

# MANUEL PIÑÓN, O.P. ON THE WILL AS A SELF-REFLEXIVE FACULTY

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*Manuel Piñón restores the Thomistic understanding of the concept of freedom, which was blurred by the interpretations of some of the Angelic Doctor's commentators—injecting into it ideas such as 'intrinsic active indifference' and 'capability for self-determination—by putting stress on the reflexive quality of the faculty of the will over its acts. Such is progressively developed in this article in three sections. In the first section, the clarification of the nature of the will as taught by Thomas Aquinas, which, according to the analysis of Piñón, acts self-reflexively, is discussed. In the second, the reasons offered by Piñón for expostulating that the will is a self-reflexive faculty, just like the intellect, are systematically presented. In the third, it is demonstrated how the self-reflexive modality of the volitive faculty over its specific acts. Finally, it is concluded with some personal observations and comments on the relevance of Piñón's elaboration on the Thomistic teaching of freedom to the practice of freedom by many today.*

*Keywords: elicitive and imperable acts, freedom, Manuel Piñón, mode of freedom, reason, self-reflexive faculty, Thomas Aquinas, will*

## INTRODUCTION

Manuel Piñón published his major treatise on free will entitled *Psychological Freedom: Mastery of the Will over its Acts from and under Efficacious Grace* in 1978. Primarily, his intention was to reveal an aspect of the Thomistic teaching on the will as a volitive faculty, which, he thought, up until his time of writing, had not been emphasized enough by commentators of Aquinas. Piñón avows such, stating, “little has been said . . . to reveal the psychic workings or processes, for the effect of the will's wielding dynamic control and freedom over its elicitive acts.”<sup>1</sup> Secondly, he also intended this work as a sequel to his book *Predestination and Salvation*, released in 1977. The clarification of the nature of the will<sup>2</sup> and its operation, he argues, would answer the questions left unanswered in the said book regarding the freedom of the will under the influence of divine aid, more specifically, efficacious grace.<sup>3</sup>

The concern of this work is to investigate Piñón's analysis of the nature of the faculty of the will and its formal act, namely, free will, as taught by Aquinas. It shall

be carried out in three sections. In the first section, the clarification of the nature of the will taught by Aquinas, which, according to Piñon's analysis, acts self-reflexively, shall be elucidated. In the second, the reasons offered by Piñon for expostulating that the will is a self-reflexive faculty, just like the intellect, shall be demonstrated. The third section will show how the self-reflexive modality of acting characterizes the different activities of the faculty of the will. It shall conclude with some personal observations and comments on the relevance of Piñon's elaboration to critique the current understanding and practice of freedom.

## CLARIFYING THE NATURE OF THE WILL

M. Piñon's undertaking is aligned with the initiative started by the French Dominicans in the 1950s of dissociating from the body of doctrine of the Angelic Doctor the unwanted interpretations of commentators, which obscure rather than express the richness of the theological genius of Aquinas (Mettepenningen 2010, 41-82). The first order in his analysis is to identify foreign elements in the explanation of freedom in Aquinas. Piñon (1978, 3-7) identifies what he has discerned as the two dominant misconceptions of the Thomistic teaching on freedom and free will. First, he refers to the description of free will, not uncommon to many of his contemporary Thomists, as "intrinsic active indifference." In *Sources of Christian Ethics*, written seven years after that of Piñon, Servais Pinckaers (1995, 327-353) has diagnosed the source of this understanding of 'freedom as indifference' to the moral theory that reduces ethics in terms of the morality of obligation dominant during the modern period. Ironically, the negative influence of modernism, denounced by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, which could be countered, according to the same pontiff, by appealing to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, has saturated the reading of the teaching of Aquinas on freedom.

Such is the reading that can be found, for instance, in Msgr. Philips who, in his work *Modern Thomistic Philosophy: An Explanation for Students, vol.1: The Philosophy of Nature* (1962, 282-283), explains the notion of freedom thus:

If, then, we have such freedom, what are the limits? [...] We must here introduce a distinction which we shall find useful more than once, that between active and passive indifference. By active indifference, we mean the power to produce or not to produce certain acts, while by passive indifference, we mean merely the capacity for receiving various determinations. Bearing this in mind, we see at once that freedom implies active and not merely passive indifference, for a passive capacity cannot exert mastery, being potentially, at least, under the dominion of that which determines it. Active indifference must then be added to the minimum requirement of freedom. No is this all, for we have seen that the object towards which the will is directed must be such as does not determine its action, and the subject which wills must be such that it can will or not will an object.

For Piñon, such a description of the formal act of the faculty of the will does not accurately reflect its quality as free. To demonstrate his point, he turns to the metaphor of an automobile, which, in his mind, is most suitable to apply the expression ‘intrinsic active indifference.’ The car is designed as a means of transportation, and theoretically, it can go anywhere else, subject to the condition of the road leading to such places. When it comes to the destination, the automobile is indifferent, but it is intrinsically active at the same time. For, once the driver of the automobile commits it to a definite destination—for instance, to go to a theater within the city rather than a vacation house outside the city—, then, from the many possible destinations where the automobile can be used to go to, it gets to service only one specific place, being the place where the driver needs to be. The doctrine of ‘intrinsic active indifference’ merely addresses the disposition of the act of election of the different goods the intellect presents to the will. But the operation of the faculty of the will goes beyond this. Thus, the operation of the will as a free human faculty is not fittingly captured by such a doctrine.

The second prevalent misrepresentation of the exercise of free will that needs clarification, according to Piñon, is for it to be termed the “capability to self-determination” (Piñon 1978, 7-13). It shares the general structure of the ‘active intrinsic indifference’ tenet. Thus, the same criticism can be offered to it. Viewing the faculty of volition in terms of capability begs the question of how it will be activated, except by positing an external agent to move it to pursue an object. As a capability, it is indifferent to options, similar to the illustration of the automobile, which needs a chauffeur to drive it toward a specific destination. Such being the case, its freedom will be compromised since it will be conditioned by an external agent, which will be required to move it to action. This is not the teaching of Aquinas, who, time and again, repeatedly stressed that the faculty of the will “moves itself to act,”<sup>4</sup> and is the “cause of its acts or actions.”<sup>5</sup>

Piñon (1978, 7-13) rejects both “active intrinsic indifference” and “capability to self-determination” as descriptions of the faculty of the will and its operation. Instead, he opts for the axiom “active self-determination,” [though tentatively, I may add,] as a description of the formal act of the faculty of the will. He insists that the sense of “active self-determination” satisfies the two essential requirements by which an action is said to proceed properly from the freedom of the will. That is, first, that the action should proceed from the agent and, second, that the specification of the undertaken activity should be determined for himself by the same agent. In this regard, the faculty of the will ventures into performing a particular act in a determined manner because it apprehends that such a course of action necessarily leads to the previously desired object.

Nevertheless, just like the concept of “active intrinsic difference,” the sense of “active self-determination” for the formal act of the rational appetite is limited to the consideration of its power of election. It likewise perceives the nature of “freedom in terms of election, and of election as dealing only with the means to the end, but not with the end in itself” (Piñon 1978, 11). Such a conception of freedom is inadequate when discoursed under the influence of divine grace, more specifically efficacious grace, the reconciliation between which was, as I have alluded to above, the rationale of Piñon for writing his treatise.

How can one preserve the freedom of the will expressed in its self-determination to elect one from the many available courses of action to achieve a desired goal under the influence of efficacious grace that infallibly moves the will to act in a particular way? According to Piñon, such a dilemma can only be resolved if one would consider the exercise of freedom not as dealing merely with the relation of the means to the end, that is, election, but in terms of its psychic workings as expressed in the will's "dynamic control over the act that it exercises and over its virtuality to act." This understanding encompasses not only the election of the means in relation to the end but also the consideration of the end itself, including the power of the will by which it is able, in dynamic conjunction with the faculty of reason, to rationally evaluate and adopt or reject an end and/or the suitable means among the many to take to achieve the desired end.<sup>6</sup>

Such a reading of freedom as a dynamic control over the acts is not an imposition of Piñon on the thought of the Angelic Doctor. Eleonore Stump confirms the same interpretation when commenting on what constitutes a distinctly human action in Aquinas; she (1997, 583-584) writes: "What differentiates human beings from non-rational animals is that a human being is a master of his acts, in virtue of having intellect and will." More than anything, such a perspective on freedom stresses that freedom is a property of the human person as an acting agent in possession of the faculty of reason and the faculty of the will. Piñon (1978, 40) further develops this point, clarifying:

It is the suppositional subject or agent that, properly speaking, acts or exercises specific actions through specific faculties, not the faculties. It is only by way of similitude and metaphor that we speak of faculties as acting or exercising operation, in order to get a clearer picture of the interaction between the intellect and will.

According to this, freedom is the product of the interaction between the intellect and the will of one and the same person. With the former, through its cognitive function, supplying the latter option/s to work on, without which it is impossible to conceive its action as free and voluntary. Moreover, the exercise of freedom lies not in a static power stably located in one faculty. It is a property that results from the interactive operations of reason and will, instantiated in the operation of the person who considers and acts, based on the deliberated options, to achieve an end. It is because of this insight that freedom proceeds from the interaction of the faculty of the intellect and will that Piñon can arrive at the notion that the appetitive faculty, just like the intellect, is also a 'self-reflexive.'<sup>7</sup>

The mistake of the aforementioned views of freedom by the commentators of Aquinas (*i.e.*, freedom as 'intrinsic active indifference' and 'capability for self-determination'), according to Piñon, is anchored on the presumption that the faculty of the will exercises its activities on its own, not factoring in its formal act the dynamic relationship it has with the faculty of reason. In the next section, it shall be demonstrated that the faculty of the will does not operate alone since it has been constituted to operate in conjunction with the inputs of the faculty of reason and vice versa.<sup>8</sup>

## DEMONSTRATING THE REFLEXIVE QUALITY OF THE WILL

Following Aquinas, Piñon declares that free will is no ‘naked will,’ stating thus: “St. Thomas says that free will is not the naked faculty of the will, but the faculty of the will as linked with and following practical reason. Hence, although the will, as faculty, is just itself; yet, taken, as free appetitive faculty, it is the faculty of the will operating conjointly with reason” (Piñon 1978, 37). He cites several quotations from the works of Aquinas that elaborate on the said assertion, but for the sake of brevity, I shall only refer to *ST I*, q.83, art. 3, body, where the Angelic Doctor<sup>9</sup> affirms that:

Hence, it behooves to consider the nature of free discretion from election. Now, for the effect of election, there is something that concurs from the cognitive power and another from the appetitive power. From the side of the cognitive power, the thing required is counsel, by which we judge what should be preferred to another thing; from the appetitive power, what is required is that what has been evaluated by counsel, be accepted by way of appetition.

Piñon expounds on the argument, contending that if the faculty of the will shall not require the accompanying operation of the intellect, it shall result in two difficulties. In the first scenario, one will end up with the same erroneous concept of freedom discussed above: freedom understood as ‘intrinsic active indifference.’ He clarifies that if the faculty of the will were to be believed to act on its own, independent of the intellect, responsible for giving the will a reasonable evaluation of the object and by means of which it can apprehend the same as good to pursue, then it would end up in a neutral state, not pursuing any object. In this regard, the will would remain unattracted to any object because it would have no object to discern either as good or bad since the intellect would not be there to supply it with objects. (Notwithstanding, the freedom of the will is not compromised even if it acts only when there are objects to apprehend, which the intellect provides. As Eileen C. Sweeney (1992, 192) clarifies, rational beings “can desire and be moved to different things, not because [their] inclination no longer follows [their own] form but because their form now inclines them to desire what they apprehend.”

Piñon conceives of the second scenario emerging from trying to avoid the difficulty of the first. Herein, one would proposition that it is within the power of the faculty of the will to determine its object. However, if the will becomes the cause that absolutely determines for itself that which is good, worthy of its desire, or that which is evil that it must avoid, then the validity of every good pursued or evil avoided would be placed in doubt. Since the appetitive faculty has no capacity to apprehend the truth of or lack of it in a particular object based either on its constitutive reality or instrumental relation to achieving an end. The same data of truth following which the faculty of the will confirms the good it desires is beyond its reach. Stephen Wang’s (2007, 104) comment rehearses this view of Piñon, writing:

If, alternatively, the will can specify what is good without being bound by our intellectual apprehension of the object, then we will

certainly have more control over our goals and our actions, but our desires will not be rooted in the objectively apprehended reality of the world. Voluntarism leads to irrationalism.

The above-discussed difficulties prompted Piñon to insist that there is no ‘naked will.’ Saying so, however, does not deny the integrity of the will as a distinct faculty with a specific object and proper power. Compared with the intellectual faculty, which has the truth for its object and is arrived at by exercising its power of apprehension, the faculty of the will has as its object the good to which it inclines itself. Also, while the reason draws to itself its object, the will pursues its object of desire. Indeed, the will is a faculty distinct from the intellectual faculty. However, the will, in its actuality, as it exhibits itself as an operative faculty, is always associated with practical reason. It cannot function without the foundational work that the cognitive faculty provides. For, as Eleonore Stump (1997, 581) rightly observes, “on Aquinas’s view, every act of willing is preceded by some apprehension on the part of the intellect.”

Having established the “mutual influence and sharing”<sup>10</sup> of the will and intellect, we are now set to construct Piñon’s positive argument for the self-reflexive character of the will. He anchors his argument on this rich statement from Aquinas: “It is necessary that the appetitive powers be commensurate to the apprehensive power.”<sup>11</sup> Commenting on *De Veritate*, q.22, a.13, quoted at length in his work, which concerns the interaction of two agents or operative faculties that are ordained to each other, Piñon (1978, 40) likewise sustains: “Owing to the reason that practical reason and will work together, for the effect of free discretion, they share from each other with regard to action, properties, and incapacitation.” He (1978, 41-42) specifies further his comment thus:

[It] revealed ... the following important things: First, the mutual interaction between reason and will. Second, the impression that the action of the one leaves in the [other]. Third, the capacitation which one enjoys, from the virtuality impressed on it by the other; even if, of itself, it would not have such capacitation.

Moving on to *De Veritate*, Q.24, a.6, r.5 —which states that “the will somehow moves reason, commanding its act; and reason moves the will proposing to its object, which is the end: and so, each faculty can be informed somehow by the other”—, Piñon inquires why do these faculties inform each other’s activities? He surmises that the simple answer is that they are ordained to each other. The mutual interaction of reason and will is apparent in the performance of acts, which they are established to do together. We speak of the free activities of human agents, which, as illustrated above, both faculties complementarily perform according to each’s mode of operation while simultaneously implying in each the other’s action. The faculties of reason and will together form the virtuality in humankind, making possible the execution of free human activities.

The faculty of reason and the faculty of the will are ordained to each other because each has been constituted to function naturally, not without the complementary activity of the other. In a free human activity, for instance, choosing

which college course a High School graduate must enroll in the university, the intellect will provide its counsel before the concerned student elects from the different degree courses available, considering various factors to reveal the most appropriate career to choose. The student shall look then into his/her aptitude and natural inclinations in relation to the viability of the different college courses, the source of matriculation, whether the degree under consideration is professionally competitive, etc. All these deliberative undertakings shall be presupposed by the will that shall make the selection based on the sound judgment of the intellect. Since the data of the deliberation on the different options by the intellect are made available to the faculty of volition, when it finally decides, it is conscious that it is choosing the most suitable option. In this respect, the act of the will becomes self-reflexive as the self-reflexive virtuality of reason leaves its mark on the will's act.

The two faculties do not just leave their respective virtuality on the other's act, but they "partake of the role and capability of the other, in a secondary and subordinate manner" (Piñon 1978, 45). Each of the higher faculties of the soul partake of each other's function and power, given that the "virtuality of the preceding act remains in the following act" (Piñon 1978, 46). In other words, since the preceding act of reason remains in the following act of the will and the preceding act of the will remains in the subsequent act of reason, the appetitive can appropriate the act of reason, and the intellective faculty can appropriate the act of will. This is why the will sometimes perform a task even if it is not part of its natural powers. This is seen when the faculty of the will commands the feet to walk toward a particular direction or the intellectual faculty to inquire about a specific object.

Properly speaking, the power to command belongs to reason, and the power to move belongs to the will. But "what is proper to the prior faculty is communicated to the subsequent faculty, inasmuch as the latter follows the former," thereby making it possible for both reason and will to exercise functions that belong to the other. To illustrate, Piñon employs a more familiar analogy of the architect and the overseer of a construction. Even if the job of properly directing the construction work belongs to the architect, the overseer can give directives to the workers on how the construction should proceed in so far as the overseer receives instruction from the architect (Piñon 1978, 46).

In addition, Piñon stresses that the two spiritual faculties share each other's objects. However, if they share each other's object, does that mean Piñon has collapsed their distinction and contradicted his previous assertion? Indeed, for Piñon, the faculties of reason and will are distinct because they have different operations and objects of operations—one is a knowing faculty with truth as object, and the other is an appetitive faculty with good as object. In reality, though, their object is the same, considered merely from its diverse aspects: the object known as truth is the same object that is willed as good. There is no contradiction here since the truth and the good are not mutually exclusive. Piñon (1978, 47) explains this:

The good as the object of the will is a kind of truth, and so are also the will and its acts; Reason itself and its acts are particular truths, that can be known by it. On the other side, reason and its acts, and the will and its acts, are kinds of particular goods that are covered under the formal

reason of good, as the universal. And in this manner, they are attainable by the will.<sup>12</sup>

Simply said, Piñon wants to articulate the mutual inclusiveness of the truth and the good because “what is apprehended [as good] and what is desired [as truth] is one, as to the subject”<sup>13</sup> The truth as a formal object of reason is good; otherwise, it would not be desirable. The good as a formal object of the will is a kind of truth; otherwise, it would not be intelligible. The mutual interaction of the faculties of reason and will is sustained by the same object, though considered from diverse aspects, that they share. Such that the intellective and appetitive faculties can impress their virtuality on each other’s act and partake of the same impressed virtuality that each received from the other because their formal objects are the same.

Lastly, Piñon (1978, 52) asserts that, being spiritual faculties, “it is a basic prerogative [...] of the intellect and will, inasmuch as they are inorganic and immaterial faculties, to be able to turn or fold completely over themselves *in toto*.” He (1978, 52) identifies this attribute as ‘reflexibility.’ Given that they can turn to themselves *in toto*, both the spiritual faculties of reason and will are reflexive faculties. However, how they operationalize their ‘reflexibility’ differs from each other. The faculty of reason can turn to itself on its own. In contrast, the reflexive character of the will is always actualized in dynamic interaction with the faculty of reason. Thus, Piñon qualifies the reflexive character of the will as virtual, compared with the reflexivity of the intellect, which he regards as absolute, without needing the instrumentality of another faculty.

In summary, Piñon was able to provide a well-constructed argument for his claim that in Aquinas, the faculty of the will, just like the intellect, is a self-reflexive faculty. He contends that the will is a self-reflexive faculty because its acts follow the conscious deliberations of reason whose content and modality the former partakes in exercising free activities. In the next section, we shall discuss how this self-reflexive character is displayed in the different acts of the will.

## THE WILL ACTS IN A REFLEXIVE MANNER

In the exercise of free will, Piñon specifies two *sine qua non* elements: the formal and dynamic dimensions of its acts. These conditions need to be present to safeguard the free and voluntary character of the activities of the will. First, the “formal aspect” of the free act of the will “consists in the will’s essential or elective unfetterment to any particular object, or voluntary act of the will, whether it be of elicitive or imperable kind” (Piñon 1978, 63). It means that the will is in the state in which it is free from coercion when it decides to apply itself to desire an objective and also in choosing the means available to carry the objective it resolves itself to do into fruition.

Some inaccurately claim that the will shall be unfettered in its act only if it enjoys multiple options. The formal aspect of the freedom of the will is reduced here to stipulate that it must have several alternatives to choose from to guarantee its freedom. Herein, the focus of freedom shifts from the qualitative acts of the will to the



choices available to the will. Also, it requires that the available alternatives must be contrary to each other to guarantee the possibility for the will to choose a contrary option. Freedom, in this regard, depends on the condition that secures the will the option to do otherwise, guaranteed by the availability of contrary alternatives. The question must be asked: Is this the only condition in which the act of the faculty of the will may be considered free? That is, only when several contradictory options are available, without coercion to incline to one or the other choice. If so, such a conception shall put in doubt God's freedom since divine action consistently expresses the good, and options contrary to goodness are non-existent in divine consideration.

The proper understanding of freedom of the will, Piñon argues, is not dictated by the availability of alternatives as these are outside the faculty of the will itself. What determines the freedom of the faculty of the will must be found not outside of but within itself. The more significant point to establish is whether the principle of its action proceeds from itself alone and is not generated from itself due to the influence of some external factors. Having clarified this point, Piñon returns to considering the formal aspect of freedom. He stresses that it merely provides the faculty of the will the freedom to act unbothered by influence except itself, but it does not cause the will to apply itself to act. The mere absence of external factors to influence the will is just one of the two sides of freedom. It alone cannot fully describe the free act of the will. For this reason, he presses for the second aspect of freedom, namely, the dynamic aspect.

The "dynamic aspect," which Piñon regards as the more important of the two, signifies "the psychic mastery of the will over its acts, wherewith the will enjoys dynamic control over its acts in the manner of mover or agent" (Piñon 1978, 63). Specifically, it means that the will is the principle of self-determination, which includes not only "the will's capability to undo an existing self-determination, as when the will disowns an existing option or rejects to continue a course it has taken;" but also "the will's capability to reject any self-determination, as when the will refuses to make any commitment or to take sides with any partisan group" (Piñon 1978, 63). Let us unpack this further by demonstrating the self-reflexive character of the mastery of the will over its specific acts.

Piñon generally categorizes the acts of the will into 'volitive or elicitive,' and 'motive or imperable' acts. The 'volitive act,' also termed 'elicitive act,' is a "result of the power which drives man in search of the good extrinsic to him" (Peña 1979, 143). There are two species under this: the movement of the will "elicited towards an end... [and] elicited in the choice of means to achieve such an end" (Peña 1979, 143). On the other hand, the 'motive act' refers to the decision of the will, acting as if an imperial authority— hence, an imperable act— charging its physical assets to actualize the preferred means leading to the completion of the preferred end. While there are two general categories of the acts of the will, the acts of the will itself could be numbered as three, corresponding to the three fields which the will navigates or levels into which the will progresses to manifest itself in the act. They are, namely, first, the act of self-determination; second, the act which proceeds from it in willing the appropriate means to carry out the decision arrived at in the first act; and third, the imperable acts which concede the will to command the sense organs to actualize its choice.

The 'volitive or elicitive act' of self-determination refers to that act of the will that concerns the decision whether to apply the will to desire and not to desire an end,

as when, returning to our previous illustration, a High School graduate embarks on a decision whether to pursue a college education or not. The succeeding ‘volitive or elicitive act’ refers to that act of the will that concerns the election of the path to take among the many that are available after every course of action has been evaluated accordingly. The new graduate, thus, having decided to pursue a college education, deliberately chooses to take a particular course program specific to the field of discipline that s/he desires to obtain. Lastly, the ‘motive or imperable act’ indicates the causal influence that the faculty of the will applies on other faculties and organs of the body to put the desired end into fruition. In our fancied example, it encompasses the array of external and physical activities of the new graduate, proceeding from the will commanding the limbs to start walking to go to the university to make the initial inquiry about the degree program of choice until the day of the actual completion of the said program and all the other activities in between.<sup>14</sup>

The faculty of the will carries all these activities out in a self-reflexive manner, made evident in the awareness of the acts that it exercises and the inherent goodness of the objects of those acts.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the self-reflexive mastery of the will over its activities is manifested in the consent or the free liking of the act, (Piñon 1978, 277-278), without which the act will cease, starting on the level of self-determination, towards the realization of this self-determined goal in choosing the most appropriate mean, and perseverance in it, employing available physical means that can help reach its completion.

While it was presented above in a sequential manner, the dynamic act of the will based on the data supplied by reason, it must be affirmed that the act of the will to give or withdraw consent to the object as something good to be pursued or evil to be avoided is always immediate. The awareness of reason of the act of the will is immediately perceived because it transpires as an immaterial and knowable object within the sphere of reason’s consciousness. The faculty of reason is immediately made aware of the act of the will, and such awareness becomes the medium by which the faculty of the will exercises its action reflexively, giving its consent to its decision and selecting the means appropriate for the decision made. Thus, the will’s reflexive act in giving its consent is simultaneous with the awareness of reason.

Let me close this section by acknowledging that the faculty of the will does not always act consciously, where the rollout of its acts it knowingly casts, as sometimes it acts also on impulse. How did Piñon address this kind of activity of the will? Though Piñon did not treat the question of whether actions that proceed from impulse are self-reflexive activities, it could be argued, following Piñon’s argument, that these actions are likewise voluntary, flowing from the dynamic act of the will and the intellect. For, as Piñon (1978, 54) clarifies, “to be volitive is not a disposition left in the will from the exercise of the volitional acts, like an acquired habit; but rather, it is the other way around, namely, the will exercises volitional acts because it is volitive in nature.” As demonstrated above, the will does not act independently without the complementary role of reason. Thus, it can be posited that in impulsive activities, the faculty of the will still enjoys the evaluative function of reason. The question, however, is what kind of knowledge it furnishes the will that prompts it to act impulsively. It can be regarded as pre-reflective knowledge, proceeding from the natural intuition of reason to come after the truth. These are ideas or positions that we naturally and immediately incline

ourselves without even becoming aware that we do so not merely because of their perceived attractiveness but, more importantly, because of the active principle within us that makes us go after what we perceive as true or good.

### **BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: WHAT PIÑÓN HAS TO SAY ABOUT TODAY'S VIEW OF FREEDOM?**

Before discussing the relevance of Piñón's teaching on freedom in today's situation, allow me to affirm that with his emphasis on the reflexive quality of the faculty of the will over its acts, Piñón was able to restore the original tenet on freedom of the Angelic Doctor, which was blurred by the interpretations of some of his commentators. Since freedom is understood as mastery over its acts and not necessarily the ability to choose the contrary position, Piñón supposes that the will's action under the influence of efficacious grace can be maintained as free. That the will which has control over its act is still free to assent to the good suggestion of God's compelling grace. It is because not all actions that proceed from the natural movement of being, even when aided by grace, are against free will, but only those that are coercive.

We can draw at least two points from Piñón's elaboration of the discussed Thomistic tenet to critique the current practice of freedom. First, with the notion of freedom located in the quality of the manner of the performance of deeds, described as mastery over one's acts, we can find in Piñón the distinction between what modern authors refer to as the 'how' and 'content' of freedom. In such a structure, it can be said that freedom, for Piñón, is concerned with the mode, not the content of action, which many confuse today. Such confusion about the proper understanding of freedom is at the root of why the essential foundations that sustain the proper ordering of societal life and relations are now being shaken. This is because many stubbornly insist that they are free to undertake any activity they want (content) independent of its implications for other people's lives and the proper order in society. In contrast, Piñón's concept of freedom teaches that one can retain freedom, even if the content or object of one's choice is not oneself, but others. Even if the content of one's action involves a form of sacrifice of one's needs for the welfare of others. One needs to arrive at such a decision consciously and reflexively ('how'), having realized by his own deliberation that it is not just the most suitable but also a noble thing to do.

Second, Piñón's interpretation of the teaching of Thomas Aquinas counters another mistaken notion of freedom, which reduces it to arbitrariness and voluntarism. This gap in the understanding of freedom stems from the verdict of many to delegitimize the role of reason in the exercise of freedom and absolutize the impact of the will in making decisions. The indispensable function of reason in producing free activities, which Piñón highlights in his work, has been dismissed by many. Since the role of reason, which functions like a guidepost allowing the faculty of volition to pursue acts that promote authentic human flourishing, both individually as a person and as a member of the larger community, has been taken out of the equation, the decision that the agent undertakes consequently results in the pursuit of irrational

options, even as it pleases the agent who carries them out. Thus, what Piñon emphatically articulates in his work regarding the quality of free will, reflected in the free activities of the human agent, being a product of the mutual interdependence of the faculty of reason and the faculty of volition shall have a resounding relevance.

In navigating today's society, characterized by diverse, fluctuating, and contradictory viewpoints, Piñon suggests that we be guided by the perennial and ever-reliable insights provided by the venerable teachers that sustain and make the Catholic Tradition responsive to the time. In closing, allow me to leave you with this quotation from the examined work of our Filipino Dominican author, which sums up his analysis of freedom as Thomas Aquinas had taught:

Psychological freedom is the mastery of the will over its elective act, in particular over its option or consent to either fidelity to God, or to the course of mortal sin. The mastery is enjoyed by the will upon the intellectual awareness, —also designated as deliberation, to mean the psychological awareness, —of the option or consent involved. From such intellectual awareness by the intellect, the will obtains outright dynamic mastery over its ongoing option, or over its consent in prospect, from the will's motive reflexiveness over itself and its power (Piñon 1978, 279).

## NOTES

1. Manuel Piñon, OP, *Psychological Freedom, Mastery of the Will Over Its Acts From and Under Efficacious Grace*, Quezon City: R.T.P. Foundation Commemorative Edition, 1987, 9. At the time of writing, the current explanation of the faculty of the will and the understanding of its formal act, which is free will, could not guarantee that the will acted upon by the grace of God, or the will working under the efficacious influence of the grace, remains free and is entirely in control of its activities.

2. In this work, I employ the terms 'faculty of the will,' 'faculty of volition,' 'volitive faculty,' 'volitional faculty,' or simply 'will' without qualification as synonymous terms. Also, the terms 'faculty of reason,' 'faculty of the intellect,' 'intellective faculty,' and 'reason' are reckoned synonymous.

3. For a summary of the arguments offered by Manuel Piñon in this book, see my article: "Manuel Piñon, OP's Retrieval of the Biblical Significance of the Doctrine of Predestination" in *Philippiniana Sacra* 51/153 (May-Aug. 2016), 373-401.

4. The will can move itself either directly or indirectly. In the first case, the will prompts itself to desire or to stop desiring an object as when one, having apprehended that he needs to take care of his health, decides to quit his habit of drinking and then starts to eat nutritious food, or, in the latter, the will indirectly prompts itself to desire something when such is necessary to achieve the goal he set for himself, as doing exercise which he finds hard to do because it shall give him physical strength.

5. Cf. *ST* I-II, q.1, a.2; *DV* q.24, a.1.

6. M. Piñon writes: "It is not possible to satisfy the mentioned desire [—it refers to those he called enemies of Thomism who said that they would only accept the Angelic Doctor's doctrine on freedom of the will, if they could explain that the will

remains free even under the influence of divine premotion—], making use of the concept “active indifference” or of the concept “power to elect,” as expressing the psychic freedom of the will. But, it would not be difficult to satisfy the said desire by making use of the concept of “mastery over its acts,” as expressing the psychic freedom of the will. In this case, it will be enough to show that God’s infallible action, making the will pursue a definite objective or course of action, also imparts to the will dynamic control over the act that it exercises, and over its virtuality to act.” (Piñón 78, 11.)

7. The insight that the faculty of the will is self-reflexive in its act has been anticipated by Augustine. In the *Liberio Arbitrio*, Augustine, as he was discussing the nature of the good will and how man can possess it, writes: “Whoever has the good will and embraces it with all the love he is capable of, delights himself in it, knowing how great a good it is, and that it can never be snatched or stolen from him against his will (*De Lib. XIII, 27*; J.H.S. Burleigh, ed., *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, Louisville 1956, 128).” The good will must be loved, according to Augustine, by no other than the will itself as it is the faculty to which such role is attributed, based on the information, as provided by reason, that it is great to have a good will.

8. Piñón elucidates that both these faculties turn to themselves when exercising their respective activities. That is, each pursues their proper object—something true for the intellect and good for the will—reflexively. Moreover, it is one thing to have a capacity for something, and another to put into action such capacity. Thus, Piñón clarifies that a subject with a particular capacity for action is not automatically qualified as such, that is, according to the competence that he naturally enjoys, unless he puts it into actuality. Nevertheless, it is not outside our personal experience that there are acts that we perform that do not prompt us to engage in self-reflection, as when we routinely eat our breakfast or impulsively do an act without thinking, which often than not commits us into trouble that we could have avoided had we thought pensively about the said act and its consequences. We shall return to this question before this study shall have been concluded. In the meantime, we turn our attention to his demonstration of the self-reflexive quality of the will.

9. The following passages from Thomas Aquinas are quoted herein by Piñón: *S.T. I*, q.83, art.3, body; *De Ver.*, q.24, art.6; *Conf.*, 1.1, q.1, art.1-3.

10. See the title of the chapter, M. Piñón, *Psychological Freedom*, 37.

11. *S.T. I*, q.83, art.3, body, quoted in *Psychological Freedom*, 38-39.

12. See its anchorage on *S.T. I*, q.87, a.4,2; q.79, a.11,2.

13. See *S.T. I*, q.80, a.1,2.

14. However, there are instances when the discussion of Piñón shifts from the tripartite to a dual structure of the acts of the will. This is not an inconsistency in the discussion of Piñón but rather another perspective of the discussion of the acts of the will. He does this when he considers the acts of the will not from the perspective of the formal aspect but from the viewpoint of their object. Under this, he usually takes the volitive and the elicitive acts as one single act since both are concerned with the will exerting its influence on itself in contrast to the imperable acts concerned with the causal influence of the will on other faculties and organs of the body other than the will itself.

15. The reflexive quality of the mastery of the faculty of the will over its acts, both in volitive and motive acts, is made possible because of the virtuality of the practical reason that it receives, assumes, and follows. It unfolds in the following manner. The will has to decide whether to will or not to will a particular goal. But, before it, the intellect has already inquired about the different options for the will to commit and compared their viability and consistency with the path toward human perfection, which, ultimately, is the object that motivates the will. Following the will's self-determination of the goal, having accepted the practical judgment of the intellect regarding it, the will again moves the mind to take counsel about the most suitable among the available means to achieve it. With this, the mind offers different means and presents to the will the most appropriate among them, after having evaluated their suitability in relation to the chosen goal, which the will shall consequently specify. Then, the will has to command the imperable faculties to take up the specified means to reach the goal set.

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