person to love something but, at the same time, also have a desire not to love that thing. Part of her loves it while another part of herself does not.³¹ If a person is ambivalent about her love of God or her desire to know God, then she will be unable to function epistemically well.³² Her perception of God will be undermined by this division. So how can the division be resolved? How does one move from a divided will to an integrated one?³³

For people in the Christian tradition such as Augustine and Aquinas, the solution is God's cooperative grace. Sanctification is based on the belief that when a person's will is not strong enough to bring his first-order desires into harmony with his second-order desires, it is strong enough to enable him to form the first-order desire to ask God to strengthen his will.³⁴ If he were to will that God help him, then God would certainly do so. God bestows the grace to strengthen a person's will for added power to will some particular good in response to that person's higher-order desire that God do so. In bestowing this grace, God is cooperating with a person's own higher-order desires to strengthen the will. For example, Augustine in the *Confessions* commands his will to will some good to which he is committed, but his will nonetheless does not will the thing it

31. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 91-92.

32. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 96. Frankfurt argues a similar point by stating that a divided will is necessarily self-defeating. He makes the case that division of will is a counterpart in the realm of conduct to self-contradiction in the realm of thought. A self-contradictory belief requires us to both accept and deny the same judgment. Thus, it guarantees cognitive failure.

33. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 131-32.

34. This is to say that God is always willing to aid the will of any person who wants God to strengthen him in his willing of the good.

has commanded.³⁵ If Augustine petitions God for help in his struggle with his divided self, then God can and will bring about changes in his will so that he is then enabled or empowered to bring his first-order desires into accordance with his own second-order desires. It is in and through this process that Augustine integrates his will around union with God and achieves wholeheartedness.³⁶

However, does God's empowering of a human person to move from a fragmented volitional state to a unified one not undermine wholeheartedness as a virtue by undermining human free will? Cooperative grace does not undermine free will because it is the case that one's desire for internal integration originates within the person himself and not God. This is because God does not simply produce a first-order volition in Augustine without his already having a second-order desire that God do so. If that were the case, then God would be undermining Augustine's free will. Rather, the grace operative in one's sanctification enhances or evokes one's efforts (or will) to integrate his own will.³⁷ If Augustine's second-order desire had been different, then God would not have acted on his will in such a way, and Augustine's first-order desires would have been different also. If God aids Augustine's will because Augustine himself wants God to help him have the state of will he himself wants to have, then the resulting will in Augustine is the one he himself desires. We can also expect that Augustine would have this second-

35. Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 147-48.

36. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 160.

37. For further reading on how cooperative grace and a libertarian conception of free will are related, see Eleonore Stump, "Chapter 13: Grace and Free Will," in *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 389-404.

order desire to will the will that desires union with God because of human reason's access to the objective good.³⁸

It seems that if this were correct, then with one act of a higher-order desire a person could achieve full integration of her will around the good if she would only desire that God unify her will in this way. However, a person's will is recurrently liable to internal division. A second-order desire for help in willing some particular good can be wavering. Even a higher-order desire for a good first-order will that is not wavering can still fade or fall away.³⁹ Consequently, the process of full internal integration is a slow one. The higher-order desire for some particular good first-order desire on the part of some person Sarah and her desire for God's aid in strengthening her in that willing will result in some integration of her will. As Sarah's higher-order desires become effective in their command of Sarah's first-order desires, and as Sarah's will becomes more integrated, Sarah will be able to form further first-order desires that further her will's integration around the good. As such, God can give Sarah more aid to strengthen her will still more in willing what Sarah increasingly wants to will; and this strengthening of her volitional structure will enable Sarah to desire even more cooperative grace, and so on. Therefore, wholeheartedness is something that is grown into and, like any other virtue, is cultivated over the course of one's lifetime.⁴⁰

38. This also seems strenuous insofar as one's second-order desire for the objective good is explicitly stated as union with God. However, one does not need to be consciously aware of the explicit nature of the objective good in order to desire it. One can be in the process of unifying oneself with God before fully comprehending or recognizing that it is God with whom they are being unified. This explicit awareness would better characterize the deepest level of religious experience.

39. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 161.

40. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 161. For Aquinas, sanctification is never completed in this lifetime but is brought to completion in the afterlife.

If sanctification is a cooperation with God towards a common goal of integrating one's will so that one may be unified with God, then sanctification is a kind of shared attention between God and the person who is becoming wholehearted. By asking for and receiving the help of God to have the will that she wants to have, one increasingly becomes unified with God and thus acquainted with God. So it is in and through one's wholeheartedness that one apprehends a pattern of God's presence and attention in her life that she would otherwise not be able to. One comes to know God as an actor within her own life and in such an intimate way that the acquaintance involves her own personal growth.

One way of clarifying the knowledge-constitutive nature of sanctification is to apply the Causal-Acquaintance Principle (CA). J. P. Moreland provides this definition of CA: necessarily, if a subject *s* has knowledge by acquaintance with a causal fact *x*, then *s* has knowledge by acquaintance with the relevant causal object *y*. For example, if *s* is directly aware of a hammer's causing a nail to move, then *s* is directly aware of the hammer.⁴¹ Brandon Rickabaugh takes Moreland to be arguing that a subject's direct awareness of the hammer moving the nail yields knowledge that the hammer moved the nail. Thus the hammer moving the nail provides the relevant phenomenological seemings and appearings that justify one's belief that the hammer caused the nail to move. Since these relevant phenomenological seemings play such a justificatory role, CA can be said to be an instance of knowledge by acquaintance.⁴²

41. J. P. Moreland, "Substance Dualism and the Argument from Self-Awareness," *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 28.

42. Rick L. Rickabaugh, "Eternal Life as Knowledge of God: An Epistemology of Knowledge by Acquaintance and Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no. 2 (2013): 212.

While Rickabaugh makes a similar move by applying CA to awareness of the Holy Spirit, I argue that CA best describes how becoming wholehearted yields knowledge of God by acquaintance. If a person is aware of the integration of her desires, though she feels powerless to change the direction or strength of her first-order desires, she can be said to be aware of the causal agent of that integration. In the case of sanctification, that causal agent is God.⁴³ So it is through the basic identification of one with the desires of her heart that she comes to know God. One becomes directly aware of God's action and presence through the integration of her will. Furthermore, this acquaintance with God provides a non-propositional cognitive foundation for knowledge of God, not only as a reality, but as an agent, as an actor in one's life. Through this acquaintance, one can pick up on the pattern of God's actions and presence in her own experiences so that God becomes a personal god. In this way one possesses the salient evidence for the belief that God is a personal God.

Wholeheartedness as a Constitutive Virtue

What this discussion has lent so far is a conception of sanctification that yields knowledge of God by acquaintance. It is in and through one's sanctification that one becomes acquainted with God. Therefore, knowledge of God by acquaintance is not gained merely through a cognitive faculty that subsequently produces knowledge of God after one's integration of will. It seems more plausible given the process of sanctification that I have laid out, and the union it entails, that it is in and through one's becoming

43. Stump, *Aquinas*, 391-93. Of course, this claim is qualified with the understanding that God remains the formal cause rather than the efficient cause so that God is not compelling the will or acting any violence against it. This qualification allows the claim to be made while maintaining a commitment to a libertarian sense of free will.

wholehearted that one gains knowledge of God by acquaintance. This is how we can make good on the claim that in growing in love of God, one grows in knowledge of God.

By revisiting Jason Baehr's work, we can better see how this is the case. The account of wholeheartedness given above is best identified by what Baehr calls an epistemic contributor.⁴⁴ One way to better understand what Baehr means by epistemic contributor is to distinguish it from another conception of intellectual virtue, which describes character traits as mere epistemic enablers. According to Ernest Sosa, epistemic enablers are qualities that put one in a position to know or in a position where one can subsequently exercise one's knowledge-producing faculties. In contrast, epistemic contributors are qualities in virtue of which one knows.⁴⁵ While Sosa appears to be open to the possibility that character traits can act as epistemic contributors, it is only in rare or non-standard cases. Baehr argues against this claim by asserting that it is not in rare or unusual cases that the exercise of character traits constitutes an item of knowledge.⁴⁶

Baehr maintains that character virtues regularly manifest in cognitive acts in belief-formation processes that are not necessarily passive or automatic. In intentional, judgmental belief-formation non-passive, cognitive acts such as judging, perceiving, noticing, and grasping are knowledge-constitutive. These are the knowledge-constitutive cognitive performances in which character traits are manifested. There could a case in which a person notices an important visual cue or detail on account of his focused attention. It is not as if this person exercises attentiveness and then, only subsequently,

44. Jason Baehr, "How Are Virtue and Knowledge Related?" in *Current Controversies in Virtue Theory*, ed., Mark Alfano (New York City: Routledge, 2015), 75.

45. Baehr, "How Are Virtue and Knowledge Related?" 77.

46. Baehr, "How Are Virtue and Knowledge Related?" 78.

sees the relevant detail. Rather, attentiveness is manifested in the act of visual perception itself.⁴⁷ So it is in or through focused or attentive looking that the detail is perceived.

There could be yet another case in which, through an act of honest introspection, a person becomes aware of the fact that she doubts a certain claim that she has long taken herself to firmly believe. Given these cases, it would be misguided to say that this person manifests intellectual honesty and then becomes aware of the relevant fact in a separate cognitive act. Instead, it is in and through her introspective honesty that this person grasps her doubt.⁴⁸

Both cases underscore a crucial insight from Baehr: the exercise or manifestation of character virtues cannot be divorced from the operation of perceptual or other cognitive faculties such as introspection and reason.⁴⁹ Wholeheartedness is also an instance of a trait that is manifested in the perception of God's action within one's life and one's union with God such that it is knowledge-constitutive. This means that it is in and through one's wholeheartedness that one grasps her acquaintance with God. So it is just like the attentive observer and the honest introspective person who come to knowledge through their traits that the wholehearted person comes to know God through her desire for internal integration around union with God. It is not the case that one becomes wholehearted or internally integrated and that one *then* is disposed to perceive or apprehend God. Rather, one's growth in wholeheartedness encompasses one's acquaintance with God.

47. Baehr, "How Are Virtue and Knowledge Related?" 81.

48. Baehr, "How Are Virtue and Knowledge Related?" 82.

49. Baehr, "How Are Virtue and Knowledge Related?" 82.

Conclusion

In the preceding, I have demonstrated that wholeheartedness is constitutive of knowledge of God by acquaintance. Since wholeheartedness is an internal integration around the objective good and the objective good for a human person is union with God, wholeheartedness aims at acquaintance with God. Union entails a shared attention and closeness with God that yields an intimate knowledge of God for oneself. This knowledge is specific to the individual agent in the sense that one cannot discursively transfer her acquaintance with God to another subject. Union with God yields a knowledge of God by acquaintance. This knowledge by acquaintance is further clarified by likening this coming to know God to coming to know another person. As such, when one's shared attention with God deepens, her acquaintance with God deepens. The more she is acquainted with God, the more she recognizes and is aware of God.

However, this shared attention requires a vulnerability to and closeness with God that is difficult to obtain because the human will is divided by its conflicting desires. If one is not wholeheartedly integrated around her desire for union with God, then her acquaintance with God will be undermined. One must become wholehearted in order to maintain this union. Yet it is through becoming wholehearted that one becomes acquainted with God. This is because God's cooperative grace is needed for one to fully integrate her desires so that she has the will that wills union with God. This cooperation is an instance of the Causal-Acquaintance Principle, where one has knowledge by acquaintance of God when one is aware that God is helping move one's will toward integration. This clarifies that becoming wholehearted is a constitutive intellectual virtue. One comes to know God in and through her wholeheartedness.

Wholeheartedness gets at the core of the volitional aspect of our epistemic lives. Understanding, recognizing, and perceiving God, like knowing another person, comes in degrees because it requires much of one's volitional character to achieve a more strenuous degree of union. Other religious epistemologists have also gone to great lengths to demonstrate the volitional aspect of our epistemic lives, especially when it comes to theistic inquiry. I will spend my concluding chapter placing my account of wholeheartedness and its volitional aspects in conversation with Paul Moser, whose work has revolutionized the way we think about theistic inquiry. Like me, Moser emphasizes the volitional dimension of theistic inquiry by claiming that knowledge of God and the evidence that justifies it requires volitional openness to God. While many of the intuitions underlying this project are in debt to Moser, I believe that Moser's account can be streamlined by my own. It is to this task that I turn in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

An Account of Wholeheartedness and Knowledge of God

What I have done in this thesis is demonstrate that wholeheartedness is a constitutive intellectual virtue. I advance this claim by first establishing the definition of intellectual virtue as a character trait that contributes to an individual's personal intellectual worth. Intellectual virtues contribute to one's deep and abiding desire for things such as truth, knowledge, and understanding. Furthermore, as a result of this orientation, one functions epistemically well. Therefore, for a trait to be an intellectual virtue, it must positively orient one toward epistemic goods to a motivating degree. Each trait must also have its own psychological characteristics that distinguish it from other traits.

Moving from this concept of intellectual virtue, I describe the particular psychological traits of wholeheartedness by drawing upon Harry Frankfurt's account of love for the self. Wholeheartedness is a matter of personally identifying with what one desires in such a way that it becomes a trumping desire and allows one to function epistemically well. One can pursue the epistemic goods toward which she aims without conflict or hindrance. The wholehearted person is wholly settled as to what she wants, and what she cares about. Wholeheartedness consists of a definite and unified volitional structure that contributes to one's personal intellectual worth by positively orienting her toward the epistemic goods she identifies with. Wholeheartedness organizes the hierarchy

of one's desires so that she is compelled to remain persistent in her commitment and pursuit of epistemic goods. Furthermore, given the objective standard of goodness, wholeheartedness also describes a person who aims toward union with God as her ultimate flourishing and objective good.

Since wholeheartedness consists of a hierarchy of the will that prioritizes a desire for union with God, wholeheartedness aims towards the epistemic good of acquaintance. I demonstrate this by drawing a constitutive relationship between union and acquaintance. Union with God yields a knowledge of God by acquaintance. The significant personal presence and closeness that is entailed within union with God constitutes an acquaintance with God, which produces a knowledge-for-oneself of God. The shared attention of significant personal presence is much like knowing another person. One comes to know God in and through her union with God. Likewise, one comes to a knowledge of God by acquaintance through her union with God.

However, this union and acquaintance with God is shot through with a complex array of volitional dispositions. It is easier said than done that one be vulnerable and close to God. For one to be in union with God, she must possess a will that prioritizes her desire for union with God against conflicting desires to be reserved and aloof towards God. Yet one can become wholehearted through the assistance of God's cooperative grace. By desiring that one have a will that wills union with God, she cooperates with God toward this wholeheartedness. As one becomes aware of her volitional structure's changing, she also becomes aware of God's presence. This sanctification produces a pattern of interactions with God over time that constitute an acquaintance with God, where acquaintance is an aptitude of recognition, belief formation, and understanding

carried via memory and other faculties that is consequent on and subsequent to an earlier immediate cognitive contact or awareness of an object of knowledge. In this way wholeheartedness is an epistemic contributor. It is in and through one's becoming wholehearted that she comes to know God. It is not the case that she becomes wholehearted to only then, through the function of cognitive faculties, gain acquaintance with God. Therefore, it is through one's progressive union with God that she obtains knowledge of God that she otherwise would not have.

Through this account of wholeheartedness, the volitional aspects of theistic inquiry are revealed. If one is to come to knowledge of God for herself, then she must engage in the integration of her desires. Paul Moser undertakes a similar project by making the case that volitional openness is necessary for what he calls filial knowledge of God. In this final chapter, I will place my account of wholeheartedness in conversation with Moser's volitional theistic evidentialism with regard to acquiring knowledge of God. While Moser's intuition that acquiring knowledge of God has an existential, volitional, and ethical dimension is right, Moser does not state in a coherent or precise manner how one comes to be volitionally open to God. I believe that conceiving of wholeheartedness as an intellectual virtue will streamline Moser's religious epistemology. My analysis of Moser's religious epistemology will begin with a brief discussion of volitional theistic evidentialism and will then draw out the potential weaknesses of his concept of volitional openness. I will then demonstrate the ways in which my account of wholeheartedness as a constitutive intellectual virtue help address the lacuna left in Moser's. Finally, I will use this conversation as an entre for further inquiry into related areas of concern.

Volitional Theistic Evidentialism

For Moser, filial knowledge requires an inquirer's volitional reception of the self-manifestation of a perfectly moral God. The purposively available evidence that grounds such filial knowledge and that constitutes the volitional reception of God's self-manifestation *is* one's volitional and moral transformation. Therefore, filial knowledge is inherently personal and adds qualitative content to one's knowledge of God.

However, Moser fails to clearly organize these steps of inquiry into a coherent process of acquiring filial knowledge of God. As a result, the epistemic significance of volitional openness is obscured. Moser insists that knowledge of God requires a volitional reception of God's self-manifestation that is evident through a subsequent moral transformation of the inquirer. At the same time, he argues that volitional openness is antecedent to the self-manifestation of a perfectly moral God.

My account aids Moser's in three fundamental ways: first, by integrating virtue epistemology, I organize the steps of inquiry about God into a coherent process of becoming wholehearted. By making the case that one comes to know God through the integration of her will, my account more clearly illustrates how one comes to be volitionally open to God. In becoming wholehearted, one is desiring union with God as her ultimate flourishing in a way that trumps her lesser, first-order desires. Secondly, by conceiving of wholeheartedness as a constitutive intellectual virtue, my account offers clarity to the chronological order of volitional openness and the acquisition of knowledge by acquaintance. In and through one's wholeheartedness one comes to know God.

While filial knowledge of God may strike readers as an important aspect of the Christian epistemic life, Moser fails to tie this to other concepts within the field of

epistemology and leaves interlocutors a bit plussed regarding what exactly volitional openness aims at, epistemically speaking. By clarifying that wholeheartedness aims at acquaintance with God and that this acquaintance is much like coming to know another person, my project better establishes the epistemic dimension of volitional openness. The volitional and epistemic are integrated into a coherent process of acquiring knowledge of God. By clarifying the epistemic good to which wholeheartedness aims, my account also maintains a better balance of epistemic goods regarding God (e.g., propositional knowledge, warranted belief, understanding, sense perception). Moser tends to reduce inquiry about God to an existential crisis of sorts; I would like to maintain the important role of intellectual tasks such as rigorous philosophical reflection, natural theology, the rationality of religious belief, the nature of religious experience in acquiring knowledge of God.

Defining Filial Knowledge

Moser introduces the concept of filial knowledge of God as a volitional reception of the firsthand, direct encounter with a morally perfect God in and through a mutual, reciprocal relationship. What constitutes this firsthand, direct encounter with God is the manifestation and the subsequent reception, of purposively available evidence. Purposively available evidence is the volitional reception of God's self-manifestation of his will or love in one's experience over time. Since God is morally perfect, his character is perfect, unselfish love; thus a direct, firsthand encounter with God entails an encounter

with perfect, unselfish love. This makes it the case that any manifestation of perfect, unselfish love within one's experience is a direct, firsthand encounter with God.¹

So what does the volitional reception of the self-manifestation of God look like? First, the self-manifestation of God to an inquirer and the inquirer's subsequent decision to receive such self-manifestation takes place within the context of what Moser calls the God relationship. Just as in any relationship, the God relationship is mutual and reciprocal. Given that God is morally perfect, this mutuality places a moral demand upon human recipients. Being in the reciprocal God relationship where one could come to know God would require one to imitate God's perfect, unselfish love and thus be reconciled to God (i.e., to be in cooperative communion with God). Therefore, the process of inquiry within the God relationship is morally robust due to the demand of reciprocity with a morally perfect God. Upon entry to this relationship, one finds that her motivational attitudes such as desires, intentions, and feelings are challenged by the morally perfect nature of God. The result of any morally robust inquiry into God would be a serious reflection on how one orders her life and priorities. Subsequent to this reflection would be one's volitional decision to reorient oneself toward God as supremely authoritative in one's life.² One's decision to conform one's will to God then is what is entailed in the volitional reception or acceptance of the self-manifestation of God. Therefore, one's moral transformation is inextricably intertwined with and taken up into one's inquiry about God.

1. Paul K. Moser, *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 135-36.

2. Paul K. Moser, *The God Relationship: The Ethics for Inquiry about the Divine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 48.

Since purposively available evidence is inherently volitional and ethical, its content is qualitative in the sense that purposively available evidence must be salient to one's own experience.³ It is inherently personal insofar as it is directly presented to one's will or heart. Purposively available evidence provides the qualia or input of one's filial knowledge of God.⁴ Filial knowledge of God is akin to a direct person-to-person knowing that is constituted by one's qualitative experience of another personal agent.⁵ This means that purposively available evidence is not reproducible or necessarily demonstrable to others. One person cannot present, give, or manifest purposively available evidence for another because the salient evidence *is* the change of a person's will toward the will of God.⁶ Knowing God results in self-knowledge as well as moral transformation, and it is this which constitutes one's distinctive knowing of God as Father.

Volitional Inconsistencies

However, there is one major inconsistency within Moser's model for acquiring knowledge of God that threatens to undermine his project. He makes the case that in an inquirer's sincere inquiry about God, she could become more attentive to some important character traits of God and thus cooperate with God in acquiring filial knowledge of God. This cooperation entails the prioritizing of a supreme love of God. Thus being related to God, the person could cooperatively receive firsthand, salient evidence of God's reality.⁷ This attunement allows one to recognize God when God purposively decides to self-

3. Moser, *The God Relationship*, 305.

4. Moser, *The God Relationship*, 305.

5. Moser, *The Elusive God*, 154.

6. Moser, *The Elusive God*, 97.

7. Moser, *The God Relationship*, 43-46.

manifest for the good of the inquirer. At the same time, Moser makes the case that one cannot come to faith or filial knowledge of God until she has been morally overwhelmed in either a positive or negative way. However, given a person's past bad experiences, she can easily make false associations with that moral overwhelming and thereby block a genuine opportunity to realize goodness in her life. Moser argues that this person would need to learn how to receive rather than resist good overwhelming in life even when it is difficult.⁸

As such, it is unclear from Moser's account just how one becomes volitionally open to God and at what point in the inquiry process. On one hand, it seems that humans must enter into a sincere inquiry about God that cultivates their attunement to God's character and thus receive firsthand, salient evidence of God's reality. On the other hand, a person can hinder the reception of this evidence due to her resistance caused by negative past experiences. Furthermore, is it not the manifestation and subsequent reception of God's self-revelation that yields the ability to discern the nature and presence of God in the first place? At the same time, Moser prescribes a discernment or attunement to goodness that would correct someone's association of moral overwhelming. Yet one comes to possess this attunement in and through a cooperative relationship with God in which she has already volitionally opened herself. How is one able to come to a point of being able to discern the reality of God and thus volitionally open herself to God if this attunement is available only for someone already within the God relationship?

8. Moser, *The God Relationship*, 61.

Response to Moser

My account of becoming wholehearted better addresses exactly how one comes to be volitionally open to God by being knowledge constitutive. In Moser's language, this is the same as saying that one becomes progressively volitionally open as she becomes more and more acquainted with God. However, the inquiry process for Moser is convoluted insofar as it is not clear which prescription is a precondition for knowledge of God. Must one already be attuned to God before she can recognize God's self-revelation when he finally decides to reveal himself to her? And if so, is it not in and through the God relationship that she receives this ability to discern God's presence in the first place?

Sanctification, as the process of becoming wholehearted, offers a better alternative to conceptualizing the cooperative and mutual nature of encountering God through its subtleties. Moser seems to be expecting a moral overwhelming of a great, existential degree. However, in the life of most believers, the case is that God is encountered through the small, almost mundane moments of life. Union with God entails significant personal presence that consists of a shared attention. In becoming wholehearted, God and an individual share attention by attending to the integration of her desires around union with God. This attention and God's cooperative grace, constitutes an acquaintance with God that yields the filial knowledge Moser is concerned with. Through this intimate attention and union, one comes to know God as Father, where her knowledge of God is unique to the pattern of interactions she has with God. This may include the existential struggle that Moser describes, but it also encompasses something as simple and subtle as one's coming to a self-knowledge about who she is and what she takes to be ultimately authoritative for her.

The common experience of coming to know God in this way is also underlined by its centrality to the Christian life. Since the human will is typically divided rather than wholehearted, the process of becoming wholehearted is paramount to the Christian concerned with union with God. Given this state of affairs, knowledge of God and the transformation that it entails must be a simultaneous, diachronic process. It is through one's transformation that one grows in knowledge of God by acquaintance, and as she grows in acquaintance, she is further transformed. Therefore, wholeheartedness and acquaintance with God are mutually benefitting. Sanctification demonstrates that the process of becoming volitionally open to God happens alongside one's growing acquaintance with God.

Furthermore, this acquaintance with God more clearly demonstrates that this transformation encompasses more than just a moral transformation. In sanctification, what is at issue is one's personal identification, rather than her moral status.⁹ From our discussion of intellectual virtue, we know that not all excellence is moral in nature. There is still a way to be personally excellent without there being any direct link to one's morality. So acquiring a deeper acquaintance with God requires a volitional overhaul, where what desires one identifies with is transformed.

By conceptualizing the human person as a rational creature, one's determination of her second-order desires is made through the intellect, which recognizes the objective good. This is not to say that one immediately and automatically recognizes God as the objective good or fully understands what that entails. It simply means that one grows in

9. This is not to say that sanctification has absolutely no effect on one's morality. Rather, the point is that the volitional dimension of acquiring knowledge of God by acquaintance has to do with what one identifies with and what she finds to be most important. In the case of wholeheartedness, it would be her own flourishing, or union with God.

perception and desire of God, in degrees, through the interdependent relationship of the will and intellect.¹⁰ Conceptualizing sanctification as a matter of transforming the desires one identifies with clarifies what exactly it means to be volitionally open to God. By integrating my account with Moser's, we can better determine that becoming volitionally open to God is a matter of desiring that one's will is conformed to God's will or identifying with the ultimate desire for union with God.

Since becoming wholehearted is a matter of determining that one ultimately desires union with God and having God's assistance in this determination, acquaintance with God is not far removed from the everyday patterns or schemata of one's life. While Moser is not wrong that this transformation can be manifested through a positive or negative overwhelming, the process of sanctification brings with it a more nuanced expectation of how one becomes acquainted with God. It is in and through one's struggle to will the will that wills union with God that one encounters God.

Sanctification as an internal process of identifying more and more with God better describes the struggle that Moser claims to be entailed within inquiry about God. It also reveals how background beliefs about oneself, what one wants, and what one expects can exacerbate this struggle and undermine acquaintance with God by furthering alienating one from herself. According to the shared attention model of union, throwing out evidence of God's presence available at the most basic level of human spiritual development impedes gaining further evidence that is grasped as the relationship with

10. The doctrine of justification states that God first reveals to the intellect what is good and thus sets one's second-order desires around God. The doctrine of justification and sanctification work in tandem to clarify just how one comes to faith and continues to grow in that faith, through love. However, a discussion of justification is beyond the scope of this project. It is enough to indicate that the intellect still plays a role in acquiring knowledge of God by acquaintance. This augments Moser's account by considering every aspect of the human person rather than reducing inquiry about God to existential and moral transformation.

God progresses. So if we assume that coming to know God is nothing short of an ecstatic experience, then we will not recognize God in the smaller moments of personal growth.¹¹

It follows that if one's experience of God is shallow and the history short, then deflationary schemas can be introduced to remake one's memories and damage trust between her and God.¹²

For this reason intellectual tasks such as those germane to natural theology and philosophy of religion are part and parcel of one's growing acquaintance with God.¹³ Propositional knowledge and a systematic understanding of those propositions still play a role in coming to know God, though not in the constitutive nature as sanctification. Philosophical reflection on the nature of God and his relationship to human beings can present a new schema for the will to follow. One does not need to necessarily undergo a moral overwhelming to begin unifying herself with God. This union can begin in something as simple as wanting to discover for oneself what experiencing God might entail. If one learns through her studies that God can be encountered through the process of becoming wholehearted, then one will be able to pick up on this schema. As such, even the pursuit of analytic philosophy and theology can have salvific effects.¹⁴

11. Green, "Hiddenness," 148.

12. Green, "Hiddenness," 148.

13. In different places, such as "The Inner Witness of the Spirit," Moser claims that philosophical arguments and conclusions can hinder purposively available evidence of God or distract from direct interpersonal knowledge of God, so Moser tends to prioritize the volitional over the cognitive. However, it was the intention of my thesis simply to clarify the volitional dimension of acquiring knowledge of God, while maintaining the equal importance and role of both the volitional and cognitive in the epistemic life of the Christian.

14. For a more in-depth study of how analytic philosophy and theology can have salvific effects, see William Wood, "Analytic Theology as a Way of Life," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2 (May 2014): 43-60. While I agree with Wood about the ways in which analytic theology can have salvific and transforming effects, Wood does not enter the epistemological debate between an auxiliary or constitutive trait. However, Wood's work is still helpful insofar as he illustrates the way analytic theology cultivates the

However, there is one area of inquiry that both Moser and I never explicitly address. After looking more analytically at what it means to become volitionally open to God, we still find room for a discussion about the practices that are entailed in becoming volitionally open. There needs to be further conversation about the everyday practices and habits involved in the process of becoming wholehearted and the role that each one plays. Are there certain practices that are more beneficial than others? What about the nature of these practices? Do they simply dispose one towards wholeheartedness, or are these practices major contributors to one's sanctification? This thesis also calls for further reflection on what can be drawn from the Christian tradition in terms of practices and habits. Some theologians are beginning to address these specific questions by drawing upon the larger Christian tradition, its writers, and more specifically, the mystical branch of Christian theology. For example, Sarah Coakley has done extensive work on the role contemplative prayer plays in coming to know God.¹⁵ Her work also opens the possibility for further investigation into the role suffering plays in coming to know God. There are also other analytic philosophers and theologians who continue to look at the connection between philosophy and spirituality as a point of interest for religious epistemologists. These thinkers have made the case that philosophical and theological study may have similar salvific effects as traditional Christian practices. The work of people such as

character traits that are manifestations of one's acquaintance with God (i.e., wisdom, attentiveness, patience, courage).

15. For further reading see Sarah Coakley, "Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation: The Analytic Theologian Re-Meets Teresa of Avila," in *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, eds., Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 280-312; also see, Sarah Coakley, "Divine hiddenness or dark intimacy? How John of the Cross dissolves a contemporary philosophical dilemma," in *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*, eds., Eleonore Stump and Adam Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 229-46.

William Wood would be worth further investigation as it relates to wholeheartedness and volitional openness.¹⁶

16. William Wood, "Analytic Theology as a Way of Life," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2 (May 2014), 43-60.

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