

UNDERSTANDING RELIGION
AND SPIRITUALITY

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Abstract: The past several decades have witnessed a trend of esteeming empiricism to the point of vilifying philosophical knowledge, which has resulted in conceptualizations of religion and spirituality that are increasingly polarized, incomplete, and theologically and philosophically bankrupt (Adler, 1941; Pesut, Fowler, Taylor, Reimer-Kirkham, & Sawatzky, 2008; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). A related effect of discrediting and discarding philosophical knowledge has been the recent emergence of the claim of being spiritual but not religious (Hill, et al., 2000). The overarching aim of the current study was to evaluate the validity of this claim within the context of the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, endeavoring to understand religion and spirituality as they operate within the context of the whole person. Using a structured interview with individuals who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious, the primary goal was to demonstrate that this claim does not make existential sense. The secondary goal was to compare those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious to those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious in terms of the quantity and type of actions they listed to characterize their spirituality. Data were analyzed using Observation Oriented Modeling (Grice, 2011). Results provided unequivocal support for viewing religion and spirituality within the context of the teachings of Aquinas. At the end of the interview, 88% of those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious modified their claim in such a way as to bring it in line with Aquinas' assertion that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually. Those who were both spiritual and religious tended to list more actions that they perform as a result of their spirituality. Moreover, their actions were more likely to fit the criterion for truly being considered a spiritual action. The implications of these results are that the claim of being spiritual but not religious is not consistent with the existential reality of the person in that it disintegrates the individual by asserting that the will operates entirely independent of the intellect.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have witnessed an increase in confusion over how the terms religion and spirituality are defined (Pargament, Sullivan, Balzer, Van Haitsma, & Raymark, 1995; Rose, 2001; Schneiders, 2003; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Individuals generally have an understanding of their own perceptions of the terms, but their personal constructs do not align very well with those of other individuals (Pargament, et al., 1995; Zinnbauer, 1997). The use of the terms is no clearer within empirical research, where the terms are often used interchangeably (Pargament, et al., 1995; Turner, Lukoff, Barnhouse, & Lu, 1995). As a result, individuals have parted from the traditional perspective of how the two terms relate to one another based on a philosophically rich past in favor of a less time-honored understanding (Pargament, et al., 1995; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999).

Three overarching approaches to understanding how the terms coincide with one another have emerged – viewing them as strangers, as rivals, or as partners (Schneiders, 2003). Within these differing perspectives, researchers have made many attempts to explain the terms and develop a clearer understanding of how they should be understood in reference to one another (e.g., Pargament, et al., 1995; Rose, 2001; Schneiders, 2003; Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). Customarily lacking within these endeavors has been any reference to the “rich history of theological and philosophical thought” (Pesut, Fowler, Taylor, Reimer-Kirkham, & Sawatzky,

2008, p. 2806), which offers a more complete understanding of religion and spirituality within the context of the human being as a whole.

One consequence of the abandonment of philosophy in understanding religion and spirituality has been a surge in the number of people claiming to be spiritual but not religious. Understood from a Thomistic perspective, religion is an act of the intellect, providing the beliefs about what is true of the immaterial and supernatural – the context within which the individual develops spiritually. Spirituality is understood as an act of the will and operates in consultation with the intellect (i.e., religion) in order to connect the individual with the supernatural in a practical and concrete sense (spiritual growth). Accordingly, the claim of being spiritual but not religious would not make existential sense within the individual, as it would require that his or her will is functioning in isolation of the intellect (that he or she is performing actions with no intellectual basis for them).

This study endeavored to return to a philosophically rich past and examine the claim of being spiritual but not religious within the context of the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. The primary aim of the study was to demonstrate, using a structured interview, that the claim does not make existential sense from a Thomistic perspective. The secondary aim of the study was to explore notable differences between those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious and those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Faith has increasingly been the topic of research over the past several decades (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003), with researchers citing implications for a variety of aspects of one's life, including but not limited to one's psychological well-being (Laurencelle, Abell, & Schwartz, 2002), sense of happiness (Hill & Pargament, 2003), interpersonal functioning (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2008), and physical and mental health (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Despite the influx in the academic literature devoted to the topic and the overall consensus therein that faith does impact one's life, there remains a great deal of confusion about what exactly is meant when characterizing someone as either a religious or a spiritual person (Pargament, et al., 1995; Rose, 2001; Schneiders, 2003; Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). These terms – *religious* and *spiritual* – seem to connote different aspects of one's faith, but any unequivocal decisiveness about the definitions of the terms ends there. Although they are commonly used descriptions, a precise understanding of what is meant by them requires further explanation. There have been “many attempts to clarify” what exactly is meant by these terms, yet the result has been a “proliferation of the vague ideas which currently abound” (Rose, 2001, p. 195).

Defining Religion and Spirituality

The 1828 edition of Noah Webster's Dictionary of the English Language defined religion as “a belief in the being and perfections of God, in the revelation of his will to man, in man's obligation to obey his commands, in a state of reward and punishment, and in man's

accountableness to God.” Spirituality was defined as “essence distinct from matter; immateriality; intellectual nature” and “spiritual exercises and holy affections.”

In a 1913 edition of Webster’s dictionary, religion was defined as “the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or gods having power over their destiny, to whom obedience, service, and honor are due.” Spirituality was defined as “the quality or state of being spiritual; incorporeality; heavenly-mindedness.”

A modern edition of Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines religion as “the service and worship of God or the supernatural; commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance” and “a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.” Spirituality is defined as “something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such” as well as “sensitivity or attachment to religious values.”

As can be seen, the definitions have become more general and a bit indiscernible from one another. This issue is further compounded in that the terms are not clearly distinguished from one another and are used interchangeably among empirical research (e.g., Pargament, et al., 1995; Turner, Lukoff, Barnhouse, & Lu, 1995). Lacking a clear distinction between the two concepts breeds confusion about what exactly is meant when either term is used. The same is often true when speaking informally.

Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott (1999) cite three potential explanations for why so much disagreement exists among both social scientists and laity about the meaning of religion and spirituality. First, they point to an emerging trend in the United States for religious individuality; individuals are increasingly breaking from traditional religious institutions and are “picking and choosing” (p. 892) from various religions to develop a personalized religion under the heading of spirituality. Second, contemporary conceptualizations of religion and spirituality are inconsistent in that they lack important aspects of how they have traditionally been

understood. The lack of consistency that now exists in how the terms are understood is demonstrated in their sampling of definitions used in recent times. Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott cite the rise of religious pluralism as a contributing factor to the decline in consistency. Third, recent definitions of religion and spirituality have relied on “narrower and more biased perspectives” (p. 890) as opposed to more “broad and balanced conceptualizations” (p. 890). Given the inadequate understanding that exists both in the scientific literature and among the general population, there have been efforts to gain a clearer, more concise understanding of how religion and spirituality should be conceptualized.

Religion

Defining religion is rather difficult, as “religion appears to mean different things to different people” (Pargament et al., 1995, p. 979). In an attempt to better understand what information influences whether an individual is considered religious or not, Pargament et al. (1995) utilized a policy capturing approach. This technique, an application of Brunswik’s (1955) study of human judgment, indicates what information individuals use most when making decisions (Stewart, 1988). Their first sample consisted of Roman Catholic and Protestant college students; the second comprised Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy. Participants were shown 100 profiles that varied on 10 cues believed to influence how religious an individual is thought to be (e.g., doctrinal orthodoxy, church attendance, personal religious practices) and were asked to rate how religious they thought each of the 100 hypothetical individuals to be. Pargament et al.’s results highlight the confusion that exists when trying to unequivocally define religion. Individuals tended to be fairly consistent in the cues they relied upon in making their judgments. There was, however, little consistency across individuals. In other words, while one individual may have considered doctrinal orthodoxy an important indicant of being religious, another individual may have considered church attendance to be the deciding factor. Although Pargament

et al. made an attempt to determine how individuals define religion, no distinction was made between religion and spirituality.

Zinnbauer (1997, as cited in Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999) extended the policy capturing study of Pargament, et al. (1995) to include judgments of both religiousness and spirituality. Similar procedures were used, but the participants (Christian clergy and registered nurses) were asked to rate the hypothetical individuals' religiousness as well as their spirituality. Results again indicated that individuals used consistent judgment policies in making their decisions about one's religiousness and their spirituality. However, little consensus existed across individuals about what cues were essential in making these judgments.

Amidst all of the apparent confusion that exists between individuals, one way religion has been defined independent of spirituality involves identifying a particular tradition that affects the way the individuals of a given region or culture understand their surroundings (Schneiders, 2003). It follows that this is most commonly embodied by a specific religious tradition (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism). The prevalent religious tradition of a particular region often permeates the culture, guiding how events are generally interpreted and should be responded to, such that "even people who claim to have rejected religion in favor of spirituality probably continue to operate to some degree in relation to a religious tradition" (Schneiders, 2003, p. 169). The guiding principle that all men are created equally influences the interactions individuals have with one another in predominately Judeo-Christian cultures (e.g., the United States), whereas a traditional belief in a caste system exists in principally Hindu regions (e.g., India). All members of society are believed to possess innate value regardless of their family of origin in the former; Dalits (Untouchables; those in the lowest caste in South Asia) are required to make noise warning others they are approaching so that those in higher castes can avoid an unexpected and unwanted interaction in the latter. These beliefs and traditions are pervasive in

the respective cultures such that they often shape the behaviors even of individuals who may not themselves adhere to the dominant religious tradition.

Religion can further be described as that which “establishes the orientation and outlines the procedures the seekers [individuals] should follow in order to make real the transformation for which they hope” (Mahony, 1987, p. 19). In this capacity, religion is encompassed by a specific, established institution (e.g., Southern Baptist, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Jew, Sunni Muslim, Theravada Buddhist) within a particular religious tradition that guides the fundamental beliefs and behaviors of an individual’s life in his or her quest toward a transcendent reality (Schneiders, 2003). Commonly referred to as religious denominations, these affiliations provide adherents the opportunity to learn more of the history and foundations of their faith as well as a sense of community with other believers who are likewise striving toward their ultimate purpose. The members typically hold to an authoritative standard (e.g., the Bible for a Christian, the Vedas for a Hindu) that provides them with much more specific beliefs about how events are to be understood within the context of the transcendent reality and expectations for how individuals relate to that reality.

The Christian, for example, would understand that all individuals inherently possess equal dignity because they were created in the likeness of a holy God (Genesis 1:26-27) and none is righteous in his own right (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10) but all hope for justification is found solely in one’s faith that Jesus’ death and resurrection serves as propitiation for one’s sins (Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8-10). Good deeds are performed, through the power of the Holy Spirit that indwells the believer, as an outpouring of gratitude and a sign of the salvation already received (Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 2:10). The Hindu would understand the varnas (i.e., castes) as having originated from the natural order (rita) that separates individuals based on their spiritual purity and provides them with the moral duties (dharma) that they should fulfill well in order that their karma will allow them to be reincarnated in a higher caste in their next life

(Purusha sukta, Rigveda 10.90). Good deeds are performed as a means by which the individual attains a higher caste in a subsequent life through reincarnation. In short, the formalized religion teaches individuals the reasoning behind certain beliefs or traditions so that they are understood as more than just a cultural practice. Individuals are equipped to understand why they do the things they do, instead of doing them merely because that is what they have always done.

Defining religion within the context of a particular religious affiliation is indeed a predominant aspect of understanding what is meant by the term, but as Schneiders (2003) points out, religion can be understood from a much more basic level. This understanding of what it means to be religious involves:

a recognition of the total dependence of the creature on the source or matrix of being and life which gives rise to such attitudes and actions as reverence, gratitude for being and life and all that sustains it, compunction for failure to live in that context in a worthy manner, and reliance on the transcendent for help in living and dying. (p. 168)

Even without defining a specific religious tradition, this description seems to apply to some degree to the vast majority of people. It takes little effort to see the application when considering a Christian or a Buddhist individual, but a closer investigation reveals that it appears to resonate quite nicely when considering other individuals as well, such as an atheist who holds evolution in high esteem.

In the case of an atheist who believes only in evolution, he or she would believe that humans are here completely as a consequence of the natural progression of evolution (i.e., the creature's existence is totally dependent on the evolutionary process). This belief might then stir up feelings of appreciation (i.e., reverence and gratitude) for where the complexities of evolution have brought the human species today as well as feelings of responsibility to not impede the future progression through behaviors believed to degrade the quality of life for generations to

come (i.e., compunction for failure to live in that context in a worthy manner). An example of this might be demonstrated in his or her response to anthropogenic climate change. Specifically, he or she might exhibit a dutiful reduction of unnecessary carbon emissions with the intent of preserving or improving the attainable quality of life for those who will live on this planet in subsequent generations.

Finally, there might also exist within the individual the confidence that the evolutionary process will continue in spite of any ill-advised human behaviors. Though this individual would not rely on a transcendent reality, there is a reliance on evolution as a process that supersedes all else (i.e., approximating a reliance on the transcendent for help in living and dying). This final sentiment is illustrated in the popular TV series, *Stargate Atlantis*, when the fictional character, Dr. Jennifer Keller, says:

You know, my Uncle George – he always hated the phrase ‘save the planet’ ... he just thought it was a little bit backwards, you know, ‘cause the planet’s gonna be here no matter *what* happens. It might be a giant unlivable rock but it’s gonna survive ... the work you’re doing isn’t about saving the planet – it’s about saving lives. (Wright, Cooper, & Gero, 2008)

In other words, this demonstrates the belief that evolution will continue whether human lives continue to be a part of the picture or not. Any attempts to rectify the harmful effects of human behaviors are ultimately an attempt to preserve the livelihood of humans, with the anticipation that doing so will maintain their position in the evolutionary sequence. An understanding that all beings, including humans, are subject to evolution offers individuals a guideline of which behaviors might be beneficial in their quest to prolong the existence of the species (i.e., reliance on evolution, though it is not transcendent, for help in living and dying).

A formal, all-encompassing definition of religion, then, evokes multiple facets of what it means for an individual to be religious. Most individuals likely refer to their affiliation with an external, formalized religious denomination that guides their understanding of both the natural and the supernatural world. The influence of religion on how individuals make sense of and respond to their environment is evidenced much more generally through ubiquitous cultural practices and even a fundamental perspective on life that acknowledges one's place within the context of a larger reality.

Spirituality

Spurred by his impression that spirituality has seemingly become “a neat catch-all, intimating a certain something without necessarily revealing much about what it entails” (Rose, 2001, p. 193), Rose attempted to achieve a more refined definition of spirituality. Leading individuals (e.g., priests, rabbis, monks) were polled from five religious traditions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism) as well as professionals who may or may not have been involved in a particular religious tradition personally, but who did have some professional understanding of spiritual matters (e.g., teachers, psychologists). He concluded that being spiritual encompassed a much broader array of experiences than does being religious, and that the three characteristics that consistently emerged across respondents were 1) experience: an ongoing personal experience relating to the numinous, 2) practices: continued effort in living in a manner consistent with a chosen ethical code, and 3) love: a life characterized by altruistic behaviors and love for others. Unfortunately, the second characteristic seems to overlap with the definition of religion given above as a set of beliefs about a transcendent reality and how individuals relate to this reality. Rose would not agree, however, that the two are intimately linked. Hence, the general characteristics given still do not seem to clearly capture what it means for an individual to be spiritual.

In a paper presentation, Spilka (1993, as cited in Hill, et al., 2000) elucidated three forms of spirituality: God-oriented, world-oriented, or humanistic (people-oriented). Each of these categories provides the context whereby the motivations of one's spirituality can be understood. A God-oriented spirituality, the traditional form of spirituality, utilizes a specific theology (i.e., religion) as the guide for one's behaviors. A God-oriented spirituality would be clearly exemplified by an individual who adheres to any major religion. A world-oriented spirituality focuses on one's existence and role within ecology. An individual who possesses a world-oriented spirituality may be the person who relies on evolutionary explanations to make sense of the world. The humanistic spirituality centers on human achievement and potential. Clearly, this form of spirituality would be encapsulated by an individual who adheres to the Humanist philosophy. Although these types of spirituality attempt to capture what motivates individuals to act the way they do, there seems to be an important aspect of spirituality missing from the latter two, namely the spirit. This familiar shortcoming of modern definitions of spirituality will be discussed in more detail below.

Schneiders (2003) defines spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives" (p. 166). This definition is intentionally broad enough to encapsulate the spirituality of an individual who adheres to either a religious or a secular worldview, while at the same time being narrow enough to preclude just any belief or experience from being included. Her definition also allows for one's spirituality, much like one's personality, to be exhibited in a unique and highly personalized manner, such that two individuals from identical religious backgrounds might display their spiritualities in ways that differ vastly from one another.

Delving deeper into this definition of spirituality reveals four crucial aspects of spirituality, including 1) experience, 2) conscious involvement, 3) life-integration, and 4) self-transcendence toward ultimate value (Schneiders, 2003). First, spirituality is something that is

personally experienced and lived by the individual. In other words, an individual's spirituality does not exist in name alone; it is something that truly affects his or her life to some extent. Second, one's spirituality is something that the individual is consciously aware of, involved in, and striving for. In other words, it is an ongoing personal experience that the individual initiates and is cognizant of. The continual quest of one's spirituality implies that the individual acts or reacts to various situations in an intentional manner. One's spirituality is not something that comes and goes on a whim or in a single event – even an awe-inspiring moment. Being caught up in the love and intimacy that is so wonderfully displayed at a dear friend's wedding does not qualify here as a spiritual experience.

Third, spirituality involves life-integration (Schneiders, 2003). An individual will use his or her spirituality to understand every part of life. Spirituality involves the whole person. There is no aspect of one's life that is not affected. It is a unique worldview through which the individual sees all things, nothing is off limits or not applicable to one's spirituality. There is no situation that cannot be lead back to or understood through one's spirituality. All areas of life are fundamentally spiritual issues. Fourth, spirituality involves self-transcendence toward ultimate value. The individual is consistently striving for something beyond oneself. Although the ultimate value that the individual aspires to is most likely believed to be what is best for his or her own life, it is principally believed to be best from an objective rather than a mere subjective standpoint. A clear example of the ultimate value one might seek would be reconciliation with God. Another example might be the goal of preserving the human race.

Taken together, these four components depict a spirituality that is highly individualized, intentional, enveloping the whole individual as he or she strives for something that is both bigger and better than selfish desires. It applies cleanly to both theistic and secular traditions. That is, "all individuals have a spiritual nature whether or not they identify it as such" (Pesut, et al., 2008, p. 2804). For the Christian, although his or her spirituality will exhibit itself uniquely, the basic

tenets of spirituality are present within the context of the Christian faith. Although much more could be said about the Christian's spirituality, in short, the individual will personally experience his or her faith (first aspect) while intentionally and continually endeavoring (second aspect) toward a life that is wholly devoted (third aspect) to being transformed into the image of Christ and extending the glory of the one true God to the ends of the earth through the power of the Holy Spirit (fourth aspect). For the Humanist, the same basic principles of spirituality are again present within this worldview. In short, the individual will personally experience the effects of his or her philosophical perspective (first aspect) while he or she purposefully and continually strives (second aspect) toward a life that completely (third aspect) relies on empiricism, embraces justice, and acknowledges the utility of all of mankind (fourth aspect).

Despite this attempt at defining spirituality in a broad enough manner that it is found favorably by most people, it fails in the sense that it does not clearly address the issue of spirit. If one speaks of spirituality, it only makes sense that the spirit must be a central aspect of the investigation. Yet, the current trend in defining spirituality appears to involve widening the scope of whom and what is included in the definition to gain support from more individuals. By creating such inclusive definitions, the important and distinguishing aspects of how spirituality is traditionally understood are lost, namely the spirit in spirituality (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999).

Perspectives on Religion and Spirituality

Clearly defining religion and spirituality and distinguishing the idiosyncrasies of each is an endeavor that many authors have attempted (Pargament, et al., 1995; Rose, 2001; Schneiders, 2003; Zinnbauer, et al., 1997), but there remain different opinions of how they relate to one another, if they do at all. The varying views that exist on how religion and spirituality are

conceptualized can be summarized into three overarching perspectives: that they are *strangers*, *rivals*, or *partners* (Schneiders, 2003).

Religion and Spirituality as Strangers

Those who view religion and spirituality as strangers believe that the two are not necessarily linked in any way (Schneiders, 2003). An individual might be *either* religious *or* spiritual, *both* spiritual *and* religious, or *neither* religious *nor* spiritual. This is exemplified, for instance, in the individual who will ascribe to a particular religious affiliation on demographic forms, and yet put forth no effort to understand the teachings of that faith or how those tenets are intended to be integrated into one's daily life.

The belief that religion and spirituality are strangers of one another is espoused by Rose (2001), who believes that "religion is not a prerequisite to what spirituality entails" (p. 201). Although his definition of spirituality includes a component of living consistent with a chosen ethical code (involving certain practices), he maintains that religious belief is "not essential to the experience of spirituality" (p. 201). It is somewhat unclear where the ethical standard for the individual is derived if not from a religious belief (whether a major religion or an idiosyncratic code of conduct) that guides the spirituality. It is perhaps possible that he is thinking only of the five major religions he used to recruit his sample, but this apparent inconsistency is unfortunately not discussed in more detail, thereby leaving the credibility of this perspective in question.

Religion and Spirituality as Rivals

The view that religion and spirituality are rivals maintains that the two can only be exhibited in an individual in inverse proportion to one another (Schneiders, 2003). This is tantamount to an individual who believes that someone's individual spiritual experience detracts from the order, tradition, and authority of the religion. This person might, for example, read about Saint Faustina, specifically the visions she records in her diary that lead her to have the image of

the Divine Mercy painted, and discredit her experiences as not having originated from a legitimate Christian source simply because of the highly individual and uncommon nature of her story. This perspective – of religion and spirituality being rivals – would also be seen in the individual who believes that adhering to predetermined rites and rituals diminishes a truly spiritual experience. An example of this is exhibited in the individual who desires to connect with God but does not believe there is a specific set of behaviors or beliefs that are necessary for all individuals in order to do so (such as the Christian’s belief that faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ serves as the only atoning sacrifice for sins allowing people to be reconciled to God or the Muslim’s belief in the Five Pillars of Islam – the Islamic creed, daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting during Ramadan, and a pilgrimage to Mecca).

Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott (1999) highlight three budding perspectives on religion and spirituality that fundamentally classify them as rivals. They warn that “traditionally broad and balanced characterizations of religiousness and spirituality are giving way to narrower and more polarized depictions, and in the process, this area of inquiry is losing its focus” (p. 897). The first distinguishes organized religion from personal spirituality. Religion encapsulates all aspects of faith that are organized or traditional, whereas any areas that are personal or transcendent would be classified as spiritual. The second description includes substantive religion versus functional spirituality. Here, religion is seen as a static entity, whereas spirituality is viewed as an active pursuit of some goal. The third classification consists of negative religiousness versus positive spirituality. This perspective, which views religion as an obstacle to the fulfillment of spirituality, credits all negative aspects of faith to religion and all positive aspects to spirituality. In their critique of these modern perceptions of religion and spirituality, Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott caution that “the polarization of religiousness and spirituality can yield only a limited understanding of the two constructs” (p. 903). They maintain that such a constricted and polarized view of religion and spirituality inhibits one’s ability to completely appreciate either concept. The

terms have traditionally been understood to possess a fair amount of overlap, which is an essential component to comprehending the whole picture of faith. Still, the trend of pitting religion and spirituality against one another or as utterly different from one another persists.

Religion and Spirituality as Partners

Finally, understanding religion and spirituality to be partners assumes that the two operate within an individual together as two aspects of a single endeavor. Although the reality of tension may arise between the two, both continue to strive toward a single purpose (Schneiders, 2003). Specifically, religion forms the context within which one's spirituality is exhibited and understood. It serves as the guide for an individual's spirituality on his or her quest toward transformation (Mahony, 1987). The three forms of spirituality discussed by Spilka (1993; God-oriented, world-oriented, and humanistic) presuppose a partner view of religion and spirituality because each type of spirituality is housed within a philosophical perspective that is used to guide one's behaviors and understand the world.

In short, within the partners perspective of religion and spirituality, religion provides the individual with the ultimate purpose of his or her existence, and the spirituality is the means by which the individual strives toward that goal. This perspective on the relationship between spirituality and religion was eloquently modeled by Anderson (2010, 2012), who asserted that separating religion and spirituality is not possible. He summarized religion to be the content or the specific beliefs of an individual and spirituality to be the pursuit of the spirit. His model presents the relationship between religion and spirituality in the form of two circles, one within the other, with one's religion serving as the outer circle and one's spirituality as the inner circle (see Figure 1). The size of the circles represents an individual's religious beliefs and his or her spirituality are depicted in proportion to one another to represent the faith development of that individual. A larger religion circle would represent an increased level of knowledge of his or her

religion, and a larger spirituality circle would represent an increased level of spiritual maturity. Anderson (2012) later appended his model to illustrate the notion that religion and spirituality are linked within the individual through the virtue of faith. He argued that every person has the potential to cultivate his or her faith which he understood to be evidence of spiritual growth.

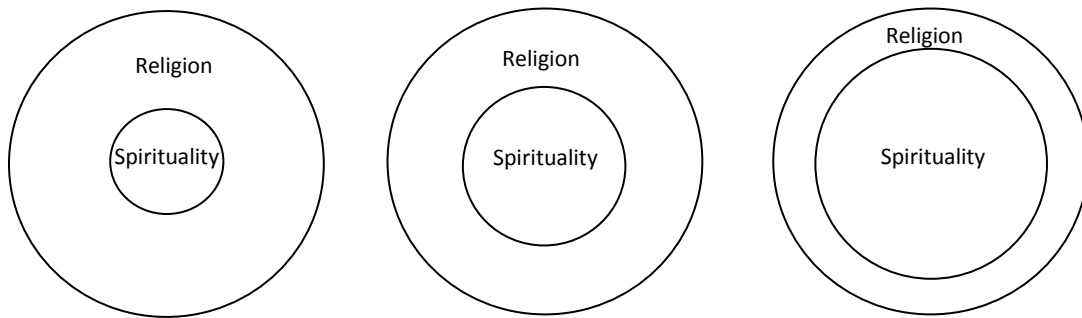


Figure 1. Model of the relationship between religion and spirituality

Assumed within this model is that religion and spirituality are intimately linked such that within every individual exists the potential for spiritual growth, although it may only be small at the moment. This is exemplified by the individual who has a fair amount of knowledge about his or her religious beliefs and yet does not attempt to align his or her life to those beliefs nor use those beliefs as a means to understand the world. Stated differently, this individual knows all the right answers and yet does not truly apply and integrate those beliefs to his or her life on a consistent basis, perhaps because the importance of the beliefs is not fully real to the individual.

Also assumed within this model is that an individual's spirituality must be linked to a set of religious beliefs and practices. His or her spiritual pursuits can only be understood within a specified context. For example, a Christian prays to God with the intent of submitting to His authority for His glory, the well-being of others, and the joy of the individual. A Buddhist prays while meditating on the teachings of Buddha in an effort to rouse one's inner strength and wisdom. It is possible that an individual has not put forth the effort to truly think through what religious standard he or she ascribes to (and what the spiritual practices they perform mean within

this context), but the presence of what is considered to be necessary, acceptable, or moral is implied. Without acknowledging a religious context, whether a recognized, organized religion or not, an individual would essentially be wandering aimlessly with no guidance, susceptible to being persuaded in any direction the wind blows. Again, the individual may not have ever taken the time to think about what the specific religious beliefs are that he or she adheres to, but they do exist and influence the direction of his or her spiritual pursuits at some level.

Important to note is that one's spirituality cannot outgrow the religious backdrop within which it operates. For the individual who acknowledges a religious context and is actively striving toward spiritual maturity within the realm of those beliefs, his or her spiritual maturity level cannot exceed his or her level of religious content. Since the religious standard that the individual operates under is the objective reality that guides the subjective experience of spirituality, it would make no sense to say that a small amount of religion can truly guide a large amount of spirituality. Stated differently, a limited knowledge of religious beliefs cannot fully help an individual grow closer to the ultimate value or goal of the religion. Limited knowledge of one's religion also makes it challenging for the individual to integrate these beliefs into daily life in order to find meaning in and understand the world. A person who is a new convert to a religion, for example, is not expected to have a great deal of knowledge about the ins and outs of the religion (compared to an individual who has been active within the faith for several decades). This knowledge is acquired with time and effort through a variety of avenues – discipleship, studying, experience, corporate worship, to name a few. The new convert's spiritual maturity is expected to grow in line with his or her religious beliefs as the new convert allows himself or herself to be further guided, molded, refined, and perfected by these beliefs. It would not make sense for an individual's spiritual maturity to exceed his or her level of religious beliefs, as it is impossible to put into practice what remains unknown.

Along the same line of thought, an individual's religious beliefs are assumed to be accurate within the context of the religious standard used. An individual who holds inaccurate religious beliefs is not likely to have a truly integrated faith that is exhibited by a flourishing spirituality. Consider, for example, a Roman Catholic who fasts, prays, repents, and makes sacrifices during the Lenten season simply because he or she believes that this is what Catholics are supposed to do because it has been a tradition for decades past. This individual will miss out on the opportunity to genuinely connect with and worship the triune God as a result of a lack of understanding of the true purpose of Lent. His or her spirituality will consequently be rendered ineffective at drawing the individual closer to God, at least in regard to the practices of the Lenten season, because of an inaccurate religious belief on the topic.

Using this model of religion and spirituality, Anderson (2010, 2012) developed a new measure intended to assess how individuals integrate their religious beliefs into their lives to connect with an intangible reality and make sense of the world. Thus, religion and spirituality are seen as partners of one another. One's religious beliefs serve as the context within which spirituality is expressed. Religion is the standard toward which one's spirituality is striving. To limit the scope of his initial studies, Anderson focused on the religious teachings of traditional Christianity, though he acknowledged that the beliefs being assessed could just as easily be changed to align with other religious standards of interest. Thus, he introduced the Spirituality Repertory Grid – Christian Version (SRG-CV).

In his samples comprised of non-Christians, Christian laity, and Christian ministers, he assessed whether individuals had a correct understanding of eight doctrinal truths of Jesus Christ (their religion) and whether evidence of their spirituality was exhibited in their use of personal constructs (Kelly, 1955) that were deemed Christ-like. If an individual who claims to be Christian is spiritual, his or her beliefs should be integrated into daily life through an increasing reliance on the fruit of the Spirit as his or her faith increases in maturity. His results supported the view that

religion and spirituality are partners and that a correct understanding of the traditional Christian teachings was necessary for the Christians' spirituality to be integrated in a consistent manner that reflected maturity.

Being “Spiritual but not Religious”

The all-too-common response to questions of either spirituality or religiosity is that “I consider myself to be spiritual, but not religious.” Interestingly, this response has only recently become popular (Hill, et al., 2000). The word spiritual itself has its roots in Christianity, dating back to the Apostle Paul (Schneiders, 2003), who used the term to describe persons who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit or things that were derived from the Holy Spirit. Given the etiology of the term, it is interesting that it has recently lost its intimate connection with Christianity. Whereas it once was embedded within the Christian faith, it is now considered to cover “a wider spectrum of activities than the term ‘religious’” (Rose, 2001, p. 202). Its meaning has morphed from a very specific quality within one religion to now signifying somewhat of a “generic term” (Schneiders, 2003, p. 166) that may or may not even involve a religion. With such a drastic change in definition, it is no wonder that such a great deal of confusion exists about what the terms mean and how they are intertwined.

Operating under the assumption that religion and spirituality are strangers (Schneiders, 2003) allows an individual to make the claim that he or she is spiritual but not religious. After all, the one is not necessary for the other in any way. A person can ascribe to one or the other, both, or neither. Thinking along the lines of this example in particular, individuals who hold to the strangers perspective believe that “religion is not a prerequisite to what spirituality entails” (Rose, 2001, p. 201). The claim of being spiritual but not religious, then, is in line with the overall perspective on what the two terms mean and how they interact with one another, resulting in no reason to further investigate the cogency of such a claim at a deeper, more fundamental level.

Viewing religion and spirituality as rivals (Schneiders, 2003) also allows for individuals to describe themselves as spiritual but not religious. Under this belief, the two are enemies of one another, existing within an individual in inverse proportion, such that as one's spirituality increases, his or her religiosity decreases and vice versa. If this proposed relationship between spirituality and religion does in fact reflect reality, and an individual deems himself or herself to be a spiritual person, then the only possible conclusion would be that he or she is also not religious. Since both attributes cannot be exhibited within the same individual, he or she can only be one or the other. Here, again, the claim of being spiritual but not religious is logically consistent with the view on how the two are to be understood in relation to one another. There is no reason to investigate the statement any further when operating under the rivals perspective.

When an individual believes spirituality and religion to be partners with one another, the familiar stance of being spiritual but not religious suddenly becomes much more problematic. If spirituality and religion are perceived to be two aspects operating jointly toward a single endeavor, the notion that an individual could possess one of the attributes and not the other is a logical fallacy. This requires the individual to delve deeper into the two claims being made – that 1) spirituality and religion are partners and 2) it is possible to be spiritual but not religious – resulting in an adjustment being made to one or both of the statements. It could be that spirituality and religion do not operate as partners toward a unified goal, that claiming to be spiritual but not religious does not reflect reality, or modifications are warranted for both assertions.

The description of religion and spirituality as partners presented by Anderson (2010, 2012), Mahoney (1987), and Schneiders (2003) provides a well thought out and convincing means of understanding how religion and spirituality are integrated in an individual's life. There also appear to be shortcomings in viewing religion and spirituality as strangers and rivals (e.g., an individual is still believed to live in accordance with a moral standard, which the partner perspective understands to be, essentially, the individual's religious beliefs). As such, it seems

most prudent to assume the first claim to be true (that religion and spirituality can be considered partners, two aspects of a single endeavor) and to investigate the second claim (that it is possible to be spiritual but not religious) more closely. The second claim will most likely need to be modified, as it is at odds with the first.

A common reason cited for describing oneself as spiritual but not religious is a result of disillusionment from the “empty ritualism, hypocrisy, clericalism, corruption, abuse of power, superstition, and other deformations...from which no religion is totally free” (Schneiders, 2003, p.171). This view seems to be fully reliant on the worst possible aspects of religious institutions while jettisoning any admirable history the religion might possess. This contemporary perspective of religion as utterly negative and spirituality as wholly positive was noted by Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott (1999). In an attempt to distance oneself from the blemishes of the religion, some individuals attempt to discard the entire religious institution. This is analogous to an individual with a wonderful track record of fighting for human justice in the world being ostracized for comments that were made decades ago about his perspective on a completely separate issue. It might also bear a resemblance to the child who cannot be friends with another child, despite countless similarities and common interests, because the two disagree on whom the best Avengers character is. The result of classifying religion as bad and something to be avoided implies that the spirituality they embrace is good and something to be cherished. Individuals who employ this mode of reasoning are essentially utilizing the perspective that religion and spirituality are rivals. The two can only exist within an individual in inverse proportion to one another.

Despite the negative features of institutionalized religions, the religious institution is necessary for religion to be reliably passed on from one generation to the next without it dissipating into an unidentifiable form (Schneiders, 2003). If there were no organized institution of religion and each individual adhered to an idiosyncratic version of his or her religion, the value

and lessons inherent in age-old traditions would be lost because each person would individually know only his or her own version of any given religious beliefs and practices. There would be essentially nothing to pass on because those in the next generation would think up their own beliefs and practices to follow.

Moreover, the sense of committed community that exists among individuals pursuing spirituality within a religious institution is absent to the same degree among those who claim to be spiritual but not religious (Schneiders, 2003). The overwhelming support that can come from others who are or have been faced with similar situations in life – both struggles and triumphs alike – and who interpret the events of this world through the same religious worldview, can foster a profound sense of unity among believers. Those who do not share a specific set of beliefs with other individuals may very well possess similarities with others who are likewise attempting to pursue their spirituality without the context of a religious tradition. Still, particular events may be understood in vastly different ways. The differences that exist between two individuals who claim to be spiritual but not religious will most likely be significant compared to those between individuals who at least agree upon a religious context. The former is faced with differences in both religious beliefs and spirituality, whereas the latter possesses common ground in their religious beliefs though the specifics of how their spirituality is integrated into their daily life may differ.

The existence of an institution is also advantageous in that it guides the development of spiritualities that might otherwise be “prone to extremism and instability on the one hand and to ghettoizing on the other” (Schneiders, 2003, p. 172). Without a religious institution in place, it becomes very difficult for individuals to be held accountable regarding how their spirituality is developing. In fact, the sentiment that what is right for one individual may or may not be right for another individual is routinely echoed throughout the trend of claiming to be spiritual but not religious. Cardinal Ratzinger warned of this “dictatorship of relativism” that pervades

contemporary culture in his homily before being elected as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005 (Catholicism Pure & Simple, 2013). He noted that this attitude of questioning the certitude of everything and seeking above all else one's own desires and ambitions is a consequence of individuals being "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Ephesians 4:14) as opposed to being "like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" (Psalm 1:3, NASB). It also reflects a tendency to be "always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). This relativism essentially is a restructuring of what Christians know as sin such that it merely reflects being out of alignment with one's personally contrived standards and values, as opposed to an objective, external standard. The troublesome nature of this is quickly apparent. First, if what is acceptable for one person is unacceptable for another, how are these two views to be reconciled? This is especially problematic when the actions of one individual affect another in some way (as is the nature of social beings). Second, adhering to an idiosyncratic standard allows the individual to amend, modify, or completely discard certain aspects of their ethical code, without notice or reason, because it is after all subjective in its totality.

There exists no clear standard for what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, when each individual is accountable only to himself or herself. The accountability and loving correction that exists among fellow believers is difficult to attain without a consensus on the religious context within the individuals operate. Moreover, there can be no reliable discernment about the actions or motives of an individual without an identifiable, unwavering standard. The opportunity for edification is also missing when other individuals cannot succinctly point to both areas of weaknesses and strengths within their own lives or the lives of those around them.

Returning to a Philosophically Rich Past

Despite a recent proliferation of research within the area of religion and spirituality, a great deal of confusion and disagreement remains regarding what exactly is meant by the terms and how they relate to one another. A potential source of this uncertainty lies in the recent break from how the terms have been traditionally understood. Individuals are increasingly parting ways with traditional religious institutions in favor of a more idiosyncratically contrived faith. New conceptualizations have abandoned the broad and balanced nature that once prevailed for narrower and more biased accounts (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Rather than progressing toward a more refined understanding of religion and spirituality, the endeavor of better defining these terms has resulted in polarized conceptualizations lacking certain crucial components of human nature that are necessary for a complete understanding of either term. This field of inquiry has developed definitions of religion and spirituality that are “ungrounded from a rich history of theological and philosophical thought” (Pesut, et al., 2008, p. 2806). Stated simply, contemporary conceptualizations suffer from “theological and philosophical impoverishment” (p. 2807) and would benefit from a return to “the language and forms of knowing inherent to the spiritual and religious realms” (p. 2808).

The abundant research and data that offer no solace of clarification about human nature, only a sense of confusion and divisiveness, is also bemoaned by Mortimer J. Adler (1941). He attributes the ensuing chaos of a field (psychology) that is divided into diverse schools of thought, which differ only in terms of how the field of inquiry has been limited by each school’s respective perspective, to the “complete independence from philosophy” (p. viii) that many have championed. In valuing only verifiable, empirical data, psychologists have effectively abandoned an entire wealth of knowledge essential to a unified, complete understanding of mankind (Adler, 1941; Pesut, et al., 2008). Adler insists that both philosophical and scientific knowledge are essential to a proper and complete conception of man, that considering the mind and body as

separate entities was a “disastrous Cartesian mistake” (Adler, 1941, p. x). Operating under a unified approach to studying human nature, Adler explains that:

the philosopher makes his contribution by defining the essence of man, setting forth the essential distinction of his powers, analyzing the nature underlying his habits and acts; the scientist makes his contribution by investigating the phenomenal correlations among human operations, and discovering thereby the material and accidental determinants of his habits and powers. (Adler, 1941, p. xi)

Brennan (1941) further clarifies philosophy to be “noninvestigative and grounded on common experience” and science to be “investigative and grounded on special experience” (p. 35). He goes on to say that “Science progresses by a transition to new and better knowledge, often discarding the old as false or unsatisfactory. Philosophy progresses by a deeper and richer understanding of principles that are already known” (p. 57). Although science and philosophy are characterized by differences in their primary approaches, it is crucial to recognize that “both disciplines have the same subject matter and the same starting point, namely, the acts, powers, and habits of man” (p. 51). Rather than pitting science and philosophy against one another because of their differences, it is helpful to bear in mind that the study of man himself is central to both approaches. The beauty is that both philosophy and science offer critical components to the quest for this knowledge of human nature that complement each other. The fundamental principles of philosophy can be used to guide the scientist in designing studies that lead to intelligible conclusions and provide a context within which the results can be rightly interpreted; scientific knowledge can be used to illustrate and further clarify the principles of the philosopher’s theories and to refine the details in light of scientific evidence. Apart from one another, the philosopher and the scientist are only privy to partial truths, but together, the two inform one another toward a more complete understanding of mankind.

In short, by jettisoning a traditional approach to understanding religion and spirituality and relying only on scientific knowledge (as is heralded by positivism), modern conceptualizations within psychology are developed that are incomplete, polarized, and theologically and philosophically bankrupt (Adler, 1941; Pesut, et al., 2008; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). In light of these concerns, the prudent course of action is to delve into the wealth of knowledge available on the topic from a history filled with prominent and authoritative philosophical thinkers. Whereas some may deem this old-fashioned or outdated, the goal here is to learn from the foundational truths taught by those from previous generations, rather than attempting to produce some entirely novel definition of religion and spirituality without an understanding that is grounded in the rich heritage they are already rooted in. Individuals' inclination to overlook or forget the wisdom of the past in pursuit of some innovative thought is also echoed in Scripture:

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.
(Ecclesiastes 1:9-11)

In an attempt to resist this tendency, the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas is reviewed and presented here as a means for understanding the role of religion and spirituality within the individual more completely. It is hoped that this wisdom and insight taught centuries ago is found to be germane in guiding and refining our conceptualizations of religion and spirituality both now and into the future.

The Teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas

Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274), the youngest of seven boys, was born at Roccasecca, near Naples (Hutchins, 1952). He entered the Abbey at the young age of five to begin his educational training. He later attended the University of Naples to continue his education, where he was introduced to the Dominicans. Impressed by their devotion to study and teaching, Aquinas took the habit of the Dominicans (Feser, 2009). His family, however, was not pleased with their simplistic lifestyle and attempted to dissuade him from joining by placing him under house arrest for one year in the hopes that he would align himself to their worldly ambitions. Instead, Aquinas used the time to memorize the entire Bible as well as other theological texts.

Once his family conceded, he studied under the tutelage of Albert the Great, a “champion of Aristotle” (Hutchins, 1952, p. v). Shortly thereafter he earned his baccalaureate and began his teaching career, which continued throughout the remainder of his life. Aquinas himself eventually became an influential thinker, who was resolute in his belief that the works of Aristotle, which were fairly controversial within the realm of Christianity, were not only compatible but were also an effective apology of the faith when they were rightly understood (Feser, 2009). He was also a prolific writer, who produced Scriptural commentaries as a means of expounding theological doctrine. His giftedness for sustained abstract thought reportedly left him completely unaware of his surroundings in the midst of a particularly engaging thought or conversation (Feser, 2009). Furthermore, his devotion to God was evidenced in his apathetic attitude toward other topics. He was said to leave a room whenever the conversation turned toward any other subject matter and allegedly ate only one meal a day so that he could devote himself more fully to his work.

While saying mass the morning of December 6, 1273, Aquinas appeared to enter a trance (Hutchins, 1952; Feser, 2009). He later explained it to be a mystical experience and that in

comparison to what he had seen while in that state, all of his writing seemed to be “like straw” (Feser, 2009, p. 6). This experience brought his writing career to a sudden close, which meant that the *Summa Theologica*, arguably his most well-known and influential work, would never be completed despite the behest of others to continue.

Fundamental Doctrines of Metaphysics

As mentioned above, Aquinas studied under Albert the Great, one of the period’s great Aristotelian thinkers (Hutchins, 1952; Feser, 2009). Aquinas grew to be an even more prominent thinker, who fully believed – and sought to demonstrate – that not only were the teachings of Aristotle consistent with the Christian doctrines, but they also provided a wonderful defense of the faith when they were understood correctly. As such, the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas are rooted in and expound upon the philosophical realism of the Stagirite, Aristotle, placing his teachings in stark contrast to the positivist views esteemed by so many today (Adler, 1941; Pesut, et al., 2008). In his well-regarded work on Thomism, Brennan (1941) further elucidates the parallel between Aristotle and Aquinas by saying that “the psychology of both thinkers is woven of one cloth...The genius of Aristotle discovered it. The genius of Aquinas integrated and developed it” (p. 4).

Act versus Potency. A foundational tenet of Aquinas’ thought is that a person or object is composed of both act and potency (Feser, 2009). The act entails the characteristics that are present in actuality; they exist in the current form of the person or thing. These would include, for example, physical characteristics or behavioral tendencies such as hair color, eye color, and typical response patterns in specific situations (e.g., an individual might jump every time the doorbell rings). The potency of the person or object involves the potential characteristics that might exist at some point in the future (e.g., different hair colors or lengths). A particular potency becomes act when a characteristic is changed from being a potential and is realized in the person

or object. For example, the person can dye his or her hair, thereby reducing the potency to act (Feser, 2009). In other words, the act of the person's hair color is moved (i.e., changed) to potency through a chemical reaction in the dye that changes the color of his or her hair. The change that occurs represents the potential being made a reality.

When considering the act and potency of a person or object, it is important to bear in mind that the potency of a person or object is always grounded in reality (Feser, 2009). Although any number of possibilities exists for how a person or object can be conceived of, only those options truly possible (given the laws of the universe) should be considered potency. Humans cannot be transformed into monstrous vermin, though the notion can be theoretically imagined, as demonstrated by Franz Kafka. This possibility would, therefore, not be considered as a true potency of humans.

The Four Aristotelian Causes. Another central teaching of Aquinas is that of the Aristotelian four causes (material, formal, efficient, final). These four causes are general principles that can be used to understand nature. The first two, material and formal, are commonly referred to as the doctrine of hylomorphism (Feser, 2009), the principle that people and objects are composed of both matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*). Take a chair, for example. The matter (material cause) consists of the material that the chair is made of, say wood. Its form (formal cause) consists of the particular shape, structure, and other characteristics that are used to both identify it as a chair as opposed to a table (substantial form) or describe it in more detail, perhaps to distinguish it from other chairs (accidental form). The substantial form of the chair is that which distinguishes it as a chair as opposed some other object (say four even legs, a flat top upon which one may sit, and a back that is attached to one side of the top at a perpendicular angle to the ground). If this is changed, the act of the chair will have been moved to a potency (maybe being chopped into several smaller pieces), and the object will be identified as something other than a chair (perhaps a heap of wood to be used for a campfire). The accidental form of the object

may be changed without affecting the substantial nature of the object, or what it is identified as. It involves some attribute the object possesses that does not change the essence (the nature) of the object (such as the color of the chair, or a design that has been etched into the wood).

As should be apparent, the matter and form of the object are understood in relation to one another. The two are separable “in thought, though never in fact” (Brennan, 1941, p. 67). The matter that exists will take on a particular form, and a form consists of some matter (with few exceptions). Aquinas does allow for the possibility of immaterial substances, namely God, angels, and an individual’s post-mortem soul (Feser, 2009). He does not, however, deem objects that are purely theoretical (what is called prime matter) to be real. Just as the potency of an object must be rooted in reality (and consistent with the laws of the universe), so must the matter of an object be rooted in reality for it to truly exist. This eliminates the potency of an individual receiving the same skeletal structure given to Wolverine in the X-Men series, as it was made of the prime matter adamantium, which exists only in Marvel comic books and movies.

An object’s matter and form are also intimately linked to its act and potency. Just as potency cannot exist without act, matter cannot exist without form. If matter is considered without form, it is potentially everything but actually nothing. Form explains the act of the matter, allowing it to be identified as a particular object that is distinguishable from other kinds (i.e., species) of objects (Brennan, 1941). The one (potency; matter) presupposes the other (act; form) and the two are understood as complete only in light of one another. They are aspects inherent in a specific object that can be used to understand it (the object) more completely.

The matter and form of a particular object are rooted in the act of the object and are that which changes when the object is moved to potency. This process of change (from act to potency) represents the third Aristotelian cause, efficient cause. It is that which “actualizes a potency” (Feser, 2009, p. 16). Final cause is understood to be the effect produced by the efficient cause of

the object; it is the end or goal that the object is directed toward by its very nature. Returning to our example of the chair, the efficient cause would be, for example, the process of manufacturing the chair. This process is, in turn, likely to result in a specific set of functions or possible effects more than others. The functions or possible effects that are produced constitute the final cause of the object. With regard to our chair, this might include providing an individual with somewhere to sit or serving as a piece of decoration in a room. Whatever it is, every object possesses within itself (given its current state, or act) some “goal-directedness” (p. 17). The object inherently tends to direct toward or lead to some end or goal, whether consciously or otherwise. Again, this may simply be the particular function of an object, as in the case of the chair, or, on a much grander level, it might be the purpose of an individual’s life.

Just as material cause and formal cause are understood in relation to one another, so too are efficient cause and final cause linked in such a way that final cause is that which makes efficient cause intelligible (Feser, 2009). The efficient cause of an object is understood when considered together with the object’s final cause. Without considering final cause, it cannot be determined what end the efficient cause is directed toward. In other words, the cause cannot be understood without the effect. The two exist in unison with one another, though modern philosophers are in the habit of not only separating them but denying the existence of final cause altogether. Nonetheless, it is clear to those who adhere to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition that the one absolutely gives rise to the other. Indeed, the fact that all agents (i.e., anything serving as an efficient cause) tend toward a final cause is known as the *principle of finality* (Feser, 2009). In other words, all causes have some effect as their end or goal; all causes are directed toward effects. Consider, for instance, the efficient cause of water being poured out onto a cloth. This cannot be separated from the final cause of the cloth becoming wet. The water being poured onto the cloth and the cloth absorbing the water are in fact the same incident understood from the perspective of the two Aristotelian causes. It would not be reasonable to expect the water to cause

a fire in the cloth (given the laws of nature). The efficient cause is going to produce some effect more often than it will result in some other outcome, and as such it is to be understood together with the final cause.

As stated previously, the final cause of an object makes sense of its efficient cause. The final cause is fundamental in that in light of a specific final cause one can make certain implications about the efficient cause (as well as the essence and the formal and material causes) of the object. The final cause is inherent in the efficient cause, and the efficient cause is that which directs the object toward the final cause. If the cloth is wet, one can imply that the water that was poured onto it was the cause of the effect. Aquinas' *principle of causality* speaks to the reality that whatever agent (person or object) is moved (i.e., has a potency actualized, is changed; efficient cause) is moved by another (Feser, 2009). Anything that comes into being or that possesses an act that is contingent on another has a cause. This movement (actualization of potency) cannot actualize itself and must, therefore, be actualized by some other agent that is already in a state of act in that moment. Stated more simply, all effects have a cause. Though the cause may be unknown, no effects manifest themselves without causes.

Moreover, when a particular cause produces an effect, it transmits something of itself, known as the *principle of proportionate causality* (Feser, 2009). In other words, the cause possesses within itself an inherent power or ability to produce the given effect. It is not possible for a cause to produce an effect that is outside the realm of its nature. The water that was poured transmits its wetness onto the cloth, causing the cloth to be wet as well. In other words the water transmits part of its essence to the effect. The effect of the cloth becoming wet is not an independent outcome that just happens to follow water being poured with a greater frequency than, say, the cloth igniting. Water is not capable of transmitting "fire-ness" to the cloth because the effect of "fire-ness" is not contained within the virtue of the very nature of the water. The

essence of the object is central to what end (final cause) can be expected, though the final cause need not ever be actualized for it to still be operating as the end state the object is directed toward.

Ontology – the Doctrine of Being. Another foundational teaching of Aquinas is that of ontology (the doctrine of being), which deals with the distinction between the essence and existence of an object. An object is intelligible through its essence; its essence, which is principally an amalgam of its matter and form, is that which allows the object to be identified as such and understood. That is to say that a particular object that exists in reality in a given moment possesses within itself an essence (i.e., “whatness,” quiddity, nature) that describes it as such. Returning to the example of the chair discussed above, the chair possesses within itself “chair-ness”. Although the chair in our example had four legs of equal length, a three-legged chair certainly contains an element of “chair-ness” as well, though we might say that it does not instantiate the essence of a chair as perfectly as the four-legged chair does. Clearly, the essence of an object is not merely particular (applying to only one object, such that only one chair contains chair-ness) nor is it merely universal (applying to many distinct objects of the same kind, such that it cannot be applied to a single object). Although the essence can be conceived of universally, Aquinas would say that these universals exist only in the soul (more specifically, in one’s intellect) and that the essence itself exists in the actual object itself (Feser, 2009). The universality of the essence can be helpful, but this is simply an abstraction of that which is represented in and exists in a particular object. Hence, it is possible to speak of the essence of a chair universally, but the fact that “chair-ness” exists in a real object should not be forgotten.

All that exists possesses an essence, but it is also possible to understand the essence of something that does not exist (e.g., something comprised of prime matter). Since the existence of prime matter is only theoretical and not rooted in reality, it is pure potency and no actuality. It can be conceived of intellectually, though it does not truly exist in reality (and may not even conform to the natural laws of the universe). As such, the essence of an object is distinct from its

existence. The essence of an object can be conceived of without begging the question of whether or not it truly exists.

The two (essence and existence) can be thought of in relation to one another based on the presence of act and potency in the object (Feser, 2009). God, the only example of pure act without potency, is also the only example of essence and existence being identical. Since God is pure act, there is no potency to be actualized. Consequently, the essence and existence of God are identical and the nature of God (as He exists in reality) cannot change. God is identified by Aquinas as the First Cause, and as such He does not Himself require a cause because His essence and existence are identical and do not need to be sustained by some other agent. He is pure act without potency; His existence is identical to His essence. Essence and existence are distinct in all other objects which contain a composite of both act and potency (angels, human beings, material objects). As mentioned above, the essence of something can be conceived of though it does not actually exist. In other words, something that is pure potency and no act (i.e., prime matter) also has an essence that is distinct from its existence.

Anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas

The anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, as with his fundamental doctrines of metaphysics, is rooted in and expounds upon the philosophical realism of Aristotle. Aquinas believed that, when rightly understood, the teachings of Aristotle were not only unproblematic, but that they were compatible with and provided a convincing apology for the Christian faith. He sought to demonstrate this very claim through many of his teachings and writings (including his anthropology) in a time when the two were believed to be incompatible. Unfortunately, his battle is not yet won. As with so many of his metaphysical doctrines, the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas is routinely discarded by modern philosophers as irrelevant, outdated, or inaccurate.

The views of the prominent medieval thinkers and those of contemporary theorists could not be more divergent from one another in many regards. Traditionally, and as understood by both Aristotle and Aquinas, the “study of the soul through its acts, powers, and habits” (Brennan, 1941, p. 48) comprised the quintessential nature of psychology. Psychology was also fundamentally understood to unite “both philosophic analysis and scientific research in one continuous doctrine, in which philosophy answers the fundamental questions about the nature of man, and science resolves in detail the problems of his acts, powers, and habits” (p. 57). Recall that the differences between the scientist and the philosopher complement one another and that their overarching goal and subject matter is identical – the study of man himself.

Psychology to Aristotle and Aquinas comprised the study of man – that is, the whole of man – within the context of human nature. If one aspect of the living being is the primary focus of investigation at a particular moment for a Thomist, it is always understood in unison with the rest of the organism, never in isolation, as this would effectively render the organism as a whole unintelligible. In contrast, proponents of positivism have approached psychology through a multitude of sub-disciplines that focus only on single aspects of the person while ignoring others. Brennan (1941) describes the shortcoming of this approach by stating that “since its establishment as a science, psychology appears to have little more than confusion and conflict to show for all its efforts at development” (p. 54). One such confusion of this contemporary view of psychology is the modern dilemma taught to every introductory psychology student today, the mind-body problem. This issue, however, is a non-issue when the teachings of Aquinas are understood properly.

The Body and Soul. Aquinas understood the distinction between the soul (mind) and body of a living being within the context of the doctrine of hylomorphism (the material and formal causes, matter and form). In essence, the person of man is both psychological and physiological. Man is understood as an integer, a complete corporeal substance that is comprised of both body

and (rational) soul, an integrated unit undivided in himself and distinct from all else. Who man is constitutes his substantial form, what he does his accidental form. The subject of all his actions (both physical and psychological) is understood to be man, not the body or soul alone. The two (body and soul) are substantially (not accidentally) conjoined with one another in that they can only be rightly understood in relation to one another as one complete being, as with the matter and form of any object (Brennan, 1941).

The matter of a living being (obviously) consists of his or her physiological body; the soul comprises his or her substantial form (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Anything that is alive, whether human being, non-human animal, or plant, by definition is a besouled being since the soul represents the form of a living being. Stated differently, the soul represents the act of the human being and the body represents the potencies. The soul is simply a potency that has been actualized. As such, Aquinas understood it to be the principle of natural life – the soul is that which makes the living being living. Without the soul, the being would not be living, meaning that a different, non-living potency of the body has been actualized. From the moment matter takes on the form of a living being, say a human organism, he or she has a soul (and is alive) until the last breath of life has been taken (at which time another potency of the matter has been actualized and the soul is no longer the form of the matter).

This conceptualization of the soul stands in contrast to the Cartesian view that the soul is an immaterial substance independent of the matter that it informs (the body), and that it (the soul) gives rise to life in whatever matter to which it is conjoined. If this were so, the soul could conjoin itself to any body arbitrarily and would not be constrained to being the particular form of a particular body, meaning one man's (Adam's) soul could inform new matter, moving his consciousness to a new body. Carried to its logical conclusion, this doctrine of transmigration (a tenet of the Indian religions) would also imply that it be possible that any object could become living if a soul were conjoined to it, not only plants, animals, and humans. Adam's consciousness

would then be transferrable to a tea kettle should his soul conjoin itself thereunto. Not so for Aquinas. Adam's soul is the form of his particular body. The two are inexorably linked and co-adapted to one another; if his soul were the form of another body, it would not be Adam's soul at all because it is not the form of his body.

The essence (nature) of the soul for Aquinas is demonstrated in that the being appears to be able to move itself toward improved excellence, though he would clarify that this really is a case of the cause of the movement originating internally in the object (Brennan, 1941). Only living beings are capable of moving by an internal cause, called immanent causation; inanimate objects can only be moved by some external cause, called transeunt (transient) causation (Feser, 2009). Living beings can also be moved by transeunt causes, but they are not limited in this regard. It follows that only living beings are capable of furthering their own well-being internally. That is to say that only living beings possess immanent teleology, a final cause which has an internal efficient cause (though, as will be discussed more momentarily, Aquinas would recognize that all beings are ultimately moved by God, the First Mover who is not Himself moveable; Feser, 2009). In short, the soul is not only the substantial form of the living being entitatively, it also embodies the efficient and final causes of life operationally as the root of the being's vital powers and acts (Brennan, 1941).

Aquinas identified a natural hierarchy in living beings and distinguished between the kinds of souls possessed by each kind of being (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Plants, which possess nutritive, growth, and reproductive powers (abilities), are said to have a *vegetative* or *threptic soul*. Plants have the ability to nourish themselves (when nourishment is available to them), grow as a result of the nutrients they have received, and reproduce themselves. Animals possess the same powers of plants but also the powers of sensation, locomotion, and appetite and are said to have a *sensory* or *aesthetic soul*. Animals (but not plants) are able to sense their environment (sensation) and move (locomotion) toward stimuli that are desirable and away from

stimuli that are aversive (appetite). Human beings, who possess the powers of both plants and animals, are said to have a *rational* or *dianoetic soul* because they also possess the powers of the intellect and the will. Humans (but neither plants nor animals) are able to think abstractly to make rational decisions that they then choose to act on. Beyond these three types of living beings, Aquinas would also note immaterial beings (angels) followed by God. Both possess each of the powers of the beings lower in the hierarchy but, resultant of their lack of dependence on matter, are increasingly perfected in their powers, with God being the ultimate example (the maximum whose attributes human beings are directed toward in a teleological sense, discussed more below).

The Powers of Man. The powers possessed by man are deducible from the acts that are directed toward certain formal objects (Brennan, 1941). In other words, if a person acts toward a formal object in a particular manner, it can be inferred that he or she possesses the ability (or the power) to act in such a manner. Based on the acts of human beings, it can be reasoned that they possess within themselves the powers inherent in both plants and animals (which possess vegetative and sensitive souls, respectively). Since the vegetative and sensitive powers are present in humans, humans can be said to be virtually the same as plants and animals in this regard (Brennan, 1941). Despite this similarity, the vegetative and sensitive powers of human beings are performed by a rational soul and are, as a result, more perfected. The vegetative and sensitive powers are, moreover, subordinate in human beings. What distinguishes humans from plants and animals as rational beings, and what is of primary interest here, is that they also possess the higher powers of the rational soul – intellect and will. That is, although humans still operate using their vegetative and sensitive powers, these are secondary to their intellectual nature. The intellectual powers, unique to the rational soul (also called the mind by Aquinas), enable humans to think critically and abstractly about various issues (intellect) and are able to then choose their

course of action in light of the information they have considered (will). In short, the powers of the intellect and the will are what allow human beings to be reasoning beings.

Considering the intellect first, it is that by which humans are able to discover truth about their environment and about their very nature (Feser, 2009). The teleological goal of the intellect, whose subject is the rational soul, is to know all things, to understand the natural order of the universe, and to specifically know the Creator (Wallace, 1996). Intellect also allows the knower to reflect on his or her own intellectual acts, as the intellect is not limited by either material objects or material organs in its operation (Brennan, 1941). Such is not the case with sensitive knowledge, which is both grounded in experience and concerned with particular sensible objects. Aquinas argues that the intellect is irreducible to mere sensation or imagination. In other words, the intellect is more than sensation or imagination. That the intellect is more than simply the sensitive powers possessed by animals is evidenced in its ability to handle universal concepts as opposed to singular, particular objects (Feser, 2009).

Though the sensitive knowledge of humans is more perfected than that of animals, it still only ever deals with the immediate experiences of the knower and the particular objects that can be sensed with the olfactory, visual, tactile, gustatory, and auditory senses. Whether the sensitive knowledge is of what is present, absent (as in imaginal powers), or past (as in memorial powers), it still only operates through the sensible objects with which the knower has some experience (Brennan, 1941). The intellect, however, is capable of abstracting beyond the singular objects that are found in its immediate proximity to the universal concepts that define the very essence of the object in question. In other words, where the power of sensibility only enables one to know a specific flower through the five senses, the intellect allows humans to grasp the concept of flower-ness. Although the intelligibility of flower-ness often stems from one's sensory experiences with flowers, it is not constrained by these experiences. A child can learn about flower-ness and expand his or her understanding thereof without having come into contact with

many flowers (in much the same way as humans are capable of grasping the essence of prime matter though it does not exist in reality, and they have therefore had no sensory contact with it whatsoever).

Similarly, the intellect is more than mere imagination (either reproductive or creative) because the imagination, like sensation, only ever deals with particular, singular examples of objects (actually representations thereof) and does not deal with universal concepts of their nature (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). When asked to ponder flowers, one's imagination will inevitably conjure up an image of a single flower. The ability of the intellect goes beyond that of these mental images by allowing the person to grasp the nature of flower-ness as it applies to all flowers, not only a representation thereof. The universal flower-ness that is intelligible through the intellect is also a perfect form, whereas the mental image of a flower will only approximate the perfect form that is understood in the intellect.

The philosophies of materialism (sensism, of which positivism is an example) and idealism (intellectualism) anchor the realism of Aquinas and Aristotle on either extreme with regard to the intellect (Brennan, 1941). On the one hand, the materialists (still popular today) maintain that only the physiological processes of the body are necessary in explaining the genesis of ideas and knowledge. On the other hand, the idealists overemphasized the immaterial explanations of knowledge, claiming ideas are innate to the intellect alone and possess no material basis to them whatsoever. Both extremes are examples of "empty deceit" and lead the student astray through the resultant "diverse and strange teachings" that do not match what is found in reality (Colossians 2:8; Hebrews 13:9). Aquinas' teachings, though, line up with the reality of public experience and man's hylomorphic nature more so than either materialism or idealism. It bears repeating that man is a composite creature consisting of both an immaterial soul and a material body functioning together as one complete whole. It should not come as a shock, then that both matter and form are necessary in all the powers of the soul, including the

formulation of ideas. The intellect is rooted in matter in the process of knowledge but can operate immaterially once an idea has been apprehended. Knowledge begins first with the senses and the particular sensible objects that are experienced. In the process of actualizing the potency of knowledge, the intellect abstracts from the material object to its universal essence (intelligible species). In other words, the sensibility of the object is transformed to an abstract intelligibility by the intellect. The hylomorphic nature of man is further evident in that he will rely on concrete (or material) examples to elaborate or clarify an immaterial idea before its knowledge has been fully actualized (while it remains indistinct in the intellect). Once knowledge has been fully attained, the intellect is capable of functioning in an immaterial manner. In other words, the intellect is rooted in matter, though it is not limited by it.

The universal nature or essence that is intelligible (i.e., knowable) through the intellect is what Aquinas refers to as an intelligible species (Feser, 2009). Hence, species to Aquinas refers to an epistemological concept whereby intentional forms (discussed presently) are known (Brennan, 1941). The particular kind of object – the intelligible species – that is known by the intellect is grasped through an understanding of the object’s form. Since the philosophical realism of Aquinas maintains that the forms of objects themselves (as they exist in reality) are knowable, not a representation thereof, for the rational soul to grasp the form of another object through the power of the intellect is for the intellect itself to take on the very form of the object (intentionally) without losing its own form or nature in the process (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Aristotle’s example of wax that takes on the form of a seal impressed upon it without losing its own substantial form or nature serves as an imperfect analogy of this concept. This is akin to saying that the form of the object not only exists in the object itself (i.e., natural existence, is entitative) but exists also in the intellect (i.e., intentional existence, is intentional). Of course, the intellect is not entirely passive as the wax is; it is more active in the intelligible objects that it seeks to understand. The intellect is also purely immaterial in nature. It does not rely on any material

organs to function, meaning that there is no bodily change that occurs upon its knowing an object (whereas the accidental form of the wax changes upon the seal's imprint).

Since the intellect can take on the universal form of that which is known without losing its own form (of a rational soul) in the process and without requiring a specific material organ to function, the intellect is not dependent on matter (i.e., it is immaterial) and has no limit to what it can know.¹ If the intellect were dependent on matter, the act of it taking on the form of another object would require that it actually become that object *entitatively* (and thereby lose its form in the process) or it would be restricted by the determined functions of the material organ upon which it relied (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Sensitive knowledge, to be sure, is psychosomatic in nature. It does contain an element of immateriality in that the particular form of the known object is grasped in an immaterial manner, but it still requires material objects and organs to function. When a sensible object is known, there is a bodily change that takes place in the sense organ (evidenced in that there are thresholds under which the object is not noticed and above which the organ can no longer function effectively). Sensitive knowledge, being particular and concrete, is therefore partially removed from matter, whereas intellectual knowledge, being universal and abstract, is fully removed (Brennan, 1941).

Moreover, only sensible objects are knowable to the senses, whereas the essence of anything (material or otherwise) can function as the formal object of the intellect as an intelligible object. As such, the intellect can potentially take on the form of anything *intentionally*. This union

¹ Aquinas argues that it is this immateriality of the rational soul that allows it to survive the deceased human body (as its existence is not contingent on matter), though Aristotle did not weigh in on the issue (Feser, 2009). In other words, Aquinas believed the rational soul to be a subsistent form. Though it does not come into being independent of matter and is understood in conjunction with its matter, it does not depend on matter to operate and can therefore continue to function as a form even after the matter ceases to exist. Yet just as is the case during the individual's life the essence and existence of the post-mortem soul is ultimately sustained by God, and since it can survive when its matter perishes (i.e., changes form) only God can kill the rational soul. Contrary to Buddhist teachings, Aquinas maintains a personal survival of the soul since it is a personal form adapted to and by a particular body (Brennan, 1941).

between the intellect and the known intelligible object is also more intimate than that between the senses and the known sensible object. The intellect is capable of a more intimate union with its formal object because it knows the deeper (immaterial) substance of the object, the very essence of the object, whereas sense knowledge knows an object at a surface or accidental level only.

Turning now to the appetitive power of the rational soul, the will is that which enables humans to choose to act in a particular manner as opposed to choosing some other course of action (Wallace, 1996). The actions of the will are contingent upon the information gleaned by the intellect (Feser, 2009). Through the intellect the individual discovers universal truths; through the will the individual makes a practical decision about how to act in the here and now (Brennan, 1941). The rational individual will choose to pursue what is deemed to be good and avoid what is deemed to be bad, discussed more in a moment. An individual's morality in short reflects the habitual pattern of behavior directed by the will (Feser, 2009). An individual who routinely chooses to behave in a manner that is good is said to have good or high morality; the individual who routinely chooses to behave in a manner that is bad is said to have bad or low morality (again, the notion of goodness will be discussed below).

The idea or concept that is known by the intellect allows the individual to be unified with the object in an internal, immaterial way (intentionally) through the knowledge of its form or essence. The will desires to increase the intimacy of this union by moving the individual into an external, physical union with the object of its affection, thereby engaging both the body and the soul of the individual (Brennan, 1941). If the desired object is attained (and not merely desired) by the individual, the union of the known and the knower will be even more intimate.

In its operation, the will, an intellectual or rational appetite, gathers information from the intellect about the universal desirability of an object. Based on this knowledge, the will is directed toward a good as a result of desire (love) for the object and makes a practical decision about how

to act in the here and now. The desirability of the object propels the person to learn more about the object than what was originally known, which in turn leads to a further increase in the desirability of the object (Brennan, 1941). Hence, the two (intellect and will) clearly operate together within the individual to enable rationality, though they both possess unique functions.

The question of whether the will of humans is free, of whether their actions are voluntary, is a nonissue for Aquinas. Some would argue that if humans can choose to act freely, then God must not be omnipotent; others claim that if God is in control of all things, then the will of man is deterministic and not free at all (Feser, 2009). Aquinas perceives flaws in both perspectives and points to an alternative that allows for the will of man to be considered free while still maintaining the omnipotence of God. The natural order that exists follows a predetermined set of principles that were put in place by God as the First Cause. As such, God is still the First Cause of all things, including the actions carried out by an individual's will. Though it is possible for God to operate outside the natural law (as in the case of miracles), He will typically operate within the natural law, and within the nature of the object He is causing to move.

The will of humans operates freely within the bounds of its nature to choose the means an individual will follow as he or she is naturally directed toward his or her teleological end, whether that end is ever actualized or even recognized by the person or not. As such, humans experience both *natural volitions* and *deliberate volitions* (Brennan, 1941). Natural volitions are those decisions that have a universal good as their formal object. As a universal good, it would be against the nature of the will to choose to move away from the object or to not move at all (though this does still occur, as will be seen below). Natural volitions represent the teleological end of the person. Deliberate volitions are those choices that possess a particular good as their formal object. Since these particular goods lack some goodness compared to the supreme, universal good, they can be considered nongoods (not to be confused with evils) because they will never fully satisfy. As such, the will is free to choose to either desire them or not. Deliberate

volitions can be said to be the means of an individual. Stated briefly, the will allows humans to behave in a voluntary manner, choosing to pursue one course of action over another, but the actions that are chosen are done within the context of the nature of humankind (a nature that was created by God, the First Cause).

Morality according to Aquinas. As mentioned briefly, the rational soul possesses the power of the intellect, which informs the will of the person's nature and experience. The will in turn is that by which the person will choose to act toward his or her good, which over time is referred to as the individual's morality. A number of interesting questions might be raised by this summary of the powers that distinguish human beings from other living beings that exist lower in the natural hierarchical ordering of beings (plants and animals). Two of interest here are 1) the notion of goodness and 2) the assertion that the individual will choose to act in a manner that is for his or her good.

Unless a person is experiencing some defect that inhibits his or her ability to think clearly and abstractly, he or she will choose to act according to that which is good and to avoid that which is bad. Stated differently, individuals tend to choose to pursue goodness by their very nature (as part of their teleology). To what, then, does "goodness" refer? It is not thought of by Aquinas in the same manner as it is by humanists or most contemporary thinkers, as a subjective opinion of what is deemed appropriate for one person or another in a given situation. Rather, goodness refers to that which fulfills one's teleological purpose, the final cause of humankind according to the natural law (Feser, 2009). Goodness is not at all subjective. It is an objective reality that exists naturally in an object and measures how closely the object fulfills its teleological purpose. Take the example of mothering (the vegetative power of reproduction, possessed also by humans). One aspect of mothering is to nurture and protect one's children. Described in terms of efficient and final causes, mothers by nature care for and attempt to keep their children safe (efficient cause) so as to raise children that are nurtured, safe, and capable of

functioning well in society (final cause). A mother who fulfills this purpose (who nurtures and protects her children) is said to be a good mother because her actions are consistent (over time) with the end goal of what it means to be a mother (in this limited example of mothering). A mother who repeatedly ignores her children's basic needs and does not keep them safe from abuse is said to be a bad mother, simply because she is not fulfilling the natural role (the teleological purpose) of motherhood. Goodness is simply defined by how perfectly one fulfills his or her teleological purpose. Similarly, badness is defined as the absence of goodness, or anything that does not draw the individual toward his or her natural end. Since the second mother does not instantiate the essence of motherhood as well as the first does, she is, by this measure of goodness, not as good of a mother as the first.

The ultimate, or highest, teleological purpose of the powers of the rational soul (i.e., of human beings) is to know God. That all other pursuits toward happiness and well-being (e.g., wealth, fame, secular pleasures, power) are temporary and leave much to be desired bears witness to the fact that this is the ultimate goal (and therefore the ultimate goodness) of our soul (Feser, 2009). The shortcoming of these other pursuits lies also in the fact that they are all created beings (i.e., particular goods as opposed to universal goods), which are not able to satisfy the soul to the same extent as the Creator is. The very intellect of human beings, though, is a testament to their teleological tendency to aspire toward God. God, being supremely perfected in His powers, is the maximum (the highest standard) for each of the divine attributes. The human intellect, though flawed by its very nature in comparison to the intellect of God, nonetheless possesses within itself the final cause of pursuing truth and grasping knowledge of the nature of objects. Thus, although the goodness of man's intellect will never reach the perfection of God's intellect, its nature is still to strive toward divine, perfect goodness within the confines of man's nature (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Moreover, the moral law by which man's actions are deemed either punishable or commendable only makes sense within the context of an ultimate, objective judge of good and

evil (Brennan, 1941). If this were not so, morality would be indeterminable with each person deciding on his or her own standards that serve his or her own interests regardless of how others are affected. Simply, moral chaos would ensue.

This definition of goodness and Aquinas' assertion that the pursuit of God is the ultimate good for the rational soul raises the second question mentioned above: about whether individuals will choose to act in a manner that is for their good. Surely examples of individuals who seem to be acting in a manner that is inconsistent with their teleological purpose come to mind easily, as in the example of the mother who does not care for or protect her children. There are also those who deny God's existence, who would likely ascribe to some other definition of goodness, particularly ultimate goodness. The wills of these individuals (and those of countless others who could be used as examples) do not appear to be operating in a manner that directs them toward their teleological purpose. Still, it is not only important to bear in mind that determining what is good "is a matter of determining what fulfills our nature, not our contingent desires" (Feser, 2009, p. 180) but also that the final cause of an object is inherent in the object whether the object desires it or even recognizes it as such. The object need not even fulfill this teleological purpose for the fact to remain that it was the ultimate goal for the object (again, whether consciously desired or not).

The same is true of human beings. Obstacles often arise that inhibit the person from desiring or even recognizing what is truly good. Individual differences arise in the perfection of one man's powers over another's as a result of the body's capacity for the form of the powers being superior in the former compared to the latter, says Aquinas (Brennan, 1941). Moreover, the sin of not pursuing supreme goodness is rooted in the vices of ignorance (which blocks knowledge from the intellect), malice (which distorts the intellect's knowledge), or passion (which obstructs the clarity of the will's judgments), or some combination thereof. As an imperfect analogy, consider the child who wants to play outside in the midst of a severe

thunderstorm. Although his mother brings him indoors to safety (thereby fulfilling part of her nature as a mother), this may be met with tears or a temper tantrum because the child does not understand that his mother desires what is best for him by restricting his play in this manner. Regarding the corruption that can occur in human desires, affecting how the will operates, Edward Feser (2009) remarks:

Desires are nature's way of prodding us to do what is good for us, but like everything else in the natural order, they are subject to various imperfections and distortions. Hence, though in general and for the most part our desires match up with nature's purposes, this is not true in every single case. Habituated vice, peer pressure, irrationality, mental illness, and the like can often deform our subjective desires so that they turn us away from what nature intends, and thus from what is good for us. Genetic defect might do the same; just as it causes deformities like clubfoot and polydactyly, so too might it generate psychological and behavioral deformities as well. (p. 179)

To summarize, although humans possess an inherent purpose to operate toward their good, this truth is not always evident in the actions of people. All of the "imperfections and distortions" that cause people to operate outside of their teleological purpose can be explained biblically as the sin nature that entered mankind after the Fall in Genesis 3. In other words, the "doctrine of original sin, which can be established on purely philosophic grounds, has an immediate bearing on the study of human nature" such that "no human being exhibits the excellencies which we theoretically attribute to human nature. Neither are the acts, powers, and habits of man subordinated in proper rule and measure, as we speculatively picture them in their relationships" (Brennan, 1941, p. 109-110). Thus, although there is a deep rooted desire within humanity to pursue what is good and right for the soul, people are faced with a variety of trials and shortcomings that present challenges in the process.

The desire individuals have to seek out God as their ultimate purpose is evident in that religion and spirituality have emerged in some form universally across cultures (Anderson, 2012). Still, one point of contention that may arise in light of Aquinas' understanding of morality is that it leaves little room for those who do not believe in God to experience the deep-rooted goodness their souls desire. It seems that Aquinas would respond to this criticism by acknowledging that there is some truth to it, but that the claim by no means represents an absolute truth. Since beings need not acknowledge their natural ends for them to still be drawn toward them, it follows that there are some final causes within the natural order that individuals will still tend toward without them pursuing God. In other words, there are certain aspects of the natural law that are intelligible without a reliance on any theology (Feser, 2009). This general revelation, or areas of the natural order in which goodness is to some degree revealed to all people, including those who do not acknowledge God, is also discussed in Scripture:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:19-20)

Nevertheless, since the natural law was instated by God through His eternal law, there does remain the need for individuals to pursue God as their ultimate teleological end if they are to fully grasp the goodness that their soul desires (Feser, 2009). The powers of the rational soul serve both efficient and final causes in this regard in that it is through the intellect and the will that one can know God (efficient cause), and this knowledge of God is the ultimate end goal of the soul (final cause). Biblically, this would constitute a special (specific, divine) revelation whereby the goodness of God is gifted to individuals by God through faith (e.g., Matthew 16:16-17, Luke 8:9-

10, Acts 9:1-19, Ephesians 2:1-10, James 1:5, 2 Peter 1:3-4). It is only through the grace of God that goodness is fully comprehensible to man, as it is through the intellect (whereof God is the Creator and First Cause) that pure goodness (i.e., God) is intelligible (Brennan, 1941).

The Passions of Man. Recall that man exists as one complete corporeal substance comprised of both body (material) and soul (immaterial). The mind informs man with a knowledge that is separate from matter. Although the known object may very well be grounded in matter, this entitative form is not possessed by the intellect; rather an immaterial, intentional form is what exists in the intellect. The passions yield desires that move the knower into action, driving the individual toward a real, physical union with the object (Brennan, 1941). The whole of the individual, body and soul, are thereby satisfied.

Just as human nature is hylomorphic (consisting of both material and immaterial substances understood as one), so are the passions psychosomatic (comprising both a psychological and a physical aspect). Every passion produces physiological changes in the person and desires (immaterial) that together serve to either draw the individual closer to the object or repel him or her from it (Brennan, 1941). If the physiological changes that take place are minor, the passions are referred to as *feelings*. If the physiological changes are more intense, they are called *emotions*. Briefly, feelings bring the individual pleasure or displeasure that is just above the noticeable threshold of bodily changes as a result of sensitive knowledge as well as rational knowledge (by way of increased certitude). Emotions are accompanied by much stronger bodily changes, well above the threshold of what the individual will notice. The specific physiological changes that occur are often similar for various emotions, which means that the individual emotions are discernible by their formal object not by the particular physiological reaction that occurs.

Passions, strictly speaking, are the acts of the appetitive power (motivated by the estimative and cognitive powers) that identify objects as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, advantageous or injurious, and so on (Brennan, 1941). A *concupiscible appetite* is one that is fully pleasurable or not at all pleasurable. Those objects that are deemed concretely good are pursued and those deemed concretely evil are avoided. One individual may, for the sake of illustration, be drawn toward sweets and be repulsed by lutefisk. He or she will effortlessly pursue the former while avoiding the latter. Temperance is often required to moderate the concupiscible appetites, lest the ensuing desires become domineering. An *irascible appetite* is one that requires arduousness, whether pleasurable or not. The object that is deemed good requires overcoming obstacles to attain it, and the object deemed evil requires great struggle to avoid. An individual might, for example, overcome great odds and hours of physical therapy to regain the ability to walk after experiencing a horrific traffic accident. Another may struggle daily to overcome a former drug addiction, faced with temptations to revert back to this habit in nearly every situation. Fortitude is required when faced with the arduousness of irascible appetites.

There are a total of 11 specific passions that stem from concupiscible and irascible appetites, which also encompass all other emotions of man (Brennan, 1941). Of the concupiscible appetites, when the individual is attracted toward the object (when object is deemed good), he or she experiences *love*. If this desirable object is within the person's possession, he or she experiences *joy*, but if not he or she experiences *desire* for it. When the individual is repelled by the object (when the object is deemed evil), he or she experiences *hate*. If this obnoxious object is possessed by the individual, he or she experiences *sadness*, but if not he or she experiences *aversion* toward it. For the irascible appetites, when the individual is attracted toward something that is difficult to achieve, he or she experiences *hope* when the object is viewed as attainable and

despair when it is not.² If the object is evil, he or she experiences *courage* when the struggle to resist the evil is considered possible and *fear* when it is not. If the person fails at resisting the evil, he or she experiences *anger*. The principle of all passions is love. Love is that which motivates all of the individual's actions and all other emotions surrounding the object of his love to some degree.

Appetite (also called *orexis*) is exhibited in three different manners, corresponding to the three types of soul (Brennan, 1941). *Natural appetite* merely denotes properties that are present in the object. There is no knowledge involved in a natural appetite, only a natural affinity or aversion. The north side of a magnet, for example, is naturally repelled from the north side of a second magnet but is naturally attracted to its south side. Perhaps a more appropriate example would be the sunflower's natural proclivity to grow in such a manner that it is facing the sunlight. *Sensitive appetite* does involve knowledge – sensitive knowledge – but is limited to particulars. This is represented by the animal that, in line with the principles of classical conditioning, has learned to be attracted to the sound of the garage door opening upon his master's return. *Intellectual appetite* proceeds from the will and is limited only by the finite nature of the concepts that are known. Being subordinate to the will, the individual exercises the power of the will in allowing himself or herself to be drawn by the object. The person is not simply a passive victim of his or her desires but chooses when and how to act based on his or her passions as well as reason.

Both the passions and the will operate within the individual and play an important role in influencing how he or she will act (Brennan, 1941). The passions are beneficial in their capacity

² Aquinas does not recognize a unique passion for an object that is good that was difficult to attain because it would then cease to be an irascible appetite and instead become a concupiscible appetite, meaning the individual would experience love (Brennan, 1941). It seems possible, however, that the individual might also feel *relief* after acquiring an irascible good. This would of course be subordinate to the love felt for the object, but in much the same manner that all other passions are derivative of love in one way or another.

to physically move the individual toward or away from an object. The will, being superior to the passions, is beneficial in its aptitude for discerning when and how to move, serving as a sort of gatekeeper for the individual that manages the impulses of the passions so as to maximize the long-term well-being of the individual. Man, therefore, is moved by the passions, but only at the consent of the will. Still, it happens that man is sometimes “easily led to overlook what is advantageous to his spiritual nature” (p. 109), which leads to the occasional battle that arises between an individual’s passions and reason. This internal struggle is bemoaned by St. Paul:

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
(Romans 7:19-23)

When an individual experiences tension between the desires of the passions and the reason of the will, it threatens his or her overall well-being. The risk is that if too much attention is paid to one’s material well-being, he or she may be “swallowed up in its luxuries. The more he feeds his senses, the less inclined he is to nourish his mind. The more he gives rein to his passions, the less inclined he is to discipline his will” (Brennan, 1941, p. 109). Though the passions and reason are both beneficial to the development of man, it is critical that “the legitimate privileges of the one must not be emphasized at the expense of the rightful claims of the other” (p. 109). There exists an intricate balance that must be maintained between the two.

The Habits of Man. Repeatedly exercising a power will lead to the formation of a habit over time, in that “power gives birth to action, and [repeated] action gives birth to habit” (Brennan, 1941, p. 260). Otherwise stated, the more an individual acts in a particular capacity, the

easier that action becomes (the more skilled he or she becomes in this regard) and the more likely the person is to act accordingly in the future. Habits, once formed, make individuals somewhat disposed to act in a particular way as opposed to taking some alternative course of action. The well-established habit often seems as *second nature* to the individual; it is effortless and almost natural for the person to act in a manner consistent with the habit and would require great concentration and effort to act otherwise. To reiterate, habits are formed through repeated actions and often require some degree of effort before they are well-established. If the power in question is not exercised, the habit will weaken, even to the point of extinction. “To pit one’s tennis skill against a superior player is to improve one’s game; to exercise one’s intellect on cheap fiction is to spoil one’s taste for good reading. In the matter of habit, as in the matter of perfection, if we are not progressing, we are deteriorating” (Brennan, 1941, p.269). Thus, although an action may become effortless and second nature through the formation of a habit, even it can be weakened if the power is not exercised.

Although the power is foundational to the formation of a habit (it would be impossible to develop a particular habit if the power to do so were not present at the outset), habits also serve to further develop and perfect the power (Brennan, 1941). Specifically, since habits are a product of the powers of the rational soul (if they were not, they would be reducible to mere instincts or reflexes), they allow the intellectual powers (which, as powers of the soul are purely immaterial and can therefore act indefinitely) to act effectively in specific manners. Habits limit the range of possible actions to a more restricted range of probable actions.

Habits are said to be either moral or immoral depending on whether they are in line with the final cause of man. Virtues are those habits that are consistent with the teleological purpose of man. They serve to direct him toward ultimate happiness. Wallace (1996) identifies virtues as those habits which allow the individual to consistently think clearly and choose to act rightly within the context of the information and decision at hand. Vices are those habits that are

inconsistent with man's final goal. They move him away from supreme happiness by depriving him of some measure of good. Of the virtues, Aquinas recognizes five that are intellectual by nature: *understanding* (understanding first principles), *science* (understanding proximate causes), *wisdom* (understanding ultimate causes), *art* (right knowledge about what is made), and *prudence* (right knowledge about how to act). There are three virtues that are moral by nature: *justice* (controlling the impulses of the will: rendering to others what they are rightfully due), *temperance* (controlling the passions of the concupiscible appetite: restraint, self-control), and *fortitude* (controlling the passions of the irascible appetite: endurance, courage). The intellectual virtues (other than prudence) perfect the man only in part because they require only theoretical knowledge to operate effectively. The moral virtues (together with prudence, which completes the four cardinal virtues) perfect man more completely, since they add a component of practicality to their operation. Aquinas also recognized the three theological virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *love* listed in the Bible (1 Corinthians 13:13).

As with anything else, individual differences exist in the virtuousness of people. As was mentioned above, Aquinas teaches that individual differences arise, in part, as a result of the capacity of the person's body to house the perfection of a particular form (Brennan, 1941). Differences in rational acts are referred to as differences in personality, whereas differences in moral acts are referred to as differences in character. The question of how an individual becomes more virtuous (improves his or her character) is understood clearly when it is considered that virtues are examples of habits. To increase one's virtuousness, the individual must perform virtuous acts.

Views on Science and Philosophy

One reason for the opposing philosophies between Aquinas and other classic philosophers compared to modern philosophers stems from the differing views held by each on

the goal of science and the pursuit of knowledge. Ancient philosophers understood the goal of science to be the discovery of the teleological nature of objects. This knowledge was gained in an effort to strengthen one's soul and to prepare for the afterlife (Feser, 2009). This is markedly different from the perspective of contemporary philosophers, who view the goal of science to be to increase the power of humans (chiefly through technological advances) and to improve their lives in the here and now (Feser, 2009). On the one hand, philosophers once believed that their knowledge served to draw them into a better understanding of the "deep ontological structure of reality" (p. 39), believed to have benefits both in this life and the next. On the other hand, the aim of philosophers of late has shifted to a focus only on the present life and has favored mathematical and mechanical (read: anything but teleological) explanations for phenomena that ignores or outright denies the presence of final cause. Interestingly, this rejection of final cause has resulted in confusion and the rise of issues that are not problematic when the Aristotelian-Thomistic tenets are acknowledged and rightly understood, as evidenced by Alasdair MacIntyre's argument:

[The] plethora of competing moral theories within modern philosophy – not to mention the radical disagreement that has come to exist within Western society at large over the grounds and content of morality, and widespread skepticism about whether this disagreement is susceptible of any rational, objective adjudication – is a consequence of the abandonment of a teleological conception of human life in particular and the natural world in general. (Feser, 2009, p. 42)

Although contemporary philosophers insist (whether overtly or otherwise) that final causes are at best unimportant or at worst nonexistent, their avoidance of the natural teleological order in nature does not in any way negate its presence in reality. Merely focusing on a single (observable, quantifiable) aspect of an object ignores all other aspects of the object. Though this method is employed by the majority of modern scientific thinkers today, it does not follow that the other

aspects are unimportant or nonexistent. On the contrary, this approach simply reveals the biases that operate in those who are investigating the object. It should come as no surprise that aspects of an object that are ignored will not be understood to any great extent. Though a great deal may be learned about certain aspects of the object that are studied, the object itself will never be fully known. In order to glean a more complete understanding of the object, it is necessary to let reality guide one's method of investigation rather than allowing one's method to guide what is perceived as reality (Feser, 2009).

Similar to other fundamental teachings of Aquinas (e.g., the principle of finality), the holistic nature of the doctrine ofhylomorphism is one that clearly stands in stark contrast to the materialistic and reductionistic philosophies that are ever-popular today (Feser, 2009). Whereas materialists believe that all objects can be reduced to and understood solely in terms of the matter by which they are composed, Aquinas maintains that an object can only be truly understood as an integrated whole. It makes no sense to speak of the chair from a previous example exclusively in terms of the material it is made of. One must also consider its form (both substantially and accidentally) in order to gain a complete understanding of the object. In the same manner, a person can only be understood as an integrated whole. He or she cannot be reduced to the matter that constitutes his or her body or the neurons that fire in his or her brain. While the matter of the individual is one aspect of his or her existence, the form (i.e., the rational soul) of the person cannot be ignored. Together they (form and matter) make up the individual – both body and soul.

Being “Spiritual but not Religious” Revisited

The positivistic mindset of most psychologists has resulted in an abandonment of the immaterial soul with the material aspects of human nature being overemphasized. The consequence of this is that psychology is all but reduced to a branch of physiology and the whole of human nature can no longer be rightly understood. In light of the large degree of confusion and

dissention that pervades modern psychology, it should be apparent that “what we need today, as Aquinas would indicate, is really less of psychology and more of anthropology” (Brennan, 1941, p. 357). Aquinas provides such an anthropology through Aristotelian teachings that allows the scientist and the philosopher to work together in understanding the whole of their subject matter – man.

It is completely within the realm of science to study the accidental operations of man (his powers, passions, acts, and habits), but these phenomena must be understood within the context of the philosophical theories that speak to the whole substantial nature of mankind. If they are not, man himself is never known, only individual aspects of him, and these not very well, as they are merely accidental features of the whole substance of man. Consider a scientist who spent decades seeking to investigate every aspect of a handle. Without also considering the handle within the context of the whole armoire to which the handle is attached, no conclusive statements could be made about the final cause of the handle, and certainly the dresser itself would remain a mystery. Likewise, one might spend his or her lifetime seeking to understand the habits of man, and yet if these habits are not understood within the overall context of man’s nature, crucial components of information would be absent, thereby prohibiting the researcher from truly saying anything meaningful about man himself or his habits. Brennan puts it nicely when he says:

The thing to bear in mind, always, is that no single group of experiments, no analysis of individual operations, no exclusive use of one method, will give us a complete picture of human nature. Moreover, it must be remembered that no amount of factual information which is not properly ordered and integrated with a true philosophic concept of man can ever serve its final purpose of being built up into a permanent science of psychology. (p. 355)

Thus, though the operations of man are the rightful focus of science, understanding them within the context of his nature through philosophy is fundamental if any intelligible results are to be obtained. The individual parts of man have no meaning without understanding the whole of man as well.

The same is true when considering the religion and spirituality of an individual. These must be understood within the context of the whole being of man. It should never be lost sight of that man is an integrated whole whose essence is composed of both body and soul, or that the soul is the source of *all* of man's acts through his powers, passions, and habits (Brennan, 1941). It follows that even one's religion and spirituality can be understood more completely within the context of the whole being of man. Stated simply, a central aspect of understanding a person's religion and spirituality is the *person*.

The recent trends of scientists to abandon all consideration of the soul because it is immaterial and therefore not quantifiable results in the misunderstanding of the phenomena under investigation at best and the disintegration of the person at worst. Still, this philosophy of materialism persists, which makes evident why such mass confusion pervades psychological study (Adler, 1941; Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009; Pesut, et al., 2008; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Within an anthropological context though, we are better able to understand how religion and spirituality operate within the individual.

Although the teleological purpose of the rational soul has been discussed in more detail above, it is briefly reviewed here with the purpose of demonstrating the necessity of understanding religion and spirituality from an anthropological perspective. Considering one's religion first, the specific beliefs an individual holds in regard to the immaterial transcendent reality and the expectations for how individuals are to relate to that reality clearly operate within the realm of the rational soul. Since the formal object (the transcendent reality) is immaterial,

knowledge thereof can only be obtained through the intellect – a power of the rational soul, since the intellect is neither confined by material organs nor by material formal objects in its operation (Brennan, 1941). Since the intellect is naturally directed toward truth and seeks to understand the natural order of all things, the ultimate truth sought by the intellect, as we have seen above, is only fulfilled in the First Cause, the Creator of the universe and the entire natural order therein (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Over time the individual forms intellectual habits that either promote the future attainment of knowledge (virtues) or hinder it (vices).

One's spirituality, in the sense that it engages the person in a more concrete fashion by connecting the person to his or her religious beliefs, is also understood through the vantage point of the powers of the rational soul. Again, since the transcendent reality of God is immaterial, this reality can only be comprehended through the powers of the rational soul (Brennan, 1941). The will, as one of these powers, is naturally directed toward goodness and seeks to make decisions, in light of the information gleaned from the intellect, that move the individual closer to his or her ultimate teleological goal in a practical manner (connecting with the intangible, transcendent reality), thereby moving him or her toward happiness. The natural volitions of the will are those that deal with abstract and ultimate goodness. As was seen above, the ultimate goodness is fulfilled in the One who supremely fulfills all of the divine attributes, the One who embodies the maximum goodness toward which the will aspires (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009).

In its pursuit of goodness, the will must balance the needs of the passions, which operate in a concrete manner and strive toward uniting the body with particular goods. The will and the passions *together* lead the individual to act, whereby habits are formed over time and future action becomes easier. These moral habits (either virtues or vices), within the context of one's spirituality, either connect the individual to the goodness of the transcendent reality in a practical sense or move him or her away from fulfilling this final cause of the soul. Since love is the chief of all passions (1 Corinthians 13:13), it is what motivates all of the individual's actions and other

emotions regarding the object of his love. With respect to spirituality, the ultimate good with which the individual is striving to connect (the intangible reality) is the object of his love. Aquinas explains that “spiritual life consists primarily in charity, and he who does not have charity, he is regarded as spiritually nothing” (*On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, ch. 1). He goes on to describe spirituality as perfected through both love of God and love of our neighbors.

In short, one’s religion and spirituality are understood together within the whole human being through the operations of the intellect in revealing one’s religious beliefs and the will and passions in connecting him or her with the goodness of the transcendent reality. In both religion and spirituality, exercising the rational powers of the soul makes the actions of one’s religion and spirituality more natural and require less effort through the formation of habits, particularly the theological virtues. These virtues, when practiced, enable the individual to integrate his or her religious beliefs (through the intellect) into his or her life by making decisions (through the will) that serve as a means of connecting the person to the immaterial (spiritual) reality of God. Thus, a rightful understanding of one’s religion and spirituality cannot be achieved without at some point taking into consideration the rational soul that fundamentally allows the individual (as opposed to the lesser living beings) to act in this capacity in the first place.

The description of “spiritual but not religious” does not make existential sense in that it disintegrates the person. The religion of the person, the specific beliefs he or she holds in regard to the transcendent reality, are a product of what the intellect judges to be true. The spirituality of the person, the decisions he or she makes with the intent of connecting with the transcendent reality, are a product of the will moving toward the good. The two operate jointly in that the intellect informs the will with regard to the true nature of its formal object (increasing in knowledge concerning one’s religious beliefs) and the will uses this information to connect the individual more intimately with the formal object in a practical way (spiritual growth). As the will moves the individual closer to the transcendent reality (spiritual growth), the object becomes

more desirable (the person feels more love for the object), which in turn makes learning about the object easier and the object even more desirable.

When an individual claims to be “spiritual but not religious,” the assertion is essentially that his or her will is operating without the consultation of the intellect, which is clearly an illogical claim. Take the Christian, for example, who chooses to pray and read the Bible with the goal of growing in his or her relationship with Christ. These specific actions are chosen (as opposed to, say, exercising) in light of the specific religious beliefs that the individual has. The intellect informs the individual about the true essence of the transcendent reality, which in turn allows the will to discern what actions are good and effective at moving the individual closer to the transcendent reality. In order for the individual to choose to pray and read the Bible (instead of exercising) to deepen his or her relationship with Christ, the will must consult the intellect. The intellect and the will work together as partners to extend one’s knowledge about the nature of the intangible (intellect) and to connect the individual with the intangible in a practical way (will).

Say an individual does not ascribe to any particular religion and claims to be “spiritual but not religious.” Despite a lack of a specific religious affiliation, this statement still does not make sense in that it disintegrates the rational powers of the person. This individual still makes certain decisions about what behaviors are good and effective at fostering his or her spiritual health. These decisions can only be made in conjunction with the intellect. The individual may choose to meditate, for example, but there is some belief that is driving this decision as opposed to some other option. If the individual truly was “spiritual but not religious,” the will would be making decisions without any basis for why that decision is better than an alternative.

Understood within the context of the person, one’s religion and spirituality are linked in such a way as to prohibit an individual from being spiritual but not religious. In the terminology of Schneiders (2003), they operate together as partners within the individual. Given the rise of

positivism, though, it is no surprise that individuals would make this claim (Adler, 1941; Pesut, et al., 2008; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). The prevailing mindset is one that attempts to understand the individual without fully considering his or her true essence and reduces all phenomena to materialistic and physiological explanations that are quantifiable. Unfortunately, the consequence of this is that the powers of the rational soul, whose operations are immaterial by nature, are ignored or discredited (Brennan, 1941; Feser, 2009). Without them, the person is disintegrated from the status of a complete corporeal substance comprised of both body and soul and attempted to be understood merely within the confines of matter. Psychology is thereby reduced to physiology and the human soul is demoted to that of a sensitive soul at best (Brennan, 1941). Removing the very feature that distinguishes humans from other living beings (the rational soul) clearly hinders one's ability to understand individual aspects of being human in a coherent fashion.

The Current Study

The primary aim of the current study was to demonstrate that, in light of the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the claim of being spiritual but not religious does not make existential sense within the individual. Toward this end, the viability of this claim was investigated through the use of a structured interview. The secondary aim of the current study was to explore differences between those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious and those who considered themselves both spiritual and religious. This was accomplished by comparing both the quantity and the types of actions listed by individuals, actions which they believed characterized their own spirituality.

Hypotheses

With regard to the primary goal, it was hypothesized that individuals who considered themselves to be spiritual but not religious would tend to see their spirituality as driven by

religion by the end of the structured interview, despite that this was not how they viewed themselves at the beginning of the interview. Regarding the secondary goal, it was hypothesized that those who considered themselves to be both spiritual and religious would be able to list more actions that characterized their spirituality than those who considered themselves to be spiritual but not religious. It was further hypothesized that the actions of those who considered themselves spiritual and religious would be more likely to meet the criterion for being considered a spiritual action according to Aquinas. That is, the actions listed by individuals who were both spiritual and religious were expected to more often serve the purpose of connecting the individual with the intangible and supernatural than those listed by individuals who considered themselves spiritual but not religious.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A convenience sample was recruited through the Sona Research Participation System. Two groups of participants were invited to participate in the study based on their response to items on the prescreening survey. The primary group of interest consisted of individuals who endorsed the item “I consider myself to be spiritual but not religious.” The second group of participants, which served primarily as a comparison group for select analyses, consisted of individuals who endorsed the item “I consider myself to be both spiritual and religious.” A total of 1920 people completed the prescreening survey. There were 298 individuals who considered themselves spiritual but not religious; 908 considered themselves both spiritual and religious. Twenty-five participants were recruited for each group for a total of 50 participants. No restrictions were placed on religious affiliation or any other demographic variables.

Of those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious, 16 were female (64%) and 9 were male (36%). Twenty-two were Caucasian (88%), 2 were Native American (8%), and 1 was Asian (4%). Ages ranged from 18 to 23 years ($M = 19.60$, $SD = 1.47$). Eleven designated no religious affiliation (44%), 10 indicated a form of Christianity (40%; 4 were Nondenominational [16%], 2 were Baptist [8%], 2 were Methodist [8%], and 2 simply designated Christian [8%]), 2 were Agnostic (8%), 1 was Pagan (4%), and 1 was Buddhist/Catholic (4%).

Of those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious, 15 were female (60%) and 10 were male (40%). Nineteen were Caucasian (76%), 3 were Hispanic (12%), 1 was African American (4%), 1 was Native American (4%), and 1 was “Other” (4%). Ages ranged from 18 to 30 years ($M = 19.76$, $SD = 2.30$). Eight were Nondenominational Christians (32%), 6 simply indicated Christian (24%), 5 were Baptist (20%), 3 were Methodist (12%), 1 was Catholic (4%), 1 was Mormon (4%), and 1 was Nazarene (4%).

Materials

Structured Interview. Two versions of the structured interview were used – one for those who considered themselves spiritual but not religious (Appendix A) and one for those who consider themselves both spiritual and religious (Appendix B). The format of the former began by verifying that the participant considers himself or herself to be spiritual but not religious. He or she was then given the opportunity to define the terms “spiritual” and “religious” as they are used in his or her own personal construct system (Kelly, 1955). The participant was then asked why it is important to be identified as spiritual but not religious and what it is, specifically, about being religious that does not characterize him or her. Next, participants were asked to provide a list of spiritual actions they perform that characterize their own spirituality, along with the purpose of each action and the belief that leads them to perform that particular action. They were then asked why they do not consider each of the beliefs listed to be a religious belief. Participants were then provided definitions of religion and spirituality that are consistent with the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. The interviewer read through these descriptions with the participant and clarified anything the participant did not understand. The interviewer then walked through a vignette with the participant that served as an example of how religious beliefs and spiritual actions might look in a hypothetical individual. Next, the participant was given the opportunity to answer questions about a hypothetical individual in a second vignette to begin applying the provided definitions to a new example. The interviewer then asked the participant to apply the

new definitions to himself or herself by reflecting on the specific actions and beliefs that he or she had previously listed and determining whether he or she believed that the actions and beliefs would qualify as spiritual or religious, respectively. They were then asked if they thought Aquinas would consider them to be religious and if they thought he would consider them to be spiritual. Finally, they were asked to provide their opinion on how religion and spirituality are conceptualized according to Aquinas and to reflect on their own classification of themselves with regard to religion and spirituality.

Those who considered themselves to be both spiritual and religious participated in an abridged version of the structured interview (Appendix B). The format of their interview began by verifying that they consider themselves to be both spiritual and religious. Next, they were given the opportunity to define the terms “spiritual” and “religious” according to their own personal construct system (Kelly, 1955). They were then asked why it is important to identify themselves as both spiritual and religious. Finally, they were asked to provide a list of the spiritual actions they perform that characterize their own spirituality, as well as the purpose of each action and the belief that guides them to perform that particular action.

Demographics and Family History. Participants answered basic demographic questions (see Appendix C) including their gender, age, and ethnicity. They were also asked to provide their religious affiliation, whether they are a member of a local religious institution and how many religious services they attend in the typical week. Next, they were asked to reflect on their family while they were growing up and to provide the marital status of their parents, a list of their siblings (identified only as brother or sister and their ages), whether they were raised within a particular religion, and whether their mother and father were religious.

Religious Emphasis Scale. The Religious Emphasis Scale (Altemeyer, 1988; see Appendix C) consists of 10 items that are answered using a 6-point response format, ranging from

0 (no emphasis was placed on the behavior) to 5 (a very strong emphasis was placed on the behavior), in order to indicate “how much their parents emphasized practicing the family religion while they were growing up” (p. 205). The sum of the 10 items is used to determine the emphasis that was placed on the family religion while growing up.

Normed scores using college students in an introductory psychology class in Canada and their parents were 17.7 ($SD = 12.69$) for the students and 25.0 ($SD = 13.64$) for their parents. The scale has been demonstrated to possess an excellent level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$) as well as high levels of external validity using a variety of other measures (Hill & Hood, 1999). For example, for students and parents respectively, the scale correlated .58 and .50 with Allport and Ross' (1967) Intrinsic Religious Orientation Scale and -.20 and -.15 with Allport and Ross' (1967) Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale. Fullerton and Hunsberger's (1982) Christian Orthodoxy Scale correlated .59 and .49 for students and parents, respectively.

Procedure

The majority of the study consisted of the structured interview. The version of the interview used for each participant was determined by whether he or she self-identified as spiritual but not religious or as both spiritual and religious. All interviews were conducted by the same interviewer, who remained as neutral and consistent as possible when interacting with the participants. The interviewer read each question to the participant from a laptop computer while sitting at a desk across from the participant, allowed as much time as was needed for him or her to think of a response, and then typed what the participant said, allowing for him or her to modify the response as desired. Only one interviewee was present for each interview – that is, there were no group interviews. After participants completed their respective version of the interview, they were asked to complete the demographic and family history questions and the Religious Emphasis Scale.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Primary Analyses

The primary analyses were intended to address the aim of the study to demonstrate that the claim of being spiritual but not religious does not make existential sense within the individual in light of the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and specifically the hypothesis that participants who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious would tend to view their spirituality as driven by religion at the end of their structured interview.

The main results from these analyses are summarized in the Table and described in more detail below. Briefly, for those participants who started the interview claiming to be spiritual but not religious, whether they understood Aquinas' definitions, their opinion of Aquinas' definitions, their perspective on whether they considered religion to be necessary for an individual to develop spiritually, their thoughts on how Aquinas would classify them with regard to religion and spirituality, as well as their final classification of themselves with regard to religion and spirituality are depicted. The typical pattern of responses is then presented in an effort to begin developing a profile of the archetypal spiritual but not religious individual, followed by more detailed descriptions of those individuals who did not follow the modal pattern.

Table

Summary of Results for Spiritual but not Religious Individuals

Question	Responses		
Understanding	Yes	No	
	23	2	
Opinion	Liked	Disliked	Unsure
	19	3	3
Religion Necessary	Yes	No	
	21	4	
Aquinas' Classification	Both S and R	Neither S nor R	S not R
	21	3	1
Final Classification	Both S and R	Neither S nor R	S not R
	20	2	3

Note. n = 25

Understanding of Aquinas' Definitions

Participant responses to the structured interview were first analyzed for an understanding of the definitions given of how Aquinas would view religion and spirituality. In order to do this, two independent raters used participants' responses to questions about the vignette that demonstrated examples of religious beliefs guiding spiritual actions in a hypothetical individual

as well as participants' free responses to other questions in the interview (mainly, their explanations of why they thought Aquinas would or would not consider them to be religious and/or spiritual). The raters looked for some indication that participants understood that religion and spirituality are inexorably linked to one another and that one's religious beliefs guide his or her spiritual actions. Based on their responses, each participant was given a score of "Yes" or "No" by each rater.

The raters agreed in their assessments for each participant (100%) and found that 23 of the 25 participants (92%) demonstrated an understanding of the definitions of how Aquinas would define religion and spirituality. For example, one participant who showed an understanding of the definitions said:

There's a motivation behind my spirituality. It's more of a cause and effect thing. Religion causes spirituality. In order to be spiritual I have to have some religious background. I practice what I believe I should do. It's how I connect with the intangible or supernatural. It's interesting how you can't have one without the other. They complement each other.

Another participant, who did not demonstrate an understanding of the definitions said, "I guess I don't use any intellect. I don't believe in any higher power, so I don't take any action to do anything." This participant also stated that the actions of the individual in the vignette were spiritual but were not guided by religious beliefs.

Opinion of Aquinas' Definitions

Participants' free responses to questions in the structured interview were next analyzed for their opinion of Aquinas' definitions of religion and spirituality. The main question of interest was "What is your opinion of how religion and spirituality are defined according to Aquinas?" The two independent raters gave each participant a score of "Liked," "Disliked," or "Unsure."

The raters agreed in their assessment of each participant (100%) and found that 19 of the participants (76%) indicated that they liked Aquinas' definitions, 3 participants (12%) did not like the definitions, and 3 participants (12%) did not demonstrate a clear opinion. For example, one of the participants who liked the definitions said:

I think he did a great job. I've never really considered myself religious, but he's right that people are lead to do things because of the things that they believe and hear about religious topics. For me, with Jimmy V. – he's a devout Catholic and he impacts me through his beliefs even though I'm not a devout Catholic. Catholicism impacts me through him.

A participant who did not like the definitions stated:

I feel like anything could be considered religious and spiritual because no action is independent of a belief. They are very intertwined so that anyone could be both religious and spiritual. So, I don't think it's a very good definition.

One of the participants who did not indicate a clear opinion of the definitions simply stated, "The two words are not as structured as I thought."

Religion Necessary for Spirituality

The question "Do you think there is any merit to the idea that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually?" was also coded in a "Yes" or "No" fashion based on participants' responses. The two independent raters agreed (100%) that 21 of the 25 participants (84%) agreed that religious is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually. For example, one participant who was given a score of "Yes" said, "Yes. In order to be spiritual you have to have a means of being spiritual, something you believe in that is immaterial or supernatural – the religious aspect of it. If A, then B scenario." Another participant who also agreed stated, "Yes

because if you believe something to be true, that will produce certain actions. You can't do something without believing in something first or believe that something is true. We don't do something without a reason behind it." One of the participants who disagreed stated, "No. You can connect to things you don't understand without any defined spiritual actions. You can just try to connect in your own way." Another participant who was given a score of "No" stated:

Overall, I think religion shouldn't be necessary for spirituality. I think I would define spirituality differently. I would think of it as being in tune with the things around you. I feel like there are different types of spirituality, so it's hard to define. That's probably why the definition has been unclear in recent years.

Applying Aquinas' Definitions

The spiritual but not religious individuals also indicated how Aquinas would perceive them with regard to religion and spirituality. Twenty-one of the 25 participants (84%) said that Aquinas would consider them to be both spiritual and religious, 3 participants (12%) said that Aquinas would classify them as neither religious nor spiritual, and 1 participant (4%) maintained that Aquinas would call him spiritual but not religious.

To determine how they classified themselves by the end of the structured interview, the question "In light of how Aquinas defined religion and spirituality, is there anything you would like to modify or add to how you would classify yourself with regard to religion and spirituality?" was also coded using two independent raters. The following coding protocol was used:

- Participant modified his or her classification to be more consistent with the definitions provided. For example, "My actions are linked to religion more strongly than I thought."
- Participant modified his or her classification, but the new classification was not clearly a result of wanting to be more consistent with the definitions provided. For

example, “I always knew I wasn’t religious, but now I am wondering if I am as spiritual as I thought I was.”

- Participant stood firm in original classification. For example, “I still don’t see how I could ever be classified as religious.”
- Participant’s response was unable to be scored because it was unclear what he or she was trying to say or it was irrelevant.

Three of the 25 participants (12%) maintained their original classification, without indicating any intentions of modifying or adding to their claim, by giving answers such as, “Spiritual but not religious. Same. No change.” The other 22 respondents (88%) modified or added to their classification of being spiritual but not religious to include some element of religion, coming more in line with how religion and spirituality relate to one another according to Aquinas. Of these 22 individuals, 2 (9.09%) said that they were neither religious nor spiritual (e.g., “I would say I’m not religious and not spiritual I guess.”). The other 20 individuals (90.91%) made statements about being both spiritual and religious. For example, one participant said, “I would classify myself as both religious and spiritual. This is really interesting, a lot more interesting than I thought it would be. Aquinas changed my view of what it means to be religious.”

Developing a Profile

In order to begin developing somewhat of a profile and to glean a better understanding of those who classified themselves as spiritual but not religious, the typical pattern of responses was determined. Seventeen participants (68%) demonstrated an understanding of Aquinas’ definitions, indicated that they liked the definitions, determined that they considered religion to be a prerequisite for an individual to develop spiritually, said that Aquinas would classify them as both spiritual and religious, and then modified their final classifications of themselves to include elements of being both spiritual and religious.

Of the eight participants who did not follow this pattern of responses, four were still consistent with the Thomistic perspective on religion and spirituality. One participant indicated that she understood and liked the definitions, and said that religion was necessary for an individual to develop spiritually. She then determined that Aquinas would have classified her as neither spiritual nor religious. She then similarly modified her own classification, saying that she would consider herself to be neither spiritual nor religious. Two participants understood the definitions, indicated that there was merit to the idea that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually, said that Aquinas would classify them as both spiritual and religious, and then modified their own classifications to both spiritual and religious. The difference for these two individuals compared to the typical pattern of responses was that they did not like Aquinas' definitions. The fourth participant who was still in line with Aquinas' view on religion and spirituality understood the definitions, said that religion was necessary for spirituality, thought Aquinas would classify her as both spiritual and religious, and then modified her own classification to include both religion and spirituality. Her responses deviated from the modal pattern of responses in that it was unclear whether she liked the definitions or not.

The remaining four participants who did not follow the archetypal pattern of responses were in some way at odds with Aquinas' conceptualizations of religion and spirituality. One participant demonstrated some degree of understanding of the definitions and thought that Aquinas would classify her as both spiritual and religious. She departed from the typical pattern in that she did not like the definitions, did not think religion was necessary for an individual to develop spiritually, and maintained her original classification of being spiritual but not religious. Another participant exhibited an understanding of Aquinas' definitions, thought that Aquinas would classify her as neither spiritual nor religious, and also modified her classification of herself by saying that she was neither spiritual nor religious. Yet, her opinion of the definitions was unclear, and she did not think that religion was necessary for an individual to develop spiritually.

The third participant did not demonstrate an understanding of Aquinas' definitions, did not express a clear opinion of the definitions, did not think that religion was necessary for spiritually, thought that Aquinas would classify her as neither spiritual nor religious, and then maintained her original spiritual but not religious classification. The final participant who was inconsistent with Aquinas' view of religion and spirituality did not exhibit an understanding of Aquinas' definitions, but said that he liked them, did not think that religion was necessary for spirituality, thought that Aquinas would classify him as spiritual but not religious, and did not change his classification of himself.

The eight participants who were inconsistent with the modal pattern did not share any demographic or family history characteristic that might provide some explanation for why they deviated from the typical pattern. In looking only at the four individuals who did not fit the pattern and who were inconsistent with Aquinas' teachings, the only characteristics that they all shared were that they were not church members, did not attend any religious services in the typical week, and all thought that there was not any merit to the idea that religion was necessary for an individual to develop spiritually.

Secondary Analyses

The secondary analyses were intended to address the aim of the study to compare those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious and those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious. Specifically, it was expected that participants who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious would list more actions that characterize their spirituality than those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious. It was further expected that the actions listed by those who considered themselves to be both spiritual and religious would be more likely than the actions listed by those who considered themselves

spiritual but not religious to meet the criterion of being considered a spiritual act according to Aquinas (i.e., serving the purpose of connecting the individual with the immaterial).

Total Number of Actions

The total number of actions the participants could list that they perform as a result of their spirituality was tallied for each participant. The number of responses given by those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious was compared to that of those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious using Observation Oriented Modeling (OOM; Grice, 2011). Specifically, the Build/Test Model option was used with Identity (Spiritual but not religious, Both spiritual and religious) as the cause and Total Actions as the effect. It was expected that those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious would list more spiritual exercises than those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious. The observed range in the total number of actions listed across all participants was 0 to 16. The pattern that emerged was consistent with the expectation (Figure 2). There appeared to be a natural break in the data at 4 actions. Only one of the 25 spiritual but not religious participants listed more than four actions (6 to be exact); 19 listed two or three actions. All but three of the spiritual and religious individuals listed five or more actions, with over half the participants (13) listing seven or more actions. Consequently, 45 of the 50 participants (90%) were correctly classified by the analysis ($c < .01$, 1000 trials).

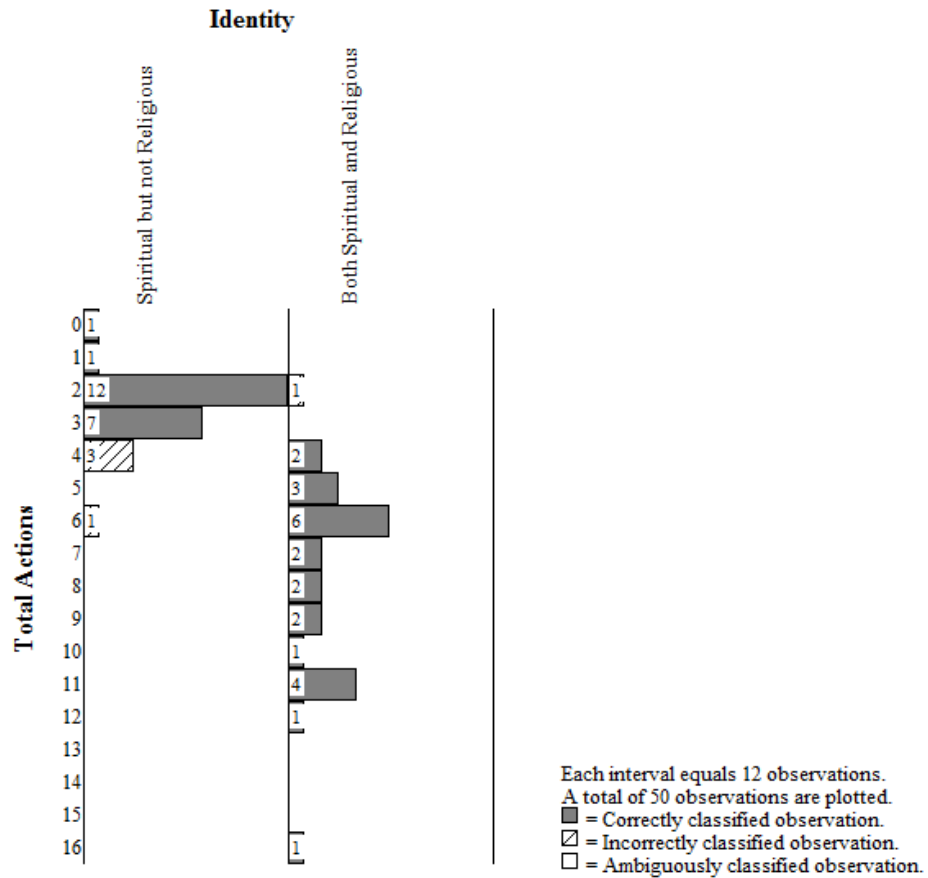


Figure 2. Multigram conforming Total Actions to Identity

Percent of Spiritual Actions

Each of the actions listed along with its stated purpose was also analyzed to verify that it did indeed meet the criterion for what would be considered a spiritual act according to the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Specifically, in looking at both the stated action and its intended purpose, two independent raters coded the responses based on whether the action served to connect the individual with the intangible or supernatural in some way. For the set of actions listed by each person, the raters determined what percentage would be considered spiritual actions. The raters agreed in their assessment of 252 of the 255 actions listed (98.82%). The average of their ratings was then used to determine the percentage score for each participant.

For example, one spiritual but not religious person listed the following actions: “1) Take everything in and take time to smell the roses, and 2) Don’t take things for granted.” The stated purpose for these actions was: “1) To realize that the world is bigger than yourself, and 2) Appreciate the little things in life.” Neither of these actions seems to meet the criterion for a spiritual action because they do not go beyond the material realm in any way in order to serve the purpose of connecting the person to the immaterial or supernatural. Both raters coded this individual’s actions as 0% spiritual.

A participant who identified as both spiritual and religious listed the following actions: “1) Have a strong prayer life, 2) Read the Bible regularly, staying connected with His Word, 3) Go to church, and 4) Meditate on what you’ve read and try to think about what the Bible is saying.” The purpose of each of these actions was:

1) To keep in communication with God through prayer. You feel like you’re more connected and have a stronger relationship with God. Like with any other person you have a relationship with, you need communication for the relationship to thrive,

2) To be familiar with His Word. It shows a lot of Jesus’ character. To familiarize yourself with that so you know who you’re talking to while you’re praying. It helps with daily life; it’s very enriching in life. It’s a very important part of our relationship with Christ, knowing and being familiar with the Word,

3) It’s for community and keeping in contact with others who share your beliefs. Keeping each other accountable. Helping each other grow in a relationship with God so you don’t have to do it alone, and

4) So that when you’re reading, you’re not reading without purpose. To understand the Bible better and to have it become less confusing.

All four of these actions appear to meet the criterion for a spiritual action because each purpose is to connect the individual with the immaterial, specifically to strengthen her relationship with and understanding of God. Both raters coded this individual's actions as 100% spiritual.

One participant who identified as spiritual but not religious stated, "I really can't think of anything I do." Since she could not list any spiritual actions, she was given a score of 0%. The percentage of spiritual actions of those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious was then compared to that of those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious in OOM using the Build/Test Model option with Identity as the cause and Percent Spiritual as the effect. It was expected that the data would reflect a pattern indicating that those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious would tend to report a higher percentage of actions that truly met the criterion for being considered a spiritual action – connecting the individual to the immaterial in a practical sense.

The pattern that emerged was generally consistent with the expectation (Figure 3). Every action (100%) of all 25 of those who identified as both spiritual and religious was rated as spiritual. Of the 25 individuals who were spiritual but not religious, 14 listed actions of which 50% or less could be considered spiritual; the actions of 10 of the spiritual but not religious individuals were rated as 100% spiritual. Overall, 40 of the 50 participants (80%) were correctly classified by the analysis ($c < .01$, 1000 randomization trials), indicating that these results were highly improbable.

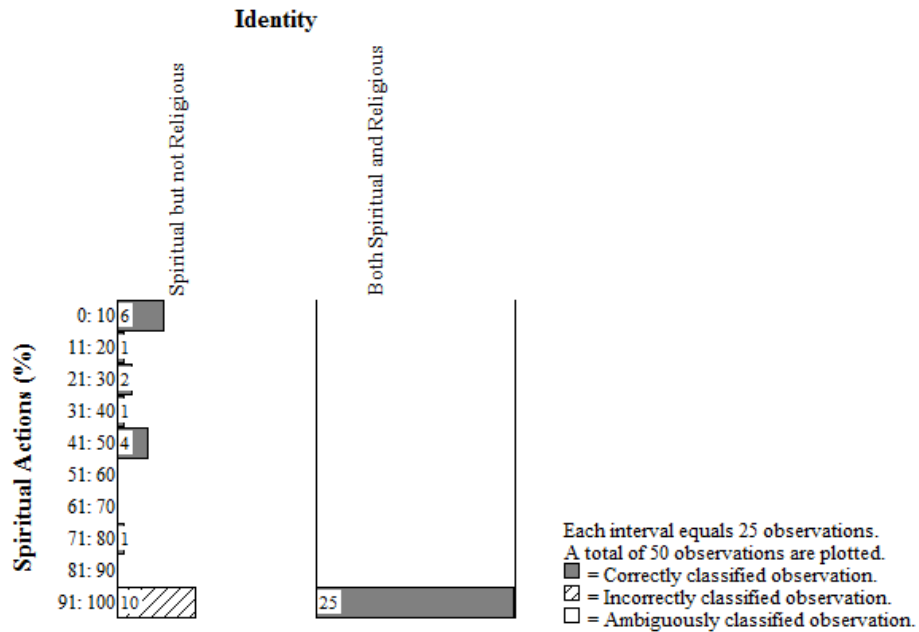


Figure 3. Multigram conforming Spiritual Actions to Identity

Additional Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted in order to provide a clearer understanding of those who considered themselves spiritual but not religious, comparing them to those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious where appropriate.

Percent Religious Beliefs

Similar to each action listed being coded for whether it met the criterion for being considered a spiritual act, each belief that was listed as the reason for why the individual was lead to perform each action was also analyzed for whether it met the criterion for being considered a religious belief according to the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. The two independent raters determined whether each belief was indeed a religious belief – that is, whether it spoke to what the individual believed to be true of the immaterial or supernatural. For the set of beliefs listed for each person, the raters determined what percentage would be considered religious

beliefs. The raters agreed in their assessment of 251 of the 256 beliefs listed (98.05%). The average of their ratings was then used to determine the percentage score for that participant.

For example, the spiritual but not religious individual above (under *Percent Spiritual Actions*) listed the following beliefs as leading her to perform those particular actions: “1) You get caught up in other things and you need time to realize and accept all the other things in life, and 2) You don’t take things for granted. You appreciate things more and know what’s in front of you and what you have.” Neither of these beliefs seems to meet the criterion for being considered a religious belief, as they do not deal with matters of the intangible. Both raters scored this individual’s beliefs as 0% religious.

The spiritual and religious individual above (under *Percent Spiritual Actions*) listed the following beliefs as the cause of her choosing to perform each of the respective actions:

- 1) My prayers aren’t unheard. I’m not praying to a wall. God is listening. Even if I don’t get a direct answer, it’s not unanswered. In prayer, I will have a stronger relationship with God.
- 2) The Bible holds a lot of answers of the questions we have in life. It is a source of comfort and reassurance. God gave us the Bible in order for us to understand and know Him better and to grow closer to Him.
- 3) I believe that community is very important for Christianity and my belief in God. There is strength in numbers. We shouldn’t do it alone.
- 4) It stems off of knowing God through knowing His Word. Reading it with purpose and understand what you read so you can apply it to your life instead of reading it and not doing anything.

Given that the actions this individual listed were all coded as spiritual actions, they must be driven by religious beliefs in order to remain consistent with Aquinas’ anthropology and the

perspective that views religion and spirituality as partners. Clearly, each of the beliefs listed is consistent with what the individual believes to be true of the supernatural, specifically God. Her actions, guided by these beliefs, are how she connects with God in a practical sense as a result of these beliefs. Both raters scored her beliefs as 100% religious.

The percentage of religious beliefs for those who considered themselves spiritual but not religious was then compared to that of those who considered themselves both spiritual and religious in OOM (Grice, 2011) using the Build/Test Model option with Identity (Spiritual but not religious, Both spiritual and religious) as the cause and Percent Religious as the effect. As would be expected, the results are almost identical to those obtained for the percent of spiritual actions (Figure 4). Thirty-nine of the 50 individuals were correctly classified (78%) by the analysis ($c < .01$, 1000 randomization trials).

All 25 of the spiritual and religious individuals possessed beliefs that were 100% religious. Of those who were spiritual but not religious, 12 stated a set of beliefs that were coded between 0% and 50% religious. The one spiritual but not religious participant who could not think of any actions did say that her actions are guided by the following belief: “I have morals that I live by that I got from the Bible. I was taught them when I was little growing up in church through Sunday School teachers.” Since this belief appears to be religious in nature, providing a context for what the individual believes to be true of the immaterial and supernatural, it was coded as religious by both raters, thereby giving her a score of 100%.

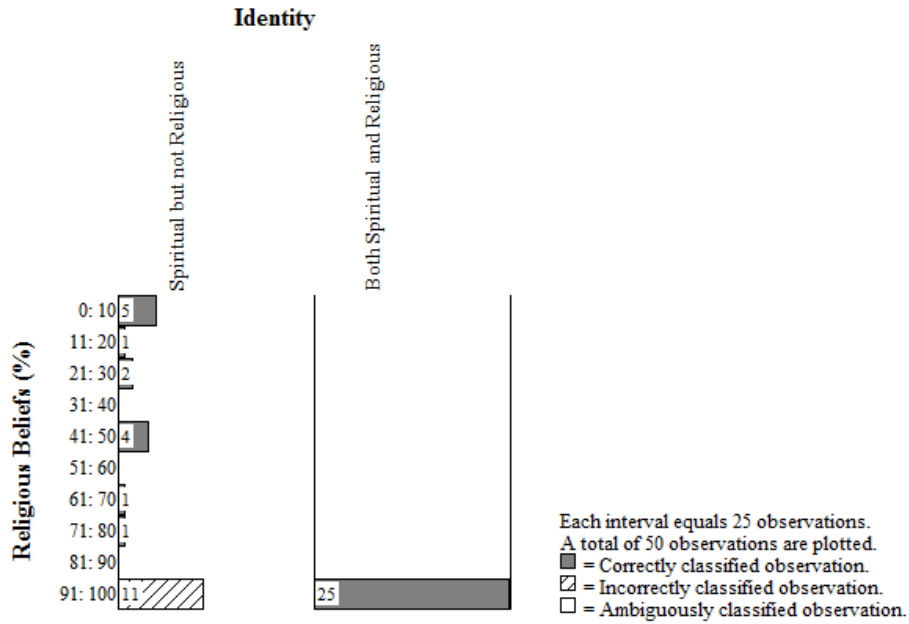


Figure 4. Multigram conforming Religious Beliefs to Identity

Religious Emphasis Scale

The emphasis placed on practicing the family religion while participants were growing up was analyzed within OOM using the Build/Test Model option with Identity as the cause and Religious Emphasis as the effect. Higher scores indicated more of a religious emphasis within the home. Three participants (all of whom were spiritual but not religious) felt they could not accurately depict their environment growing up by completing the scale only once. Two completed the scale separately for their mothers and fathers, and one completed the scale separately for before and after her parents got divorced. The averages of the two were used as the score for each of these participants.

Not surprisingly, those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious tended to grow up in homes that emphasized religion more strongly than those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious (Figure 5). Nine of the spiritual and religious individuals had scores between 41 and 50 on the scale; only one spiritual but not religious person had a score that high.

On the low end, five spiritual but not religious individuals had scored between 0 and 10; none of the spiritual and religious individuals had scores that low. Thirty-three of the 50 participants (66%) were correctly classified by the analysis ($c = .17$, 1000 randomization trials).

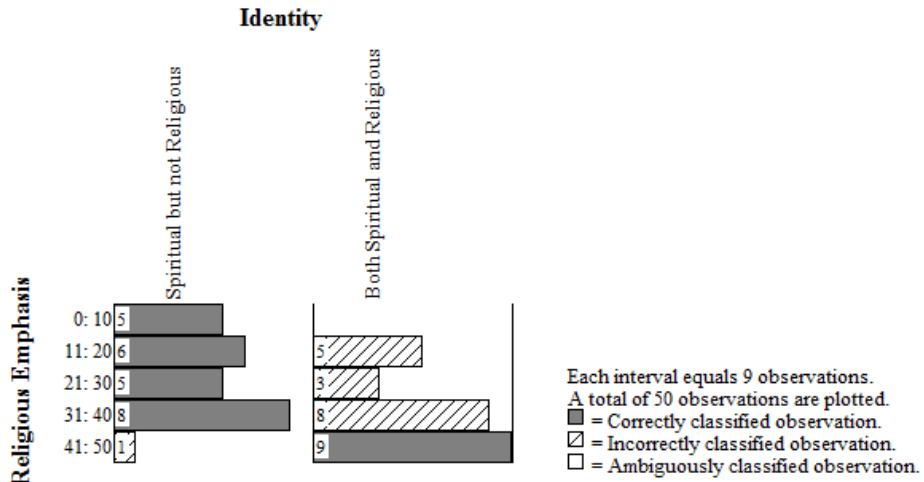


Figure 5. Multigram conforming Religious Emphasis to Identity

Similar models were also built and tested for each individual item on the Religious Emphasis Scale to investigate whether there was a particular item that clearly did or did not differentiate the two groups. Each of the scale's 10 items followed the same basic pattern of typically being more emphasized in the homes of those who were spiritual and religious as opposed to those who were spiritual but not religious.

Demographics and Family History

Demographic and family history information was analyzed in OOM to investigate whether these characteristics could differentiate between those who were spiritual but not religious and those who were both spiritual and religious. Gender, age, ethnicity, parents' marital status and total number of siblings were all unable to successfully differentiate between the two groups of participants in a clear way (e.g., Figure 6). Whether the participant had a religious

affiliation, was a church member, attended at least one religious service weekly, was raised in a particular family religion, had a religious mother growing up, and had a religious father growing up all were able to successfully differentiate between the two groups, showing each time that those who were both religious and spiritual were more likely than those who were spiritual but not religious to possess those qualities or perform those behaviors (e.g., Figures 7-8).

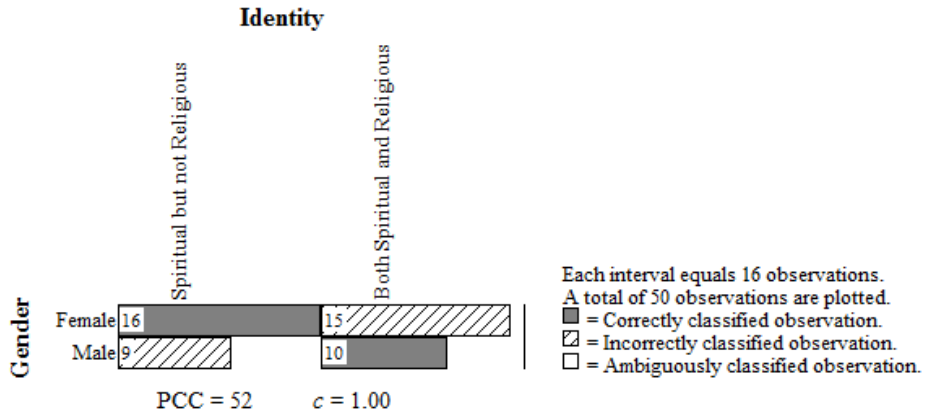


Figure 6. Multigram conforming Gender to Identity

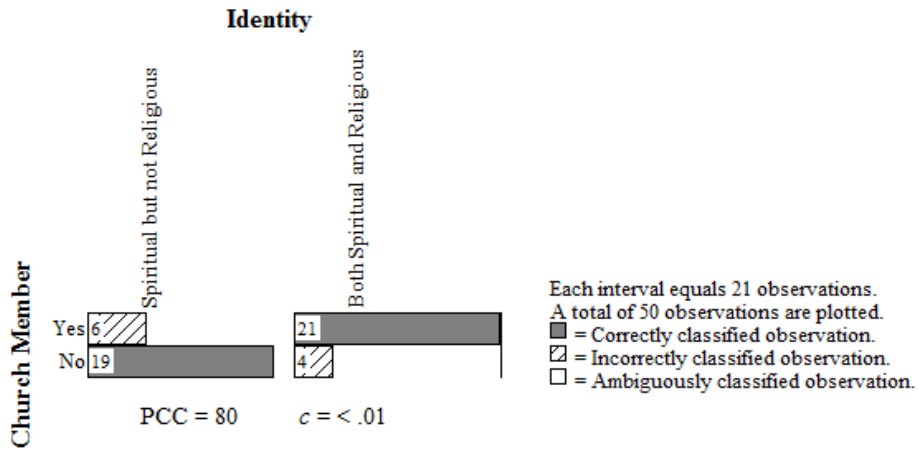


Figure 7. Multigram conforming Church Member to Identity

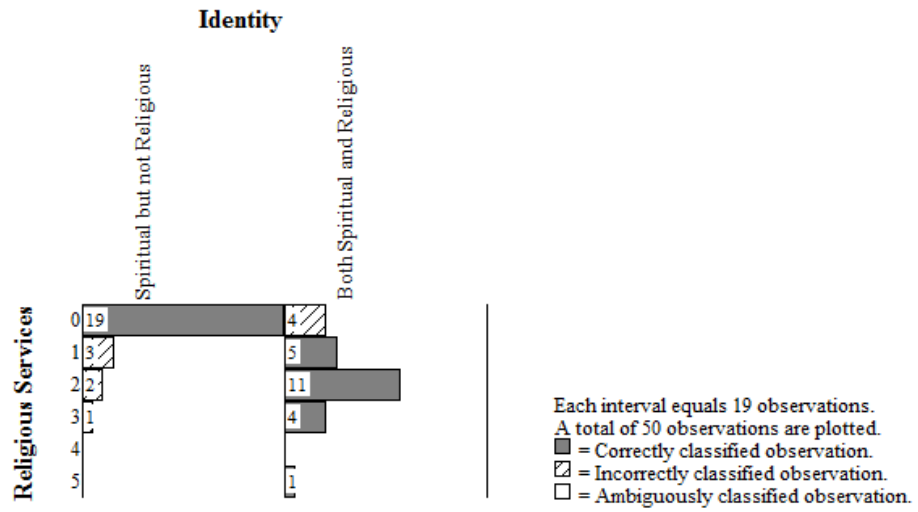


Figure 8. Multigram conforming Religious Services to Identity

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The definitions of the terms religion and spirituality have been unclear in recent years. In jettisoning philosophical knowledge and relying entirely on empirical knowledge, it seems less is known about religion and spirituality as they operate within the individual as a whole (Pargament, et al., 1995; Rose, 2001; Schneiders, 2003; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). One consequence of this has been the rise in the amount of people identifying themselves as spiritual but not religious. This claim does not make existential sense within the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, which views religion and spirituality as partners. Indeed, this study ventured to examine this claim from a Thomistic perspective.

Reconstructing the Individual

If religion and spirituality are indeed partners of one another, as they are understood to be within the philosophical perspective of Aquinas, it would not make sense for an individual to identify himself or herself as spiritual but not religious. As with studying any aspect of human nature, it is imperative that the whole of the person be considered – both body and soul. Failure to do so, at best, results in a misunderstanding of the person, or, at worst, the disintegration of the person.

The primary aim of the current study was to demonstrate that the claim of being spiritual but not religious is inconsistent with the individuals' existential reality. Specifically, following a

structured interview, it was expected that those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious would tend to view their spirituality as driven by religion – that, in light of Aquinas’ anthropology, they would begin to understand that the spiritual exercises they perform only make sense as spiritual acts in the context of certain religious beliefs. A belief about the intangible is a prerequisite if the purpose of their actions is indeed to connect them with the intangible.

The majority of the participants (17 of the 25 participants; 68%) followed a similar pattern of responses. They demonstrated an understanding of the definitions of religion and spirituality as presented from a Thomistic perspective. They also expressed that they liked the way the terms were defined according to Aquinas. These participants reported that they believed there is merit to the idea that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually. Taking the next step of applying the definitions to themselves, they determined that Aquinas would not endorse their original claim of being spiritual but not religious and stated that he would instead consider them to be both spiritual and religious. In ending the interview, these participants amended their original spiritual but not religious classification to reflect their new understanding that their spiritual actions are indeed guided by religious beliefs.

In other words, upon being presented with definitions of religion and spirituality that are consistent with the long-established philosophical knowledge of the nature of the whole person, participants typically understood and approved of the definitions. They then were likely to discuss how the terms relate to one another in a manner that is consistent with the perspective of them being partners of one another – much different from the view that is assumed within their claim of being spiritual but not religious (that the two are either strangers or rivals). They were then able to see how Aquinas would apply these definitions to describe them, and finally incorporated their new understanding of the terms into how they described themselves at the end of the interview.

Only eight participants did not fit the modal pattern of responses. These eight participants did not share any particular demographic or family history characteristic that might better explain their deviance from the modal pattern. Important to note is that four of these participants were still consistent with the teachings of Aquinas. One participant was completely consistent with the modal pattern, but thought that Aquinas would consider her neither religious nor spiritual and ended the interview with similar sentiments. This is still consistent with Aquinas' anthropology and with the partners perspective of religion and spirituality. On the one hand, a person uses religion as the context within which he or she develops spiritually by connecting with the supernatural in a practical manner; on the other hand, the person is not thinking about religious matters and also not growing spiritually.

The cause for the deviation from the typical pattern for the other three participants (whose responses were still consistent with Aquinas' teachings) was in their opinion of the definitions. Three of the participants were completely consistent with the typical pattern, but two of them did not like the definitions and one did not provide a clear response regarding her opinion of them. Clearly, it is possible to understand and implement the definitions, realizing that there is value inherent in them, but to do so begrudgingly. It makes sense that this would be another pattern of responding, since the participants have only just begun to change their conceptualization of religion and spirituality and how these concepts operate in their own lives. If being spiritual but not religious was an important part of their identity, it is feasible that it would be somewhat difficult to let it go or that there would exist some degree of uneasiness.

After hearing the traditional, Thomistic definitions, most participants responded in a manner that was consistent with an understanding of the person as a complete unit, within the philosophical context of the whole of human nature. Moreover, the typical pattern of responses that emerged provides clear evidence that the spiritual but not religious claim dissipates easily when challenged by the philosophical wisdom taught centuries ago. Such a large proportion of

the spiritual but not religious individuals modifying their statement in such a way as to come more in line with Aquinas' teachings signals the weakness of the claim itself and suggests that it does not reflect the existential reality of the individuals.

Only four individuals were inconsistent with Aquinas' anthropology in their responses. The only demographic and family history characteristic that these four individuals had in common was that none was a church member and none attended any religious services in the typical week. All four of the individuals were also similar in that they did not think there was any merit to the notion that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually. This view stands in stark contrast to the partners perspective of religion and spirituality that is espoused by Aquinas. It is instead consistent with either the strangers or rivals perspective that they are assumedly operating under when making their spiritual but not religious claim.

Of the two individuals who did not demonstrate an understanding of the definitions, one said that Aquinas would classify her as neither spiritual nor religious; the other said that Aquinas would classify him as spiritual but not religious. Again, both individuals did not consider religion necessary for spiritual development. Both of them also maintained their original claim of being spiritual but not religious, which is clearly inconsistent with Aquinas' understanding of religion and spirituality. One potential avenue for improving participants' understanding of the definitions in the future is discussed below along with other opportunities for future improvement.

Evidence of Being Spiritual

Total Number of Actions

The secondary aim of the current study was to compare those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious to those who identified themselves as both spiritual and religious. The results provided overwhelming support for the hypothesis that those who identified

themselves as both spiritual and religious would be able to list more actions that they perform as a result of their spirituality than those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Many of the (spiritual but not religious) participants, in defining religion and spirituality using their own personal constructs at the beginning of the interview, mentioned that they considered religion to consist primarily of behavioral rules and regulations within a particular tradition that they did not adhere to and often found to be irrelevant and outdated. A portion of them made statements about religious people being “very conservative,” “judgy,” and “hypocritical,” suggesting that they not only identified themselves as non-religious, but actually were *anti*-religious according to their own personal constructs of religion. Spirituality was typically defined simply as a belief in a higher power. With that said, it makes sense that they would not be able to list as many actions as those who ascribe to a religious view. The insinuation is that they can maintain a general belief in a higher power without having any actions to follow. Indeed one of the spiritual but not religious participants could not think of a single action she performed as a result of her spirituality, yet she maintained throughout the interview that she was spiritual (changing her classification to both spiritual and religious).

The contrast that was found between the two groups on the total number of actions listed painted a clear picture of one of the striking differences between them. Many of the spiritual but not religious individuals stated that they do hold a belief in God, but their lack of follow through begs the question of whether they do indeed. To put it bluntly, it seems that those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious were often stating that they like the idea of a God of the universe and they “want to be on good standing whenever [they] die,” but day-to-day, in a practical sense, they were putting forth very little to no effort to actually live in a manner that reflects their belief in God. They were often not concerned with learning more about God or discerning His will, evidenced by statements indicating a desire to “act independently of God’s will. A person can still be moral without following God. You don’t have to consult God to know

what's right." They also seemed to lack concern for understanding where they stood in relation to God by suggesting that others should "not worry about committing a sin because what is right is not necessarily in the Bible and God will forgive you no matter what."

Of course, this laissez faire attitude toward an all-powerful and holy God in which they purport to believe is a bit baffling. If they do believe in God and still do not strive to live their lives in accordance with that belief, perhaps it is due to a lack of understanding about how they relate to this Most High God on their own accord (about which they would be informed through the religious context they strive to avoid). For example, most of the spiritual but not religious participants who alleged a belief in God were referring to the God of Christianity. Within Christianity, the prophet Isaiah explains that even "our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" compared to the righteousness of God (Isaiah 64:6). Scripture also says that we are incapable of looking fully on the glory of God in our sinful state (Exodus 33:20-23; John 1:18). Isaiah is brought to a state of desperation, of genuine repentance and worship in the presence of the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-7). Thomas Aquinas was also forever changed following his mystical experience, abandoning what would become his most well-known and influential work and stating that to write on it any further would be "like straw" in comparison to what he had seen (Feser, 2009, p. 6). It is only after the fallen nature of man is truly understood that the sacrifice of Christ can be truly appreciated (Romans 5).

Those who were both spiritual and religious, however, were typically able to list far more actions. They often discussed the importance of being "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22) and that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). They also commonly cited that the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23) should be displayed in an individual's life as evidence that the Spirit lives within them – as evidence of their spirituality. Clearly, the two groups are very different from one another in this regard. Similar to Rose's impression of spirituality becoming "a neat catch-all, intimating a certain something without

necessarily revealing much about what it entails” (2001, p. 193), individuals seemed to use the claim of being spiritual but not religious to signify a shallow description of themselves, whereas those who were both spiritual and religious were typically attempting to live their lives in total abandon, fully committed (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Several of the spiritual and religious individuals mentioned that Christ gave them an example of how to act (John 13:15) and that He said that if anyone believes in Him and loves Him, they will strive to follow this example and keep His commandments with the help of the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within them (John 14:12-17). They often admitted that doing so is “difficult though. It’s easy to say, hard to do.”

Type of Actions

It was not only expected that those who identified themselves as spiritual but not religious would list fewer actions than those who identified as both spiritual and religious, but also that the actions they listed would be less likely to serve the purpose of connecting them with the intangible or supernatural. The pattern that emerged supported this assertion as well. The actions listed by those who were spiritual but not religious were less likely to meet the criterion for being considered a spiritual act compared to those who were both spiritual and religious, determined by the percentage of actions listed for each participant that were coded as spiritual by two independent raters. Their actions were less likely to go beyond the material realm in any way, lacking the central aspect of *spirituality* of connecting the individual with the *intangible* or *supernatural*. In essence, their beliefs reflected little more than materialism.

Noteworthy is that the percent of actions listed by some of the participants who were spiritual but not religious may have been high (more than 50%), but the total number of actions listed was typically far less than those who were both spiritual and religious (generally 0 – 4 actions as opposed to 5 – 16 actions). For an individual’s list of four actions to have been

considered 75% spiritual, he or she would need to list only three spiritual actions, whereas someone who listed 12 total actions would need nine actions to be counted as spiritual.

Also important is that the same action listed by two different people may be considered spiritual for one but not the other depending on its intended purpose. Recall that an action is only considered spiritual if it serves the purpose of connecting the individual with the intangible or supernatural in a practical sense. For example, one spiritual but not religious person listed, “Take everything in. Take time to smell the roses.” The intended purpose of this action was to “realize that the world is bigger than yourself.” Appreciating the beauty that exists in the world does not necessarily go beyond the material realm and this action was not intended to connect the person with the immaterial or supernatural, so it would not be considered a spiritual act. Another spiritual but not religious person listed, “Notice the small things in life.” The stated purpose for this individual was that he was “looking for a sign...If you put out positive vibrations, the universe will reply with positive energy and vice versa.” He also discussed multiple examples of him noticing “small incidents that feel like the touch of God or the universe is trying to tell me something.” In his case, the same action would be considered spiritual because its purpose was to connect him with God or the “vibrations” and “energy” of the universe.

Finally, those who were spiritual but not religious were also more likely compared to those who were both spiritual and religious to report actions that were more of a general guideline for their actions (e.g., keep an open mind, be a nice person) as opposed to concrete, observable actions (e.g., read everything [Bible, Quran, etc.], serve when opportunities around town come up like work days raking leaves). Again, this seems to intimate that those who are spiritual but not religious are less likely to act on the very beliefs that they allegedly hold. The claim of being spiritual but not religious for some people appears to be a more palatable way of saying that they don't genuinely believe anything about the supernatural, but that they still have a desire for being considered good.

Type of Beliefs

The beliefs that were listed as the motivation for participants to act according to the actions they listed were also analyzed for whether they met the criterion for being considered a religious belief – if they had to do with matters of the intangible or supernatural. As would be expected, the pattern of observations comparing the percent of religious beliefs of those who were spiritual but not religious to those who were both spiritual and religious matched the pattern comparing the percent of spiritual actions almost perfectly. As was modeled by Anderson (2010, 2012) using the partners perspective of religion and spirituality, if an action is considered spiritual, it must be guided by a religious belief. In other words, for an individual to connect with the supernatural in a practical sense there must first be a belief about the supernatural. However, though most religious beliefs will lead to spiritual actions, this is not always the case. A religious belief provides the context within which the individual determines how to act in order to develop spiritually. This does not mean that he or she will choose to do so. For example, an individual who has a religious belief that God does exist will not necessarily act in a spiritual manner in an effort to connect with God in any way.

Developing the Profile Further

The final analyses were intended to develop further the typical profile of those who were spiritual but not religious. Further analyses conducted demonstrated that those who identified as both spiritual and religious were more likely to grow up within a home that emphasized the family religion compared to those who were spiritual but not religious. Although this trend did not apply to each person in either group (i.e., some of the spiritual but not religious individuals grew up in a home that did emphasize the family religion and some of the spiritual and religious individuals reported growing up in a home that did not emphasize the family religion), it should come as no surprise that for most participants, the prominence of religion in their family of origin

matched their emphasis of religion in how they classified themselves. Similarly, there were no surprises in how the two groups were differentiated using other demographic and family history information, such as whether they ascribed to a particular religious affiliation, attended at least one religious service a week, or have religious parents.

Opportunities for Future Improvement

A number of opportunities for improvement were discovered while conducting the interviews with the spiritual but not religious individuals. A few participants were at first confused by the question, “Do you think there is any merit to the idea that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually?” because they were unsure what the word “merit” meant. This was easily resolved by restating the question to read, “Do you think there is any merit *or value* to the idea that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually?”

One participant was also confused by the last question, “In light of how Aquinas defined religion and spirituality, is there anything you would like to modify or add to how you would classify yourself with regard to religion and spirituality?” His response indicated that he believed the question to be asking about how Aquinas would classify him. This can also be easily remedied by ensuring that their response included some component of how they viewed themselves. To ensure that no additional confusion about this question surfaces in the future, it is recommended that this question be reworded to read: “After hearing about how Aquinas defined religion and spirituality, is there anything you would modify or add to how you would classify yourself? How would you classify yourself with regard to religion and spirituality?”

It may be beneficial in the future to add more vignettes to the interview protocol. It did seem helpful to begin by reading the first vignette with the participants, walking them through the examples of spiritual actions that are guided by spiritual beliefs. However, since this vignette described a hypothetical individual who followed Christianity, a religion that most of participants

had at least a cursory understanding of, it seemed to provide a nice introductory example of applying the definitions. When the second vignette was read, which involved religious beliefs that most of the participants were less familiar with, many of the participants who thought they had a solid understanding of the definitions spent some additional time returning to the descriptions given in order to determine how they would apply in that scenario. Though it was encouraging to see that the participants were thinking critically and trying to apply the definitions as best they could, it is recommended that an additional vignette be used in the future describing another hypothetical individual who adheres to a less well-known religion in addition to the first. This would provide them with a more solid demonstration of the definitions before they are asked to apply them on their own and hopefully facilitate even more of the participants being able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the definitions.

Additionally, it is recommended that a third vignette be read with the participants before they are asked to answer questions about the final vignette themselves. The purpose of this extra vignette would be to provide examples other than religious beliefs leading to spiritual actions. For example, it would be beneficial for the participants to also see examples of non-religious beliefs that result in non-spiritual actions as well as religious beliefs that do not produce spiritual actions in the hypothetical individual. Again, this would provide a more complete demonstration of how the definitions are applied using hypothetical individuals before asking the individuals to apply them to themselves.

Opportunities for improvement in the future also emerged for all participants (as opposed to the interview protocol that applied only to the spiritual but not religious individuals). Several participants from both groups, but especially those who were spiritual but not religious, took additional time to think before they could identify the belief that guided each action they had listed. This may simply be a characteristic of those who identify as spiritual but not religious – that they do not often contemplate their foundational beliefs that lead them to act one way as

opposed to another with regard to their spirituality. It seemed that many had not contemplated why they do what they do, assuming they even did much at all by way of spirituality. Several made comments along the lines of “I haven’t really ever thought about all of this before.” Many made comments about needing to “go home and reflect about some things.” In order for them to be able to practice discerning underlying beliefs that guide specific actions, it might be worth considering allowing them to determine some of the beliefs that lead to different actions within one of the practice vignettes, instead of having all of the beliefs explicitly stated within the text.

Another potential area of improvement involves how the individuals were asked to think of spiritual actions that they perform. Using the current protocol, they were asked:

If you were to teach someone to be spiritual but not religious in the same manner as yourself, what would the person need to do? For example, if someone were interested in working out in the same manner as you, you might advise him or her to go jogging or to do sit-ups. What would a person need to do to be spiritual like you?

It is recommended that this question be modified in the future to read, “Thinking now only of your own personal spirituality, please list as many spiritual actions, both large and small, as you can think of that you perform.” Several (spiritual but not religious) participants were concerned about the idea of someone else trying to learn to be spiritual from them personally. They began first with disclaimers about how spirituality should be considered a personal endeavor that might look very different across individuals, and that one person’s spirituality is not necessarily superior to that of other. This modification would effectively encourage them to think about all of the actions they perform personally without needing to worry about being perceived as attempting to force someone else to behave exactly like they do.

A final opportunity for improvement deals with the difficulty that was sometimes experienced by participants in both groups when they were asked to think of as many actions as

they could that characterize their own spirituality on the spot in the interview. It seems understandable that some of the participants had trouble thinking of a variety of things that they do, both large and small, without really having the opportunity to take a significant amount of time to ponder their actions. Of course, they were able to take as long as they needed during the interview, but most people did not want to delay the interview for too long while they thought of other actions. It may be advantageous to encourage the participants take some time alone to think about what actions they perform before continuing with the interview. During this pause in the interview, they should perhaps be instructed to take time thinking of their actions throughout the course of each day in a typical week in order to prime their thinking to recognize additional actions.

Closing Remarks

Unfortunately, recent years have witnessed a trend of redefining the terms religion and spirituality in a manner that is unclear and inconsistent within the context of human nature. The rise in the number of people who claim to be spiritual but not religious is one consequence of this trend. The two terms are often polarized and pitted against one another, such that religion is intended to encompass all that is bad and spirituality refers to some individualized sense of being in good standing with some higher power.

In his attempt to define spirituality more succinctly, Rose (2001) concluded that spirituality consistently involved three primary characteristics: 1) experience: continual personal experience relating to the supernatural, 2) practices: ongoing effort to live in a manner consistent with a chosen ethical code, and 3) love: a life characterized by love for others and altruistic behaviors. Using the anthropology of Aquinas, this appears to be an acceptable start to an understanding of spirituality. Spirituality is understood as a partner of religion, housed within the will. It does involve certain practices that are performed consistent with a chosen ethical code

(religion). The particular actions are chosen in consultation with the intellect (religion) as a means of attaining that which is desired (love), that which is deemed good. Specifically, the practices serve the purpose of connecting the individual with the supernatural in a practical sense, similar to Rose's first characteristic.

Rose's (2001) conceptualization lacks, however, the crucial aspect of adequately and explicitly describing how spirituality relates to religion and how the two operate within the individual as a whole. He purports that the two, religion and spirituality, are strangers of one another. That is, he contends that the two need not inform one another; one is not necessary for the other. If this were the case, the second characteristic is especially perplexing. The ethical code that the individual strives to live by seems to clearly denote a religious belief. The results from the current study provide striking evidence that viewing religion and spirituality as strangers is not substantiated within the reality of the person viewed as a whole. The two – religion and spirituality – are far better understood as partners, consistent with the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Viewing religion and spirituality as partners returns the terms to their traditional, time-honored understanding. Though it is not the popular perspective of late, the merit of such an approach is evident not only in how easily individuals tended to change their claim of being spiritual but not religious, but also in the comments made by individuals about their experience participating. No less than 20% of the participants, at some point during or after the interview, made a comment about how much they enjoyed the study as a whole, such as, "This is a lot more interesting than I thought it would be." and "I really like this study." They also made more pointed comments about enjoying thinking through how their beliefs guided their actions and why they choose to do the things they do, with comments such as, "This is really good for me to think about all of this."

Anthropologically speaking, the terms are intertwined with one another within the person as a whole. Religion is seen as an act of the intellect, the beliefs the individual holds about what is true of the immaterial or supernatural. This forms the context within which he or she is able to develop spiritually. Spirituality is seen as an act of the will, the way that the person connects with the immaterial or supernatural in a real, concrete sense. Recall also that the term spirituality was originally used to describe those who were indwelt with the Holy Spirit or that which was derived from the Holy Spirit, which very clearly speaks to a connection with the immaterial.

Understood this way, it makes no existential sense for an individual to break ties with religion while maintaining claims to spirituality. What the individual is saying with this claim, in essence, is that there is no intellectual basis for why the individual does what he or she does. A simple illustration is found in the story of a mother teaching her daughter how to bake a ham. The first step in the process, she says, is to cut off the end of the ham. The daughter, confused by why her mother would waste such a large piece of good meat inquires about the reasoning behind this step. The mother, leaving her daughter unsatisfied by not being able to justify her action calls the girl's grandmother. The grandmother, in all her wisdom, reveals that she always cut the end off of the ham because her pan was not large enough to hold the whole thing and she could not afford to buy a new one. As it turns out, the mother's tradition was unfounded all of those years because she did not know the reasoning behind the action to begin with.

In a similar manner, religion provides the context within which one's spiritual actions are understood. When religion holds its rightful place, it protects against traditions becoming too regimented and idolized. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees about this multiple times, saying that they have esteemed their own traditions above the commandment of God (e.g., Mark 7:6-13). The nation of Israel is similarly admonished for their traditions being performed for the purpose of pleasing themselves and for the praise of others instead of for the purpose of bringing glory to God (Isaiah 58). In discarding religion, it also becomes easy to lose track of the value inherent in

certain traditions and why they are (or should be) maintained over the years. Their meaning is lost and it becomes tempting to say that they are, and perhaps always have been, irrelevant without truly understanding them or evaluating them properly.

Religion also provides a community of likeminded believers to share experiences with – both triumphs and trials alike (Schneiders, 2003). There is something beautiful about a community of people committed to one another, striving to encourage one another in all areas of life, even when it is difficult and life gets messy, reminding one another of truths, holding each other accountable, and serving and loving one another through every minute of it as best they can, all for the glory of God.

The importance of rightfully understanding religion and spirituality cannot be overstated. Religious beliefs are necessary if an individual is to develop spiritually, “and without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God *must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6b, emphasis added). Only when they are seen as partners, can their operations within the context of human nature be fully understood. As was emphasized through the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the whole of the person – body and soul – is engaged in the process. The immaterial soul of the person cannot be ignored for the sake of empiricism if a complete understanding of religion and spirituality within the person is to be achieved.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Structured Interview for Spiritual but not Religious Individuals

1. Would you consider yourself to be spiritual but not religious?

Yes

No

2. Please list descriptions and examples of what you mean when you use the terms spiritual and religious

Spiritual

Religious

3. Why is it important for you to identify yourself as spiritual but not religious?

4. What is it, specifically, about being religious that does not characterize you?

5. If you were to teach someone to be spiritual but not religious in the same manner as yourself, what would the person need to do? For example, if someone were interested in working out in the same manner as you, you might advise him or her to go jogging or to do sit-ups. What would a person need to do to be spiritual like you?

{Encourage participant to come up with as many examples of spiritual actions as they can, record in chart below. If participant is having a hard time thinking of more activities, ask:} Is there anything else you can think of that you do as a result of your spirituality?

{For each of the actions listed, ask:} Why do you perform this action? In other words, what is the purpose of the action? What are you trying to accomplish?

{Record answers in chart below }

{For each of the actions listed, ask:} Is there a belief that you hold that leads you to perform each of these actions instead of doing something else instead? In other words, why do you think that this particular action is an effective way to fulfill its purpose?

{If they are having a hard time thinking of a belief, ask them to fill in the following: } I believe that (stated action) is a good way to achieve the goal of (stated purpose) because _____.

Efficient Cause Actions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Final Cause Purpose

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Beliefs

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

6. For each of the beliefs listed, why would they not be considered a religious belief?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

{Provide them with the following definitions and read through it with them. }

The definitions of the terms religion and spirituality have been unclear in recent years. It seems that people understand what they themselves mean by the terms, but there is very little consistency across individuals. As a result of this confusion, it has become important to use definitions that can be applied equally to all people. Thomas Aquinas, a well-known philosopher from the 13th century who remains highly influential today, provides such definitions.

As understood by Aquinas, an individual relies on his or her intellect to determine what is true of the world. These beliefs about what is true are what guide his or her actions. With respect to religion and spirituality, an individual relies on his or her religion (whether one of the major world religions or not) as the context within which they form beliefs about what is true of the immaterial and supernatural. These religious beliefs not only provide a basis for how the individual understands the supernatural but also guide the specific actions of how the individual connects with and relates to the intangible.

In other words, an individual holds specific religious beliefs that they use to decide which spiritual exercises should be done in order to connect with the intangible or supernatural. A belief

is considered religious when it has to do with matters of the intangible or supernatural. An action is considered spiritual when it serves to connect the person with the intangible or supernatural.

Without religious beliefs, it would be logically impossible for the individual to know what actions would be effective in helping the individual to grow spiritually because there would be no intellectual basis for why the individual does what he or she does. So, even if the religious beliefs are hidden or implicit and have not been thoroughly analyzed by the individual, they still have an influence on what spiritual actions are performed.

{Ask if they have any questions and clarify any confusion they might have. Once they say they are clear on the definitions, provide them with the vignettes.}

Let's consider the first vignette on your sheet as an example:

>>>Sarah thinks it is important to volunteer at her local homeless shelter. She believes this is a good way to remind herself that her life, though it may have its own struggles, has been incredibly blessed by God. While working at the homeless shelter she often looks for opportunities to help the individuals she meets. For example, she will often buy them items they are in need of that they cannot afford. She does this as a way to show gratitude for the blessings she has received and to bring glory to God.

{Read through the following with the participant.}

One of the actions that Sarah does is to volunteer at her local homeless shelter. This action is guided by the belief that her life has been blessed by God. Aquinas would consider this a religious belief because it speaks to what Sarah believes to be true about the immaterial or supernatural, specifically God. He would also consider her action to be spiritual because its purpose is to remind her of how she relates to God.

Another action that Sarah does is look for opportunities that go beyond her role as a volunteer at the shelter to help the individuals she meets there. The belief that drives this behavior is that it will show gratitude for the blessings she has and bring glory to God. Again, this would be considered a religious belief because it has to do with the immaterial. Her action would be considered spiritual because its purpose is to connect her with God.

Therefore, Aquinas would consider Sarah to be both religious and spiritual.

{Read through the second vignette with the participant after allowing them to ask any questions.}

Let's read through the following vignette:

>>> Mark always wears a necklace that has a special crystal on it. He does this because he believes that the energy emitted from the crystal will give him patience and allow him to feel more composed regardless of what challenges he has to face that day. He also has special stones that he places on his chest and forehead for a few minutes at night because he believes that they have the power to heal him when he is sick and to ward off any illnesses he may have come in contact with that day. Mark has crystals of various colors throughout his house, some of which are meant to absorb negative energy that is brought in, others that are meant to give off positive energy. Together these crystals are designed to make a more peaceful environment for Mark to live in. Lastly, Mark always makes an effort to leave every interaction with another person in a positive way. He believes that if he leaves a person on unsettled terms, he is setting himself up for some disaster in the future.

Please list two of the actions that Mark chooses to do.

- 1.

- 2.

What are the beliefs that might be guiding each of these actions?

- 1.

- 2.

{Tell the participant that there is no right or wrong answer for the next set of questions. They can say yes to all, no to all, or some combination thereof.}

Please place a check mark next to each of the actions that you think Aquinas would consider to be spiritual.

Please place a check mark next to each of the beliefs that you think Aquinas would consider to be religious.

Do you think Aquinas would consider Mark to be religious? Yes No

Do you think Aquinas would consider Mark to be spiritual? Yes No

Considering the spiritual actions you listed above, do you think Aquinas would consider these to be spiritual actions?

1. Yes No

2. Yes No

3. Yes No

4. Yes No

Considering the beliefs you listed above that motivate you to act according to the actions you listed, do you think Aquinas would consider these to be religious beliefs?

1. Yes No

2. Yes No

3. Yes No

4. Yes No

Do you think that Aquinas would consider you to be religious? Yes No

Do you think Aquinas would consider you to be spiritual? Yes No

Please explain briefly why you think Aquinas would or would not consider you to be religious and/or spiritual:

What is your opinion of how religion and spirituality are defined according to Aquinas?

Do you think there is any merit to the idea that religion is necessary for an individual to develop spiritually? Please explain.

In light of how Aquinas defined religion and spirituality, is there anything you would like to modify or add to how you would classify yourself with regard to religion and spirituality?

{For each of the actions listed, ask:} Is there a belief that you hold that leads you to perform each of these actions instead of doing something else instead? In other words, why do you think that this particular action is an effective way to fulfill its purpose?

{If they are having a hard time thinking of a belief, ask them to fill in the following:} I believe that (stated action) is a good way to achieve the goal of (stated purpose) because _____.

Efficient Cause Actions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Final Cause Purpose

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Beliefs

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Appendix C

Demographic and Family History Questions

Gender: Female _____ Male _____

Age (in years): _____

Ethnicity:

- African American _____
- Asian _____
- Caucasian _____
- Hispanic _____
- Native American _____
- Other _____

Religious Affiliation:

What is your religious affiliation? Please be as specific as possible.

Are you a member of a local religious institution? Yes No

If yes, please indicate where (Name of Institution and City, State):

How many religious services do you attend during a typical week? _____

Thinking of your family while you were growing up:

Your parents were:

- a. Married
- b. Never married, but lived together
- c. Never married, and did not live together
- d. Divorced, but not remarried
- e. Divorced, and remarried
- f. Other _____

Please list your siblings, identified as brother or sister (no names necessary), and their ages:

Were you raised within a particular religion? Yes No

If yes, what was is (please be as specific as possible): _____

Was your mother religious? Yes No

Was your father religious? Yes No

For the following 10 questions, how much did your parents emphasize the following practices while you were growing up? Please respond with a score of 0-5 using the following scale:

- 0 = no emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 1 = a slight emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 2 = a mild emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 3 = a moderate emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 4 = a strong emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 5 = a very strong emphasis was placed on the behavior

- _____ 1. Going to church; attending religious services.
- _____ 2. Attending "Sunday school"; getting systematic religious instruction regularly.
- _____ 3. Reviewing the teachings of the religion at home.
- _____ 4. Praying before meals.
- _____ 5. Reading Scripture or other religious material.
- _____ 6. Praying before bedtime.
- _____ 7. Discussing moral "do's" and "don't's" in religious terms.
- _____ 8. Observing religious holidays; celebrating events like Christmas in a religious way.
- _____ 9. Being a good representative of the faith; acting the way a devout member of your religion would be expected to act.
- _____ 10. Taking part in religious youth groups.

VITA

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