

【논문】

# Thomas Aquinas' View on the Nature of Sin:

Reconsidered in A Comparison with Augustine's Idea of Sin

Jiwhang Lew \*

【Key words】 Sin and Evil, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine of Hippo

【Abstract】 Aquinas reconstructs Augustine's idea of sin on the basis of Aristotle's philosophical system that highlights actual particular realities rather than Plato's abstract universal reality of form. He accepts Augustine's idea of sin as starting from the human moral evil of Adam's fall, but rejects its biological inheritance to all humans. Augustine argues sin in the universal dimension of faith by which the will returns back to God, while Aquinas addresses it in the actual dimension of reason by which the will rationally realizes natural law proceeded from God the eternal law. Sin for Augustine originates in the human misuse of free will which anxious for the help of grace because of its universal bondage to sin. But sin for Aquinas comes from the disuse of reason which calls for the will's full exercise of it. Sin is neither a wrong product of God's creation, nor a result of the Satan's temptation, but a human-creating reality contingently present in particular living contexts. Hence humans must engage themselves in cultivating the virtuous character of the will, so that they can overcome the power of sin originated in the antagonism of desire over reason in the will.

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\* Kwandong University, Dept. of Christian Studies

## I. Introduction

It is my starting point of this article that Thomas Aquinas (1224/6-1274) reconstructs the idea of sin, held by Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in a way of both affirming Augustine's concept of (original) sin and rejecting it on the basis of Aristotle's philosophical system.<sup>1)</sup> He basically employs the fundamental points of Augustine's view on sin, yet significantly refurbishes it by posing Aristotle's emphasis on particular matters before Plato's idea of incorporeal universal form. What, then, are the contrast and harmony between Augustine and Aquinas in understanding sin? Is there any critical point that provokes us to rethink Aquinas' idea of sin in relation to Augustine's concept of sin? Here we must point to their different ideas about the antagonism of reason and desire in the will. Aquinas regards, like Augustine, sin as arising from human free will. Evil, the cause of sin, exists only where there is human will in rebellion

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1) This work may be seen as being painted with religious colors, for Thomas Aquinas and Augustine with whom I would deal presuppose the Christian faith in discussing all philosophical issues of truth. But the main focus of this project is sin, a universal reality, which is closely bound up with human life both religious and secular. The problem of sin and evil goes beyond the theological realm of faith in God. Its theological character has a commensurability with the wider sphere of the philosophical discussion of sin and evil. Especially this project focuses on the comparative analysis of Aquinas' idea of sin with Augustine's rather than on the explication of Aquinas' idea of sin through Aristotle's work, like *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Physics*, consistently quoted throughout almost all of his work, though it presupposes his reconstruction of Augustine's idea of sin in terms of Aristotle's philosophy.

against God. Both Augustine and Aquinas do not use the Satan to explain the origin of sin or to absolve humans of responsibility for their sins. For them, sin is something committed only when those who did it were already evil.<sup>2)</sup> It is not initiated by the Satan's temptation, but by human will before the temptation. For the Satan's work is embodied by our lack of control, our anger, conceit, and so on. It operates through the corrupted human will or institutions. Sin is absolutely a human work. What then do they see evil? On the one hand, they understand evil as an existing powerful reality. Evil acts originate in humans, yet evil exists outside them. It is not humans, but the Satan or the angelic powers that represent the reality of evil. On the other hand, they regard evil as the lack of being or good.<sup>3)</sup> For them, such a reality of evil as the Satan means the presence of evil powers rather than the existence of evil beings. It means the demonic power hovering over the world rather than an entity objectively existing in the world.<sup>4)</sup> However, Aquinas' idea of sin is not something that just copies Augustine's idea of sin. It has some significantly different points in interpreting sin. In this regard, I would

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2) See St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), XI. 17. and Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo (On Evil)*, trans. J. Osterle (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), q. 3, a. 3 (115).

3) Augustine says that "evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name evil." St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XI. 9, and Aquinas too says that "evil is neither a being nor a good." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 Vols (New York: Benziger, 1947), I. q. 48. art. 1.

4) "[T]he devil can be the cause of human sin in the manner of one disposing or of one persuading." Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 3. a. 3 (114). Augustine presents the similar idea of the devil that became bad by his own choice and poses many temptations to humans. See St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XI. 17.

like to address his view on the nature of sin first by clarifying the contrast between him and Augustine on “original sin,” then by discussing his idea of actual sin, i.e., its origin and specific realities in relation to Augustine’s view on sin.<sup>5)</sup>

## II. Thomas Aquinas’ Conception of Sin

### 1. Original Sin: The Loss of Supernatural Original Justice

Aquinas understands original sin as the privation of original justice bestowed on the first man and the habit of its disordered disposition.<sup>6)</sup> He posits three good aspects of human nature: 1) its constitutive

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5) “Aquinas’ moral theory is to be found mainly in the two divisions of the second part of the *Summa Theologiae* and in the third book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.” Frederick C. Coplestone, *Aquinas: An Introduction to the Life and Work of the Greatest Medieval Thinker* (New York: Penguin Books, 1955), 199. In this project, I would discuss his idea of sin especially by focusing on his *Summa Theologiae* for the discussion of original sin, and on *De Malo* for the articulation of actual sin, because Aquinas addresses clearly the problem of (original) sin and evil mainly in these two works.

6) “[O]riginal sin is the privation of original justice, and besides this, the inordinate disposition of the parts of the soul. Consequently it is not a pure privation, but a corrupt habit.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-IIae. q. 82. art. 1. And Aquinas explicates the relation between original sin and actual sin as follows: “the privation of original justice, whereby the will was made subject to God, is the formal element in original sin; while every other disorder of the soul’s powers is a kind of material element in respect of original sin. Now the inordinateness of the other powers of the soul consists chiefly in their turning inordinately to mutable good; which inordinateness may be called by the general name of concupiscence. Hence original sin is concupiscence, materially, but privation of original justice, formally.” *Ibid.*, q. 82. art. 3.

principles, like the power of the soul, 2) an inclination to virtue, and 3) the divine gift of original justice. And he claims that God's gift of original justice was additionally granted to Adam and Eve's human nature created by God. But Adam and Eve lost the supernatural divine gift of original justice because of their primal sin. They lost the power to know God, to control their desires, and to perform good deeds. They had to live the mortal life of concupiscence and ignorance only with their nature alone. Their first sin did not destroy their human nature itself, but the gift of original justice God had graciously added to their human nature. Original sin is the loss of original justice that does not belong to their original human nature. It means that human nature is left to itself, and that all humans inherit Adam's nature stripped of God's gift of original justice.<sup>7)</sup> Therefore, original sin for Aquinas is not like concupiscence held by Augustine. It is not something positively imposed, but negatively lost. It is the privation of original justice rather than the incoming of concupiscence. Concupiscence is an effect of original sin which means the disordered state of human existence, caused by the loss of original justice. It is preceded by the loss of original justice in the inheritance of original sin. What all humans inherit from the first sin of Adam and Eve is an inability to achieve what he could achieve in the state of original justice before the fall.

Aquinas agrees with Augustine on the principle that Adam imparted original sin to his posterity. We inherit the original sin of Adam and Eve through the natural process of procreation. We are sinners even prior to any conscious free choice of evil. But he does not maintain

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7) "[T]he punishment of original sin is that human nature is left to itself, and deprived of original justice: and consequently, all the penalties which result from this defect in human nature." *Ibid.*, Iallae. q. 87. art. 7.

that the concupiscence of the parents' sexual act causes sin in their offspring. The sexual act of the parents, even if sinful concupiscence, does not generate sin in their children, because it is itself a natural process.<sup>8)</sup> Although it is grafted on sinful concupiscence, concupiscence is itself not sin, but just a manifestation of punishment which humans pay for original sin. He distinguishes original sin from actual sin. Actual sin is the result of an act of willing, like Adam's willful rebellion against God, whereas original sin is a habit of spiritual disorderliness into which Adam was cast as a result of his actual sin. We are given original sin from our birth, yet not given actual sin. We share in "the character of a habit" originated in Adam's nature "stripped of God's gift rather than in "the character of guilty."<sup>9)</sup> Thus, unlike Augustine, Aquinas holds that original sin is not identical to Adam's actual sin, nor to any sinful concupiscence.

Accordingly, Aquinas does not see original sin as the broken state of original human nature created by God. Adam's fall did not bring about the unnatural sinful state of human existence into which he was cast. It did not destroy or corrupt human nature. Such human weakness as mortality, physical ailment, lust and ignorance, do not indicate the broken miserable state of human nature. Human nature remains essentially intact, yet is just deprived of God's gift of supernatural original justice which prevents the disorder of the human soul from taking its toll. Hence the tragic human flaw, i.e., the soul's disorderliness, is natural. It had been curbed by God's supernatural gift of original justice. Yet it was resuscitated after the loss of

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8) "The semen is the principle of generation, which is an act proper to nature, by helping it to propagate itself. Hence the soul is more infected by the semen, than by the flesh which is already perfect, and already affixed to a certain person." *Ibid.*, IaIIae. q. 81. art. 1.

9) *Ibid.*, IaIIae. q. 82. art. 1.

original justice. In this sense, Aquinas thinks of original sin as opening up the natural yet tragic state of human existence, unlike Augustine who views original sin as destroying the natural state.<sup>10)</sup>

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10) This difference between Augustine and Aquinas on original sin is well exemplified by their different views of infant baptism. Augustine asserts that baptism is absolutely indispensable for the remission of sins. "All sins are blotted out in the sacrament of baptism." But he admits that the lust of the flesh remains after baptism. Through baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted. Yet the penalty entailed by original sin remains. In other words, though baptism removes the guilt of original sin, infants of baptized parents inherit original sin from their parents. But their guilt is completely removed through baptism. They have no responsibility for their parents' sin, but only for their own. "The son shall not be charged with the guilt of his father" (Ezekiel 18:4) if (s)he is baptized. Hence infants, too, cannot be saved without baptism. They are saved through baptism as believers, not as non-believers. For they believe in the hearts of others, i.e., parents or other sponsors, and they confess through others' tongues. Just as they are wounded by another's disobedience, so they are healed by another's confession of faith. If infants die unbaptized, they are condemned to the flames of hell, even if their punishment will be milder (*poena mitigata*) than those who sinned on their own account. Aquinas too, like Augustine, holds that baptism remits the guilt of original sin, and that infants of baptized parents still inherit original sin because even after baptism original sin remains as the "tinder of sin" in the lower powers of body and soul. But he saves the unwashed infants from the flames of hell and consigned them to the incomplete happiness of *limbo*. He claims that the infants who died unbaptized lived in *limbo*, i.e., a place between hell and heaven. They live in a state of relative deprivation where they do not feel the pain of loss, because they are ignorant of God's supernatural gift of original justice. This difference comes from the fact that Augustine regards infants as having human nature broken by original sin, while Aquinas considers them as possessing human nature intact by original sin. Aquinas sees less seriously the damaging effect of original sin to human nature than Augustine does. This means that original sin is very decisive in Augustine's doctrines of sin and salvation, while it is not so in Aquinas.' See St. Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. J.B. Shaw (Washington D.C.: Regenery Publishing Inc., 1996), XLIII-LII, and *Letters*,

What, then, is it to hold the natural state of human existence? For Aquinas, it is reason that determines the character of the soul. He sees the soul as “reason-informed will,” and focuses on “the external ordering of the soul by reason.”<sup>11)</sup> He distinguishes the desiring part of the soul from the higher rational part of the soul, and identifies the rational soul with the movement of the will. The soul is controlled by reason. Its movement is directed by reason. Desire is merely “the neutral appetitive part of the soul.” Neither can it characterize the soul, nor can it determine the movement of the will. Rather it is characterized in relation to the movement of the will directed by reason.<sup>12)</sup> Aquinas rejects Augustine’s idea that desire is identical to love which means the movement of the will. But it could sometimes set forth love. For love does not signify the unity of reason and desire, but rather presents two kinds of movements: the “sense-good”

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trans. J.G. Cunningham, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1. ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), XCVIII, and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. q. 68. arts. 2-9, and q. 69. arts. 1-5.

11) See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Co., 1990), 415.

12) “[T]he will moves the intellect as to the exercise of the act, since even the true itself, which is the perfection of the intellect, is included in the universal good, as a particular good. But as to the determination of the act, which the act derives from the object, the intellect moves the will, since the good itself is apprehended under a special notion as contained in the universal notion of the true.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 9. art. 1. This means that reason, i.e., the intellect, informs the will of the will’s object by presenting the object to the will, while the will moves the intellect in the act of specifying the object. In other words, choice for Aquinas is related to reason and will. It “intellective appetite” or “an act of the will as ordered to reason.” Here choice is not “an act of the will taken absolutely, but in its close relation to reason.” Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate (on Truth)*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), XXII. 15.

of reason controlling desire, and the “sense-evil” of desire refusing rational direction.<sup>13)</sup> Hence Aquinas sees love as characterized, before loving a certain object, by the relation between reason and desire in the soul, unlike Augustine who understands love as representing the soul’s unity of reason and desire and as characterized by its loving objects. For Aquinas, “a passionate desire for the things of God” is an example of love generated by reason’s domination of desire. It is love that embodies the soul’s rational reception of “the things of God.” It is a desire or appetite under the control of reason rather than natural desire itself. It is good because “it is subject to rational control.”<sup>14)</sup> For this reason, the basis for morality is not love, but reason. Sin is to do anything that “exceeds reason.” It is “to disorder reason” rather than to disorder love.<sup>15)</sup> The soul is not, as Augustine argues, conditioned by the movement of the will, i.e., love, but by whether or not the movement is directed by reason. Hence it is meaningless for Aquinas to talk about (original) sin in terms of love.<sup>16)</sup>

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13) See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 23. art. 2. Strictly speaking, for Aquinas, reason and desire are not always in antagonism, because desire is itself neutral. This point is similar to Augustine’s view on the relation of reason with desire. But he thinks that if desire defies reason’s direction, their antagonistic conflicts begin. We will discuss this antagonism between reason and desire in the later part of this article’s first section and the second section.

14) *Ibid.*, IaIIae. q. 22. art. 3 and q. 26. art. 1. Aquinas also talks about love out of reason’s control: “the two-fold inordinate acts of the will” which are 1) “self-love” as “the hatred of God,” and 2) “the love of this world” as “the despair of a future world.” See *Ibid.*, IIaIIae. q. 153. art. 5.

15) See *Ibid.*, IIaIIae. q. 153. arts. 1 and 4.

16) For Augustine, love basically means *eros*, the impulse of the soul or the movement of the will, which has the neutral value of good and evil. But if the will moves toward God the ultimate good, it is rightly ordered love, i.e., *caritas* (the love of God), and if it moves toward the changeable corporeal

This idea of original sin mirrors the Manichaean moral principle that checks and controls human action through the rational knowledge of truth, and stresses the external life-style of abstinence and continence. Morals depend on “reasoning divine truth” and on

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things, it is disordered love, i.e., *cupiditas* (the love of the world). According to John Burnaby, since love for Augustine is synonymous with desire, it could be named “loving desire” or “desiring love.” Hannah Arendt too says that “love [for Augustine] understood as craving desire (*appetitus*), and desire.... constitutes the root of both *caritas* and *cupiditas*.... Desire mediates between subject and object, and it annihilates the distance between them by transforming the subject into a lover and the object into the beloved.” Love is a motion assessed with reference to its object. But Aquinas does not follow fully Augustine’s idea of love as the above. He thinks that love is basically the first inclination of the appetitive motion toward the good. He sees love as depending upon knowledge, unlike Augustine who sets up love before knowledge and thinks of knowledge as being helpless to order love, i.e., *eros*, toward the good. Of course, Aquinas too thinks, like Augustine, that love is primarily the motivating principle of one’s action, and that as the result of his or her free choice, it represents the character of his or her will. Yet importantly Aquinas rejects Augustine’s idea of love as basically being neutral of good and evil. He divides love into three forms: natural love (*amor naturalis*) that necessarily inclines toward the good fitting to it, sensitive love (*amor igitur sensitivus*) that arises from necessity, not from free judgment, and rational love (*amor intellectivus*) that is actualized according to both intellect and will. The first two forms of love are different from the third, i.e., rational love, in the sense that only the third arises according to free judgment. At this point, Aquinas claims that all these forms of love presuppose knowledge, unlike Augustine who hesitates to acknowledge the active role of knowledge in the actualization of love. This makes him stress reason in understanding the realization of love. Aquinas accepts the power of reason both in knowledge and morality, unlike Augustine who asserts the limits of reason. See *Ibid.*, IaIIae, q. 26. art. 1, and q. 36. art. 2, and see St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIX. 24, John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Norwich, UK: The Canterbury Press, 1991), 92-3, and Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 18-9.

ordering human action, which suppresses craving desire as the product of the evil bodily appetites.<sup>17)</sup> Aquinas similarly subordinates desire to reason, and posits reason as the God-given source and norm of moral life. Of course, unlike Manichaeans, neither does he see desire itself as evil, nor does he exempt humans from moral agency in sin.<sup>18)</sup> But he places reason on the center of human morals.<sup>19)</sup> If we make good use of reason, we can be in the ultimate state of true happiness.<sup>20)</sup> For reason practically lets us know both what and how we ought to do through “the virtue of prudence.” All qualities of the soul and its will fall under the virtue of prudence that “not merely makes wise

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17) See St. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and of the Manichaeans*, trans. Richard Stothert (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), I. ii. 3-4.

18) Aquinas, like Augustine, sees evil as the privation of being and rejects the Manichaean idea of sin that we unwillingly sin, i.e., we are compelled by the dark power of evil, the independent reality against God. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. q. 5. arts. 1-3.

19) Aquinas's moral principle starts from the universal precept of practical reason: “good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.” All humans have *synderesis*, a habit of moral knowledge which unerringly prompts its realization. This moral principle of practical reason is indebted to Aristotle's distinction between speculative knowledge and practical knowledge and his precept of *phronesis*: right reason about things to be done. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. q. 62. art. 3, and q. 94. arts. 1-2.

20) But this does not mean that Aquinas argues, like Pelagians, the absolute power of free will. Rather he thinks that “rectitude of the will,” i.e., the human work of reason, needs divine grace because reason cannot repress all evils in this world, and thus claims that true happiness is not possible in this world. Grace provides us “the New Law shown forth by faith that works through love.” Here love for Aquinas is not natural human desire characterized by its object, as for Augustine, but the power of grace which forms the virtue of the soul. Thus where there is no grace, there is no love; Love as the power of grace strengthens the work of reason to form virtues. See *Ibid.*, IaIIae. q. 5. art. 3, q. 91. arts. 3-4, and q. 108. art. 1.

decisions about the pursuit of goods but also — by engaging the appetite, especially the will — harness desire and yields action.”<sup>21)</sup> Reason informs the soul of good and orders it to good. Love is subsumed and virtue is characterized.

But this idea contains a characteristic against which Augustine vehemently criticizes Manichaeans in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and of the Manichaeans*. He argues the life of virtue as the life of love rather than of reason. What is central to human life is not reason standing against desire, but love unifying reason and desire; God has revealed Godself through love, not through reason. Virtue does not call for reason, but the love of God revealed through the two commandments of love in Scriptures.<sup>22)</sup> Love is greater than reason in forming the virtue of the soul. The movement of the soul toward happiness is not possible by “reasoning divine truth,” but by loving God.<sup>23)</sup> Augustine holds that our pursuit of true happiness is in fact to seek God whom we cannot see. How, then, can we see God? God could be seen with our minds, not with our eyes. But our minds are insufficient to see God. Thus we must rest upon “the teachings of authority” rather than upon our limited reason for the pursuit of true happiness.<sup>24)</sup> We can get the directions of authority by observing

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21) Cristina L.H. Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 65.

22) As I have already said before, Augustine employs the Neo-platonic idea of love (*eros*), and moralizes it through the two commandments of love. Plotinus sees *eros* in the universal sense that “all that exists aspires toward the Supreme by a compulsion of nature.” Augustine appropriates this idea of *eros* in terms of the biblical authority commanding love. See John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, 89.

23) See St. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and of the Manichaeans*, I. xi. 18-21.

24) See *Ibid.*, I. ii. 3 and vii. 11.

Christ's commandments to love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind," and "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mat. 22: 37, 39). From Jesus Christ's commandments to love, we can see what we ought to love and how we ought to love it. In doing so, we can form the disposition of our love, i.e., our virtues, and attain true happiness.<sup>25)</sup> In other words, our love attending upon Christ's commandments constitutes our virtuous character that enriches and enlightens our pursuit of true happiness in God. Love to see God precedes to see God; loving God is prior to knowing God.

Accordingly, Augustine says to Manichaeans that "we must therefore in your case try not to make you understand divine things, ... but to make you *desire* [italic mine] to understand."<sup>26)</sup> We must first love God before we know God. Our soul is not determined by the ordering of rational knowledge, but by the movement of love that "is itself the soul at work and therefore reason at work."<sup>27)</sup> Love forms the soul's character through four virtues: temperance as "love giving itself entirely to that which is loved," fortitude as "love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object," justice as "love serving only the loved object and thus ruling rightly," and prudence as "love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it."<sup>28)</sup> In this sense, original sin is the problem of love that cannot form by itself such virtues, due to its inherited disorderliness. It is not a matter of reason or knowledge, but that of love.

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25) See *Ibid.*, I. viii. 13.

26) See *Ibid.*, I. xvii. 31.

27) John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 415.

28) St. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and of the Manichaeans*, I. xv. 25.

However, Aquinas understands the formation of virtuous character through reason rather than through love. He sees love as the mere representation of the will that reflects the ontological conflict of reason and desire in the soul. Aquinas thinks that morality depends on the soul's dialectic in which reason embodies "natural law" by ruling desire.<sup>29)</sup> In the dialectic, if reason overrules desire, virtues are formed. If not, sin emerges.

When the lower powers are strongly moved against towards their objects, the result is that the higher powers are hindered and disordered in their acts. Now the effect of the vice of lust is that the lower appetite, namely, the concupiscence, is most vehemently intent on its object, to wit, the object of pleasure, on account of the vehemence of the pleasure. Consequently the higher powers, namely the reason and the will, are most grievously disordered by lust.<sup>30)</sup>

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29) For Aquinas, law is a basic principle of reason by which human actions are directed to the common good. In other words, law is directed, by reason, to the common good. His idea of law is centered on "natural law" that manifests "eternal law," the fundamental source of all laws, by receiving its revelatory supplement and thereby completes the outward conduct of "human law." Importantly, natural law is "the light of natural reason whereby we discern what is good and what is wrong," and "an imprint on us of the Divine light." By this natural law, Aquinas means that divine reason is shared by all of us because it is written in our own reason. Natural law reads divine reason written in our human nature and prescribes our actions of reason corresponding to "natural inclinations." Here comes his first precept of "practical reason" that "good is to be done and evil is to be avoided." But Aquinas does not clarify the relation between natural inclinations and the first precept of practical reason. I think that the relation for him could be seen in terms of the ontological antagonism in the soul. For he expresses the formation of virtue and the emergence of sin through a sort of power conflict between natural inclinations and reason. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. q. 90. arts. 1-2, q. 91. art. 2, q. 94. arts. 1-3, and IIaIIae. q. 153. art. 5, and q. 155. art. 1.

He thinks that sin and virtues arise in relation to the conflict between reason and desire, unlike Augustine who presupposes the original, peaceable unity of reason and desire and sees sin and virtues as the wrong or right movement of the will through love representing the unity. But Aquinas ignores the original peaceableness by assuming the antagonism between reason and desire in the soul, and claims reason's subordination of desire for the fulfillment of natural law. No original peaceableness exists in the soul because reason and desire are in antagonism. The soul, before the fall, enjoys the good of justice and peace. Yet, after the fall, it faces its own antagonistic nature of injustice and conflict, due to the loss of original justice. In this way, Aquinas disregards Augustine's idea that love binds up desire and reason together in the actual movement of the will, and paints human nature with the brush of antagonistic dialectics.

Of course, Aquinas basically acknowledges Augustine's idea of original sin inherited to the whole humanity. All humans have the will that tends toward sin because of Adam's fall. A human being is an individual person, yet also is a part of the whole humanity. Just as a ruler's decision and actions effect all of his people, so the primal sin of Adam effects all humanity. But Aquinas refuses Augustine's argument that original sin destroys the intrinsic goodness by which humans can do good.<sup>31)</sup> It is the tragic loss of original justice God

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30) *Ibid.*, IIaIIae. q. 153. art. 5. This means that there are two drivers, i.e., the lower appetite and the higher reason, in a car, i.e., the soul. They have different destinations and fight against each other to sit on the driver seat. This kind of conflict in the soul, for Augustine, is impossible.

31) Like Pelagians, Aquinas too criticizes Augustine's original sin as traducianism: the soul of children is generated from the soul of their parents. See *Ibid.*, IaIIae, q. 81. art. 1. His idea of sin's transmission is against Manichaeism in that it rejects God's creation of evil. Yet it has a risk of

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advocating the Manichaeian heresy that evil objectively exists, even if it can dismiss the Pelagian idea that the human will is something neutral between good and evil and can do good by itself. Pelagians hold that original sin inherited to us is biological, insofar as it is related with procreation. Its biological transmission does not mean the total corruption of human nature. The first sin of Adam and Eve is not the fault of their human nature given by God, but the fault of their will. The basic goodness of our human nature still remains even after the fall. Also many western thinkers rejected Augustine's idea of original sin. Here it is meaningful to see Immanuel Kant's idea of (original) sin and evil. Kant thinks, like Augustine, that moral evil is imputable to our personal exercise of freedom. But he rejects the inheritance of evil, saying that "[h]owever the origin of moral evil in man is constituted, surely of all the explanations of the spread and propagation of this evil through all members and generations of our race, the most inept is that which describes it as descending to us as an inheritance from our first parents." For the interpretation of evil, he looks to our double nature, i.e., sensuous desire and reason. We are not born in evil, but are born with a predisposition to good. He asserts that the autonomy of our will decides the good or evil of our acts. If we take, as our supreme maxim of conscious willing, the pleasure principle rather than the newly discovered principle of duty, we are morally evil. This moral decision based on the pleasure principle is, for Kant, the propensity to radical evil. It is to choose, as the supreme maxim of decisions, the pleasure principle over the unconditional principle of moral laws. We are evil by nature in the sense that we freely make our choices according to the principle of our sensuous nature, instead of according to the principle of our rational nature. Yet we are not evil by nature, either in our sensory appetite or in our reason, because the propensity to evil is acquired through one's deliberate act of free choice. In this sense, unlike Augustine, Kant argues that the first sin of Adam and Eve is just an example that we place the higher nature of reason for duty under the lower nature of sensuous desire for pleasure. Kant draws upon the Platonic idea of antagonistic dialectic between reason and desire in the soul, and develops into his idea that evil lies not just in the wrong exercise of freedom, but importantly in the wickedness of our intention. Its determination is not based on the result of our actions, but on our intentions prior to them. Even if we choose actions which happen to be dutiful, but do so purely as a means to pleasure, we are radically evil in intention. For we have inverted the true

added to human nature, which is brought about by Adam's loss of the original justice. All humans, as an individual, are not blamed for Adam's first sin. They are responsible just for the result of Adam's sin from which the sinful nature permeates into their heart.<sup>32)</sup> What is transmitted to them is not the actual reality of sin for which they should be punished, but the potential reality of sin. What is actual sin for Aquinas? How is it different from Augustine's idea of actual sin? He takes use of Aristotle's philosophy that places the actual particular reality of matters before Plato's form, namely, the abstract universal

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ordering of the higher and lower parts in our soul. See Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 15-49. Also in this regard, Elaine Pagels argues that Augustine misreads Romans 5:12 due to his poor knowledge of Greek. He reads it that "[t]hrough one man sin entered... death passed to all men, in whom (underlines mine) all sinned." But according to Pagels, the phrase should not be read as "in whom," but as "in that" which correctly spells out what Paul originally means in Romans 5:12. However, by misreading the text of Roman 5:12, Augustine asserts the solidarity of the whole humanity in the first sin of Adam. He "has now restricted the free exercise of the will to the first instance, the first sin of the first human being." Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 109.

- 32) See Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 4. a. 1 (168-169). This seems to influence Schleiermacher who rejects the universality of the human innate sinful disposition by denying its deserving value of punishment. He says that the innate sinfulness "cannot in similar fashion be the guilt of the individual, so far at least as it has been engendered in him." The sinfulness prior to actual sins does not deserve punishment. It is just the origin of sin, not the sin itself. It is the ground of sin, but not the sinful actions to be punished. In this way, like Aquinas, he reinterprets the fall of Adam and Eve whose original sin had been believed to be biologically transmitted. The fall is, he thinks, not grounded just on the misuse of free will. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1948.), § 71. 2.

reality of things, and nevertheless theologially reconstructs Plato's idea of dialectical ontology<sup>33)</sup> that ignores the intrinsic human good peaceableness given by God. We can discuss that the (dis)similarity of Aquinas with Augustine on original sin are reflected in their views on actual sin, and that Aquinas holds Augustine's theological presupposition of God, yet substitutes Aristotle's philosophy for Plato's in formulating the moral theory of sin and evil.

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33) This indicates the antagonism of desire and reason, clearly represented by Plato's illustration of the soul's conflict between its parts or motives: the bodily appetites, reason, and the spirited sense of honor. Our soul is in conflict, because it contains both the bodily appetites urging us to drink and reason holding us back from drink. Here reason overpowers the bodily appetites' pursuit of satisfaction. It gives us "the knowledge enabling [us] to distinguish the good life from the evil and always to choose the best within [our] reach." It guides us to right action by empowering us to know the eternal form of justice. If we do something evil, the evil doing is due to our disuse of reason ingrained in our soul. Our use of reason is the first step of right action. Justice is not an outward matter of action, but an internal matter of the soul whose virtue is formed through the employment of reason. In this traditional understanding of Plato, the human good of justice rests on the dialectic of the soul wherein reason overrules desire. Reason is a stable center of the soul we must hold in order not to fall into the evil mire of the bodily appetite. It is the foundational self-repairing power of the soul, which is "able to mend our ways," even if the ways are evil. In this regard, Catherine Pickstock argues that Plato gives desire a more positive role than reason in *Phaedrus*. She says that "the *Phaedrus* exalts the erotic pull of the soul towards the beautiful as an integral part of the soul's eternal essence: even the divine souls are drawn around the eternal circuit by the horses of passion." See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Francis M. Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), IV. 439, and X. 618. Also see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 14.

## 2. Actual Sin: the Antagonism of Desire over Reason in the Will

Aquinas understands, like Augustine, sin as the rebellion against God. Sin is “a word or deed or desire against the law of God.”<sup>34)</sup> He specifically conceptualizes sin much more than Augustine does. He divides sin into two kinds of reality: one is the sin of commission, and the other is the sin of omission. The sin of commission is the evildoing committed in the positive way. It is the sin that performs affirmatively what God’s law inhibits, i.e., “you shall not kill.” It neglects God’s negative commandments, and acts in opposition to them. Here Aquinas defines sin as “an act deprived of due order,” which means the privation of good action.<sup>35)</sup> For example, adultery could be seen to be a good act in the sense that it is done between human beings created good by God. Yet it is definitely sinful because it is done in the wrong relationship which is outside of marriage. Hence a good act may become sin when it is done out of its right order intended by God and stated by the law of God. But Aquinas does not think that the outward forms of sin fully represent all modes of sin. This is significantly different from Augustine’s idea that the objects of our will determine whether our acts are good or evil. In understanding the nature of acts, Augustine focuses on the object of the will while Aquinas does the other case. In other words, Aquinas highlights the involvement of will with acts and its operation of reason and will. Yet Augustine goes beyond the will’s involvement and maintains the orientation of human will, where reason and desire

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34) Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 2. a. 1 (40). As I said before, I would hereafter take up the reference of Aquinas’ sayings about the specific forms of actual sin chiefly from *De Malo* that is, I think, the best reference for it.

35) See *Ibid.*, q. 2. a. 1 (7, 40, 45).

holistically, not antagonistically, move toward its object.<sup>36)</sup> Aquinas puts emphasis on the inner reality of sin, which means the inner act of will. Whether an act is sinful or not is determined by the inner character of the act, which reflects the relation of reason with will. Although a wrong or disordered act may be seen to be evil in general, it can be defined as sinful only when the will to do something wrong or disordered is involved. When someone fails to attend his class, it could be considered not to be sinful if his or her failure is due to something that is beyond his or her inner act of will. It is not sin because it is not done at one's will guided by reason. For this reason, Aquinas argues that "sin has the nature of fault only from the fact that the act is voluntary."<sup>37)</sup> Sin is, as the form of commission, based upon the will that determines the nature of acts as evil or not in terms of its relation to reason.<sup>38)</sup> Hence Aquinas is

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36) Of course, Augustine too, like Aquinas, thinks that sin has its origin in the will: "The will is the cause of sin." Sin originates in the defective operation of the will, which means the misuse of free will. It is not caused by anything outside the will. But Augustine takes a further step to argue the importance of the will's object for the recognition as to if the will's act is good or evil. What is it to determine the will's object? It is the free choice of the will, which orients the will toward good or evil. Here free choice is conditioned by the will itself or its character that determines its free choice of good or evil. How do we see the will's character? By seeing its object that is good or evil. In this sense, Augustine accents the will less than its objects represented paradigmatically by God the incorporeal or the world corporeal. See St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), III. 17 and III. 1.

37) Aquinas also says that "no disordered act is imputed to anyone as a fault except in relation to the fact that it is within his power..... fault is on account of the will." Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 2. a. 2 (50).

38) "The human person can will and not will, act and not act; again he or she can will this or that, and do this or that. The reason for this is found in the very power of reason. For the will can tend to whatever reason can as good.

contrasted against the later Augustine's idea that the will is too weak to do good because it lost the power of free will and is helpless to do good since Adam's fall. Augustine never abandon his idea that the will is good. He insists that the will was created good by God, yet willing as making use of free choice is now lost. Here it is impossible to see the antagonistic operation of the will, where reason and desire are in conflict. The will is in bondage to sin. The will is too weak to redirect its movement, i.e., love, from its wrong objects, i.e., worldly things back to the right object, i.e., God.<sup>39)</sup>

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Now reason can apprehend as good not only to will or to act, but also not to will and not to act. Again, in all particular goods, reason can consider an aspect of some good and the lack of good, which has the aspect of evil." Aquinas thinks that reason or the intellect moves the will, while the will moves the intellect. The will always, as a rational appetite, follows the intellectual knowledge through the power of reason. It inclines toward what reason reveals as good. But the will moves reason in a way of shaping reason's judgment that considers particular realities in choosing the one object instead of another. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 13. art. 6.

39) "From this moment, the flesh began to lust against the spirit. With this rebellion we are born, just as we are doomed to die and, because of the first sin, to bear, in our members and vitiated nature, either the battle with or defeat by the flesh." St. Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius B. Zema, Grace Monahan, and Daniel J. Honan. (New York: Image Books, 1958), XIII. 13. Here the above quotation does not mean that disordered love (*cupiditas*) stands against rightly ordered love (*caritas*). The rebellion of the flesh against the spirit does not mean the antagonism between the love of the flesh and the love of the spirit in the soul. Sin does not manifest the flesh's triumph over the spirit in the soul, but the soul's love of the flesh, i.e., the changeable worldly things, in acts. For Augustine, the flesh and the spirit do not signify two divided spheres of the soul, but the different objects of its love. They are not at odds with each other within the soul, but represent the right or wrong movement of the will or its habit of love. The good for him is not the result of the spirit's win over the flesh, but of the harmony of the will, in which they are in good order. The measure of

The other form of sin, for Aquinas, is the sin of omission, which does not perform what the law of God commands, that is, “you shall do.” The sin of omission is not the sin of doing, but the sin of non-doing. It is a sin of “one who knows the right thing to do yet does not do it.”<sup>40)</sup> We may sin if we do not take care of what should be done according to the law of God. Even though one of us attempts to do nothing in order to avoid doing something evil, (s)he cannot be nevertheless free from sin. For God wants us to do something good. If (s)he neglects the actions which God commands him or her to do, (s)he would be a sinner. In this case, how do we understand the conflict of honoring our parents with glorifying God? If we choose one over the other at a time, do we not fall in the sin of omission? If we glorify God instead of honoring parents, are we free from the sin of omission? Aquinas’ answer is that we sin by omission not to honor parents. But in this case, our glorifying God cannot be a sin. Our doing best is not enough, because God’s best is the real best. Any action or non-action may be sinful if it is not compatible with God’s will or best, the ultimate good. Aquinas says that the sin of omission can be caused by other actions, whether they are good or bad. For instance, if someone helps the other all night without sleep, but his or her lack of sleep causes him or her to miss the next day

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the good is not, as Aquinas and Kant argue, the rule of reason over desire, but the actual relationships of “the whole desiring person” with others in the social context.

40) Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 2. a. 1 (41). At this point, Aquinas makes an exception that “it is not imputed as a fault to anyone if he fails in effecting that for which his work is intended.” In other words, when someone tries to do good yet fails to do good through no fault of his or her own, it is not sinful. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon Burke (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), III. a. 4.

class, (s)he has done the sin of omission.<sup>41)</sup> Even the sin of omission is brought about by the will that decides doing or non-doing. Thus both the sin of commission and the sin of omission are determined by whether or not an act is against the law of God. If it willfully negates God's law of not doing evil or doing good, it is sin. Sin is doing something contrary to the law of God.<sup>42)</sup>

Aquinas holds, like Augustine, that God cannot be the cause of sin. God wills always something good, and God cannot fail to do what God wills. Thus sin is caused when God's will is not done. It is something real rather than a mere privation as in the case of evil.<sup>43)</sup>

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41) See Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 2. a. 1. Response (45).

42) Aquinas' idea of law constitutes a fabric of Christian morals into which the Aristotelian philosophy, Neo-Platonism, and Augustine's Christian doctrines are interwoven. Its most important point is to give us an answer to the question of how we harmonize divine law with human law without reducing one to the other. How do we take into account reason and faith at the same time for constructing a system of law which maintains its revelatory character yet is common to all people? Aquinas tries to solve this problem by proposing a coherent system of law by constructing four rubrics of law: eternal, natural, human, and divine. He thinks that natural law is derived from eternal law in which it participates (q. 91. a. 2), human law is based on natural law from which it draws its legitimacy (q. 95. a. 2), and that natural law and human law should be supplemented by divine law (q. 91. a. 4). For the system of law, he takes up the neo-Platonic view of being's hierarchy, the Aristotelian notion of nature as the source of movement, and the Augustinian doctrine of the divine order manifested in the world. More importantly, he acknowledges both the free choice of human will and the control of law over the will. He reconciles the rational dimension of law with the revelatory dimension of law, and avoids the risk of reducing the universal divine law to concrete human laws, or that of *vice versa*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, qs. 90-108 and Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L.K. Shook (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), 264.

43) We can understand Thomas Aquinas' idea of evil in two ways: one is the

If so, can we not think that God may be considered to be at least the indirect cause of sin? Does God have nothing to do with sin in reality? Aquinas' answer to these questions is 'no'. He argues,

[T]he effect of an effect, inasmuch as it is such, is reduced to the cause. But if something proceeds from an effect, not inasmuch as it is such, this should not be referred to the cause.<sup>44)</sup>

For instance, our hands are caused to move by the power of our mind. But a paralyzed hand is not caused to tremble while moving not by the mind, but by a defect of the hand, caused by something not attributable to the causer. In this way, the defects of the sinner's will cannot be attributed to God who caused the sinner's ability to will something. Another argument to attribute the cause of sin to God is as the following: since God inclines human will, it is God not the human who should be blamed for his or her sin. To this argument, Aquinas responds that God does not actively incline human will to sin, but rather concedes to that inclination of the sinful will "by withdrawing God's support or not deterring [it]."<sup>45)</sup> Here God's allowance of a sinner to follow his or her sinful desire is one thing, God's causing of such sinful desires or actions that stem from the sinner is another. Allowance to do something is not the same thing as the commandment to do it. The cause of power to do something is

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metaphysical form of evil, and the other is the moral form of evil. The former indicates evil as the lack of being or good, by which any form of human agency's will and act is not involved, the latter means evil as the actual product of human agency's will, which is occurred in concrete living contexts. The latter form of evil is actualized by ignorance, malice, and the weakness of will, with which I would deal in the later part of this section.

44) Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 3. a. 1. Response (106).

45) *Ibid.*, q. 3. a. 1 (105).

not the same thing as the use of the power to do it.<sup>46)</sup> This means that although God withholds grace from a sinner, God is not the cause of sin. God offers grace to all humanity. But not everyone accept God's offer of grace, and sin occurs due to one's refusal of offered grace. The sinner's refusal of God's grace itself is the beginning of sin's manifestation.<sup>47)</sup> Thus God is not responsible for any sinful human action at all.<sup>48)</sup>

This is not unlike Augustine's idea as to who is the subject of sin. The earlier Augustine thinks that sin has its origin in free will. "The will is the [radical] cause of sin."<sup>49)</sup> Sin originates in the defective operation of free will. It is a self-originating act of free will, which deprives the will of its ontological goodness given by God. It is not

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46) See *Ibid.*, q. 3. a. 1. Response (108).

47) At this point, Aquinas is a little bit different from Augustine who thinks of grace as being irresistible to humans. For Augustine, whoever offered grace by God cannot reject it, because the offer of grace is itself grace and the acceptance of grace is the result of the help of grace for him or her. The acceptance of grace is identical with the cooperation of God's grace with his or her will in effectively willing the good. See St. Augustine, *On Admonition and Grace*, trans. John Courtney Murray, in *Writings of St. Augustine*, Vol. 4 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1947), II.

48) Aquinas' denial of God as the cause of sin leads to the question that the Satan may be the cause of sin. Aquinas says that "the devil cannot be the cause of sin in the manner of an effective cause." He basically accepts the Satan's power over human will. But the Satan's power he accepts is persuasive rather than actual. "[T]he Satan can be the cause of human sin in the sense of persuading or disposing." The Satan appears, he thinks, actually to the sense like in the garden of Eden, and appears through such impressions imputed on the human as bodily sensations or emotional provocation. The Satan causes our sin yet in the indirect way of persuading us. Although our sin may be seen to have originated in the persuasion of the Satan, we are still responsible for the action of sin, since we are the subject of the sinful action. Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 3. a. 3 (114).

49) St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, III. 17.

forced by anything outside the will, but originates in the misuse of free will or in the wrong willing of love turning away from God. He explains the origin of sin by comparing the movement of a stone to the movement of the will. Just as the movement of a stone “occurs when it falls to the earth by its own weight,” so the movement of the will occurs when it turns to God or worldly things by its own weight. The former is without free choice, while the latter involves free choice. Both the stone and the will do not move without power. The stone’s weight corresponds to the will. But the stone falls without a motive or free choice, while the will needs free choice to turn away from or back to God. The cause of sin is the will’s free choice of turning away from God. Here free choice is the will’s motive determined by the will’s weight. What is the will’s weight? It is the will’s loving character. If the will has the character of loving good, it makes good choices freely. Yet if not, it makes evil choices freely.<sup>50)</sup> Free choices reflect and embody the will’s weight, i.e., its character of love. Thus sin is the incarnation of the will’s evil character or habit. What, then, is the cause of the will’s evil character of love? He says that “I do not know” because the evil cause is “that which is nothing.”<sup>51)</sup> Since the evil cause of free will “belongs to the will

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50) See John M. Rist, “Augustine on Free Will and Predestination,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (October 1969): 422-3. It is critical to note here that Augustine understands the will’s weight or character of love without looking to an antagonistic dialectic between the will’s lower and higher parts. For him, love is the inner impetus that motivates the will, not the result of the will’s dialectic. Hence, as Etienne Gilson says, the quality of love is the quality of the will and the quality of the resulting act. See Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, 135.

51) See St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, II. 20. Augustine also argues, in *The City of God*, that “we must not look for any efficient cause of the evil act of will.” He says that “[n]o one therefore must try to get to know from

itself,” we are responsible for sin. Sin is not given to us, but created by us. It does not belong to God’s creation.

Accordingly, for Augustine, evil is “nothing else than privation of good.” It is a privation of being in the sense that “wound or disease is not a substance in itself, but a defect of fleshly substance.”<sup>52)</sup> All natural beings were created good by God. Since whatever exists is good, evil does not exist. It is not a being existing within the order of God’s creation, but the corruption of a natural existence that deprives itself of goodness.<sup>53)</sup> In this way, Augustine rejects the Manichean dualism of evil and good in God’s created world. Evil and good do not dualistically exist in humans. Evil arises within the existence of being. It does not come from its own compelling power, but from the

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me what I know that I do not know, unless it may be, in order to learn not to know what must be known to be incapable of being known! For of course when we know things not by perception but by its absence, we know them, in a sense, but not-knowing, so that they are not-known by being known — if that is a possible or intelligible statement!” St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XII. 7. This means that the evil cause of the will is a privation; To try to know its cause is like to see darkness or to hear silence. Just as we can see darkness by not seeing and we can hear silence by not hearing, so we can know the evil cause of the will by not knowing.

52) St. Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, and see St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), III. 7, and *The City of God*, XI. 9.

53) This results in an idea that where there is a being, there may be evil, the corruption causing the privation of being. Evil, the privation of being, is impossible without a being. “Not only can [good and evil] exist at the same time, but evil cannot exist without good.” For this relation of evil to being, Augustine took an example: “an evil man.” Man is good because he is a being. But he is evil because of “his falling away from the unchangeable good.” In him, good and evil exist at the same time. He is “an evil good,” because he embodies both being and non-being by his willing and acting. “He is good because he is a man, and he is evil because he is wicked.” See St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, XIII-XIV.

will of human beings created by God. Its existence is impossible. Yet the presence of its virulent power is possible through human free will.<sup>54)</sup> Evil has nothing to do with God's will. Rather it is against God's will for the good measure, form, and order of all beings. Evil is caused and carried out by free will that is itself good, yet misused to turn away from God.

Back to Aquinas on the subject of sin, it is neither God nor the Satan, but the human that is responsible for the sin of moral evil. He does not accept both God and the Satan as the excuses for the sinful human actions. He says that "the effective and proper cause of voluntary acts is just what operates internally.... but this can be nothing other than the will itself as the secondary cause and God as the first cause."<sup>55)</sup> This means that God primarily causes the power of human will, whether the will chooses good or not, but that humans cause their own sin by exercising their own free will. Human will is good in itself. Yet it is "neither good nor evil but potentially good or evil" in the matter of morality. Thus the moral problem of human will is not in its essential nature but in its propensity to sin. The will brings about evil actions due to its own disposition toward evil, which indicates the weakness of the heart. The disposition toward evil makes Aquinas acknowledge Augustine's idea of original sin: human will is stricken with sinfulness and the sinful will is, as both the seed and the fruit of sin, inherited into all humanity. Aquinas, like Augustine,

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54) Strictly speaking, evil for Augustine is also caused by God's will as well as human free will. God's will produces natural evils that are inflicted first by natural causes, like earthquake and floods, and secondly by human causes, like "a bad son's wish of his father's death." Here both natural causes and human causes are natural evils that fit the overall plan of God. See *Ibid.*, CI and CV.

55) Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 3. a. 3 (115).

thinks that sin is caused by the defect of the will, and that the defect is transferred down through the ages from Adam. Although God gave humans free will, that is, the power to sin, it is not God but humans who use free will to sin. The actual capacity of sin is given by God, the actualization of sin is done by humans. Also though persuasion to sin may be caused by the Satan, the primary movement of sin depend on human free will. Thus it is only the defect of free will, which causes sinful actions in three ways. The defect of human will is the encountering point of Aquinas' idea of metaphysical evil and that of moral evil, which is clarified by three specific causes of sin.

In the first place, the cause of human sin is related to ignorance.<sup>56)</sup> Aquinas thinks that a law may not be used, if not promulgated, to assign guilt to the ignorant. But this does not mean that he refuses to consider ignorance as a cause of sin. Of course, the ignorance of law may excuse one's guilt. Yet it could be an indirect cause of sin. For instance, just as the knowledge of a certain area's map keeps us from losing ways, so its ignorance causes us to be astray. Ignorance breaks a wall to sin in those who wants not to sin, yet is unaware that their particular actions are against the law of God.<sup>57)</sup> For Aquinas, ignorance is a lack of knowledge or the willful opposition to knowledge. It is different from error. Ignorance does not allow any

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56) For the sin for ignorance, Aquinas says that "a moving cause is twofold, direct and indirect. A direct cause is one that moves by its own power, as the generator is the moving cause of heavy and light things. An indirect cause, is either one that removes an impediment, or the removal itself of an impediment: and it is in this way that ignorance can be the cause of a sinful act; because it is a privation of knowledge perfecting the reason that forbids the act of sin, in so far as it directs human acts." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. q. 76. art. 1.

57) See Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 3. a. 6 (125).

judgment to be made, while error judges on the basis of falsehood, that is, affirming what is untrue. Ignorance may be seen to be not sinful in itself in the sense that it is a lack of knowledge not available to all. But it leads to sin because there are some things that all should know. Ignorance cannot be the excuse of sin, for there are some cases in which we accept the obligatory priority of knowledge over ignorance. And Aquinas points out the problem of voluntary ignorance, which links the involuntary aspect of actions to the awareness of the possibility of sin. For instance, we are not sure that something on the road is a lump of sand or a person and run over it. But later we know that it is a person. Once we see our ignorance about it, we consciously take up a voluntary act to hold our ignorance. This is the sin of voluntary ignorance which does not make us free from sin, even if involuntary ignorance basically gives us the excuses of sin.

Another major cause of moral evil is, for Aquinas, malice that could be actually willed along with good acts. By the sin of malice, evil is intentionally willed when it is joined to desired good. In other words, the will has habitually submitted to evil in order to enjoy the good. It voluntarily incurs the deformity of sin for the sake of pleasure.<sup>58)</sup> This sin of malice is worse than the sin of ignorance and weakness in the sense that it is more voluntary than the other two. It

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58) “[W]hen an inordinate will loves some temporal good... more than the order of reason or Divine law... it follows that it is willing to suffer the loss of some spiritual good, so that it may obtain possession of some temporal good. Now evil is merely the privation of some good; and so a man wishes knowingly a spiritual evil, which is evil simply, whereby he is deprived of a spiritual good, in order to possess a temporal good: wherefore he is said to sin through certain malice or on purpose, because he chooses evil knowingly.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 78. art. 1.

signifies a constant force that directs the will in terms of habits, and not only makes for a continual willing to sin, but also makes repentance uncertain. Comparatively saying, the sin of ignorance wills the good yet makes a mistake in acting toward good, while the sin of weakness seeks the good, yet deviates from the good for a time. But the sin of malice seeks, unlike the former two, evil rather than good. Moreover, the sin of weakness is caused by desire and comes from without the will, whereas the sin of malice is rooted within the will. Hence the sin of malice is much greater than the sin of ignorance and weakness.

What, then, is the weakness of human free will? Although we know what is good or evil, we usually do something evil due to the weakness of the will. In other words, we can know that something is sinful, yet we nevertheless carry it out. This is exactly what the later Augustine vehemently argues against the Pelagians who advocate the power of human will. Here Augustine and Aquinas are different in decoding the meaning of 'the weakness of human will.' Augustine means, by the word 'weakness,' the helplessness of the will to do good. But Aquinas means the emotional expression of "some passions" like anger and fear, which dominate reason in one's will.<sup>59)</sup>

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59) For the weakness of human will, Aquinas points out the antagonistic power of passion or desire over reason as follows: "a passion of the sensitive appetite cannot draw or move the will directly; but it can do so indirectly, and this in two ways. First, by a kind of distraction: because, since all the soul's powers are rooted in the one essence of the soul, it follows of necessity that, when one power is intent in its act, another power becomes remiss, or is even altogether impeded, in its act, both because all energy is weakened through being divided, so that, on the contrary, through being centered on one thing, it is less able to be directed to several; and because, in the operations of the soul, a certain attention is requisite, and if this be closely fixed on one thing, less attention is given to another. In this way, by a kind of distraction, when

Humans are always in the antagonism wherein passion or desire is over reason or intellect. But he does not argue basically the conflict of reason with desire, but rather the insufficiency of reason which can control the power of desire and its manifestation. Reason is too weak to hold the power of desire, and thereby allows the specific engagement of desire with the particular realities, which disregards the knowledge of the universal principle.<sup>60)</sup> In this case, the intellectual knowledge cannot play any role in the actualization of the will, for desire to follow what is felt goes beyond reason to realize what is good. Even if the soul intends what is known to be good through reason, sensual desire may make the soul regard it as bad or the other case. Rational knowledge is frozen, yet bodily impulse galvanizes the movement of the will. For this reason, the weakness of the will means, for Aquinas, the antagonism of desire over reason, which

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the movement of the sensitive appetite is enforced in respect of any passion whatever, the proper movement of the rational appetite or will must, of necessity, become remiss or altogether impeded. Secondly, this may happen on the part of the will's object, which is good apprehended by reason. Because the judgment and apprehension of reason is impeded on account of a vehement and inordinate apprehension of the imagination and judgment of the estimative power, as appears in those who are out of their mind. Now it is evident that the apprehension of the imagination and the judgment of the estimative power follow the passion of the sensitive appetite, even as the verdict of the taste follows the disposition of the tongue: for which reason we observe that those who are in some kind of passion, do not easily turn their imagination away from the object of their emotion, the result being that the judgment of the reason often follows the passion of the sensitive appetite, and consequently the will's movement follows it also, since it has a natural inclination always to follow the judgment of the reason." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, q. 77. art. 1. This is one of crucial evidences that show Aquinas' idea of actual sin as the result of the antagonism of desire over reason.

60) See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. qs. 18-21.

results in sin.

Why, then, can desire defeat reason in the realm of human will? Aquinas says that “reason is nearer to the will than desire, but desire is nearer to the particular sensual objects than reason which pertains to the universal.”<sup>61)</sup> We can sin in a given specific context where we directly confront particular living realities instead of abstract universal principles. Here desire or passion weakens our will to the extent that it wills evildoing, even though we already know what is good or evil at that moment. If this is the case, one might ask whether or not our sin could be excused because of the rational weakness defeated by bodily desire. Once we are entrapped by desire, we will and act what is evil. We are too weak to defeat the evil invasion of desire. Does this mean that we are not responsible for our acts of sin? Aquinas rejects this questionable argument in such a way that he posits reason as having the power to conquer desire or passion. The weakness of the will is not due to the natural weakness of reason, but to the disuse of reason’s power to overcome bodily desire. It means the weakness of the will, resulted from the disuse of rational power. If we do not fully use the power of reason, we are subject to the power of desire and do something sinful.<sup>62)</sup> The crucial issue here is that we usually do not actualize the power of reason in full when we are confronted with particular realities. Faced with something particular, we fall into the evil mire of sensual pleasure because we forget the universal principle of practical moral reason: “good is to be done and pursued, yet evil is to be avoided.”

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61) Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 3. a. 10 (141).

62) See *Ibid.*, q. 3. a. 10 (141-143).

### III. Conclusion

Aquinas posits the origin of sin, like Augustine, on the free choice of human will. It is neither God nor Satan but humans that open up the sinful manifestation of evil into the world. Neither coercion nor persuasion is relevant to understanding moral evils committed by humans. Although God is the primary cause of sin in the sense that God gave us the power of free will to do evil, we are accountable for sin originated in our will. God added the grace of original justice to the natural state of human will. But we lost the divine gift of supernatural original justice due to Adam's fall, so that we cannot avoid the sin of ignorance, weakness, and malice, which discloses its evil realities both as the actual form and as the non-actual form. For Aquinas, morality is based on the antagonism of reason and desire in the will. When our will follows the direction of reason that lets us know what is good, or when we use reason so fully that we can get over the impulsive power of desire, we are free from sin. Here comes the practical moral reason that dialogically works with the will and engages us in realizing natural law in a way of forming virtuous character by which reason controls desire.<sup>63)</sup>

In conclusion, Aquinas reconstructs Augustine's idea of (original) sin, which disregards the antagonism of reason and desire and interprets the work of human will as the whole human subjectivity where reason and desire are interwoven. Aquinas denies Augustine's emphasis on the limits of reason and asserts the power of reason,

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63) See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae. q. 91. arts. 3-4 and q. 108. art. 1.

arguing that reason is intrinsically infused with divine grace. His focus on reason makes him reject Augustine's original sin to be biologically inherited to all humans. We are, he thinks, all sinful in the sense that we lack the perfection of God-created being before the time of Adam's fall. We are not free from such evil as ignorance, malice and the weakness of will. Yet we are not sinners unless we do actually something evil. Original sin means the human loss of God-added supernatural original justice and the human potentiality of sin. Actual sin has something to do with original sin in the sense that it is a specific manifestation of the will fallen into the lack of supernatural original justice due to original sin. This leads to the difference that Aquinas asserts reason intrinsically infused with grace, while Augustine argues the Christian faith strengthened by grace,<sup>64</sup> for "the walk in the shadow valley of death (psalm 23:4)."

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64) In this regard, I do not mean that Aquinas disregards faith. For him, "faith is a realization of grace assisting us to accept and express God's invisible presence." Reason conceptually constructs faith and expresses it. Thomas F. O. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 122.

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【요 약 문】

## 토마스 아퀴나스의 죄 이해:

어거스틴 죄 이해의 비교를 통한 재고

유 지 황

토마스 아퀴나스는 추상적이고 보편적인 형상에 기초한 플라톤 철학보다는 실제적이지가 개별적인 실상들을 강조한 아리스토텔레스 철학의 근거위에서 어거스틴의 죄 개념을 재구성했다. 그는 죄가 아담의 타락에서 비롯된 인간의 도덕적 악에서 출발한다는 어거스틴의 견해를 인정했으나 아담의 최초 범죄가 실제적 죄의 형태로 모든 인류에게 전수된다는 점은 부정했다. 어거스틴은 인간의 자유 의지가 다시금 신을 지향하도록 하는 신앙의 보편적 차원에서 죄를 논한 반면, 아퀴나스는 인간의 의지가 신의 영원한 법에서 비롯되는 도덕 자연법을 실현하는 실제적 이성의 차원에서 죄를 논했다. 어거스틴에게 죄란 자유 의지의 오용에서 시작된 것으로 보편적 죄의 멍에를 벗어나기 위해 자유 의지는 은총의 도움을 갈망한다. 그러나 아퀴나스에게 죄는 자유 의지의 불완전한 이성 활용에 기인한 것으로 죄의 극복을 위해 의지의 완전한 이성 활용을 요청한다. 죄는 신의 세계 창조의 잘못된 부산물도 아니고 악마 유혹의 결과물도 아니며 인간 삶의 구체적인 정황에 따라 등장하는 인간의 창조물이다. 그러므로 인간은 의지의 미덕적 인격을 함양함으로써 의지 안에서 일어나는 감정과 이성의 대립에서 비롯되는 죄의 힘을 이겨낼 수 있다.

주제분류: Ethics, Medieval Philosophy

주요어: Sin and Evil, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine of Hippo

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