

The Study of Theology as a Foretaste of Heaven: The Influence of Albert the Great on Aquinas's Understanding of *Beatitudo Imperfecta*

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IN THE COURSE OF the Treatise on Beatitude in the *Summa theologiae* [ST], Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between *beatitudo perfecta* and *beatitudo imperfecta*.¹ Perfect beatitude consists in the vision of God in heaven.² Imperfect beatitude, however, is more difficult to define. If we consider the term apart from related terms such as *beatitudo supernaturalis* and *beatitudo naturalis*,³ then, while scholars agree that Aquinas's use

¹ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 3, a. 6, corp.: “Duplex est hominis beatitudo, una perfecta, et alia imperfecta. Oportet autem intelligere perfectam beatitudinem, quae attingit ad veram beatitudinis rationem, beatitudinem autem imperfectam, quae non attingit, sed participat quandam particularem beatitudinis similitudinem [Man's beatitude is twofold: one is perfect, and the other imperfect. Now, we should consider that which attains to the true *ratio* of beatitude as perfect beatitude, while that which does not attain it, but which participates in a particular similarity to beatitude, as imperfect beatitude]” (*Opera Omnia* [Rome: Leonine Commission, 1882–], 6:33). All translations are the author's. Latin orthography will follow the best available edition of a given work.

² ST I-II, q. 3, a. 8 (Leonine, 6:35–36).

³ It is not the intention of this article to enter into recent discussions of the possibility and meaning of *beatitudo naturalis*, as the literature on that subject is so vast that it would distract from the purpose of understanding *beatitudo imperfecta*. However, a study of *beatitudo imperfecta* can shed light on the question of *beatitudo naturalis* insofar as it highlights how Aquinas carefully distinguishes natural contemplation from graced contemplation in his mature thought as two different but complementary ways of achieving *beatitudo imperfecta* in this life.

Generally speaking, the discussion of *beatitudo naturalis* has for the last twenty years been annexed to debates about the natural desire for God. For

of *beatitudo imperfecta* has something to do with Aristotle's discussion of happiness in book 10 of the *Nicomachean ethics*, they diverge widely on whether or how Aquinas made use of the Stagirite's thought.

Germain Grisez, for example, asserts that Aquinas improperly appropriated Aristotelian beatitude and thereby distorted the biblical understanding of beatitude, making the vision of God a monolithic beatitude that excludes other aspects of integral human fulfillment.⁴ Denis Bradley agrees with Grisez's observation that Aquinas places the end of man solely in the vision of God to the exclusion of other ends;⁵ ironically, he explains this claim with the opposite view that Aquinas rejected Aristotelian concepts of beatitude as fundamentally irreconcilable with Christian revelation.⁶ Still others have approached the question from the side of Aristotle. Thus, R. A. Gauthier argues that Aquinas so thoroughly transformed Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* through his own reading of Albert the Great that Aquinas can hardly be said to be Aristotelian at all.⁷ Anthony Celano, by contrast,

bibliographies of recent contributions to that debate, see: Thomas Bushlack, "The Return of Neo-Scholasticism? Recent Criticisms of Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace and Their Significance for Moral Theology, Politics, and Law," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 35 (2015): 100n2; Patrick Gardner, "Thomas and Dante on the *Duo Ultima Hominis*," *The Thomist* 75 (2011): 416n2; Aaron Riches, "Christology and *duplex hominis beatitudo*: Re-sketching the Supernatural Again," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14 (2012): 44n1.

⁴ Germain Grisez, "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 34–35. See also the discussion of Grisez's work in Benedict M. Ashley, "What is the End of the Human Person?: The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment," in *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter Geach and Elizabeth Anscombe*, ed. Luke Gormally (Portland, OR: Four Courts, 1994), 85–86. John Finnis offers a more nuanced understanding of imperfect beatitude from a perspective similar to that of Grisez in "Practical Reasoning, Human Goods and the End of Man," *New Blackfriars* 66 (1985): 438–51. For a critical evaluation of Grisez vis-a-vis Aquinas, see Ezra Sullivan, "Seek First the Kingdom: A Reply to Germain Grisez's Account of Man's Ultimate End," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 8 (2010): 959–95.

⁵ Denis Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 488–89.

⁶ Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 404, 408, 484, 487–89. See also Steven Wang, "Aquinas on Human Happiness and the Natural Desire for God," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1015 (2007): 332.

⁷ R. A. Gauthier, "Praefatio," in Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri ethicorum*, Leonine ed. vol. 47/1 (1969), *235. Gauthier is speaking more generally about Aquinas's

defends Aquinas from the charge of misreading Aristotle. For Celano, Aquinas completes Aristotle's aspiration to the happiness of the gods with the Christian revelation that such happiness both is possible and has been offered by God to humanity.⁸ More recently, Adriano Oliva has proposed that Aquinas used Aristotelian contemplation as a paradigm for Christian contemplation and that Aquinas consistently harmonized Aristotelian and Christian contemplation from the beginning to the end of his career as two ways of seeking the vision of God in loving friendship with him.⁹

The purpose of the present article is twofold. First, I would like to propose a way of reading Aquinas historically that can account for the radical divergence among scholars on his understanding of *beatitudo imperfecta*. Generally speaking, the aforementioned readings of Aquinas align with three stages of development in Aquinas's explanation of imperfect beatitude, but without always taking into account the developments from one text to the next. Bradley and Grisez have a view of Aquinas that most closely aligns with the *Commentary on the Sentences*, where Aquinas says that imperfect beatitude is the summit of natural contemplation in this life, juxtaposed with the contemplation of God by grace in the next life. Celano has a view of Aquinas that most closely aligns with the *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG], where Aquinas says that imperfect beatitude is the summit of natural contemplation in this life but there is also a sense in which our contemplation of God by faith prepares us by desire for the end of man proposed by Christian revelation for the next life. Gauthier and Oliva have views of Aquinas that most closely align with *ST*, where Aquinas refers to the second act envisioned by SCG as another form of imperfect beatitude through which we not only grow in the knowledge and love of God but also order our actions toward the vision of him by charity. Reading Aquinas in this way leads to the view that, rather than juxtaposing Aristotle with Christian revelation, as Bradley suggests, or of compromising Christian revelation, as Grisez suggests, we should see Aquinas as ultimately

nas's reception of Aristotle, not of beatitude specifically, but others have applied his general approach to the concept of beatitude. See Anthony Celano, "The Concept of Worldly Beatitudo in the Writings of Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987): 215.

⁸ Celano, "The Concept of Worldly Beatitudo," 225.

⁹ Adriano Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes selon Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 96 (2012): 585–662.

using the idea of *beatitudo imperfecta* as a way to harmonize what reason and faith say about the perfection of man and, therefore, to affirm the legitimacy of multiple secondary beatitudes in relationship to *beatitudo perfecta*. This harmonization does not preclude a place in Aquinas's thought for a *beatitudo imperfecta* inspired by Aristotle that is formally distinct from a *beatitudo imperfecta* inspired by faith and charity, as Gauthier and Oliva could be read to suggest, but it does elevate Aristotle into a more comprehensive synthesis inspired by Albert the Great.

The second purpose of this article is to show how developments in the textual structure of Aquinas's argumentation in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, *SCG*, and *ST* coincide with three stages in Aquinas's understanding of the rationale for studying theology. In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, where Aquinas contrasts an imperfect, this-worldly beatitude with a perfect, other-worldly beatitude, we should study theology so as to please God by learning about the end of man in the next life. In *SCG*, where Aquinas describes more explicitly the role of charity as the ground of a Christian contemplation parallel to Aristotelian contemplation, we study theology not only to know God as the goal of the next life but also to increase our desire for him here and now. In *ST*, Christian contemplation becomes its own form of imperfect beatitude. In this context, the study of theology is described as the *locus* of an integral spirituality, whereby we advance in this life toward the perfect beatitude of the next life. The imperfect beatitude that can be had in the study of theology thus constitutes not only a *participation* but also an *inchoation* of the happiness that we hope to enjoy in the vision of God.¹⁰

The argument will proceed in two stages. First, I will situate Aquinas's treatment of imperfect beatitude in the historical context of the reintroduction into the West of book 10 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* during the tenure of Albert the Great at the University of Paris. Second, I will survey the main texts in which Aquinas mentions or alludes to imperfect beatitude, trace their development, and indicate

¹⁰ All three of these elements (faith, love, and inchoation) are taken up in summary form in Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Robert Royal, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003–2005), 2:4–9, where he discusses the relationship between the study of theology and the spiritual life. However, Torrell does not discuss the historical development of that synthesis, nor does he therefore provide sufficient resources for sorting out disagreements about the nature of imperfect beatitude.

their relationship to his discussions of the rationale for the study of theology in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, *SCG*, and *ST*.

Albert the Great

Considerations of beatitude among thirteenth-century theologians changed significantly in the 1240s. The cause of this change was the completion of Robert Grosseteste's translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* in 1246/1248.¹¹ Prior to that date, the only available Latin translations of the *Nicomachean ethics* covered books 1–3.¹² After the completion of Grosseteste's work, the Latin world had to take into account the fact that Aristotle attributes the highest human happiness to our participation in the life of the gods, a life of perfect and uninterrupted contemplation, and suggests that we ought to strive for as deep a participation in this divine life as possible.¹³

One of the first thirteenth-century theologians to incorporate Grosseteste's newly translated text was Albert the Great. Albert moved to Paris to study theology at the University of Paris in 1243 or 1244.¹⁴ By 1246, the earliest date by which Grosseteste could have finished his translation, Albert had already finished books 1 and 3 of his *Commentary on the Sentences* and was working on book 2.¹⁵ This meant that he had yet to begin his detailed treatment of beatitude; the *locus classicus* for that topic was not until the end of book 4 (distinction 49).¹⁶

Albert does discuss beatitude in general terms in books 1 and 3. In book 1, he distinguishes between uncreated beatitude, which is God himself, and created beatitude, which is the effect in the human soul of being united with God.¹⁷ In book 3, discussing the Beatitudes from

¹¹ István P. Bejczy (ed.), "Introduction," in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1200–1500* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 3.

¹² Bejczy, "Introduction," 2. There were two separate translations: the *editio vetus* covered books 2–3; the *editio nova* included book 1.

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics* 10.7–8.1177a–1179a.

¹⁴ J. A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of Albert the Great," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays, 1980*, ed. J. A. Weisheipl (Toronto: PIMS, 1980), 20.

¹⁵ Simon Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 8.

¹⁶ Albert did not finish commenting on that book until after March 25, 1249, following his departure from Paris for Cologne. See: Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas*, 32; Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of Albert the Great," 22.

¹⁷ Albert the Great, *In I sent.*, d. 1, a. 9, resp., in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Auguste Borgnet (Paris: Vivès, 1890–1899), 25:25.

the Sermon on the Mount, he distinguishes between the beatitude of someone on the way to heaven (*beatitudo viae*) and the beatitude of someone already there (*beatitudo patriae*). He distinguishes *beatitudo viae* into beatitude in hope (*beatitudo spei*) and beatitude in actual fact (*beatitudo rei*). The former is the beatitude of someone who hopes for eternal life without possessing it completely; the latter is the beatitude of someone who has advanced along the way of perfection in the Christian life and enjoys something of it present in him already.¹⁸ Albert does not make any distinctions concerning *beatitudo patriae*.

In book 1, Albert discusses the study of theology with reference to beatitude. Having described the multitude of subjects discussed in theology,¹⁹ he identifies beatitude as that which gives theological science its unity.

We should say that this science is not one in proportion to one thing as though that thing were the subject of the others, like a substance is the subject of its accidents; rather, it is one in proportion to one thing, which is its beatifying end, because those who can be beatified are considered in this science as participating in it, because beatifying dispositions are considered as withdrawing them from what is contrary to it, and because the things of this world are considered as helping and supporting them.²⁰

Since the whole of theology is ordered toward beatitude, since beatitude is that which is principally intended by the will, and since the attainment of beatitude therefore entails the satisfaction of human desire, Albert argues that theology is primarily an affective science, although it does lead to the perfection of both the intellect and the

¹⁸ Albert, *In III sent.*, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, resp. (Borgnet, 28:624).

¹⁹ Albert, *In I sent.*, d. 1, a. 2, sol. (Borgnet, 25:16).

²⁰ Albert, *In I sent.*, d. 1, a. 4, sol.: “Dicendum est, quod hæc scientia una est proportionem non ad unum quod subjectum sit aliorum, sicut substantia subjectum est accidentium: sed proportionem ad unum quod est finis beatificans: quia sic beatificabile considerabitur ut participans illud, et dispositiones beatificantes ut removens a contrario: et res hujus mundi ut adjuvantes et adminiculantes” (Borgnet, 25:17). See Mikołaj Olszewski, “The Nature of Theology according to Albert the Great,” in *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences*, ed. Irvén M. Resnick (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 76.

affect.²¹ He does not make an explicit connection with the distinctions he makes about beatitude in book 3, since this material was presumably authored afterwards, but if we were to connect this material with the distinctions in book 3, the conclusion would be that the study of theology constitutes a *locus* of *beatitudo viae*, where a person advances along the stages of Christian perfection from *beatitudo spei* to *beatitudo rei*.

Things change in book 4. Having, by this point, encountered Grosseteste's translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics*, Albert places the new translation at the forefront of his speculation on beatitude. In answering the question "what is beatitude?"²² he sets up his solution as though he were simply going to maintain what he had said in books 1 and 3. In the first half of the *sed contra*, he merely reasserts a classic description of beatitude from Augustine, mediated by Peter Lombard: "He is happy, who has everything that he wants and wants nothing wrongly,"²³ and it appears as though Albert might proceed to repeat the distinctions concerning beatitude from book 3. But in the second half of the *sed contra*, he subtly shifts the focus of the question from the definition of beatitude in general, which includes *beatitudo patriae* (about which Aristotle could not have known) to a discussion solely of *beatitudo viae*.²⁴

Having limited the terms of the discussion to *beatitudo viae*, Albert carves out a place for Aristotelian beatitude in the *solutio* within a

²¹ Albert, *In I sent.*, d. 1, a. 5, sol. (Borgnet, 25:18). See: Henryk Anzulewicz, "The Systematic Theology of Albert the Great," in Resnick, *A Companion to Albert the Great*, 21–22; Mikołaj Olszewski, "The Nature of Theology according to Albert the Great," 73, 77; Christian Trottman, "La théologie comme pieuse science visant la béatitude selon Albert le Grand," *Revue thomiste* 98 (1998): 387–410. For a bibliography of articles dealing with various particular questions in Albert's understanding of theology, see Olszewski, "The Nature of Theology according to Albert the Great," 70n3. To Olszewski's list should be added Katja Krause, "Albert and Aquinas on the Ultimate End of Humans: Philosophy, Theology, and Beatitude," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (2012): 213–29.

²² Albert the Great, *In IV sent.*, d. 49, a. 6 (Borgnet, 30:672). The Borgnet edition titles the question provocatively, "Whether beatitude is well defined by the Philosopher?" However, Albert's *proemium* frames the question more modestly: "quid sit beatitudo?"

²³ Albert the Great, *In IV sent.*, d. 49, a. 6, sc 1 (Borgnet, 30:674). The text of Peter can be found in Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, 3rd ed. (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1971), II:550. "Beatus igitur non est, nisi qui et habet omnia quae vult et nihil vult male."

²⁴ Albert the Great, *In IV sent.*, d. 49, a. 6, sc 1 (Borgnet, 30:674).

long and complex taxonomy of beatitudes. First, Albert distinguishes between beatitude taken in a prior way and in a posterior way (*secundum prius et posterius*), and according to this distinction, beatitude can mean the perfection of someone on the way to heaven (*secundum statum perfectionis viae*), or of someone already there (*secundum statum perfectionis patriae*). Thus far, Albert is consistent with books 1 and 3. However, when he considers *beatitudo secundum statum perfectionis viae*, he continues not as previously (distinguishing two ways of possessing beatitude by grace: *beatitudo spei* and *beatitudo rei*), but by distinguishing beatitude taken personally (*proprie*), generally (*large*), and with respect to its cause (*per causam*). Beatitude taken generally is what all want, but he does not imply a specific object in which it is to be found. Beatitude taken with respect to its cause can be considered commonly (*communiter*), properly (*proprie*), and most properly (*propriissime*). Taken commonly, it is those general attitudes that prepare for final beatitude; properly, it is those acts that are conducive to final beatitude, such as the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount; most properly, it is perseverance in a life of Christian perfection.

Albert attributes beatitude taken personally (*beatitudo* taken *proprie* as distinguished from *beatitudo* taken *large* and *per causam*, not *beatitudo* taken *proprie* as distinguished from *beatitudo* considered *communiter* and *propriissime*) to Aristotle. According to Albert, this is the happiness that follows an act of moral virtue in this life, as described in book 6 of the *Nicomachean ethics*, or the happiness that follows an act of intellectual virtue through the contemplation of the separate substances or the first cause, as described in book 10. The former, Albert notes, is ordered to the latter, since the moral virtues give a person the exterior goods and solitude necessary for contemplation.

Nothing in Albert's language suggests that he sees a sharp distinction between Aristotelian and Christian beatitude. Rather, he thinks that Aristotle and Christian revelation are describing different aspects of a similar reality.²⁵ For Albert, Aristotle is discussing a *subjective* fact of human nature: that happiness is to be found in the highest operation of our highest faculty, the intellect. He does not raise the more fundamental questions that were to occur to subsequent theologians

²⁵ On this conflation, see Martin Tracey, "The Moral Thought of Albert the Great," in Resnick, *A Companion to Albert the Great*, 368. This mitigates against the claim that the difference between Aristotle's thought and that of the received Christian tradition was clearly delineated at this time. See Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes," 624.

about the difference between the formal object of Aristotle's happiness and Christian happiness, even if he does, as we have already seen, acknowledge that the object of Aristotle's happiness is the contemplation of the first cause, while the object of Christian happiness is immediate union with God. Instead of a formal distinction, Albert limits himself to a linguistic distinction. Grosseteste had translated Aristotle's εὐδαιμονία as *felicitas*, not *beatitudo*. Following Grosseteste, whenever Albert refers to Aristotle, he calls happiness *felicitas*. Otherwise, he tends to refer to happiness as *beatitudo*.²⁶ In spite of this linguistic difference, nothing that Albert says conceptually about Aristotle in book 4 disturbs what may be gathered about the study of theology from books 1 and 3.

Albert's harmony between Aristotelian and Christian beatitude begins to break down in his first commentary on the *Nicomachean ethics*, the *Supra ethica*.²⁷ He gave this commentary as a *lectio* in Cologne from 1250 to 1252, a period during which Aquinas acted as his *socius*.²⁸ In book 10, Albert initially follows his *Commentary on*

²⁶ On this, consult the edition of Grosseteste's translation reprinted in Albert the Great, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 14/2, ed. Wilhelm Kübel (Münster: Aschendorff, 1968–72), especially at Bekker nos. 1177b–1178b (pp. 755ff.). This edition of Albert's works will be abbreviated "Col." for Cologne, where the institute responsible for its publication is located. Evidently, Albert also observed this distinction in later works. See Martin Tracey, "The Moral Thought of Albert the Great," 377.

Bradley, Celano, and Oliva all note the importance of the *felicitas/beatitudo* distinction. Celano and Bradley map it onto Aristotle's distinction between εὐδαιμονία and μακαρία (Celano, "The Concept of Worldly Beatitudo," 215–20; Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 398–99). While Bradley and Celano are focused on Aquinas's later *Sententia libri ethicorum*, which relies in part on Moerbeke's subsequent revision of Grosseteste's translation, Valeria Buffon notes that the same distinction occurs in Grosseteste ("Philosophers and Theologians on Happiness: An analysis of early Latin commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 60 [2004]: 457). Oliva observes the seeming association of *felicitas* with Aristotelian contemplation and *beatitudo* with Christian contemplation, but does not draw the same parallel with Greek terms in Aristotle ("La contemplation des philosophes," 587–88). The fact that Aquinas does not consistently observe this distinction, which Bradley acknowledges (*Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 401) may result from the influence of the pre-Aristotelian tradition mediated through Albert.

²⁷ On the gradual corrective that Albert undertook to distinguish Aristotle's thought from Christian theology, see Tracey, "The Moral Thought of Albert the Great," 369.

²⁸ Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of Albert the Great," 29. On Aquinas's role, see also Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:21. Albert's first commentary, the *Supra*

the Sentences and describes Aristotelian contemplation as an act of the intellect formed by the habit of wisdom and ordered toward God and the first principles of the speculative sciences as its object.²⁹ But, unlike in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert begins to distinguish the different subjective dispositions required for the exercise of Aristotelian and Christian contemplation. “Insofar as the intellect is imperfect, it is not sufficient for the contemplation of the things of God. However, insofar as it is perfected by the habit of wisdom, it is in this way sufficient for philosophical contemplation, and, insofar as it is perfected by theophanies descending from God, it is in this way perfected for divine contemplation.”³⁰ As the Christian faith requires, Albert recognizes that the powers of nature do not suffice for the vision of God. But he avoids devoting any significant inquiry to whether or to what extent the two different dispositions he describes would result in two different acts with two different formal objects, or what that distinction would do to the place of theology in the spiritual life. That set of questions would mark the starting point for Aquinas’s reflections on the same subject in the subsequent semester.

Thomas Aquinas

The Commentary on the Sentences: Studying Theology to Know God

The problem of sorting out the differences between Aristotelian beatitude and Christian beatitude was bequeathed to Aquinas in the state in which Albert left it in the *Supra ethica*, with a firm distinction between the habits required for Aristotelian and Christian happiness but without much of an explicit discussion about how those habits incline toward different acts and different objects. This topic was fresh in Aquinas’s mind when he began commenting on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*

ethica (1250–1252), should not be confused with his second, the *Ethica*, which he edited from 1261 to 1263 (Weisheipl, “The Life and Works of Albert the Great,” 39).

²⁹ Albert the Great, *Supra X eth.*, lec. 11, q. 1, sol. (Col., 14:748). On God and the first principles of speculative sciences, see Albert, *Supra X eth.*, lec. 11, q. 1, ad 4 (Col., 14:748).

³⁰ Albert, *Supra X eth.*, lec. 11, q. 4, ad 1: “Intellectus, secundum quod est imperfectus, non est sufficiens ad contemplationem divinorum, sed secundum quod perficitur per habitum sapientiae, sic sufficiens est ad contemplationem philosophicam et, secundum quod perficitur per theophanias descendentes a deo, sic perficitur ad divinam contemplationem” (Col., 14:752).

in the fall of 1252, for Aquinas had only just heard Albert's lecture on *Nicomachean ethics* 10 in the spring of that year, just before he was sent at Albert's suggestion to the University of Paris.³¹

The first article of Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences* takes up the question of theology. It asks whether any other teaching is necessary for man beyond the philosophical disciplines.³² The first objection and the second *sed contra* seem to suggest that Aquinas is engaged merely in a perfunctory apologetic for the studies on which he is about to embark. The first objection posits, on the authority of Dionysius, that there is no need for any higher teaching because "philosophy is the knowledge of existing things" and there is no knowledge at all unless it concerns what exists. The second *sed contra* argues that, since philosophy proceeds from creatures and since creatures, in their finitude, cannot lead to a perfect knowledge of their Creator, it is necessary that there be some other teaching that makes up for the defects in philosophy with respect to God.

However, the second and third objections reveal that there is also a practical component to the question. The second objection moves from a consideration of philosophy in itself to a consideration of man's perfection. It argues that there is no need for anything above philosophy because all teaching is ordered toward the perfection either of the speculative or of the practical intellect and philosophy can address these through demonstrative and moral science, respectively.³³ The third objection suggests that, since it is nobler to be able to achieve one's end through oneself, and since man is nobler than many creatures that can do so, it follows that man's natural intellect suffices for him to achieve his perfection.³⁴

Taken together with the second and third objections, the first *sed contra* reveals the full extent of the question's consequences. "Against

³¹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:37. On the gradual integration of these two traditions of influence, see R. A. Gauthier, "Arnould de Provence et la doctrine de la *fronesis*, vertu mystique suprême," *Revue de Moyen-Âge Latin* 19 (1963): 95, cited in Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes," 624n95.

³² Aquinas, *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, in Adriano Oliva, *Les débuts de l'enseignement de Thomas d'Aquin et sa conception de la sacra doctrina avec l'édition du prologue de son Commentaire des Sentences* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2006), 310–314. This edition of the prologue, albeit only a small portion of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, supersedes the Mandonnet and Moos edition of the prologue (see note 36) until the entire Leonine critical edition is complete.

³³ Aquinas, *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, obj. 2 (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 310–311).

³⁴ Aquinas, *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, obj. 3 (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 311).

this is Heb. 11:6: *without faith it is impossible to please God*. But to please God is supremely necessary. Since, therefore, philosophy cannot avail for that which is of faith, it is fitting that there be another teaching that proceeds from the principles of faith.”³⁵ This first question, then, is not just about human knowledge, its limits and its perfection; it is also, as Albert had argued, about human action in view of the end to which God has called human nature. In this light, Aquinas responds by drawing a distinction between two acts that, following from Albert’s two habits, lead to two different formal objects:

All who have thought rightly have held that the end of human life is the contemplation of God. The contemplation of God, however, is twofold. The first kind, which is imperfect for the reason already mentioned, is through creatures. The Philosopher placed contemplative happiness, which is still but the happiness of the journey [*felicitas viae*], in this contemplation, and all philosophical thought, which proceeds from the knowledge of creatures, is ordered to this. There is another contemplation of God, by which he is seen immediately through his essence. This is the perfect contemplation which will occur *in patria* and is possible for man according to the supposition of faith.³⁶

³⁵ Aquinas, *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, sc 1: “Contra, Hebr. XI ‘Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.’ Placere autem Deo est summe necessarium. Cum igitur ad ea que sunt fidei, philosophia non possit, oportet esse aliquam doctrinam que ex fidei principiis procedat” (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 311).

³⁶ Aquinas, *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, sol.: “Omnes qui recte senserunt posuerunt finem humane vite Dei contemplationem. Contemplatio autem Dei est duplex. Vna per creaturas, que imperfecta ratione iam dicta, in qua contemplatione Philosophus felicitatem contemplatiuam posuit, que tamen felicitas est vie, et ad hanc ordinatur tota cognitio philosophica que ex rationibus creaturarum procedit. Est alia contemplatio Dei, qua uidetur immediate per suam essentiam, et hec perfecta est, que erit in patria et est homini possibilis secundum fidei suppositionem” (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 312–13). In his use of the *imperfecta/perfecta* distinction, Aquinas also seems concerned to oppose Robert Kilwardby, who had argued in the first half of the 1240s that man could achieve *beatitudo perfecta* in this life and that such *beatitudo* would be the contemplative happiness that Aristotle describes (Buffon, “Philosophers and Theologians on Happiness,” 471).

When exegeting this passage in “La contemplation des philosophes,” 639–40, Oliva suggests that, for Aquinas, Aristotelian and Christian contemplation share a common end in the vision of God and that the necessity of *sacra doctrina* is grounded in the inability of Aristotelian contemplation to reach

Like Albert, Aquinas still frames the discussion of Aristotle in terms of the happiness that can be found *in via*. But, where Albert spoke of Aristotle in the context of *beatitudo viae* because his understanding of Aristotle was incorporated within his understanding of Christian beatitude, Aquinas utilizes Albert's later linguistic distinction (taken from Grosseteste's translation) between *felicitas* and *beatitudo* in such a way that—contrary to Oliva's interpretation of this passage—the distinction here implies a formal difference; Aquinas explicitly associates Aristotelian contemplation with *philosophical* thought, not *theological* thought.³⁷

By omitting reference to Albert's association between Aristotelian and Christian contemplation *in via*, Aquinas was able to distinguish not just two habits, as Albert had done, but also two acts and two formal objects (God known mediately in this life through creatures

this common end. He then goes on to reject a distinction between natural and supernatural happiness (642) because he rejects the idea that Aristotelian contemplation has a proper *terminus* apart from the vision of God. While such an emphasis on the *material* unity of the object of Aristotelian and Christian contemplation is useful in supporting Oliva's Thomistic humanism (see 626–27), one may ask whether Oliva sufficiently emphasizes the distinction between their *formal* objects. Without raising the question of a hypothetical state of *natura pura*, one may question on purely exegetical grounds whether Oliva does justice to Aquinas's treatment of three subjects: (1) the inability of natural reason to know the Trinity in *In I sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 3, sol. (*Scriptum Super Sententiis*, 4 vols., ed. Pierre Mandonnet and Fabien Moos [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929–1947], 1:98), where Aquinas states that, since philosophical knowledge is *per creaturas* (the same language he uses to describe philosophical knowledge in the passage above), and since the three Trinitarian persons act in perfect unity in causing creatures, philosophical knowledge terminates in God's unity; (2) The final state of the souls in limbo in *In II sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5, whom Aquinas says enjoy God “with natural knowledge and love [*naturali cognitione et dilectione*]” (Mandonnet and Moos, 2:861–64); (3) the distinction between the resolution of philosophical conclusions and the resolution of theological conclusions in *In III sent.*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 4 (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:785–86).

Oliva acknowledges that he is indebted to Henri de Lubac in the denial of the distinction of natural and supernatural happiness (643n136) and supports his argument with a Lubacian exposition of natural desire (641–54). Yet, even when de Lubac denied the existence of natural happiness apart from the vision of God, he still acknowledged that philosophical contemplation has an act whose perfection is formally distinct from the vision of God, even though he thought it was concomitant with the vision of God; see Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 462–63.

³⁷ See Oliva, “La contemplation des philosophes,” 588, 623.

and God seen immediately in the next life by grace). Yet this raises two questions about the influence of Albert's thought on Aquinas at this stage. First, what happened to Albert's *beatitudo viae* whereby we participate in this life by grace in the *beatitudo* of the life hereafter? Second, if we omit Albert's *beatitudo viae*, what happens to the place of theology within the spiritual life in its progress toward *beatitudo patriae*?

It is true that the restoration of Aristotle to a more purely philosophical understanding of beatitude left a seeming *lacuna* in Aquinas's thought. But Aquinas recognized the gap: if we are eventually to reach Christian beatitude, and if Aristotle's beatitude is completely distinct from Christian beatitude, then there must be something in this life proportioned to Christian beatitude whereby we might anticipate it:

. . . It is necessary that those things which tend toward the end [*quae sunt ad finem*] be proportioned to the end, inasmuch as man is led by the hand to that contemplation [of the face of God] in the state of the journey by a knowledge which is not taken from creatures, but which is rather immediately inspired by the divine light. And this is the teaching of theology.³⁸

Aquinas does not yet say in the text that theology constitutes in any way a "participation" or "inchoation" of perfect beatitude, even if the seeds of such ideas are certainly present at this early stage.³⁹

³⁸ Aquinas, *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, sol.: "Vnde oportet ut ea que sunt ad finem proportionentur fini, quatenus homo manuducatur ad illam contemplationem in statu vie per cognitionem non a creaturis sumptam, set immediate ex diuino lumine inspiratam. Et hec est doctrina theologie" (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 313). Aquinas makes a similar comment in *In III sent.*, d. 24, a. 3, qc. 1, sol. (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:773), as well as *In III sent.*, d. 24, a. 3, qc. 1, ad 3 (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:775). Similarly, see Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram* 1, lec. 1 (Leonine, 28:9), cited in Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes," 587. Oliva notes that Aquinas speaks there of a *visio* associated with the contemplation of the faithful *in via*, although we may observe that Aquinas does not speak in the text referenced of a corresponding *beatitudo*.

³⁹ The closest Aquinas comes is in *In prol. sent.*, a. 1, ad 2 (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 313), where he associates the study of theology with the perfection of the intellect by infused knowledge and of the affect by gratuitous love. But it is ambiguous whether Aquinas is discussing the ultimate perfection of these faculties *in patria* or a degree of their perfection *in via*. Even if Aquinas intends the latter, there remains room for him to associate that degree of perfection more explicitly

But he does acknowledge that theology constitutes a sharing in the wisdom (*sapientia*) that beatitude includes.⁴⁰ As wisdom, it considers the highest causes as they are in themselves and leads back to them.⁴¹ Moreover, since the highest cause is God, the wisdom that theology teaches is ordered to God as “the contemplation of the first truth *in patria*.”⁴²

Aquinas does not write here that theological wisdom implies *per se* any connaturality between the one who possesses it and the first truth toward which it is ordered. Rather, in book 3, Aquinas clearly distinguishes between the wisdom that is acquired by study, which does not imply such a connaturality, and the infused gift of wisdom, which does.⁴³ Only the *gift* of wisdom necessarily entails the “deiform contemplation” that causes connaturality between the wisdom and the one who contemplates it, and even then, the connaturality between wisdom and the one who possesses it is only *secundum quid*; like any gift of the Holy Spirit, wisdom presupposes charity, which is the ground of connaturality. Although Aquinas will later connect wisdom to action that is predicated upon it, at this stage of his career, he does not make such a connection explicitly.⁴⁴

with *beatitudo imperfecta*. Oliva is therefore somewhat imprecise when he speaks of theology in this text as referring to “une participation inchoative” of contemplation *in patria*, and somewhat anachronistic when he interprets this passage in light of texts from *ST II-II* that were written nearly two decades later (“La contemplation des philosophes,” 589–91).

⁴⁰ *In prol. sent.*, a. 3, qc. 3, resp. (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 325).

⁴¹ *In prol. sent.*, a. 3, qc. 1, resp. (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 321).

⁴² *In prol. sent.*, a. 3, qc. 1, resp. (Oliva, *Les débuts*, 320).

⁴³ *In III sent.*, d. 35, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, sol. (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:1193).

⁴⁴ *In III sent.*, d. 35, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 3, sol. (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:1195). This explains why Oliva, “La contemplation des philosophes,” 599–603, must appeal to a later text to find a more comprehensive explication of the role of charity in Aquinas’s understanding of Christian contemplation at this point in his career to undergird the premise that “l’acte de contemplation des saints [dans *In III sent.*, d. 35] commence inspiré par la charité” (“the act of the contemplation of the saints [in *In III sent.*, d. 35] begins under the inspiration of charity”) (614). A closer reading of the passage that is most central to Oliva’s argument, *In III sent.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1 (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:1177–78), shows that Aquinas says the same about Christian contemplation as he does about wisdom at this stage of his career. He says that it consists “essentially in an act of the cognitive faculty” (sol.) and that the end of contemplation in itself is “only truth” (ad 1), while acknowledging that the action of the intellect in contemplation presupposes charity in the will. Certainly, the seeds of Aquinas’s more mature thought are present in this passage, and Oliva is

To summarize what we have seen thus far with regard to book 1 of Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas develops Albert's distinction from the *Supra ethica* between Aristotelian and Christian beatitude, acknowledges an act alongside Aristotelian beatitude that is conducive toward and proportioned to Christian beatitude, and associates theology with that act. However, Aquinas has not yet gone so far as to describe that act explicitly as a form of beatitude in the way that Albert had.⁴⁵

Having been introduced in the beginning of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, imperfect beatitude does not reappear until distinction 49 of book 4, where Aquinas considers the question of human beatitude and the thought of Aristotle more fully.⁴⁶

The Philosopher in the same place suggests another opinion about beatitude [*beatitudo*], or happiness [*felicitas*], in saying that beatitude has absolute perpetuity and immobility according to its perfected character. But it is not possible for man to come to beatitude according to its perfected character. Nevertheless, it is possible for a man to have some participation of it, however small, and from this he can be called happy [*beatus*]. Therefore it is not necessary that a man be perpetually and immutably happy simply speaking, but rather according to the condition of human nature; wherefore he adds: "happy, however, as men." Now, such immutability comes to man when the firm habits of

right to draw connections between Aquinas's earlier and later thought, but it is anachronistic to read Aquinas's later thought into this passage as though it were already present and more fully developed than the text allows. As will be shown below, Aquinas explicitly changes his mind later about the practical nature of wisdom, and this correlates with important developments in his explanation of the role of charity in Christian contemplation and in theological study.

⁴⁵ Note that I do not intend to say that Aquinas had given no consideration to the habit, act, and object associated with Christian contemplation in this life, only that he had not gone so far as to associate this habit, act, and object, with what Albert called *beatitudo viae*.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 4, in *Opera Omnia* (Parma, IT: Fiacadori, 1852–1873), 7/2:1185–86. Aquinas may allude to Albert's distinction between *beatitudo spei* and *beatitudo rei* briefly once in *In III sent.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 4, ad 2 (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:1129). However, since it comes in response to a short objection and in light of the fact that Aquinas does not integrate it into any larger discussion of beatitude, there is no reason to suppose that the distinction forms a significant part of Aquinas's consideration at this point.

the virtues are within him, so that he is not able to be deflected easily from acting according to virtue.⁴⁷

Like Albert, Aquinas understands Aristotle to be speaking of beatitude primarily in terms of speculative virtue, and only secondarily in terms of moral virtue, insofar as moral virtue is ordered toward speculative virtue. Yet, unlike Albert, who took every care not to criticize Aristotelian beatitude and Christian beatitude—Aquinas does not hesitate to point out the limits of Aristotelian beatitude in the text that follows any more than he hesitates to distinguish Christian beatitude from it.

According to Aquinas, Aristotelian beatitude is insufficient on its own. Aristotle held that man could be made happy only by a participation of divine beatitude. However, a creature with an intellect must be able to attain beatitude in essence, not merely by participation.⁴⁸ Accordingly, Aquinas argues, “true beatitude cannot be placed in this life on account of the various changes to which man is subject; wherefore it is necessary that beatitude, which is the end of human life, is after this life.”⁴⁹ Continuing, however, to place Aristotelian beatitude alongside Christian beatitude, Aquinas hastens to add:

Still, we do not in fact deny that some participation of beatitude can be [possessed] in this life, according to which man

⁴⁷ *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 4, sol.: “Philosophus ibidem ponit aliam sententiam de beatitudine, sive de felicitate; ut scilicet dicatur, quod beatitudo, secundum suam perfectam rationem, perpetuitatem et immobilitatem absolutam habeat. Sed secundum perfectam rationem beatitudo non est possibilis homini accidere; sed possibile est hominem esse in aliqua participatione ipsius, licet modica, et ex hoc eum dici beatum; et ideo non oportet hominem beatum esse perpetuum et immutabilem simpliciter, sed secundum conditionem humanae naturae; unde subjungit: beatos autem ut homines. Talis autem immutabilitas accidit homini quando sunt in ipso firmati habitus virtutum, ut non de facili possit deflecti ab actu secundum virtutem” (Parma, 7/2:1185).

⁴⁸ Aquinas is animated here not just by a concern to overcome Aristotle himself but also by the various *beatitudines perfectae* affirmed by the Arabic Aristotelians. See Richard Taylor, “Arabic/Islamic Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas’s Conception of the Beatific Vision in IV Sent., d. 49, q. 2, a. 1,” *The Thomist* 76 (2012): 509–50.

⁴⁹ *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 4, sol.: “Beatitudo... vera non potest poni in hac vita propter mutabilitates varias quibus homo subjacet; unde necesse est beatitudinem quae est finis humanae vitae, esse post hanc vitam” (Parma, 7/2:1185–86).

is perfected principally in the goods of speculative reason, and secondarily in those of the practical reason; and in his *Ethics* the Philosopher passes judgment on this happiness, neither affirming nor denying another [happiness], which is after this life.⁵⁰

In this way, the young Aquinas sees the harmonization of book 10 of the *Nicomachean ethics* with the Christian tradition as simple: the two can stand alongside each other without conflict. The contemplation enjoined by each has its own cause, its own disposition, its own act, its own object, and its own effect. If, *per impossibile*, Aristotle were presented with Christian revelation, he might find himself indifferent about it because it was something that he simply had not considered.

In Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, which dates to the academic year 1257–1258, he follows the doctrine of beatitude from his *Commentary on the Sentences* but makes the dissociation between Aristotelian contemplation and Christian beatitude even stronger.⁵¹ He seems to do so not only in order to take into account the opinion of Aristotle but also to respond to the opinion of the Arabic commentator Avempace (Ibn Bājjah), who blurred the line between Aristotelian and Christian beatitude by arguing that we could rise to a quidditative knowledge of the separate substances through the science of metaphysics and could, in this way, achieve ultimate beatitude in this life.⁵²

⁵⁰ *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 4, sol.: “Non negamus tamen quin aliqua beatitudinis participatio in hac vita esse possit, secundum quod homo est perfectus in bonis rationis speculativae principaliter, et practicae secundario; et de hac felicitate philosophus in Lib. Ethic. determinat, aliam, quae est post hanc vitam, nec asserens nec negans” (Parma, 7/2:1186). Bradley's position that Aristotelian and Christian beatitude are fundamentally irreconcilable is based on a definition of *beatitudo imperfecta* taken directly from this text and from other, similarly early texts (*Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 398–99).

⁵¹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:328. On Aquinas's use of Pseudo-Dionysius at this stage in his career, see: John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 509–13; Douglas Hall, *The Trinity: An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas' Expositio of the De Trinitate of Boethius* (New York: Brill, 1992), 108; Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 39.

⁵² Aquinas, *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, arg. 3 (Leonine, 50:169). In this question, Aquinas speaks of “philosophers” who posit that the most perfect human happiness consists in understanding the separate substances. The “philosophers” in question are Averroes and Avempace. The context of the question, asking whether we come to see God through speculative science,

According to Aristotle, Aquinas says, the knowledge we have through the speculative sciences is mediated by material things.⁵³ In some cases that material thing is proportioned to an immaterial thing; this is so in the case of genera and species. In other cases it is not; this is the case when God's effects refer to him.⁵⁴ In such cases, we cannot arrive at the vision of the immaterial thing in this life because our intellect is limited by the knowledge it can attain from the material thing and the material thing is not proportioned to its cause.⁵⁵ Consequently, in this life, we can know that God and the separate substances exist but we cannot know their essence or quiddity.⁵⁶

In itself, Aquinas's argument was sufficient to meet the proposed objection. But Aquinas goes a step further and adds a subjective consideration to his objective reasoning. Following Albert's distinction of habits in the *Supra ethica*, Aquinas emphasizes in this context the difference between the habit of natural wisdom, which prepares the intellect for Aristotelian contemplation, and the *lumen gloriae*, which prepares the intellect for the vision of God:

The happiness [*felicitas*] of man is twofold. One is imperfect, which happens *in via*. The Philosopher speaks about this one; it consists in understanding separate substances through the habit of wisdom of the sort that is possible *in via* (such that their quiddity is not known). The other is perfect *in patria*, in which God himself is seen by his essence as well as the other separate

leans more toward Avempace's opinion than that of Averroes, since, although this objection could be attributed to both, the question under consideration concerns knowledge acquired through the speculative sciences, and Avempace held that we can acquire knowledge of the separate substances through the speculative sciences. See Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros* 3.36, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), 490–95. Also see *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] III, ch. 43, in *Summa Contra Gentiles: Editio Leonina Manualis* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1934), 261–71. This version of the Leonine edition of SCG will be cited rather than vols. 13–15 of the edition; it will be cited as “Man.” and is superior to the version originally published by the commission in those folio volumes of the *Opera Omnia*.

⁵³ *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, resp. (Leonine, 50:170–71).

⁵⁴ *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, ad 2 (Leonine, 50:171).

⁵⁵ *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, resp. (Leonine, 50:170).

⁵⁶ *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 3, resp. (Leonine, 50:167). On the background to this discussion in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, see Oliva, “La contemplation des philosophes,” 593–96.

substances. Now, this happiness will not come through some speculative science; rather [it will come to us] through the light of glory.⁵⁷

In this way, Aquinas remains consistent with his *Commentary on the Sentences*. He draws a sharp contrast between the habit, act, and formal object of Aristotelian contemplation and the habit, act, and formal object of the vision of God. In the distinction of habits, he follows Albert's *Supra ethica*. In the distinction of acts and objects, he continues to draw out the implications of Albert's thought.

A second text from the 1257–1258 academic year in which Aquinas treats the question of imperfect beatitude is question 14 of the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*.⁵⁸ Here again, Aquinas follows the pattern of the *Commentary on the Sentences* of sharply distinguishing the habits, acts, and formal objects of Aristotelian beatitude and Christian beatitude:

Now the ultimate good of man, which first moves the will concerning the ultimate end, is twofold. One of these is proportioned to human nature because natural powers suffice for obtaining it; and this is the happiness concerning which philosophers have spoken: either contemplative, which consists in an act of wisdom; or active, which consists first in an act of prudence, and consequently in acts of the other moral virtues. The other is a good which exceeds the proportion of human nature because natural powers do not suffice for obtaining it, nor even for knowing or desiring it; rather it is promised to man out of God's liberality alone; 1 Cor. 2:9: "eye has not seen," etc., and this is eternal life.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, ad 3: "Duplex est felicitas hominis: una imperfecta que est in uia; de qua loquitur philosophus, et hec consistit in contemplatione substantiarum separatarum per habitum sapientie, imperfecta tamen et tali, qualis in uia est possibilis, non ut sciatur ipsarum quidditas. Alia est perfecta in patria, in qua ipse Deus per essentiam uidebitur et alie substantie separate; set hec felicitas non erit per aliquam scientiam speculativam, sed per lumen glorie" (Leonine, 50:171).

⁵⁸ James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 362–63.

⁵⁹ *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2 resp.: "Est autem duplex hominis bonum ultimum quod primo voluntatem movet quasi ultimus finis, quorum unum est proportionatum naturae humanae quia ad ipsum obtinendum vires naturales sufficiunt, et hoc est felicitas de qua philosophi locuti sunt, vel contemplativa quae

This is the point at which Aquinas had concluded his argument in the *De Trinitate*. However, in the *De veritate*, Aquinas introduces a new axiom into his thought that he had previously encountered in the course of Albert's teaching and that enables him to extend his argument yet further. That axiom is "nothing desires a good except inasmuch as it has some similarity with that good."⁶⁰

But nothing can be ordered unto an end unless a proportion to that end pre-exists in it, from which a desire for the end arises in it. This happens according as some beginning of the end comes to be in it, since nothing desires a good except inasmuch as it has some similarity with that good; and therefore it is the case that there is a certain beginning of the good which is proportioned to nature in human nature itself: for the self-evident principles of demonstrations [*sic*], which are seeds of the contemplation of wisdom, and the principles of the natural law,

consistit in actu sapientiae, vel activa quae consistit primo in actu prudentiae et consequenter in actibus aliarum virtutum moralium. Aliud est bonum hominis naturae humanae proportionem excedens quia ad ipsum obtinendum vires naturales non sufficiunt, nec etiam ad cognoscendum vel desiderandum, sed ex sola divina liberalitate homini repromittitur, I Cor. II:9 'Oculus non vidit' etc., et hoc est vita aeterna" (Leonine, 22:441).

⁶⁰ The idea appears in Albert's discussion of the desire for the good in all things in his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus*. See Albert the Great, *Super Dionysius de divinis nominibus*, ch. 4, no. 114 (Col., 37:211–12]. While scholars differ as to the dating of this work, we know that it was prior to Aquinas's first Paris regency. That Aquinas read it is proven by the fact that we possess a copy of the work in Aquinas's hand (Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:21).

The fact that Aquinas does not use the axiom about desire in this way until now suggests that, even though he was aware of the idea, it may be that some more recent reading may have brought it to the forefront of his mind, e.g., chapter 2 of the *De ebdomadibus* of Boethius: "Quod appetit aliud, tale ipsum esse naturaliter ostenditur quale est illud hoc ipsum quod appetit" ("that which desires another shows itself to be naturally similar to it [i.e. to the object of its desire] by the very fact that it desires it"). For the text of Boethius, see Aquinas, *Expositio libri de ebdomadibus* (Leonine, 50:270.19–22). There is some difficulty with regard to the dating of Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De ebdomadibus* (see Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:68). The question is how it should be dated with reference to Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*. While Torrell, following the editor of the Leonine edition, seems to favor a later date, the correlation of the *De ebdomadibus* with *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2, might provide a small piece of evidence in favor of dating the two Boethian commentaries to the same year while still allowing for the fact that the *De Trinitate* was written first.

which are the seeds of the moral virtues, pre-exist in it naturally. By the same reasoning it is also necessary that, in order for man to be ordered unto the good of eternal life, a beginning of it come to be in the one to whom it is promised. But eternal life consists in the complete knowledge of God, as is clear from John 17:3, "This is life," etc.; wherefore it is necessary that a beginning of this supernatural knowledge come to be in us, and this happens by faith, which grasps those things by an infused light, which exceeds natural knowledge.⁶¹

Aquinas's use of the aforementioned axiom, while consistent with his argument in the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the *De Trinitate*, advances his thinking a step further. While the *Commentary on the Sentences* describes the need for a habit in this life proportioned to perfect beatitude in the next life, it does not suggest explicitly that this habit in any way constitutes the *pre-existence* in this life of the perfect beatitude of the next life. Although Aquinas does not draw all the possible conclusions from this inference at this point, it opens the door to a future retrieval of Albert's *beatitudo viae* alongside the place that Aristotle's *felicitas viae* had come to assume in Aquinas's thought.

That having been said, question 14 of *De veritate* raises a new concern that neither Albert's nor Aquinas's previous writing had addressed. Aquinas claims that the pre-existence in this life of the perfect beatitude of the next life is caused by *faith*.⁶² In book 3 of his

⁶¹ *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2 resp.: "Nihil autem potest ordinari in aliquem finem nisi praeexistat in ipso quaedam proportio ad finem ex qua proveniat in ipso desiderium finis, et hoc est secundum quod aliqua finis inchoatio fit in ipso quia nihil appetit bonum nisi in quantum habet aliquam illius boni similitudinem; et inde est quod in ipsa natura humana est quaedam inchoatio ipsius boni quod est naturae proportionatum: praeexistunt enim naturaliter in ipso principia demonstrationum per se nota quae sunt semina quaedam contemplationis sapientiae, et principia iuris naturalis quae sunt semina virtutum moralium. Unde oportet etiam quod ad hoc quod homo ordinetur in bonum vitae aeternae, quod quaedam inchoatio ipsius fiat in eo cui repromittitur. Vita autem aeterna consistit in plena Dei cognitione, ut patet Ioh. XVII:3 'Haec est vita' etc.; unde oportet huius cognitionis supernaturalis aliquam inchoationem in nobis fieri, et hoc est per fidem quae ea tenet ex infuso lumine quae naturalem cognitionem excedunt" (Leonine, 22:441).

⁶² There is a hint of a similar idea in *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, but it is not stated as clearly. See *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 1, resp. (Leonine, 50:93), and q. 2, a. 2, resp. (Leonine, 50:95). Torrell inclines toward the view expressed at this stage of Aquinas's career, that faith is the basis of the inchoation of beatitude in this life, but attributes it to *ST* (Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Christ and*

Commentary on the Sentences, he had expressed hesitation as regards the relationship between faith and the vision of God. In one way, he had likened faith to sight, since it leads to knowledge of that which would otherwise be unknown to us. But Aquinas says that this is sight “improperly speaking”; in reality, faith is the assent of the intellect to things that are *not* seen.⁶³ How can we speak of faith making the object of vision present if faith is distinguished from vision precisely insofar as the object of vision is *not* present?

The Summa Contra Gentiles: Studying Theology to Love God

Aquinas continued to develop his thinking about the possibility of an imperfect participation of perfect beatitude in this life by grace in question 24 of *De veritate*, which dates to the 1258–1259 academic year.⁶⁴ In this text, he develops his argument from question 14 significantly and anticipates a way of overcoming the seeming contradiction of saying that faith constitutes the pre-existence of vision:

Although it can be granted to someone on the journey through the gifts of wisdom and of counsel that his reason should nowise err concerning the end of the good as well as the particular means, nevertheless it is not possible that the judgment of his reason be uninterrupted. This would exceed the state of the journey for two reasons: first and principally, because it is impossible that reason be always in the act of right contemplation in the state of the journey in order that God might be the motive for all that person’s works . . . except in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was at the same time a sojourner and in possession [of his homeland]; but through the grace proper to the journey a man is also able to be attached to the good, so that he is not able to sin without great difficulty. This happens when, through the infused virtues, his inferior powers are restrained, his will is inclined more strongly to God, and his reason is perfected in the contemplation of divine truth, the continuation of which, coming forth from the fervor of his love, withdraws the man from sin.⁶⁵

Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Bernhard Blankenhorn [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011], 23–29).

⁶³ *In III sent.*, d. 24, a. 2, qc. 1, sol. (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:768).

⁶⁴ Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino*, 363.

⁶⁵ *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 9, resp.: “Quamvis autem alicui viatori concedi possit ut ratio nullatenus erret circa finem boni, et circa utilia in particulari, per dona sapientiae et consilii, tamen non posse intercipi iudicium rationis, excedit

Previously, Aquinas's treatments of Christian contemplation in this life were more purely intellectual. Although he had at times mentioned the role of moral virtue in the pursuit of intellectual contemplation, he had said that the role of virtue in the will was dispositive. This had marked a fairly sharp contrast with Albert. Here we see Aquinas introducing the will into intellectual contemplation in a manner that is not merely dispositive. Love in the will serves as the cause of contemplation in the intellect, and love is therefore the reason for whatever participation our contemplation in this life has in the uninterrupted nature of divine contemplation.

The principle of pre-existence, deployed in question 14 of *De veritate* to suggest that faith makes an anticipation of perfect beatitude present in this life, together with the idea from question 24 that the driving force of Christian contemplation is not the knowledge of God so much as it is the love of God, gets taken up into a more robust understanding of Christian contemplation and the study of theology in SCG I, which was composed in the same academic year as question 24 (1258–1259).⁶⁶ In SCG I, chapter 5, Aquinas synthesizes his rationale for the study of theology from the *Commentary on the Sentences* with his developed reasoning on the desirability of contemplation from *De veritate*:

No one tends toward something with desire and zeal unless it is foreknown to him. Since, therefore, our human weakness is ordered by divine providence to a higher good than can be experienced in the present life, as will be investigated in what follows, it was necessary that our mind be called forth into something higher than our reason can attain in the present life, so that thus it might learn to desire something that exceeds the whole state of our present life, and to tend toward it with zeal. And this especially befits the Christian religion, which promises each person spiritual and eternal goods.⁶⁷

statum viae, propter duo. Primo et principaliter, quia rationem esse semper in actu rectae contemplationis in statu viae, ita quod omnium operum ratio sit Deus, est impossibile . . . nisi in domino Iesu Christo, qui simul viator et comprehensor fuit. Sed tamen per gratiam viae ita potest homo bono astringi, quod non nisi valde de difficili peccare possit, per hoc quod ex virtutibus infusis inferiores vires refrenantur, et voluntas in Deum fortius inclinatur, et ratio perficitur in contemplatione veritatis divinae, cuius continuatio ex fervore amoris proveniens hominem retrahit a peccato" (Leonine, 22:702).

⁶⁶ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:102.

⁶⁷ SCG I, ch. 5: "Nullus enim desiderio et studio in aliquid tendit nisi sit ei praecognitum. Quia ergo ad altius bonum quam experiri in praesenti vita

Here, as in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, the need for theology is grounded in the nature of human beatitude. There it was stated personally that man cannot please God without knowing about Christian beatitude in the next life; here it is stated abstractly that man has been ordered to an end that supersedes his natural powers. In either case, the result is the same: the need for theology is based on the exigencies of the present economy of grace. Man has been called to an end that he cannot reach by natural reason, and it is therefore necessary that his actual end be both proposed to him by revelation and investigated by theological reasoning. But the text of *SCG* goes further than the *Commentary on the Sentences*. Making use of the principle of pre-existence from *De veritate*, it notes that not only could we not please God without faith; we would not even want to try. Believing the Christian faith and conducting theological speculation about it are necessary for us not only so that we may know about the beatitude of the life to come but also so that we may whet our appetites for it and avoid succumbing to a despair born of ignorance about our final end.

If Aquinas advances beyond the *Commentary on the Sentences* by adding an explicit consideration of the role of love in the act of Christian contemplation, he does so in such a way as to carefully avoid the difficulty raised by his teaching in question 14 of *De veritate* that faith causes the pre-existence of vision in us. Even if we acknowledge the existence by faith of a remote idea of the vision of God in the intellect, Aquinas does not say that such a likeness produces any sort of union with the thing known. As he had explained in book 3 of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, union between the soul and its object is brought about by love, not by knowledge.⁶⁸ This is because truth, which is the object of the intellect, is in the mind, while the good, which is the object of the will, is in things.⁶⁹ In the case of the beatific vision, there is a quasi-exception to this general rule because the

possit humana fragilitas, homines per divinam providentiam ordinantur, ut in sequentibus investigabitur, oportuit mentem evocari in aliquid altius quam ratio nostra in praesenti possit pertingere, ut sic disceret aliquid desiderare, et studio tendere in aliquid quod totum statum praesentis vitae excedit. Et hoc praecipue Christianae religioni competit, quae singulariter bona spiritualia et aeterna promittit” (Leonine, Man., 4–5).

⁶⁸ *In III sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1 (Mandonnet and Moos, 3:853–58). See also Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 68.

⁶⁹ *In II sent.*, d. 39, q. 1, a. 2, sol. (Mandonnet and Moos, 2:988). See also Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 68.

divine essence is united to souls *as* its intelligible species.⁷⁰ But, short of that vision, the general rule applies: knowledge cannot produce union, only love, and such is even the case with faith.⁷¹

While Aquinas acknowledges the inadequacy of faith to produce union with God, he does suggest a way forward that he will integrate into subsequent reflections on the study of theology. Recalling the principles from questions 14 and 24 of *De veritate*, he notes:

The ultimate end to which man is led by the help of divine grace is the vision of God in his essence, which is proper to God himself. . . . Therefore, man cannot be brought to this end unless he is united to God by the conformity of his will. This is the proper effect of love. . . . Therefore, by sanctifying grace man is made a lover of God, since man is directed by it toward the end communicated to him by God.⁷²

Since faith cannot unite us with God before it gives way to vision, the only means that the soul possesses of anticipating in itself union with the divine essence is a love that seeks the divine goodness in itself, even before that goodness is possessed in the act of vision.⁷³

By introducing the perfection of the will into the rationale for the study of theology, *SCG* begins a return to Albert by suggesting that the study of theology is not just an intellectual endeavor; it is part of an integrated response to God's call to the beatific vision in which the knowledge of God is inextricably linked to the love of God. Even if the text of *SCG* does not explicitly make charity a constitutive aspect of the reasons for studying theology, it lays the foundation for Aquinas to do so subsequently by affirming the idea that the study of theology encourages us to advance toward God by affirming the idea that we cannot advance toward God unless he is somehow present in us, by rejecting the idea that faith makes God present in us, and by affirming the idea that love unites us with God.

⁷⁰ *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1, corp. (Parma, 7/2:1197–99).

⁷¹ *SCG* IV, ch. 152 (Leonine, Man., 410).

⁷² *SCG* III, ch. 151: “Finis autem ultimus, ad quem homo per auxilium divinae gratiae perducitur, est visio Dei per essentiam, quae propria est ipsius Dei. . . . Non potest igitur homo ad hunc finem perducere nisi uniatur Deo per conformitatem voluntatis. Quae est proprius effectus dilectionis. . . . Per gratiam ergo gratum facientem homo constituitur Dei dilector: cum per eam homo dirigatur in finem ei communicatum a Deo” (Leonine, Man., 409).

⁷³ *SCG* III, ch. 151 (Leonine, Man., 409–10).

The Summa theologiae: Studying Theology as a Foretaste of Heaven

The first article of *ST* (1265) largely follows *SCG* I on the reason for studying theology.⁷⁴ Aquinas begins by grounding the need for theology in God's having ordered us to an end beyond our power and in the need for God, as our end, to be foreknown to us. But Aquinas does not say at this point that the end needs to be foreknown to us as something about which we would be otherwise completely unaware (as in the *Commentary on the Sentences*) or needs for us to desire it as something yet unknown (as in the *SCG*); rather, he suggests that the end must be foreknown to us in order for us to order our actions toward it intentionally:

It was necessary for man's salvation that there be some doctrine which follows from divine revelation, and which is beyond the philosophical disciplines . . . because man is ordered toward God as toward an end that surpasses reason's comprehension. . . . But the end must be foreknown to the men who have to order their intentions and their actions toward it. Wherefore it was necessary for man's salvation that some things which exceed human reason be made known to him by divine revelation.⁷⁵

In view of Aquinas's previous teaching that it is only charity that advances us toward and unites us with our final end, this suggests that he is beginning to make room for charity as an integral component of theological study.⁷⁶

Another way in which we can begin to see Aquinas beginning here to emphasize the role of charity in theology is in his description of wisdom.⁷⁷ As in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas explains that we call "wisdom" that which considers the highest causes of

⁷⁴ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1 (Leonine, 4:6–7).

⁷⁵ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1: "Necessarium fuit ad humanam salutem, esse doctrinam quandam secundum revelationem divinam, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, quae ratione humana investigantur, . . . quia homo ordinatur ad Deum sicut ad quendam finem qui comprehensionem rationis excedit. . . . Finem autem oportet esse praecognitum hominibus, qui suas intentiones et actiones debent ordinare in finem. Unde necessarium fuit homini ad salutem, quod ei nota fierent quaedam per revelationem divinam, quae rationem humanam excedunt" (Leonine, 4:6–7).

⁷⁶ Cf. *ST* I, q. 1, a. 5, corp. (Leonine, 4:16), where Thomas says that the end of theology, insofar as it is practical, is beatitude.

⁷⁷ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 6 (Leonine, 4:17–18).

things;⁷⁸ he draws a firm distinction between the wisdom that is acquired by study (theology) and the wisdom that is infused (the gift of wisdom).⁷⁹ But unlike in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, where Aquinas sees both kinds of wisdom as speculative, in *ST*, he speaks of wisdom in its generic sense—including both theology and the gift of wisdom—as also inherently practical, for the purpose of wisdom is to “order human actions toward their proper end.”⁸⁰ This correlates with a subsequent change to his teaching about the gift of wisdom in the *prima secundae* that brings his teaching about wisdom in general in line with his teaching about wisdom in theology. Aquinas could no longer maintain, as he had in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, that the gift of wisdom is in itself purely speculative. He continues to acknowledge that the gifts are practical in the sense that they presuppose charity,⁸¹ but he also adds that the gift of wisdom is practical in itself, since it is both speculative and practical. The truly wise man does not consider the highest causes without also ordering his actions toward them.⁸²

Seeing both kinds of wisdom—theology and the gift of wisdom—as inherently practical opened to Aquinas a way of developing a full-fledged account of imperfect beatitude based on Christian contemplation, such as Albert had proposed, and for holding it in tandem with an imperfect beatitude based on Aristotelian contemplation. Aquinas developed this more robust account of imperfect beatitude based on Christian contemplation while commenting on the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew in the academic year 1269–1270,⁸³ the same text in relation to which Albert had

⁷⁸ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 6 (Leonine, 4:17–18).

⁷⁹ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3 (Leonine, 4:18).

⁸⁰ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 6, corp. (Leonine, 4:17). Many commentators have corrected a rationalistic reading of Aquinas’s understanding by pointing to the association in *ST* between theology and wisdom. See, e.g.: James Weisheipl, “The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1,” *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 49–80; Brian Davies, “Is *Sacra Doctrina* Theology?” *New Blackfriars* 71 (1990): 141–47; Mark Johnson, “The Sapiential Character of the First Article of the *Summa theologiae*,” in *Philosophy and the God of Abraham: Essays in Memory of James A. Weisheipl, OP*, ed. R. James Long (Toronto: PIMS, 1991), 85–98. As helpful as the theology–wisdom association is for overcoming rationalistic readings of Aquinas, the aforementioned commentators tend to overlook the association between wisdom and action noted in Sherwin, *By Knowledge and by Love*, 170.

⁸¹ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 5, corp. (Leonine, 6:452).

⁸² *ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 3, corp. (Leonine, 8:341–42).

⁸³ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 329. We should advert here to the approach of Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Catholic

explained his own doctrine of *beatitudo spei* and *beatitudo rei*.

While Aquinas was working on his *Commentary on Matthew*, he was busy drawing up a *tabula libri ethicorum*, an index to the *Nicomachean ethics* and to Albert's commentary on it.⁸⁴ The extra time spent with Albert's work was not without consequence. Evidently returning to the teaching of his *magister*, Aquinas reached back into Albert's work to redeploy the distinction between *beatitudo spei* and *beatitudo rei* as two degrees of possessing a foretaste *in via* of the beatitude that we are to expect *in patria*:

Some suggest that the vision of God is in the contemplation of truth *in via*; the Lord, however, promises it *in patria*; wherefore *blessed are the pure of heart* etc. And it should be noted that this reward, which the Lord here mentions, can be possessed in two ways: perfectly and consummately, and such will it be *in patria*; and inchoatively and imperfectly, and thus it is *in via*. Wherefore the saints have a certain beginning of that beatitude. And since in this life those things are not able to be explicated as they will be *in patria*; Augustine's commentary focuses on the fact that they are in this life; blessed, therefore, are the poor in spirit: not only in hope [*in spe*], but also in actual fact [*in re*]. Luke 17:21: *the Kingdom of God is among you*.⁸⁵

To say that Aquinas returns to Albert in the *Commentary on Matthew* is not to say that he rejects Aristotelian contemplation and the imperfect happiness it entails altogether, as Bradley implies.⁸⁶ If

University of America Press, 1995), who rightfully sees this text as central to Aquinas's theology.

⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Tabula Libri Ethicorum* (in Leonine vol. 48). See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:229.

⁸⁵ *Super Matt 5*, lec. 2: "Aliqui ponunt visionem Dei in contemplatione veritatis in via; Dominus autem promittit in patria; unde beati mundo corde et cetera. Et notandum quod ista praemia, quae Dominus hic tangit, possunt dupliciter haberi, scilicet perfecte et consummate, et sic in patria tantum: et secundum inchoationem et imperfecte, et sic in via. Unde sancti habent quamdam inchoationem illius beatitudinis. Et quia in hac vita non possunt explicari illa sicut erunt in patria; ideo Augustinus exponit secundum quod sunt in hac vita beati ergo pauperes spiritu: non spe tantum, sed etiam re. Lc. XVII, v. 21: regnum Dei intra vos est" (ed. Raffaele Cai [Turin, IT: Marietti, 1951], 66).

⁸⁶ Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 487. Failing to appreciate the manner in which the doctrine of beatitude in the *Commentary on Matthew* paves the way for the treatment of Beatitude in the *prima secundae* of *ST*,

we proceed to the *prima secundae* of *ST*, we can perceive there that Aquinas prefers to synthesize the two strands of thought rather than reject one in favor of the other. In the Treatise on Beatitude (qq. 1–5), he speaks in Aristotelian terms; in the discussion of the Beatitudes (q. 69), he follows Albert.

Although the primary aim of the Treatise on Beatitude is to establish man's perfect beatitude in the vision of God,⁸⁷ such an aim does not preclude a discussion of the possibility of an imperfect participation or beginning of that perfect beatitude in this life. Throughout the treatise, Aquinas describes a variety of ways in which an imperfect share of perfect beatitude in this life can be ordered to our one, perfect beatitude. In the first place, Aquinas establishes that imperfect beatitude is imperfect insofar as it lacks perpetuity and unicity. Its mutable character arises from the problems that affect the reason, such as illness, and those that affect the will, such as the practicalities of everyday life.⁸⁸ Yet, even if imperfect beatitude falls short of our final beatitude in its temporal finitude, it still bears a similarity to it insofar as it constitutes a good of the speculative intellect.⁸⁹ In particular, imperfect beatitude consists in the activity of contemplation supported by the exercise of moral virtue.⁹⁰

Aquinas makes it explicitly clear that, when he mentions imperfect beatitude in the Treatise on Beatitude, he has Aristotelian contemplation primarily in mind.⁹¹ But we should not therefore suppose that Aquinas meant to exclude all consideration of Christian contemplation alongside it as an alternative form of imperfect beatitude, as though his *Commentary on Matthew* were somehow an anomaly in the

Bradley wrongly interprets Aquinas as taking a critical stance toward Aristotle in this work.

⁸⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 8 (Leonine, 6:35–36). For an historical discussion of the context of this article, see my *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, forthcoming 2019).

⁸⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4 (Leonine, 6:27); I-II, q. 5, a. 4, corp. (Leonine, 6:49–50). See also *ST* I-II, q. 5, a. 3, corp. (Leonine, 6:49), in which Aquinas presents a list of concerns similar to those of article 4 but including some more of the concerns voiced in *SCG* III, ch. 48 (Leonine, Man., 277–79), including the insatiable character of the will's desire for good in this life, the ephemeral nature of the goods of this life, and the fact that man is subject to death, in addition to the fear of death.

⁸⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 5, corp. (Leonine, 6:31–32).

⁹⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 5, corp. (Leonine, 6:32).

⁹¹ *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 6, ad 1 (Leonine, 6:33).

development of his thought. Aquinas's re-engagement with Albert's distinction between *beatitudo spei* and *beatitudo rei* in his *Commentary on Matthew* was also taken up into the *prima secundae*; it was simply taken up into the discussion of the Beatitudes rather than the Treatise on Beatitude.

In his discussion of the Beatitudes, Aquinas once again employs the distinction between *beatitudo spei* and *beatitudo rei* that had been reintroduced in the *Commentary on Matthew*. He sees in this distinction a fitting manner of describing the degrees of happiness in this life attendant upon degrees of Christian perfection without therefore rejecting the Aristotelian happiness he had described in the Treatise on Beatitude.⁹² *Beatitudo spei* consists in merits, insofar as these prepare a person to receive beatitude; *beatitudo rei* consists in an imperfect beginning of future beatitude in the saints, according as they begin to receive the rewards of the Beatitudes in this life.⁹³ This leads to a brief discussion of the difference between the active and contemplative lives. The active life, Aquinas says, gains merit, which predisposes a person to receive the rewards of the beatitudes. The contemplative life, however, conveys the very beatitude promised in the Beatitudes. This reward is received either inchoatively in this life or perfectly in the next.⁹⁴

Conclusion

If we read Aquinas's texts on *beatitudo imperfecta* chronologically and in the context of Albert the Great, it becomes clear that Aquinas did not pit Aristotle against Christian revelation. Quite the reverse: he distinguished in order to unite and gradually integrated Aristotelian beatitude with Christian beatitude over the course of his career. In his mature work, Aquinas arrived at a twofold account of *beatitudo imperfecta*. One form of it is the happiness found in Aristotelian contemplation; Aquinas consistently and explicitly acknowledges the existence

⁹² ST I-II, q. 5, a. 3, ad 1 (Leonine, 6:49).

⁹³ ST I-II, q. 69, a. 2, corp. (Leonine, 6:457). Cf. ST I-II q. 69, a. 2, ad 3 (Leonine, 6:457). See also ST II-II, q. 9, a. 3, ad 3 (Leonine, 8:77), where Aquinas explains that no beatitude corresponds to the gift of knowledge, since the gift of knowledge concerns creatures, whereas the gifts of wisdom and understanding concern divine things. Once again, in connection with the Beatitudes, he associates beatitude "on the journey" with a certain graced beatitude as opposed to one attainable by nature.

⁹⁴ ST I-II, q. 69, a. 3, corp. (Leonine, 6:458).

of this *beatitudo imperfecta* throughout the course of his career.⁹⁵ This *beatitudo imperfecta* is formally distinct from another *beatitudo imperfecta*, which is the result of Christian contemplation in faith and charity. While the seeds of this latter *beatitudo imperfecta* are present in Aquinas's early work, he arrives at a robust and explicit description of it only in his mature work.

Parallel with the development of Aquinas's thought on imperfect beatitude, we have also seen the development of his reasons for studying theology. In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, the study of theology is needed to supplement the insufficiency of Aristotelian contemplation by adding knowledge of our supernatural vocation to Aristotle's observations about contemplation in book 10 of the *Nicomachean ethics*. In *SCG*, the study of theology not only makes our supernatural calling better known but also increases our desire here and now to be united with God in the future fulfillment of that vocation. In *ST*, where Christian contemplation is associated with a kind of *beatitudo imperfecta*, the study of theology becomes—as it was for Aquinas's *magister*, Albert—a *locus* of this *beatitudo imperfecta* in which we advance by degrees from *beatitudo spei* to *beatitudo rei*. Undertaken in the spirit of Christian charity, it looks forward to, makes present, and advances in this life toward the *beatitudo perfecta* of the life to come, and in so doing, constitutes for us an inchoation and a foretaste of heaven on earth. N V

⁹⁵ Having shown that the act associated here with one form of *beatitudo imperfecta* can be found consistently in the Thomistic corpus, it is important to reiterate that the abstract, speculative question of whether such a *beatitudo imperfecta* is possible *mutatis mutandis* must be distinguished from the concrete, historical question of the conditions under which the act associated with it may be performed (in integral nature versus in postlapsarian nature; with grace versus without grace, *in via* versus *in patria*, etc.) and the further speculative question of whether its performance can be associated in any sense with a *beatitudo naturalis*. I take up some of these questions in *To Stir a Restless Heart*.