

## HUMANISM IN THE *COMMENTARIUM AD MENTEM PLATONIS* OF GILES OF VITERBO (1469-1532)\*

One of Professor P.O. Kristeller's classic lectures, first delivered in 1959 and republished most recently in 1992, notes the continuation in the Renaissance of three important and familiar genres of medieval scholarly writing: the textbook, the treatise, and the commentary. Of these he names the commentary as "probably ... the most important form of scholarly literature in the Middle Ages .... From the time of the specialization of learning in the twelfth century, the commentary form was in like manner used in all branches of knowledge and it was cultivated without interruption until the sixteenth century and beyond"<sup>1</sup>. He noted that the commentary as a distinct literary form remained visible right into the Renaissance. Furthermore, "commentaries on the works of Aristotle and on the logic of Peter of Spain constitute right into the seventeenth century a broad and important branch of philosophical literature that has not yet been sufficiently explored"<sup>2</sup>.

Kristeller also points out, however, that the continuation of the commentary form notwithstanding, "the methods of explanation and doctrinal content as offered were naturally subject to constant change".

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<sup>1</sup> P.O. KRISTELLER, *The Scholar and His Public in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, in *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning*, Durham, NC, 1974, repr. New York, 1992, p. 6. Commentaries, as the detailed explication of a text for the purposes of education, are of course still written, but the twentieth century is more familiar with the oral form of commentary, in connection with the class lecture as it has been delivered "day in and day out in the schools and universities throughout the years."

<sup>2</sup> This observation holds true today despite some important work on the commentary form published in the last thirty years. See, for example, the works listed in KRISTELLER, *The Scholar and His Public*, p. 7 n. 7.



The change that interested him in that article is seen as a major one, which took place during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries as reflective of the encounter between two intellectual cultures we commonly refer to as scholastic and humanist. Humanist commentaries frequently differ from scholastic commentaries in a basic way, since the humanists and scholastics generally chose to comment on different books. But even when a single work remained the subject of commentary in both cultures, humanist and scholastic commentaries still reveal sharp differences in the method of interpretation the commentators used<sup>3</sup>. Kristeller notes that with humanist commentaries in general, "grammatical and historical interpretation for the most part takes the place of dialectical analysis and argumentation"<sup>4</sup>. His attempt to trace this distinction back to the rivalry between the professional philosophical tradition and the professional rhetorical tradition of the late medieval universities, however, is only partially successful<sup>5</sup>.

Kristeller intended the observations outlined above as guidelines. He did not fail to appreciate the complexity of the genre and knew that the quality, range, and method of an individual commentary, and the particular way it stands in relation to the commonplace scholastic/ humanist dichotomy, must be determined by detailed examination. This is particularly true of commentaries composed in the watershed period he spoke of.

The *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard was one work of Scholastic culture that continued to be the subject of commentaries even into the sixteenth century, long after Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* had replaced it as the standard textbook in theology. One such commentary is the focus of this study. Giles of Viterbo's *Commentarium ad mentem Platonis*, one of many *Sentences* commentaries produced by friars, remains unpublished except for sections edited in the 1950s by Eugenio Massa, and for sections edited for individual studies<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *The Scholar and His Public*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *The Scholar and His Public*, p. 10. He adds, "more value is placed on style, and the terminology of scholastic learning is rather avoided". Giles states that he will use the standard terminology in his discussion of the respective roles of the intellect and will, a popular issue among scholastics and humanists alike. Before he concludes his discussion, however, he adopts the vocabulary of myth and allegory.

<sup>5</sup> Kristeller recognized that the university situation in Italy was different from that of other European nations in that philosophy was not connected with a theology faculty.

<sup>6</sup> A portion of Giles's *Sentences* Commentary is edited by MASSA in *L'Anima e l'Uomo in Egidio da Viterbo e nelle fonti classiche e medioevali* (Egidio da Viterbo - Similitudo vestigio praestantior imago est quae in secundo ordine reperitur), *Testi umanistici inediti sul "De Anima"* (Padua, 1951), and *I fondamenti metafisici della*



The author of this *Sentences* commentary is a problematic figure who has puzzled and divided scholars. The heart of the problem of Giles of Viterbo (as treated in an important article by Francis Martin) contains several additional dichotomies beyond the problem of locating him within the scholastic and humanist paradigm<sup>7</sup>. As with many of his contemporaries, potentially conflicting activities, public and private, active and contemplative, secular and spiritual, reformative and conservative, competed for his attention and variously affected those who knew him. Supporters revered him for his profound learning, both secular and religious. Others considered him for all his erudition as just another paganizer of the Gospel. Similarly, despite evidence that he did take interest in social welfare, as when he preached to the prostitutes of Rome, he has been cast as a man of ivory-tower abstractions, "a polished priest of Renaissance circles"<sup>8</sup>. Significant to us here is that his intellectual and spiritual development as an interpreter of texts was rooted in scholastic culture. But as the descriptive label he gave to his commentary indicates, *ad mentem Platonis*, he wanted to promote quite other than a traditional method of interpretation of Peter Lombard's text. As Massa recognized, by the time Giles was writing the commentary he was intending "to liberate scholastic theology from the textual and systematic structure of Aristotelianism and establish a new humanistic theology based on the texts and philosophy of Plato"<sup>9</sup>.

Rather than oversimplify the situation, then, the contrast between the scholastic and the humanist commentary that serves as our point of departure provides a useful frame of reference for situating Giles's

"*dignitas hominis*", *e testi inediti di Egidio da Viterbo* (Turin, 1954). An interesting study of Giles's relationship to the scholastic tradition is Daniela GIONTA, *Scholastik und Platonismus im Prolog zum Sentenzenkommentar des Aegidius von Viterbo*, in *Augustiniana* 39(1989), 132-153. A critical edition of the entire text is being completed by the author of this essay. All passages from the *Sentences* commentary in this paper have been edited from three of the five mss. that contain the work: Rome, Vat. Lat. 6325; Naples, BN, VIII F 8; Naples, BN XIV H 71. All translations are of the present author unless noted otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> Francis X. MARTIN, O.S.A., *The Problem of Giles of Viterbo: A Historiographical Survey*, in *Augustiniana* 9 (1959), 357-379; 10 (1960), 43-60.

<sup>8</sup> *The Problem of Giles of Viterbo*, p. 359. Most portraits of Giles composed before 1900, and several after, speak of "a cultured though virtuous Renaissance prelate, the polished orator, the Ciceronian stylist, and accomplished poet, a pioneer biblical scholar astray in cabalistic literature ... an intellectual jackdaw" (F.X. MARTIN, *Friar, Reformer, and Renaissance Scholar: Life and Work of Giles of Viterbo 1469 - 1532*. Villanova, 1992, p. 123).

<sup>9</sup> E. MASSA, *I fondamenti metafisici della 'dignitas hominis', e testi inediti di Egidio da Viterbo*, p. 3.



commentary among the many others in this broad genre. His interpretive method reveals a complex thinker with characteristics of both perspectives, but I argue in this paper that a humanist perspective dominates from the outset. 'Humanist' does not mean here a preference for secular themes over spiritual, or 'pagan' over Christian. On the contrary, Giles's method is syncretistic but his viewpoint essentially Christian, like the general culture of 15th and 16th century Italy. 'Humanist' in this context does suggest a greater reliance on classic authority for textual interpretation, but that authority comes from both Christian (biblical and patristic) and Greco-Roman sources. Most important, 'humanist' points to an interpretive method that prefers literature and history, as distinct from the general method of interpretation we call 'scholastic,' which proceeds dialectically and with a greater degree of abstract argument. Another serious student of Giles, John O'Malley, acknowledged the difficulty of categorizing Giles even within the range of humanists. He concluded that "Egidio must be assigned a place closer to the grammarian's end of the spectrum than to the rhetorician's". O'Malley sees in Giles a "passion for texts," and a predilection for allegory<sup>10</sup>. Using this definition, Giles's early movement away from scholasticism and toward humanism can be witnessed in his interpretive method.

Giles began the Commentary after having completed studies at the Augustinian *studium generale* at Padua, a center of humanism, Averroistic philosophy, and Thomistic theology<sup>11</sup>. Since 1436, Thomas Aquinas was the patron saint of the arts faculty. Giles, however, had worked there with Agostino Nifo, the physician and philosopher who taught at Padua from 1492-1499. From Nifo he was already learning to develop a broader philosophical outlook by adopting Platonic and Hermetic concepts, although they did not agree on the merits of Averroes. After publishing an edition of three works of Giles of Rome in 1493<sup>12</sup>, he went to study with Marsilio Ficino in Florence during the next winter, and further cultivated the *theologia platonica* against Averroistic Aristotelianism. By 1497, his platonic reading of Christian theology was in evidence at Rome during his examination for the *magisterium* in theology. Thereafter his range of

<sup>10</sup> John W. O'MALLEY, S.J., *Egidio da Viterbo and Renaissance Rome*, in *Egidio da Viterbo, O.S.A. e il suo tempo* (Atti del V Convegno dell'Istituto Storico Agostiniano, Rome, 1983), p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> For further background see F. X. MARTIN, *Giles of Viterbo as Scripture Scholar*, in *Egidio da Viterbo, O.S.A. e il suo tempo* (Rome, 1983), pp. 191-221.

<sup>12</sup> *Quaestiones de materia coeli*, *De intellectu possibili*, and *Commentaria in VIII libros Physicorum Aristotelis*. See the list in Francis MARTIN, *The Writings of Giles of Viterbo*, in *Augustiniana* 18 (1979), 141-193.



experience grew steadily. He rose to prominence as an orator and preached before Pope Alexander VI in 1498. He was a member of Pontano's literary circle in Naples between 1499 and 1501<sup>13</sup>. On witnessing political intrigue in Naples, he resolved to return to the north of Italy, staying with the friars of Lecceto near Siena in 1503<sup>14</sup>. He continued to study the classics, however, and his modern biographer suggests that by this time he was dedicated to scriptural truth but "his thought process and imagery...belonged to the classical world"<sup>15</sup>. In 1504, during a retreat on the isle of Martana, he studied the *Iliad* and composed his own *Eclogues*, biblical poems modeled after Virgil's pastoral hexameters. In 1506, after his appointment as vicar general, he again looked to Lecceto, but this time to promote his own reform efforts. Interest in scriptural studies also grew steadily, with his election as prior general in 1507 being pointed to by Francis Martin as bringing about a kind of "conversion" from the study of secular literature.

During and after these experiences Giles devoted himself to writing the lengthy commentary. His particular interest in Peter Lombard's text is also evident in a series of sermons he gave in 1502, where he followed the division of the four books of the *Sententiae*<sup>16</sup>. He continued work on the commentary until administrative duties overwhelmed him<sup>17</sup>. When he was appointed vicar general in 1506, he may have already sensed that new duties would interfere with his large project. When he became prior general he had to negotiate with Martin Luther during Luther's visit to

<sup>13</sup> The influence was mutual, as under Giles's influence, Pontano himself may have gained a deeper Christian humanist perspective since on Giles's recommendation Pontano decided to study Augustine's *De immortalitate animae*.

<sup>14</sup> In the late 14th century this monastery had been selected as the flagship for reform in the Augustinian order.

<sup>15</sup> "Giles here shows himself the humanist and neoplatonist, harmonizing the writings of the Grecian and Christian worlds" (MARTIN, *Friar, Reformer, and Renaissance Scholar*, p. 44). When Alexander VI died that same year, for example, and was replaced by Francesco Piccolomini, cardinal of Siena (as Pope Pius III), Giles was called upon by the people of Siena to preach during a celebration in that city. The theme of that sermon, the divine harmony in events, provided Giles with an opportunity to quote liberally from Augustine, Boethius, Ptolemy, and the *Timaeus* of Plato.

<sup>16</sup> See the letter to prior Seraphino dated 20 Sept. 1502 in Anna Maria VOCI ROTH, ed., *Egidio da Viterbo OSA, Lettere Famigliari*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1990), vol. 1, p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> On the dates of composition, John W. O'MALLEY, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform: A Study in Renaissance Thought* (Leiden, 1968), p. 16, says that Giles was working on this commentary at least up into 1512. MARTIN, *Friar, Reformer, and Renaissance Scholar*, p. 161, says that the greater part was written by 1510 and that over the next two years only five additional pages were written because of Giles's growing administrative responsibilities.



Rome in 1511<sup>18</sup>. The next year he gave the address that opened the Fifth Lateran Council. When he stopped writing the commentary, having reached only the seventeenth *Distinctio* of Book I, he was well on the way toward his eventual appointment as cardinal. Many considered him as *papabilis*, a prime candidate for the papacy.

Given the range of experiences that led to his rejection of scholastic methods and scholastic doctrines for something he calls the *mens Platonis*, how does Giles proceed as an interpreter of Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*? If the work is only nominally a commentary in the scholastic sense, what is it really? Eugenio Massa considered Giles's withdrawal from scholasticism as gradual and only partially successful, as he judges from changes in the commentary. Massa suggested that its composition falls into three periods, as he saw reflected in the author's style and works cited. The first period would be that of the first chapters. Giles is more elliptical, more concerned with scholastic problems. The second and the third produce the chapters concerning the processions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, composed between 1509-1512<sup>19</sup>. Massa goes on correctly to identify the commentary as a reaction to a method of theological education, the scholastic, in an effort to restore a theology that was literary, alive, ethical, more like that of Augustine, the patron of Giles's order. But his division of the work into three phases is misleading, for Massa's second and third periods concern a very small portion of the large text, only 38 manuscript pages, in fact, out of 411. Giles appears to know what he is about, moreover, as a Christian Platonist and humanist, from the earliest pages of the commentary. Early on there is a conscious application of its title *ad mentem Platonis*, which attests to Giles's commitment to a new method, and one that has a historical emphasis.

Massa did not discuss Giles's handling of the first distinction of Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* but focused instead on a later passage that discusses the human soul. But Giles's new perspective and method can be witnessed even in his treatment of the first distinction. This section in particular deserves attention since it presents important issues that were debated extensively by both medieval and renaissance philosophers.

Book I of the *Sententiae* treats the doctrine of the Trinity. To introduce this major theme Peter Lombard adopted the technical vocabu-

<sup>18</sup> See H. JEDIN, *Die römischen Augustiner-Quellen zu Luthers Frühzeit*, in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 25 (1928), 266-269.

<sup>19</sup> E. MASSA, *L'Anima e l'Uomo in Egidio da Viterbo e nelle fonti classiche e medioevali* (Egidio da Viterbo - Similitudo vestigio praestantior imago est quae in secundo ordine reperitur, in *Testi umanistici inediti sul "De Anima"*, [Padua, 1951], pp. 37-38).



lary and line of reasoning as set forth in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*: namely, that all teaching consists of two parts: things and signs<sup>20</sup> and further, that regarding things, we can distinguish them according to another division: things we use and things we enjoy. He set forth these dichotomies because Augustine, after doing the same thing, categorically claimed: "the things to be enjoyed are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the very Trinity, one particular thing, the highest of things, the same to all who enjoy it"<sup>21</sup>. Augustine's claim about the Trinity "is not a philosophical proof but an arrogation of ecclesiastical authority based on the principle of revealed truth"<sup>22</sup>. Using his own dichotomies of thing and sign, and use and enjoyment, Augustine was

"merely trying to provide himself first with a neutral vocabulary with which to describe basic Christian doctrine. The two *a priori* categories provide the framework for a full and comprehensive theoretical description of the Trinity, and essentially of all Christian theology"<sup>23</sup>.

When Peter Lombard chose to employ for his *Sententiae* the same distinctions between thing and sign and use and enjoyment, however, he helped bring these concepts deep into the heart of late medieval philosophical debate<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, he joined to this basic framework five more principles derived from Augustine. First, that enjoyment involves the possession of the object in fact (*in re*) and not merely in hope of some future fulfillment (*in spe*). Second, that, properly understood, people are to be used, not enjoyed in themselves. Proper enjoyment of others entails the enjoyment of them "in God." Third, that God should be understood as using rather than enjoying humanity, since "if he enjoys us, he needs a benefit that is ours — something no sane man would say, because he himself is our every good, or else it comes from him"<sup>25</sup>. Fourth, that the virtues themselves are to be used toward the enjoyment of God, the highest good, the only thing that is to be enjoyed in itself. No virtue, then, is to be enjoyed unless that virtue is love, since God is love. Fifth, that it is through the function of the will that we enjoy.

<sup>20</sup> *De doctrina christiana*, 1.1.2 (PL 34.19, CCSL 32.7).

<sup>21</sup> *De doctrina christiana*, 1.5.5 (PL 34.21, CCSL 32.9).

<sup>22</sup> See James J. O'DONNELL, *Augustine* [Twayne's world authors series 759] (Boston, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> O'DONNELL, *Augustine*, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> PETER LOMBARD, *Sententiae* Book 1 (On the Mystery of the Trinity) Distinction 1, Chapter 1. F. STEGMÜLLER's *Repertorium commentariorum in Sententias Petri Lombardi*, 2 vols., (Würzburg, 1947) gives ample evidence of the frequency of production of *Sentences* commentaries.

<sup>25</sup> AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.31.34 (PL 34.32, CCSL 32.25-6), trans. John J. GAVIGAN, O.S.A., *Writings of St. Augustine*, vol. 4 (New York, 1947), p. 52.



With those concepts, particularly the calling of attention to the virtues, especially love, and to the will as a faculty of the soul, we have the essence of a major issue which scholars debated and developed during the period in question. Generally, while the two sides saw merit in both faculties, adherents to Aristotle saw the highest power of the soul as intellectual, in contemplation of the highest Good. The Platonic revival tended to place greater emphasis on the will. Thus the debate ultimately focused on whether the attainment of the supreme good was primarily an act of the intellect or the will; or, to put it another way, which of the two faculties was superior. Although the debate is implicit in Augustine and Peter Lombard in light of their establishment of the superiority of enjoyment over use, neither treated the question of the superiority of will or intellect directly. Nevertheless, an identification of a particular faculty with enjoyment, that is to say, the attainment of the highest good, naturally raises that faculty to a superior position. But the resolution of this question as a problem in philosophy was imputed to the commentators, who had more of Aristotle to reckon with than did Augustine or Peter Lombard.

Many leading philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages lectured and wrote commentaries on the *Sententiae*, including Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. All participate in the debate surrounding the first distinction. By Thomas' time, the debate was commonly presented as which faculty of the soul, the will or the intellect, showed itself as the more eminent and noble in the act of enjoyment. By the fourteenth century, this debate became commonplace — some have called it sterile — among Dominican and Franciscan theologians. It remained a matter of controversy among later scholars as well, particularly the humanists, and thus serves us as a valuable point of comparison<sup>26</sup>.

To take a well known Scholastic attempt at mediation as a case in point, Aquinas addressed the issue in detail and tried to find a way to explain how each faculty, the intellect and the will, could be considered superior according to a particular viewpoint. He held that, according to the stronger arguments, the intellect appears as the more eminent. When viewing intellect and will in their essence, for example, the intellect is superior "because the object of the will is comprised and included in that of the intellect"<sup>27</sup>. This is to point to *the beginning* of the act of enjoying

<sup>26</sup> On the continuation of this debate see *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 336, 351-353, 643, 658-659.

<sup>27</sup> E. GILSON, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. K. SHOOK (New York, 1956), p. 243. Similarly, "if we compare the intellect and will as particular powers of the soul exercising determinate acts, [the intellect is still seen as superior since] the essence of the good which the will desires is precisely that which the intellect



(*secundum originem*) and to claim superiority for the intellect, since it is what drives the will.

But Aquinas acknowledges that there is a way to consider the will so as to make that faculty appear superior to the intellect. This can happen if one looks toward the will's ultimate, universal object, the good<sup>28</sup>. For with this perspective,

"each individual intellect, all intellectual knowledge, and each object of knowledge constitute particular goods. As such they fall under universal good which is the proper object of the will. Looked at in this way, the will is superior to the intellect and capable of moving it"<sup>29</sup>.

This points to *the completion* of the act of enjoyment (*secundum perfectionem*). Aquinas makes this case in Distinction I, Question I, article 1 of his Sentence Commentary, as he explains Augustine's framework, which was adopted by Peter Lombard, through Aristotle's ethical categories. Enjoyment is the act of both intellect and will. Intellect, however, is more eminent and is the highest power of the soul. Man reaches his highest state in contemplation. The will he shares with the animals:

"Enjoyment consists in the best operation of man, since enjoyment is man's ultimate happiness. And the best operation of man is the operation of the highest power of the soul, that is, the intellect, toward the most eminent object, which is God"<sup>30</sup>.

But from the other perspective, the will can be seen as superior:

"Our happiness, which the Lombard calls enjoyment [*fruitio*], is perfected on account of its completion more than on account of its beginning, although it includes in itself a certain delight. And so we say that happiness [*fruitio*] is an act of the will, and according to the disposition of charity, regardless of its order in relation to the preceding powers and dispositions. In response to the first issue it must be said that appetite always follows cognition ... Thus the highest part of the soul has intellect and will, of which

apprehends. Therefore, the object of the intellect appears to be absolute while that of the will appears relative" (ibid.).

<sup>28</sup> For Aquinas the will is an innate hunger, a natural appetite for goodness. See Eleonore STUMP, *Faith and Goodness*, in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, ed. Godfrey VESEY, (Cambridge, 1989), p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> STUMP, *Faith and Goodness*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>30</sup> "Fruitio consistit in optima operatione hominis, cum fruitio sit ultima felicitas hominis ... Optima autem operatio hominis est operatio altissimae potentiae, scilicet intellectus, ad nobilissimum objectum, quod est Deus" (THOMAS AQUINAS, *Commentum in quatuor libros sententiarum magistri Petri Peter Lombardi*, vol. 1 [Parma, 1856, repr. New York, 1948], p. 12).



the intellect is superior according to beginning and the will according to completion"<sup>31</sup>.

In comparing Giles's handling of the issue, one notes that he begins in the customary scholastic manner, by accepting Lombard's/Augustine's dichotomy of use and enjoyment<sup>32</sup>. In distinguishing these concepts he uses the familiar terms of the subject, as he said he would<sup>33</sup>:

"There is a certain highest good which, when we pursue it, we are happy, and, happy, we *enjoy* it. Other goods are not supreme; these are to be loved for the sake of the highest good, so that we *use* them as steps for discovering the highest good, or for attaining it"<sup>34</sup>.

Giles immediately notes that this is the usual place where the debate over the superiority of intellect or will is conducted and he emphatically states where he stands on the issue:

"Here it is customary for all to ask to which faculty enjoyment belongs. I say that it does not belong to the intellect but to the will"<sup>35</sup>.

This polemical assertion already signals a departure from Aquinas in its reversal of Aquinas's emphasis whether Giles has him in mind or not. Giles's first proof, considering the question from the viewpoint of the act of enjoyment itself, lays the foundation for the reversal:

"Happiness, although situated as it were at first in the intellect and knowledge, yet has its perfection in the will, as a man in the beginning only perfects the body. In the end when his body becomes exhausted he depends on the power

<sup>31</sup> "Perficetur nostra felicitas, quam fruitio nominat, ex parte sui complementi magis quam ex parte principii, cum in se includat quamdam delectationem. Et ideo dicimus quod est actus voluntatis, et secundum habitum caritatis, quamvis secundum ordinem ad potentias et habitus praecedentes. Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod appetitus semper sequitur cognitionem ... Ita suprema pars habet intellectum et voluntatem, quorum intellectus est altior secundum originem, et voluntas secundum perfectionem" (THOMAS AQUINAS, *Commentum*, p. 12).

<sup>32</sup> Giles's handling of the issue under discussion appears in chapters 16-20 of the *Commentary*.

<sup>33</sup> "Communibus vocabulis artis utar" (*Comm.* ch. 16).

<sup>34</sup> "Quoddam est summum, quod cum assequimur beati sumus, et illo beati fruimur. Alia bona non summa sunt, quae summi gratia adamanda sunt, ut illis quasi gradibus ad summum vel inveniendum utamur, vel assequendum" (*Comm.* ch. 17).

<sup>35</sup> "Queri hic solet ab omnibus, cuius potestatis sit frui. Dicimus non intellectus esse, sed voluntatis" (*Comm.* ch. 17). In maintaining that it is through the will that we enjoy, Giles echoes Augustine *De Trinitate* 10.10.13 (PL 42.981): "Fruimur enim cognitis, in quibus voluntas ipsa propter se ipsa delectata conquiescit."



of his mind ... Although its origin is in the intellect, enjoyment, which is the most perfect act, must be ascribed to the will"<sup>36</sup>.

Aquinas made a concession to the superiority of the will *secundum perfectionem*, but his argument more vigorously affirms the superiority of the intellect in contemplation of the highest good. Here Giles, using the same distinction between the impulse that begins a process and that which brings it to completion, stresses the latter and gives only minimal support to the former.

Giles's second proof, considering the question from the viewpoint of the object of the act of enjoyment, reinforces the foundation. Looking toward the attainment of the supreme good, Giles argues that "enjoyment is the final act of the soul, not concerning anything whatsoever, but concerning the end ... Therefore it is the will that enjoys, not the intellect"<sup>37</sup>.

Despite his disagreement with the line of reasoning adopted by Aquinas and other scholastics, Giles up to this point is still arguing the issue in a scholastic manner. His third and fourth proofs, however, take a slightly different approach featuring linguistic and grammatical analysis. At first he simply points out that "to enjoy something is nothing other than to take delight in it, since we say that no one enjoys hostile and unpleasant things [which means to bring to our attention the fact that we frequently *think* about such things]. Enjoyment therefore finds no other place than in the will"<sup>38</sup>. Then he calls attention to the etymology of the *fructus* and reflects in an eloquent passage on its association with the end of a natural process that has many earlier steps:

"A tree sprouts, is set in its permanent location, is fed, grows, is ingrafted, becomes mature, flowers and finally bears fruits and produce, which is the reason why it was planted. And so if enjoyment [*frui*] has been derived from *fructus*, it is truly placed at the end. Therefore enjoyment is in the will, which follows as it were and makes its dwelling in the last and final inner rooms"<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> "Beatitudo vero, etsi intellectu et cognitione, quasi in principio sita sit, in voluntate tamen perfectionem habet, ut homo in principio corpus tantum perfectum habet. In fine illo fatisciente virtuti mentis incumbit ... Licet origo in intellectu, frui, qui est actus perfectissimus, voluntati ascribi vult" (*Comm.* ch. 17).

<sup>37</sup> "Frui est actus perfectus animae, non circa quodcunque, sed circa finem ... Haec igitur est quae fruitur, non intellectus" (*Comm.* ch. 17).

<sup>38</sup> "Frui re aliqua nihil aliud est, quam illo delectari, cum neminem adversis et ingratis frui dicamus. Non ergo nisi in voluntate locum invenit" (*Comm.* ch. 17).

<sup>39</sup> "Arbor enim oritur, seritur, alitur, augecit, inseritur, pubescit, florescit, ac denique cuius gratia seritur, fructus et poma parit. Frui itaque si a fructu sumptum est, id vero est in ultimo positum. Ergo in voluntate est frui, quae posterior sequens quasi in ultimis et perfectis penetralibus fixit sedem" (*Comm.* ch. 17).



This kind of grammatical and analogical reflection is already less characteristic of scholastic disputation. His fifth and final proof, however, which serves to resolve the debate, moves in one paragraph from a dialectical to a new literary and consciously eloquent style of approach. As the paragraph begins, the point is remade: the will is superior to the intellect because the will is connected to the idea of fulfillment, here called rest (*quies*), while the intellect is connected more with the idea of motion toward that goal (*motus*). Giles makes this point emphatically here and in a manner that effectively repeats the key words often.

"Now rest is not a characteristic of the intellect, because the end and the limit is not a movement of the soul. [Rest] rests in the will. For when the good is absent it moves us; after the good is present we rest. But that movement is characteristic of the appetite, the act is characteristic of the will and of love. Therefore after that movement has departed, rest is characteristic of it"<sup>40</sup>.

Vividly brought to mind here is the principal theme of Augustine's *Confessions*, especially the statement that opens and closes that work and sets both its mood and its theme: You have made us for yourself and *our heart is unquiet till it finds its rest in you*<sup>41</sup>. Although there is a long tradition, which includes the Scholastics, of associating man's ultimate enjoyment and happiness, the beatific vision, as loving rest in God, the change here in method is noticeable when it is considered in light of what immediately follows. Giles builds on the idea of divine rest. No longer employing philosophical argument, however, Giles now rather chooses a piece of mythography, allegorically interpreted, calling to mind the banquets of the gods. The nectar and ambrosia they, and restored souls, are served represent first the pleasure of the intellect and finally the repose of the will.

"When the table is first ready, there is pleasure, that is, nectar. When there is rest, there is ambrosia, which signifies stable eternity. For this reason Plato says that all the gods are happy and that love is the medium, as if all power of happiness and perfection is located in the will, where love's court is situated. And the ancients say this about acts of the will, that nectar and ambrosia are set before the gods, that is, the happy. Intoxicating nectar signifies pleasure,

<sup>40</sup> "*Quies non intellectus est, ad quem finis terminusque motus animae non est, qui in voluntate quiescit. Bonum enim absens movet; quo praesente quiescimus. Sed motus ille est appetitus, actus voluntatis et amoris. Ergo eiusdem est quies abeunte motu*" (*Comm.* ch. 17) [My emphasis].

<sup>41</sup> "Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te" (*Confessiones* 1.1.1 [PL 32.661, CCSL 27.1; cf. 13.37.52 [PL 32.868, CCSL 27.272]]).



but ambrosia signifies a stable and motionless rest in some happy reality and the eternity — or, so to speak, the immortality — of that happiness<sup>42</sup>.

Here Giles is able to touch on his main reason for rejecting Averroean Aristotelianism: its difficulty with the doctrine of personal immortality of the soul. He senses that enjoyment, the attainment of the highest good, requires immortality, for happiness is removed by the fear of dying and of losing it<sup>43</sup>.

Giles's voluntarism and his method of interpretation using grammar, myth, and allegory thus reflect a humanistic perspective even at this earliest point in the commentary. Ultimately the method he prefers is literary rather than dialectical, humanist rather than scholastic. His use of myth and allegory is significant because it is how he concludes every section of the commentary. Moreover, the allegory of nectar and ambrosia here does far more than illustrate his opinion on the superiority of the will. It joins Giles to a venerable tradition of Renaissance Platonist participation in the debate. Marsilio Ficino, who had made a permanent impression on Giles, reversed his position on the question. Although he first maintained that the *summum bonum* is located in our intellect, as early as 1453, after a discussion with Lorenzo de' Medici, he and his patron came to hold that the will rather than the intellect was more responsible for human happiness. Lorenzo's poem *Altercazione* and Ficino's *Epistola de felicitate* both make this point. Further, both use the images of nectar and ambrosia: the nectar of the will's joy and the ambrosia of the intellect's vision. Knowledge of God was less satisfying than love of God. The same voluntarist view can be found in Nesi and Vieri<sup>44</sup>.

We note that Giles has reversed the images of nectar and ambrosia as symbols, but the approach he takes to the issue is precisely that of his humanist contemporaries.

<sup>42</sup> "Ubi mensa quae primo instruitur voluptas, nectar. Quies, ambrosia, quae immotam significat aeternitatem. Hinc Plato deos omnes beatos esse dixit, et amorem medium, quasi omnis beatitudinis vis atque perfectio in voluntate collocata sit, ubi amoris est regia. Et de voluntatis actibus ab antiquis dicitur quod diis, hoc est, beatis apponitur nectar et ambrosia. Nectar inebrians voluptatem significat, ambrosia vero, quietem et stabilem immotamque rei felicitis, et felicitatis aeternitatem, et ut ita dicam, immortalitatem" (*Comm.* ch. 17).

<sup>43</sup> "Moriendi enim et amittendi metus felicitatem tollere videtur, ut Averroes arguit" (*Comm.* ch. 17). See Averroes's Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* 1,66 lines 54-55.

<sup>44</sup> See *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 352. Here we can also recall Augustine's caution about the intellect, here alluded to as a mountaintop reached by philosophical activity as a means of reaching god. "It is one thing to see, from a wooded mountain top, the land of peace, and not to find the way to it." (*Confessiones*. 7. 21.27 [PL 32.748, CCSL 27.111]).



The interpretive method adopted in this early section of the commentary, therefore, is appropriate as Giles moves toward an exaltation of Love, a theme that for him is inextricably connected with the Christian doctrine of salvation<sup>45</sup>. There, like his humanist predecessors who draw on Plato's *Phaedrus*, 246-7, Giles will invoke the allegory of the intellect and will as twin wings on which the soul, in love with the divinity, is able to ascend to heaven and experience *fruitio*, *felicitas*, and *quies*. This image complements the previous one. Together they give a highly poetical coloring to the debate by way of myth, much as Plato himself did, although the doctrine of the Forms, which lie behind it are, even in Plato, grounded in dialectical analysis. The major difference here and in the Platonic love dialogues is a matter of literary style.

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<sup>45</sup> Giles next turns to the question whether humans only enjoy God or use him as well.