

How Has Boethius's Appeal for *Ratio* Fared?

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Except for minority voices to the contrary, for example, Tertullian in the early church and Protestant Reformation leaders more recently, the mainstream Christian tradition has valued and utilized human reasoning powers in the service of understanding and defending Christian faith. An injunction from Boethius, that celebrated philosopher at the dawn of the medieval period, captures the tenor of the philosophical project: Faith and reason should be yoked together as much as one can do it. Taking this injunction as a kind of generic task, the following essay illustrates four specific articulations of the yoking: how Boethius himself did it, how Anselm did it, how Aquinas did it, and how Intelligent Design proponents do it today.

“No one believes anything unless one first thought it to be believable...Everything that is believed should be believed after mulling over has preceded...Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe. But everyone who believes thinks.”
St. Augustine, On the Predestination of the Blessed¹

A comment that Anicius Severinus Boethius (AD 480–524) made, almost casually so, at the conclusion of a letter written to John the Deacon (later Pope John I)² sometime prior to AD 523 occasioned this essay. The letter itself advanced arguments why the names *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Spirit* can be predicated substantially of God and sought corroboration from John. It ended with Boethius’s celebrated appeal: “As much as one is able, one should yoke together faith and reason”: fidem si poterit rationemque coniunge.³

Dealing as I shall be mostly with scholastic thinking—and in the judgment of Josef Pieper⁴ Boethius can be called the first of the scholastics—I wish to use a scholastic category to capture my fundamental insight, namely, the *genus-species* combination that exemplifies a *definitio*.⁵ Four approaches to the yoking together of faith and reason are presented. Boethius’s injunction to yoke together faith and reason functions as the *genus*. Four *species*, or specific

¹ Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum...omnia quae creduntur, praeveniente cogitatione credantur...Non enim omnis qui cogitat, credit, cum ideo cogitent plerique, ne credant; sed cogitat omnis qui credit. De Praedestinatione Sanctorum, Liber Unus, 2.5, PL 44.

² As pope (523–526), John is remembered as adopting for western Christianity the Alexandrian method for computing the date of Easter. Also remembered is that the Ostrogothic king Theodoret, himself an Arian, forced the pope to travel to Constantinople to make Emperor Justin mollify his anti-Arian decrees. John was unsuccessful. Theodoret imprisoned him and the pope died soon after.

³ See full letter at http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/resources/boethius/Utrum_pater_et_filius.txt, accessed 13 April 2009.

⁴ Josef Pieper, Scholasticism (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 36, quoting Martin Grabman’s classic judgment in Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode (Freiburg, 1909).

⁵ “For by stating the species or the genus, we appropriately define any individual,” Aristotle, Catag. 4. 2^b32. Aristotle defines virtue in terms of its genus (i.e., a state of character) and its specific difference (i.e., disposed to choose the mean). See Nico. Ethics ii, 5. 1106^a12 and 1106^b36. “Genus significat totum ut non designatum, et differentia ut designans, et definitio ut designatum, sicut et species,” Aquinas, In I Sent., 25, 1, 1, ad 2.

differences of this *genus*, convey the insight, and these four constitute the four stages of this essay. Boethius goes about the yoking in a manner that differs from Anselm's, whose in turn differs from Thomas Aquinas's, whose in turn differs from those of contemporary proponents of Intelligent Design. First, however, a framework for Boethius is needed.

The mutually supportive Christian interplay between faith and reason is not novel with Boethius. St. Paul, it is remembered, had a frustrating experience in Athens in making a reasoned case to the locals for the Christian vision of God. This apostolic experience seems to have soured any thought of such an endeavor for Tertullian later. Tertullian's signature phrase, "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem,"⁶ would seem to line up with Paul's "We preach Christ crucified...an absurdity to Gentiles."⁷ But Tertullian stands apart from a vast majority of Christian voices with whom Boethius lines up, voices that do not describe the philosophical temper of mind as antithetical to the life of faith. Such a pervasive antithesis and distrust of reasoning will not occur in western culture until the Protestant Reformers. Justin, whom we call "the Martyr," but who referred to himself as Justin the Philosopher, sees in ancient Greek philosophy already the adumbration of Christian doctrines, based on Justin's claim that the divine Logos, later incarnate as Jesus, operated in the philosophical consciousness of Plato and others. Athenagoras, not long after Justin, uses philosophical reasoning to debunk the vile rumors spreading in the Empire against Christians. And in the same second century, prompted by the need to combat Gnostic Christian thinking, Irenaeus, a Greek-speaking bishop of Lyons, born in Smyrna and educated in its famous Second Sophistic School, used the tools of Greek philosophy and rhetoric against a Gnosticism that read into the Johannine New Testament literature a strange philosophical vision of emanating eons, such as the doctrine advanced by the Gnostic Basilides.⁸ I pass over the well-recognized and documented usage of fourth-century neo-Platonic thinking at the foundation of the pastoral preaching and theological expositions of the Cappadocians in the East and, in the West, of Ambrose and Augustine. Boethius stands in the line of all of them, and especially St. Augustine, from whom Boethius absorbed so much.

Part I: Boethius

Do we derive from Boethius himself how this yoking of reason and faith works? (I would propose *yoking* as the best way to translate his word choice of conjunge.) Apart from his tractates, like his De Trinitate that was so influential on St. Thomas Aquinas and even elicited from Aquinas a partial commentary, what about Boethius's most famous work, The Consolation of Philosophy? The Consolatio, the most read book in the later Middle Ages other than the Latin Vulgate and translated into vernacular languages by luminaries from King Alfred to Chaucer much later, has always invited the following puzzlement: Why does Boethius, unjustly sentenced

⁶ "Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?" De Praescriptionibus Adversus Haereticos, PL 2: 19A.

⁷ 1 Cor. 1:23. See Acts 17 for Lukan redaction of Paul's visit to Athens.

⁸ His own writings do not survive. His position is constructed from references to him in the writings of Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria.

to death in Pavia by his boss Theodoret,⁹ not fall back on his Christian faith, on the Book of Job at least, instead of on Lady Philosophy, to find meaning in the evil befalling him? Answers have ranged from the charge that Boethius was more the intellectual than a person of faith to C. S. Lewis's famous Boethian quip, "But did you not read my title? I wrote philosophically, not religiously, because I had chosen the consolations of philosophy, not those of religion, as my subject. You might as well ask why a book on arithmetic does not use geometrical methods."¹⁰

Since this essay is not a study of the Consolatio itself, I propose my own short answer to the question whether Boethius himself yoked faith and reason in the one book for which he is so famous. The central values of this book are Christian faith affirmations to the core: (a) Worldly values such as wealth, political power, and fame are ephemeral and cannot aid the soul that approaches death; one thinks immediately of this very theme reprised in that most Christian of medieval morality plays, Everyman. (b) God is the only reality who fulfills the longings of the human heart, and Boethius informs us in Book III that we, whether facing death or not, need to "become divine....While only God is so by nature, as many as you like may become so by participation."¹¹ (c) Prayer is the human activity that joins us to God, making us godlike. "[If] hope and prayer have no power, what way will there be left by which we can be joined and united" to God?¹² (d) Our every action, good or bad, is known to God's eternal gaze. Does this differ at all from the words of Ps. 139: "Where can I go from your spirit, where can I flee from your face? If I climb the heavens, you are there. If I lie in the grave, you are there"? (e) Thus exposed to God's foreknowledge, our choices to act this way or that way are still fully free and still count. Boethius puts it this way: "It is clear that good deeds never lack reward, or crimes their appropriate punishment. The proper way of looking at it is to regard the goal of every action as its reward."¹³ Are we not reminded of the judgment of the Son of Man in the sheep and goats eschatological scene in Matt. 25 wherein choices to feed or not feed the hungry counted? Therefore, my view of Boethius's Consolatio is that he has led his readers to savor the implications of acting virtuously, for this present life and for life beyond death. Such a case could have been made by quoting scriptures and addressed to one's faith in biblical stories as God's word. But if the case could also be made by a series of philosophical insights that are in no way distinct from faith insights, have not faith and reason yoked together, not to the detriment of one of them but to the compatibility of both?

⁹ Theodoric, the second Germanic ruler in the Western Empire, employed Boethius as his magister officiorum. In this role Boethius functioned as chief of the governmental bureaucracy. Theodoric came to charge Boethius with treason, or at least with misguided loyalties. He sentenced Boethius to death. Awaiting his execution, which occurred in Pavia in 524, Boethius wrote the Consolatio Philosophiae.

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 78.

¹¹ Bk. III, passus 10, in The Consolation of Philosophy, rev. ed., translated with introduction by Victor Watts, New York: Penguin Putnam, 1999, p. 71.

¹² Bk. V, passus 3, Watts edition, p. 122.

¹³ Bk. IV, passus 3, Watts edition, p. 93. Boethius's enigmatic words become understandable after he treats the notion of *eternity* in Bk. V. The encroachment of eternal salvation or damnation into the implications of freely exercised moral choices prior to one's death is treated in a brilliantly imagined scene by C. S. Lewis in The Great Divorce (New York: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 63–65.

Boethius clearly achieves the yoking. This I am calling the *genus*. What is the *species* or specific difference? With Boethius, the yoking is fully fused with our experience of being a Christian in the world. In that most pithy and most instructive of scholastic phrases, the yoking of faith and reason is per modum unius. They are like two lungs giving oxygen to a single life. Philosophical reasoning does not come to the content of faith from outside, as if it were adventitious. Faith and philosophical reason interpenetrate. Reason is not being applied to doctrines of faith, as if a clear distinction held between natural thinking and supernatural thinking. Boethius's approach is the same as Clement of Alexandria's in Book VI of the Stromateis,¹⁴ wherein Clement describes the philosophical insights of classical Greek philosophy as willed by God in a kind of covenant between the self-revealing God and the human race, a bequeathing every bit as propaedeutic as the Mosaic covenant was to the New Covenant, yet distinct from it. In writing the Consolatio in the manner he did, Boethius did not retreat from doctrines of the faith into mere philosophy as some commentators think. With Boethius and Clement of Alexandria, it is never mere philosophy they are doing. It is philosophical reasoning that infuses the life of faith and is faith's reasoned justification and alternative expression.

Part II: Anselm

From this theologian who consecrated the phrase, fides quaerens intellectum, there can be no doubt that faith and reason are yoked together. How they are yoked together is my question? Anselm's case for God's existence in the Proslogium and the case he makes for redemption in Cur Deus Homo are the two tests to be examined. In the Proslogium he seeks a "unum argumentum...ad probandum" and in his next breath echoes the aim by saying "ad astruendum quia Deus vere est." I do not perceive that Anselm is employing strict Aristotelian nomenclature to describe a demonstratio. He merely wishes to give a reasoned argument to fortify or corroborate Christians in what they already believe. His choice of astruere is indicative in this regard; it denotes to "further build upon" that which is already confessed. The same aim undergirds Cur Deus Homo. Here he wants to refute the charge that Christian doctrines are unreasonable. "Probat rationibus necessariis" is how he proposes to defend Christian belief. In chapter one of the first book, he wishes to present "nostra rationes" concerning a "particular problematic" (which is how I translate "cujusdam quaestionis") surrounding the central Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. In the Proslogium Anselm begins with readers already believing in God's existence. The same holds in Cur Deus with readers who already confess the Incarnation. In the former book Anselm's opponents, the "fools" of Psalm 14, are likely fictitious; I do not think Anselm and his monks ran into atheists in our sense, but perhaps he had met a few such persons. In Cur Deus, the opponents are very real and very many. They are Jews and Muslims. I translate the unusual positioning of "et infidels" in the middle of his sentence as "both kinds of unbelievers." These so-called unbelievers, these monotheists, ridiculed (deridentes) Christians for saying that God became human.

¹⁴ See chap. 5 at <http://www.logoslibrary.org/clement/stromata/605.html>, accessed 24 July 2009.

In both works I perceive that Anselm yokes reason to faith similarly. He sequentially argues that statements never need to leave the realm of the reader's mind to arrive at their upshot. This is universally recognized for the Proslogium, which begins with a definition of a mere word, *g-o-d*, which is not assumed to exist extramentally and concludes that it must. Cur Deus also begins with the definition of a word, *sin* in its case. The steps of the argument draw on one's experience of life, especially medieval life, for corroboration. Does not any offense mean to not render what is due someone; hence, does not a sin withhold from God what is due God? Are not amends, then, to be paid back, and should not satisfaction be proportional to the offense, and so forth? Although the steps of the argument rely on one's lived experience of justice, the argument is about an idea or definition of sin, and it concludes to the necessity of a god man because of the need for infinite satisfaction to make compensatory amends for the infinite gravity of sin. But the argument itself never leaves one's mental ruminations for its cogency. It is, in this respect, similar to the mathematical argument for the *harmonic series* that concludes the sum of the series is infinity and must be so. I am further persuaded that Anselm's argument proceeds from the successive implications of internalized ideas because there is not a single mention of Original Sin in his argument about the need for incarnational redemption. I realize that he treats Original Sin elsewhere but not here.¹⁵ What is really clever in Anselm's strategy is the conclusion that he leaves unsaid. If Jews and Muslim judge the Christian doctrine of Jesus' Incarnation to be foolishly against reason, what is their answer to how sins are remitted?

To recapitulate Anselm's position in brief: Believing Christians constitute the originating context who believe in salvation history and in the extramental and undoubted reality of God. Anselm does yoke together faith and reason in the manner that reason serves to make Christian faith intelligible and "amabilis," as he says in other text, wherein reasoning is distinct from believing and comes to its support. In the texts above, the specific difference with him is that reason operates on mental entities, on concepts and on the definitions of words.

Part III: Aquinas

In every respect that Anselm, in true Augustinian fashion, instinctively turns within towards the resources of one's interiority to express the manner in which faith and reason are yoked, Thomas Aquinas turns without. He turns towards one's experience of the world to express the yoking. Given the explosive entry into Latin Christianity of Aristotle's realism-based philosophy in the thirteenth century, this comes as no surprise. Aristotle's philosophy begins

¹⁵ See the first eight chapters of De Conceptu Virginali et Originali Peccato, PL 158: 431B–442C. Especially instructive is the opening of chapter two: "If Adam and Eve had preserved original justice, those who descended from them as from an origin would have been justified [with God] just as they were [at first]. Ergo Adam et Eva si justitiam servassent originale, qui de illis nascerentur originaliter, sicut illi, justii essent. (It is difficult to translate *justi* or *justitia* that are found passim in the biblical and patristic traditions. Being righteous, being justified, point to the concept's *Ursprung* in Ecccl. 7:29: God made mankind upright (or fully proper, fully OK with Him). It was to Anselm's great credit to describe Original Sin as the absence of a created good meant to be there, Original Justice. God made "Adam and Eve" fully OK, in which there was no disorder or disconnect between human emotions, human insight, and human willing at the service of God. Anselm provided an alternative to Augustine's emphasis on raging libido.

with the mundane, with the secular, with sensible beings, as befits this philosopher who began as a biologist and botanist. Aquinas and his own Dominican mentor, Albertus Magnus, embraced the new philosophy, even if the new thinking arrived in consort with Muslim commentators and even if Aristotle's secularity was more atheistic than the Platonic tradition then in place that prioritized transcendent realities.

In the very second question opening his Summa Theologiae, in which Aquinas addresses Anselmian interiority on the matter whether God's existence is self-evident, Aquinas's focus ad extra is paramount. I quote his conclusion, as concise a paragraph as it is a signature of the Aristotelian shift in thinking. "My answer to our question is simply this: The statement 'God exists' is self-evident in itself since the predicate *existence* is identical with the subject of the statement, *God*. For the nature of God is pure underived existence, as we shall soon see. On the other hand, our human minds cannot grasp the divine essence. And therefore nothing about God is immediately self-evident to our knowledge; instead, our knowledge about God needs to derive from our reasoning about things that are more known to us. Here I am referring to our knowledge of the effects of God's reality, that is, I am referring to created things."¹⁶

Other utilizations of reason at the service of faith unfold in similar fashion. Aquinas's five so-call arguments for God's existence¹⁷ follow shortly upon his denial that an ontological or self-evident argument for God's existence can be made. Significantly, he does not call them arguments. He calls them quinque viae (five pathways) instead, and Aquinas significantly avoids his oft-used word demonstratio, because each one of them is not an argument in the manner he customarily presents proofs. They are, rather, five invitations to having a metaphysical experience of the material world fully external to oneself, such as a world of causalities, a world of things able to be and then not be, and so forth. Even if it is metaphysical reflection of the most subtle order, human reason focuses in the direction of its natural proclivity, which is outward. Furthermore, in his treatment of the doctrine of redemption, Aquinas's analysis is also outward. It is toward the data of salvation history. The doings of Jesus, the acta et passa of his human life, function as the instrumental causes of his divinity, wherein the primary cause of salvation is the divinity.¹⁸ He uses the philosophical category of instrumental causality, but he does not reason about it as a mental object, as Anselm does the concept of satisfaction. He reasons about Jesus' actual deeds through the lens of instrumental causality.

I recapitulate section three in some brief sentences. Aquinas yokes together faith and reason in faithfulness to Boethius. The reasoning that is at the service of faith with Aquinas, as with Anselm, is a mental activity distinct from the life of faith; with Boethius and the Church

¹⁶ ST I, q. 2, art. 1. Articulus for Aquinas is what we would term a theological *question*.

¹⁷ ST I, q. 2, art. 3.

¹⁸ All activities of Jesus' life, from birth in Bethlehem to bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples at Pentecost, are salvific for Aquinas. But ST III, q. 48, depicts the suffering and death of Jesus as effecting salvation in a most proper way: The Passion causes salvation by way of merit (art. 1), by way of satisfaction (art. 2), by way of a sacrifice (art. 3), by way of redemption (art. 4), and by way of an instrumental cause (art. 6). ST III, q. 48, art. 6, ad 3 sums up these ideas in what must be the most insight-packed answer to an objection in the whole Summa Theologiae.

Fathers faith and reason enjoy a more fused existence in the believer's experience of God. Aquinas differs from Anselm, however, in asserting that the autonomous light of reason finds intelligibility, that is to say, finds the things that are illuminated by reason's light, in those entities outside the mind, and these serve as reasoning's starting points. Theological statements about God are only inferences drawn from our concepts about created extramental realities. For Anselm, the light of reason most clearly illuminates when the human mind turns within itself, to one's experiences of thinking and interiority. Therefore, the specific difference defining Aquinas's yoking of faith and reason is reason's orientation *ad extra*, or as Aquinas says it, the conversio ad phantasmata.¹⁹

Apropos concepts about the material world and inferences drawn from them to provide, in Aquinas's scheme, a sort of indirect knowledge of God's existence and His attributes, the notion of *analogy* needs to be sharply grasped. There are no such things as analogous concepts in Aquinas's epistemology. A person does not have a univocal concept of human love and an analogous concept of God as love. There are only concepts of human love, some better than others. There is, however, analogous *language* about God, what Aquinas calls the analogy of names. We can predicate the word *love* to describe God, but it happens by way of inference from our experience of creation. We first experience and conceptualize human love. Then we attempt to mentally shave away from this concept any sense of limitation, finitude, and imperfection. Although our minds never come to comprehend such a perfected and unlimited sense of love, our minds become pointed in that direction even though the *end point* is never grasped. The word *love*, meaning divine love, reflects the mental striving to reach the unreachable. The statement, "God is love," is a direct enough statement, and is presented as a true statement, but the word *love* describes God in only an analogous manner of speaking, not in an analogous manner of thinking.

¹⁹ A classic locus for Aquinas's epistemology is ST I, 85, 1. Conversio ad phantasmata might be loosely interpreted as "the human mind's continual need to be grounded in the imagination's presentation of concrete experiences." A transliteration of the phrase means nothing to a modern reader. Here, in nub, is Aquinas's position on the formation of ideas in the mind. The imagination constructs a cluster of images, phantasms he calls them, of some material reality, like horses. The mind, the "agent intellect" in his phrase, having ruminated over them, abstracts from these phantasms the concept of what a horse is. (Aristotle's On the Soul, c.5, 430^a, 10–17, is Aquinas's inspiration for the work of the agent intellect.) This notion, this concept, resides in the mind. This residency in the mind, which he calls residency in our "possible intellect," is simply the phenomenon we recognize when someone says, "I got it. I know what a horse is." We possess the concept; the concept possesses us. But there is a further mental moment of conversio ad phantasmata, as in this enigmatic sentence, "Ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat suum objectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem" (I, 84, 7). This refers merely to the contextual grounding of our concept of *horse*. The mind is actively grasping (actu intelligat) what a horse is by keeping the wider context ever in view, namely, that the notion of *horse* only exists in actual, individual, particular things called horses. Aquinas reiterates this turn-to-the-imagination in I, 85, 5, ad 2: "Et tamen non intelligit actu nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata." This co-apprehension of the concrete grounding of the concept of *horse* is supplied by these phantasms, or what I tend to call the imagination's presentation of concrete experiences. Human reasoning, for Aquinas, begins from outside the mind, from experiencing concrete individual material objects, like bunches of horses, and our imagination fashions profiles (phantasms). Interestingly, he always uses the plural form of the Latin to describe the phantasms underlying a single mental concept or notion.

This may seem a very minimalistic approach to God as love, and Aquinas would agree. He even observes that it is more proper to say what God is not than what God is. Although the metaphysical inferences of which I speak are far removed from the inferences of science and mathematics, there is this similarity among them all. Often in science and mathematics the upshot or conclusion is not directly observed but rather inferred from what one does experience directly. The mathematical sum of the harmonic series is infinity. Even though the numbers get smaller fast (1, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5...1/ n), and we can grasp each one in itself, their inferred sum approaches infinity as its asymptote. Our mind, no matter how mathematically acute, cannot grasp *infinite quantity*, yet the statement remains true that “the sum equals infinity.” Cosmic black holes are better examples of inference at work. A black hole is what is left behind after an object has undergone complete gravitational collapse. This is not much of a “what exactly is it” definition. Physicist John A. Wheeler put it succinctly: “Spacetime is so strongly curved that no light can come out [of the hole], no matter can be ejected, and no measuring rod can ever survive being put in. Any kind of object that falls into the black hole loses its separate identity, preserving only its mass, charge, angular momentum....Measurements of these three determinants is permitted by their effects on the Kepler orbits of test objects, charged and uncharged, in revolution around the black hole.”²⁰ Wheeler’s simple point is that a scientist observes the black hole’s effect on other cosmic entities somewhat nearby that are observable and measurable. Inference follows from perceived effects.

This last illustration makes a convenient transition to part four and underlines the differences to be met. Aquinas makes inferences from *metaphysical* experiences of the world for his statements about God. Physics makes inferences from *physical* (observable, measurable) experiences of the world (perturbations in Kepler orbits, for example) for its descriptions of black holes. Intelligent Design is intent on making the case for God’s existence from directly observable scientific (i.e., physical) evidence. This is Intelligent Design’s specific difference in our historical sketch of the faith and reason interrelationship.

Part IV: Intelligent Design

The story of creation in Genesis has become the poster child for the contemporary animosity between faith and reason.²¹ On one side of the battlefield are the creationists who find the complete account of human and cosmic beginnings in the first three chapters of Genesis. If the whole cosmos is described as being created in six days, then God has achieved everything in 144 hours. And the same holds for how the first humans came to be. A man came first, and then God created a woman from one of the man’s ribs. Sometimes a certain sophistication, called Concordism, is appended to this literal approach. Instead of within six 24-hour days, God created the world within six geological epochs, but six and only six nonetheless. To get the accurate

²⁰ Physics Today (April 2009), the journal of the American Institute of Physics, devoted a special issue to this celebrated theoretical physicist who died in 2008. See Remo Ruffini and John A. Wheeler, “Introducing the black hole,” p. 47.

²¹ A sequel to this essay will appear in the Newman Studies Journal as “Creationism, Evolution, and Intelligent Design: Sober Advice from Newman on the Tension between Religion and Science.”

story, just read the bible's description, urge the creationists. On the other side of the conflict are the scientists convinced of the theory of evolution. The majority of them are materialists for whom the existence of God and a role for God have no place in the story of nature. To a theist such evolutionists are apt to quote those caustic words of the nineteenth-century French mathematician and astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace concerning God in the workings of nature, "I have no need of that hypothesis."

Attempting to navigate a middle course between the Scylla and Charybdis of these antagonists are the proponents of Intelligent Design. With the evolutionists they affirm the multi-billion-year process of nature's unfolding story. With the creationists they see the necessary hand of God in the story. Intelligent designers maintain that on scientific grounds, and by means of microevolutionary arguments, that is to say, arguments conducted at the level of minute scientific details, the designing hand of God can be perceived by reason alone. Such is the case when scientific observation discovers irreducible complexities in nature that point to God as their only explanation. The scientific evolutionary evidence, rightly sifted, proves God's necessary and ineluctable presence. God's designing hand is there to be detected, and this on the basis of scientific reasoning.

Scientists concur in recognizing that biological processes and biological organs themselves are exceedingly complex. A biologist inclined to Intelligent Design, such as Michael Behe, claims that certain complexities are irreducibly so such that a Darwinian natural selection, with its inherent randomness, cannot explain transit through or beyond these complexities in an intellectually satisfying manner. Only the hand of a designer operating behind the complexity can explain how evolutionary advance in nature is attained. He concludes that molecular systems, such as the flagella of bacteria, appear designed because they really are designed.²² Whereas nature ought to display a web of cause-effect relationships (nature's so-called natural laws), areas of unbridgeable complexities bespeak a guiding hand in nature deeper and more profound than any natural law describing orderly process. Rebuttal to Intelligent Design has taken the form of other scientists providing a scientific solution to what had been proposed as beyond apparent solution.

Intelligent Design is a more nuanced version of the older gap-in-nature argument for God's existence. The gaps in nature's organic togetherness, in its connective webbing as it were, are covered or explained by a God-of-the-gaps who provides where nature's laws are lacking. Recollect, for example, how lunar or solar eclipses were explained centuries ago as divine interventions in the well-ordered and customary movements of heavenly bodies. It has always been a temptation for some people to make the case for God by arguing from a gap in our scientific knowledge that gets filled by a divine intervention that preserves order. Such arguments discredit the rightful relationship of faith to scientific reasoning because the arguments create a house of cards that comes crashing down whenever a new scientific

²² For further descriptions of biologist Michael Behe's positions, see James L. Heft, "Evolution and Catholicism: A Few Modest Proposals," *Horizons* 35/2 (Fall 2008), 203–27.

breakthrough explains the previous gap in knowledge. This appears to be the case with the illustrations of complexity offered by Intelligent Design; science eventually finds explanations.²³

This essay can abstract from whether the arguments work that proponents of Intelligent Design propose. For the thesis of this essay, Intelligent Design is a distinctive fourth *species* [logically specific type] of the faith-reason relationship. The yoking together of faith and reason is the *genus*, as with the earlier three illustrations. The *differentia specifica* of Intelligent Design is the claim that scientific reasoning can provide a proof for God's role, all the while remaining within the canons of scientific methodology.

Concluding Postscript on Boethius's Yoking Proposal

In the winter of 1962, the Jesuit philosopher and theologian John Courtney Murray was invited to give the St. Thomas More Lecture at Yale University. What he observed of the relationship between philosophy and religion is a precise translation of the terms I have adopted from Boethius, faith and reason. However one construes the faith and reason relationship, it must be undertaken, and it is avoided only at one's peril. Murray's ringing warning needs to be noted in full.

If [a] gulf exists between faith and reason, it follows that the philosopher, who must stand by reason, should also stand for atheism. If the universe of reason and the universe of faith do not at any point intersect, it is unreasonable to accept any of the affirmations of faith, even the first, that God is. The atheist denial is the reasonable position.

This is the position against which Aquinas [I would add Anselm to Murray's Aquinas] firmly stands in the opening questions of the *Summa*, both in the name of his faith and also in the name of his reason. There may be argument about the precise intention of the famous Article 3 in Question 2, where Aquinas outlines the five ways of answering affirmatively the question whether God is. There may also be argument about the import of the cryptic phrase in which Aquinas states the conclusion reached by the different ways: "and this is what all men understand by 'God'; to this all men give the name 'God.'" In any event, it is obviously within the intention of the five ways—and of the whole *Summa*, for that matter—to demonstrate that reason is not atheist, that atheism is not the reasonable conclusion from the data of common human experience, that the twin universes of faith and philosophy, distinct as universes of knowledge, are not utterly divorced, that their cardinal point of delicate intersection is in the crucial instant when

²³ Miller, K. R. (2005) "Looking for God in all the Wrong Places: Answering the Religious Challenge to Evolution, in *Evolutionary Science and Society: Educating a New Generation*," in J. Cracraft and R. W. Bybee, eds. *Biological Sciences Curriculum Study* (Colorado Springs, 2005), pp. 13–21. Other recent publications of biologist Kenneth Miller oppose Intelligent Design and Michael Behe's interpretations. I judge it beyond the genre of this essay to marshal the many arguments pro and con.

reason affirms, what faith likewise affirms, that God is. The issue here, which is formally philosophical, is of vital religious import. It concerns the [status] of reason in religion. If reason has no valid [status] in religion, it follows that religion has no reasonable status in human life. Therefore it is unreasonable for a man to be religious. The reasonable man is the atheist.²⁴

²⁴ John Courtney Murray, The Problem of God (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 74–75.