

Extrinsicism?: Revisiting the Preconciliar Theology of Nature and Grace

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Introduction

THE LIVES OF even the most virtuous people are complex wholes and can be cast in different lights depending on the speaker's vantage point and personal agenda. Thus, for Roman Catholics, Theresa of Calcutta is a saint. For Christopher Hitchens, she is a self-righteous fraud.¹ Mother Theresa's works of corporal mercy are capable of wildly different interpretations based on one's presuppositions. Much the same holds true for the complex doctrines of venerable theological schools. Their doctrines can be characterized in different ways depending on the speaker's historical moment, personal history, and even prejudices.

In this light, the aim of this essay is a simple one: to correct the common conception of what Karl Rahner vaguely calls the "average textbook-conception on the relationship between nature and grace"² and what many scholars associated with the *nouvelle théologie* associate with the early

¹ See Christopher Hitchens, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice* (New York: Verso, 1995).

² Karl Rahner, S.J., "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore and London: Helicon and Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1961), 297–317, at 298. When not noted or cited from English-translation titles, English translations are my own.

twentieth-century manualist approach to nature and grace. Namely, I will aim to show that the neo-Scholastics were not “extrinsicists” in any negative sense of the term. In the first part of the essay, I will briefly present several of the critiques of the preconciliar “textbook” theology as found in the writings of Karl Rahner, Henri de Lubac, and Louis Bouyer. Again, my focus is on their concern that the manuals are “extrinsicist” in their understanding of nature and grace. In the second part, I will respond to the above characterization via extensive recourse to the neo-Scholastic literature.

The Supernatural as Extrinsic Superstructure?

By the mid-twentieth century, the conception of the interrelationship between nature and the supernatural in the manuals was regularly being dubbed as “extrinsicist” by its opponents.³ For example, Karl Rahner begins his essay “Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace” by noting that the “average teaching on grace,” or again “the average textbook-conception of the relationship between nature and grace,” does indeed present a teaching on their relationship that can fairly be described as “extrinsecism [*sic*].”⁴ By “extrinsicism,” Rahner means that human nature has first been conceived of as “sharply circumscribed” and “oriented to the nature of less than human things.”⁵ Next, to nature defined thusly, “supernatural grace,” according to Rahner, “can only be the superstructure [*Überbau*] lying beyond the range of human experience imposed upon a human ‘nature’ which . . . turns in its own orbit [*in sich selber kreist*] (though with a relationship peculiar to itself to the God of creation).”⁶ Grace thus comes

³ The charge seems to originate with Maurice Blondel’s *The Letter on Apologetics* of 1896, in *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 127–217, at 148. Blondel’s own account, however, is rather nuanced. He maintains that high Scholasticism placed the supernatural and natural orders in an “ascending hierarchy” that were in contact with one another. It was old Protestantism that pulled down the “edifice of reason,” which then liberal Protestantism later rebuilt with an “independent integrity,” thereafter leading to the “juxtaposition” and “opposition” of the orders which the new Scholasticism now maintains (see 154–55).

⁴ Karl Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship,” 298. It is significant that Rahner develops his own theory of the “supernatural existential” against this foil in his first article on the nature–grace problematic in dialogue with “D” (someone who holds a theory akin to de Lubac’s).

⁵ Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship,” 298.

⁶ Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship,” 299. One might ask whether it is coherent to posit a nature that “turns in its own orbit” even while appending in parentheses

as a “purely external ‘decree’ of God” which “disturb[s] [*gestört*]” a nature that, in the present economy, is otherwise equivalent to the “man of ‘pure nature.’”⁷

Henri de Lubac, in his late *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, makes a similar if more sharply-pointed charge, noting that the new “Thomist” position posits a nature–grace relationship that can be described as “two juxtaposed realities (two ‘natures’), or, if one prefers, two realities the second of which would be superimposed on the other, while both remained exterior to the other.”⁸ De Lubac, of course, rejects this understanding of grace as a “supernature,”⁹ since the nature–grace relationship is not about “two substantial natures, incapable of copenetrating each other, one of which would override the other.”¹⁰

Louis Bouyer’s assessment of the problem is similar to de Lubac’s. In his *Introduction to Spirituality*, Bouyer alleges that the extrinsicist conception arose from a misunderstanding of the Scholastic doctrine of *created* grace. From this starting point, he avers, “grace as created was taken as a pretext for representing it as a second nature, a ‘supernature’ superimposed on our original nature.”¹¹ However, so Bouyer notes, this conception is false because grace is not a new nature or supernature, but is rather “as it were a new ‘accident’ inserted into the substance of the soul, fitting it as a soul to live the very life of God.”¹²

In the most intimate connection with the falsification of the notion of grace or the supernatural, many authors likewise note that the Scholastic

as a kind of concession that this same nature maintains a relationship to God the Creator. I will return to this point below. The German is cited from Karl Rahner, “Über das Verhältnis von Nature und Gnade,” in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5/1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2015), 66–83, at 68.

⁷ Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship,” 299 (“Über das Verhältnis,” 68).

⁸ Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Arndez, F.S.C. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 34. This work originally appeared in 1980 in French.

⁹ De Lubac, *Brief Catechesis*, 33. De Lubac notes correctly that the term “supernature” in its contemporary application originates with Matthias Joseph Scheeben’s usage. See Scheeben’s 1861 work, *Nature and Grace*, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), esp. 29–33, 37–39.

¹⁰ De Lubac, *Brief Catechesis*, 35. De Lubac goes on to note that it was Blondel who provided the impulse for the twentieth-century return to what he views as a more traditional nature–grace theology (37).

¹¹ Louis Bouyer, *Introduction to Spirituality*, trans. Mary Perkins Ryan (New York: Desclee, 1961), 153.

¹² Bouyer, *Introduction to Spirituality*, 153.

manuals similarly distort the traditional teaching on human nature's capacity for receiving the supernatural—even in the present economy—in an extrinsicist direction. The problem is their interrelated notions of obediential potency for grace, natural desire to see God conceived of as a velleity or wish, and their overall notion of the possibility of a state of pure nature as a theologoumenon necessary to secure the ontological gratuity of grace next to the so-called *debitum naturae*.

To give just one example: Henri de Lubac critiques the sixteenth-century Dominican and influential Thomistic commentator Thomas de Vio Cardinal Cajetan for truncating Thomas's conception of human nature in such a way that Thomas's dictum that the "soul is naturally capable of grace"¹³ has been tacitly replaced with the concept of *potentia obedientiae*—a category of potency used to account for extrinsic miracles—that reifies man and leads to a concomitant "naturalization of the soul."¹⁴ In doing so, Cajetan turned the "[human] spirit back upon itself, enclosing it in 'its own species'" like lower natures.¹⁵ With this new conception too, man's natural desire to see God was likewise truncated, reduced to a mere velleity or wish—what de Lubac regards as a "vague"¹⁶ or "superficial" desire without "profound roots"¹⁷—that has been "water[ed] . . . down as far as possible" from the traditional conception.¹⁸ Similarly, de Lubac—

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 113, a. 10.

¹⁴ See Henri de Lubac, S.J. *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 2012), 140–43, esp. 140. De Lubac does go on to note on 142–43 that it is possible with "some of the moderns" to affirm an obediential power that is specific to man, but he does not develop this idea further, other than noting at 143n13 that the "incautious analogical extension" of the idea of obediential potency fostered "a certain confusion between the order of grace and that of miracle." See too Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études Historiques* [*Supernatural: Historical Studies*] (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 135.

¹⁵ De Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 144. De Lubac goes on to note that "later [i.e., Dominican] Thomism" largely followed Cajetan on this point (146), as did Francisco Suarez (147). Presumably, the later Jesuit commentators, who access Thomas via a greater or lesser dependence on Suarez, do so with him as well.

¹⁶ De Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 180.

¹⁷ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 433.

¹⁸ De Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 180–81. On this point, de Lubac was anticipated especially by a series of articles by Guy de Broglie, S.J., that came out in the 1920s, beginning with de Broglie's "De place du surnaturel dans la philosophie de saint Thomas [On the Place of the Supernatural in the Philosophy of St. Thomas]," *Recherches de science religieuse* 14 (1924): 193–246, 481–96. For discussion of de Broglie's position and the contention that it represents a twentieth-century revival of Giles of Rome's reading of Thomas as revived and perpet-

whose fundamental concern is with the dominance of Aristotelian categories, which he aims to subvert—also regards the concept of *debitum naturae* as a fundamental misconception of the relation between creaturely and uncreated being that presupposes a fundamentally “univocal” concept of being.¹⁹ In questions of the relation between creature and Creator in general, de Lubac maintains that the “term *exigency* [*exigence*]” is simply out of place.²⁰ “The monster of exigency,” he writes, is a “phantom.”²¹ All along Scholastic theologians were trying to “solve a false problem.”²²

As we can see, a number of influential mid-century theologians are quite critical of the earlier literature on nature and grace that stands in the manualist and commentarial tradition on Thomas. Their concern is that this literature posits an extrinsicist concept of the supernatural that functionally becomes a divine superimposition on nature insofar as it no longer fulfills the latter’s aspirations, since nature could just as well get along without it, coming to rest comfortably in the natural end posited for it by the *natura pura* hypothesis. Let us turn now to the relevant literature and see what it has to say about the nature–grace relationship.

The Supernatural in Early Twentieth-Century Neo-Scholastic Thought

The first half of the twentieth century is the era of the theological “manu-

uated among the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, see C. C. Pecknold and Jacob Wood, “Augustine and Henri de Lubac,” in *T&T Clark Companion to Augustine and Modern Theology*, ed. C. C. Pecknold and Tarmo Toom (London: Bloomsbury, 2016 [paperback edition]), 196–222, at 201–203.

¹⁹ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 485, and *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 88.

²⁰ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 484. See also 487–88.

²¹ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 487.

²² De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 487. It is worth noting that Karl Rahner defends the notion of *debitum nature* in “Concerning the Relationship,” 306–8, over and against the de Lubacian-type position of “D.” That said, Rahner also posits that the creature’s primordial ordering to the supernatural is not proper to the creature as such—and so does not fall under the exigency of the *debitum*—but is instead to be accounted for by Rahner’s “supernatural existential,” which constitutes the a priori ordering of the creature *in concreto* for its supernatural last end. In this way, Rahner’s position reunites with the de Lubacian, all the while remaining distinct in its underlying metaphysical presuppositions.

als,”²³ both Jesuit²⁴ and Dominican²⁵—although of course ecclesiastical

²³ If below I often use the term “manual” to refer to any number of the especially Jesuit dogmatic *textbooks* of this period, I do so only because it is a by-now familiar term. I intend none of the pejorative connotations—“dry,” “dusty,” etc.—that frequently accompany its use.

²⁴ The following is a representative sample of the many Jesuit manuals on grace. Ludovico Lercher, S.J., *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae* [*Institutions of Dogmatic Theology*], vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Innsbruck [Oeniponte]: Felix Rauch, 1934); originally published in 1924, Lercher’s manual stayed in print into the 1950s with a fourth edition; vol. 3 contains three books: “De Verbo Incarnato”; “De B.M.V. et Cultu Sanctorum”; “De Gratia Christi” [On the Word Incarnate; on the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Cult of the Saints; On the Grace of Christ]. Joseph Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik in sieben Büchern* [*Manual of Dogmatics, in Seven Books*], vols. 1 and 2 of 3, 4th improved ed. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schönigh, 1908–1909)]; vol. 1 has material on the supernatural order; vol. 2 contains Pohle’s treatise on grace; for abridged English translations, see (vol. 1) *God: The Author of Nature and the Supernatural*, ed. Arthur Preuss (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1942 [1st ed., 1912]), and (vol. 2) *Grace: Actual and Habitual*, ed. Arthur Preuss (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1941 [1st ed., 1915]); Pohle’s manual would ultimately go through ten editions (9th ed. known as “Pohle-Gierens”; 10th ed. known as “Pohle-Gummersbach”), remaining in print through the late 1960s. Charles Boyer, S.J., *Tractatus de gratia divina* [*Treatise on Divine Grace*] (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1938); although published for the first time in 1938, the contents of this work were used by Boyer with students at the Pontifical Gregorian University for years. Louis Billot, S.J., *De gratia Christi: commentarius in primam secundae S. Thomae* [*On the Grace of Christ: A Commentary on the Prima Secundae of St. Thomas*], 4th ed. (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1928); a Thomist, Cardinal Billot was one of the most prolific, profound, and important theologians of the early twentieth century. Christian Pesch, S.J., *Praelectiones dogmaticae* [*Lectures on Dogmatic Theology given at Ditton Hall*]: vol. 3, *De Deo Creante et Elevante: De Deo Fine Ultimo* [*On the Creating and Elevating God: On God as Ultimate End*], 4th ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1914); vol. 5, *De Gratia: De Lege Divina Positiva* [*On Grace: On Positive Divine Law*], 3rd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1908). Although the first edition of Pesch’s *Praelectiones* was published in 1896, it ultimately went through seven printings up through 1924. Gabriel Huarte, S.J., *Tractatus de gratia Christi* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1923). Blasio Beraza, S.J., *Tractatus de Gratia Christi* (Bilbao: Alameda de Mazarredo with Elexpuru Hermano, 1916). Dominico Palmieri, S.J., *Tractatus de ordine supernaturali et de lapsu angelorum* [*Treatise on the Supernatural Order and the Fall of the Angels*], rev. ed. (Prati: Giachetti, 1910); although published in 1910, the materials in this volume have been reworked from those found in his *Tractatus de Deo Creante et Elevante* [*Treatise on the Creating and Elevating God*] (Rome: Ex typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1878). George H. Joyce, S.J., *The Catholic Doctrine of Grace*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1930); the first edition of this work was published in 1920. Hermann Lange,

authors of every persuasion likewise make their own literary contribu-

S.J., *De gratia: tractatus dogmaticus* [*On Grace: A Dogmatic Treatise*] (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1929). Gustavo Lahousse, S.J., *Tractatus de gratia divina* [*Treatise on Divine Grace*] (Bruges: Carolus Beyaert Biliopolam, 1902). For additional Jesuit works on grace, which do not follow the textbook format, see J.-B. Terrien, S.J., *La grace et la gloire ou la filiation adoptive des enfants de Dieu: étudiée dans sa réalité, ses principes, son perfectionnement et son couronnement final* [*Grace and Glory or The Adoptive Sonship of the Children of God Studied in its Reality, Principles, Perfecting and Final Coronation*], 2 vols. (Paris: Lethielleux, 1901, rev. ed. [original: 1897]). See too the important work by Pedro Descoqs, S.J., *Le Mystère de notre élévation surnaturelle* [*The Mystery of our Supernatural Elevation*] (Paris: Beauchesne, 1938); in this work, Descoqs, a professor of Jersey, argues that we cannot demonstratively prove the possibility of the *visio beatifica* (20); this work is directed principally against Guy de Broglie, S.J., “Du caractère mystérieux de notre élévation surnaturelle [On the Mysterious Character of our Supernatural Elevation],” *Nouvelle revue théologique* 59 (1937): 337–76, but also is written tangentially against Gioacchino Sestili, *De naturali intelligentis animae capacitate atque appetite intuendi divinam essentiam: theologica disquisition* [*On the Natural Capacity of the Understanding and the Appetite of the Soul for Intuiting the Divine Essence: A Theological Disquisition*] (Rome: A. et Salvatoris Festa, 1896), and Pierre Rousselot, S.J., *L’Intellectualisme de S. Thomas* (1909), published in English as *The Intellectualism of Saint Thomas*, trans. James E. O’Mahony, O.M. Cap. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1935). For other Jesuit works on grace, see also Hermann Lange, S.J., *Im Reich der Gnade* [*In the Kingdom of Grace*] (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1934).

- ²⁵ See especially the magisterial work by Norberto Del Prado, O.P., *De gratia et libero arbitrio* [*On Grace and Free Will*], 3 vols. (vol. 1, *Pars prima: in qua explanantur sex quaestiones de gratia Dei ex D. Thomae summa theologica* [*First Part: in which is Explained Six Questions on the Grace of God from St. Thomas’s Summa Theologica*]; vol. 2, *Pars secunda: concordia liberi arbitrii cum divina motione juxta S. Augustinum et D. Thomam* [*Second Part: the Agreement of Free Will with the Divine Motion according to Sts. Augustine and Thomas*]; vol. 3, *Pars tertia: concordia liberi arbitrii cum divina motione juxta doctrinam Molinae* [*Third Part: the Agreement of Free Will with the Divine Motion according to the Doctrine of Molina*] (Fribourg: Ex typis Consociationis Santi Pauli, 1907). The first volume of this work serves as an extended commentary in six parts on *ST* I-II, qq. 109–14, treating accordingly of: (1) the necessity of grace; (2) on the grace of God according to its essence; (3) on the division of grace; (4) on the cause of grace; (5) on the justification of the impious; and (6) on merit. Vol. 2 serves as an extended explanation and defense of the Bañezian system of physical premotion, whereas vol. 3, not unsurprisingly, is a scathing critique of Molina’s system, the congruism of Bellarmine and Suarez, and the eclecticism of the Sorbonne school. See also Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *De gratia: commentarius in summam theologiam S. Thomae lae IIae q. 109–114* (Turin: Berruti, 1947 [originally 1946]). For English translation, see *Grace: Commentary on the Summa theologica of St. Thomas, lae IIae, q. 109–14*,

tions felt.²⁶ While the dogmatic textbooks aim to provide comprehensive explanations of the major nodal areas of Catholic doctrine, this is perhaps nowhere more true than in the subject of nature and grace, treatments of which are often covered in separate monographs devoted to the subject. In what follows, I will begin my exposition of the manuals' approach to the nature–grace problematic by first surveying a few definitions of grace or the supernatural to establish a baseline, thereafter turning to a more detailed response to the critiques outlined above.

A Supernatural Gift of God: Huarte, Pesch, Garrigou-Lagrange

Jesuit and Dominican authors alike define grace as being a *supernatural* gift of God. Thus, the Jesuit and professor at the Gregorian University

trans. Dominican Nuns (London: Herder, 1952). For an extended (2 vol.) work, the first volume of which treats the soul's capacity for grace, see Antoine Gardeil, O.P., *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* [*The Structure of the Soul and Mystical Experience*], 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1927).

- ²⁶ For additional works on grace, see Richardo Tabarelli C.P.S., *De gratia Christi in I-II partem summae theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis a. q. XIX ad q. CXIV* [*On the Grace of Christ in I-II of the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas qq. 109–114*], in *Opere Teologiche di P. Riccardo Tabarelli*, vol. 4, *De gratia Christi*, new ed., ed. Cornelio Fabro (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 1962 [originally 1908]). H. Ligeard, *La théologie scolastique et la transcendance du surnaturel* [*Scholastic Theology and the Transcendence of the Supernatural*] (Paris: Beauchesne, 1908). Not tied to any one school, Ligeard, a professor of apologetics at l'Ecole de Théologie de Lyon-Francheville, surveys the systems of diverse schools, including the Thomist, Scotist, and Augustinian schools, to elicit their views on the supernaturality of the last end of man, which must be firmly maintained—so the author contends—if modern rationalist obstacles to Catholic preaching are to be overcome apologetically (see ch. 4). See too the historical work on the question of the pure nature hypothesis in light of the challenges posed by Baianism, Jansenism, and the Synod of Pistoia in Fernand Litt, *La question des rapports entre la nature et la grâce de Baius au Synode de Pistoie: doctrines théologiques et documents ecclésiastiques* [*The Question of the Relationship between Nature and Graces from Baius to the Synod of Pistoia: Theological Doctrines and Ecclesiastical Documents*] (Fontaine-l'Évêque: Louis Daisne, 1934). Litt maintains, contra de Broglie, that the question of the possibility of a state of pure nature has ceased to be a free question following the condemnation of the Synod of Pistoia (149–50). See also: Louis Prunel, *Cours supérieur de religion*, vol. 4, *La Grâce* [*Higher Course on Religion*, vol. 4, *Grace*] (Paris: Beauchesne, 1922); Petrus Parente, *Anthropologia supernaturalis: de gratia et virtutibus* [*Supernatural Anthropology: On Grace and the Virtues*], rev. ed. (Rome: Marietti, 1943); Gerardus van Noort, *Tractatus de gratia Christi* [*Treatise on the Grace of Christ*], 3rd ed. (Bussum: Sumptibus Societatis Editricis Anonymae, 1920). The first edition of van Noort's work was published in 1908.

Gabriele Huarte, in his *Tractatus de Gratia Christi* [*Treatise on the Grace of Christ*], published in 1923, begins with a then-standard definition among Jesuits: grace is “a supernatural gift that is unowed [*indebitum*], given by God to the rational creature, in some way pertaining to eternal life [that is, the beatific vision].”²⁷ In commenting on this definition, Huarte notes that grace is above all that which is *supernaturale seu indebitum* (supernatural or unowed) in every respect (i.e., as exceeding not only creaturely merit but even the exigencies of nature in general, thus his identification of the notions supernatural and *indebitum*). It is only in this way that it is freely given. Moreover, in this way too, grace pertains only to “an end, which altogether exceeds the powers and exigencies of not only human nature, but angelic nature too.”²⁸ As such, it is the means by which we attain to the “intuitive vision [of God] which is not owed to man,” which is to say, “it surpasses simply and absolutely every debt of nature [*debitum naturae*].”²⁹

We find the supernatural defined in a similar way in the Jesuit Christian Pesch’s well-known manual *Praelectiones Dogmaticae* [*Lectures on Dogmatic Theology*], first published in the 1890s but remaining in print for three decades. The *supernatural simpliciter* (supernatural simply so-called) is “that which is altogether unowed [*indebita*] to the created subject and is given gratuitously to it.”³⁰ As such, properly supernatural grace is, simply put, “that which exceeds every natural potency and the exigency [*exigentiam*] of every creature.”³¹ Unlike creation, however, which is “negatively unowed”—since God did not have to create—supernatural grace is what Pesch terms “positively unowed,” since it is not in any way presupposed in creation.³² (I will discuss the Thomistic rationale underlying this distinction between negative and positive debt below.) It is as a corollary of this idea of grace as *indebitum* with respect to creation—as a firewall to the paradisiacal nature–grace integralism and post-lapsarian pessimism of Michael Baius—that Pesch then posits the sustainability and theological relevance of the *natura pura* hypothesis. “Because supernatural gifts are unowed to nature,” Pesch maintains, “man could have been created without supernatural gifts

²⁷ Huarte, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 8.

²⁸ Huarte, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 8–9.

²⁹ Huarte, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 9.

³⁰ Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 3:111 (see also 5:3). For a cognate definition, see Pohle, *Lehrbuch der dogmatik*, 1:453: “The supernatural is a gift of God, unowed and superadded [*indebitum et superadditum*] to nature.”

³¹ Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 3:110.

³² Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 3:111 (see also 5:3).

and consequently in a state of pure nature.”³³

We find a convergent understanding of grace and its implications in the Dominican Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s *De gratia*, a commentary on *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, qq. 109–14. There, while discussing the spectrum of related meanings of the word “grace,” Garrigou-Lagrange posits that that which is supernatural substantially—as opposed to modally or on the part of the efficient cause and so is supernatural properly speaking—is that intrinsic effect “which is above all created nature.”³⁴ As such, “the life of grace and glory . . . surpasses not only the efficient powers and requirements [*exigentias*] of any created nature, but also the cognitive and appetitive powers (or natural merit) of any intellectual nature created or capable of being created.”³⁵ As a corollary, Garrigou-Lagrange, like Pesch, also regards it as *possible* that God could have created man in a state of pure nature, although he is also quick to note that “this state never existed” historically.³⁶

*Created and Uncreated Grace: Pohle, Lercher, del Prado, van Noort,
Gardeil, Terrien, Boyer, Lange*

The Jesuit manualist Joseph Pohle, whose *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* remained in print for over sixty years in diverse iterations (1904–1968), first begins to discuss the biblical notion of grace in a section entitled “Von der Übernatur im Menschen [On Supernature in Man].”³⁷ Although use of the

³³ Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 3:146–48 (esp. 3:146).

³⁴ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 6.

³⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 6 (*De gratia*, 6). With the last clause, Garrigou-Lagrange is making it clear that he rejects Juan Martínez de Ripalda’s controversial thesis on the possibility that God could create a being for whom the supernatural *quoad substantiam* would be natural. Garrigou-Lagrange views this notion as an inherently contradictory idea, and the divine power does not extend to nonsense (like a square triangle or suchlike). Hence, it is impossible for God.

³⁶ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 32–34, at 32. On the non-existence of the *state* of pure nature, see too Billot, *De gratia Christi*, 28–29: pure nature is a “merely possible state,” receiving all the helps which are in general proper to its being, but one “which has never existed in actual reality [*rei veritate*].” In the present providential order, man has been ordained to a supernatural end.

³⁷ Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 1:450. In the English translation in *God: The Author of Nature and the Supernatural*, 179, Pohle’s translator renders this phrase “The Supernatural in Man”; Preuss consistently translates Pohle’s substantive Übernatur into English as if it were the adjective übernatürlich (Pohle uses both throughout), but this is not really accurate and obscures Pohle’s deliberately Schebenesque terminological choices.

word “supernature” does not seem to be ubiquitous in this period, Pohle regularly employs Matthias Scheeben’s neologism *Übernatur*.³⁸ Does this mean then that Pohle views grace as a second substance, a juxtaposed reality superimposed on nature? By no means. As Pohle notes when he defines graces as a *superadditum* over and above nature, what he means is that “the supernatural [Übernätürliche] presupposes nature, inheres in it as something newly coming from without [*ihr als etwas neu Hinzukommendes inhäriert*]”—it is in this latter sense that Pohle views grace as *extrinsic*—“and raises it up [*emporhebt*] to a specifically higher order.”³⁹ Or as he again puts it a bit further on: “Through the supernatural inhering in it as an accident [*durch das ihr als Accidens inhärierende Übernatürliche*],” nature “is raised up into a higher sphere of existence and operation.”⁴⁰ In other words, what Pohle means by supernature is what Matthias Scheeben meant a few decades earlier: it is human nature, with all of its dynamic teleological orientation, raised up by God through a new quality inhering in the soul to a new sphere of vital acts beyond the reach of its created powers so that it can approach God himself through its own grace-enabled acts of knowledge and love.⁴¹

³⁸ Scheeben uses this term throughout his 1861 work, *Natur und Gnade*.

³⁹ Pohle, *Lehrbuch der dogmatik*, 1:453.

⁴⁰ Pohle, *Lehrbuch der dogmatik*, 1:455.

⁴¹ For Scheeben’s fullest definition of *Übernatur*, see Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik* [*Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics*], vol. 3, *Schöpfungslehre* [*Doctrine on Creation*], 3rd ed., ed. Wilhelm Breuning and Franz Lakner, in *Gesammelte Schriften* [*Collected Writings*], vol. 5, ed. Josef Höfer et al. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1961), no. 607: By supernature, we mean “one such perfection of a lower nature in union with a higher one, whereby the lower nature does not merely come to participate in individual excellences, powers, and acts that are natural to the higher nature, but rather also in this higher nature itself, i.e. in that *fundamental constitution of the substance of the higher being*, by virtue of which those higher excellences are natural to this higher being and whereby its manner of life is determined. For if the *communion of goods*, especially of the powers of life and acts should be a truly vital and perfect one, then this communion of goods must include an elevation of the lower nature to *equality* with the higher nature, and thus must include a *higher state and rank* and a *higher existence* or an inner *ennobling, refinement* and *transfiguration* of the lower nature’s substance, by virtue of which that which is of itself supernatural to the lower nature becomes perfectly intrinsic and proper to this nature, so much so that it even becomes to a certain extent *natural* to it, to the extent that the supernatural in itself is owed to the new rank thereof, is rooted in the higher constitution of its substance and is inserted into this latter as its root in the deepest ground and innermost being of the nature of the lower being and is, as it were, intertwined with it.”

The Jesuit manualist Ludovico Lercher, in his *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae*, defines sanctifying grace as “a spiritual quality inhering to the soul in the manner of a new nature.”⁴² However, as Lercher also notes, “an abiding quality is either a substance or an accident.”⁴³ Now, habitual grace is not a substance. Therefore it “is a certain accidental form,” in this case, a “quality.”⁴⁴ Moreover, this accidental form is an entitative rather than an operative habit. Thus when Lercher avers that “habitual grace inheres in the soul in the manner of a new nature,” what he means is that it is an entitative habit and not a “new power or operative habit” (these latter are the infused theological and moral virtues).⁴⁵

The Dominican Norberto del Prado maintains in his three-volume work *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio* that sanctifying grace is a “quality,”⁴⁶ and as such, an “accident.”⁴⁷ Grace and charity, he writes, are “infused divine qualities, inhering in the soul.”⁴⁸ Unlike the virtues, however, which reside in the powers, habitual grace “is in the essence of the soul.”⁴⁹ So too with the Jesuit Charles Boyer: “Habitual grace,” Boyer maintains, “is an accident in the genus of quality, reduced to the species of habit; it is not a virtue [i.e., an operative habit], and thus is distinguished from charity.”⁵⁰ Gerardius van Noort puts it this way: “Sanctifying grace is a *quality inhering in the soul by way of a habit*. . . . [Moreover] since grace is a finite gift and cannot be a substance, it remains that it is an *accident*, spiritual (for it is in the soul) and supernatural.”⁵¹ Or, as the Dominican Antoine Gardeil simply notes together with Thomas: sanctifying grace is a “habitual quality infused into the soul by God.”⁵² Or to quote Boyer once more: “Habitual grace is no mere extrinsic favor of God, but is a gift inhering in the soul.”⁵³

Nor does the manualists’ emphasis on the role of created grace as the formal (and thus inhering) cause of our justification mean that they are not concerned with giving *uncreated* grace its due place. Certainly, the

⁴² Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 3:553.

⁴³ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 3:556.

⁴⁴ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 3:556.

⁴⁵ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 3:557.

⁴⁶ Del Prado, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 1:149.

⁴⁷ Del Prado, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 1:154.

⁴⁸ Del Prado, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 1:152.

⁴⁹ Del Prado, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 1:168.

⁵⁰ Boyer, *Tractatus de gratia divina*, 211 (thesis XV).

⁵¹ Van Noort, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 124.

⁵² Gardeil, *La structure de l’âme*, 1:361.

⁵³ Boyer, *Tractatus de gratia divina*, 172 (thesis XIII).

majority of neo-Scholastic authors of the early twentieth century reject the thesis of the Jesuit Dionysius Petavius repopularized by Scheeben in the nineteenth century on the proper, non-appropriated indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the just.⁵⁴ Thus, for example, J.-B. Terrien maintains that our adoptive sonship is in truth⁵⁵ *appropriated* to the Holy Spirit by divine revelation, since the new effect the Trinity produces in the soul reveals to us something of the hypostatic mode in which the Holy Spirit possesses the divine nature.⁵⁶ Although not dogmatically ruled out, Terrien regards Petavius's position as untenable and as running contrary to the common sentiment of theologians.⁵⁷ That said, Terrien also assigns an important place to uncreated grace—that is, to God himself—in his account of our adoptive sonship, since uncreated grace is “the principle and term of the supernatural gifts that transform us.”⁵⁸

Charles Boyer, who maintains simply that *each* of the divine persons communicate themselves to man,⁵⁹ holds that the “inhabitation of the Most Holy Trinity in the soul” is indeed the result of our engracement, and is something that begins here below inchoately through grace and is later perfected through glory.⁶⁰ Boyer accounts for this inhabitation in three ways: first, through the “infusion and conservation of sanctifying grace which is a certain impression [*sigillatio*] conforming the soul to the supernatural image of the Trinity”; second, through the divine motions or *auxilia* (helps) by which “we are disposed for the gifts of the Holy Spirit”;

⁵⁴ See: Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1954), 158–80; Scheeben, *Handbuch*, 3: nos. 832–84. For discussion, see Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Romance and System: The Theological Synthesis of Matthias Joseph Scheeben* (Denver, CO: Augustine Institute, 2010), 86–94.

⁵⁵ I say “in truth” rather than “merely.” In my view, the use of the adverb “merely” in discussions of the appropriation of divine indwelling to the Holy Spirit—i.e. “it is *merely* appropriated,” etc.—colors the discussion and prejudges the outcome of this line of inquiry. There is nothing “mere” about an appropriation, insofar as it refers to the wonder of a divine effect *ad extra* revealing something proper to one the persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

⁵⁶ Terrien, *La grace et la gloire*, 1:405. See also 1:418 on the mission of the Holy Spirit: “The mission of the Holy Spirit is the eternal procession of this same Spirit manifested by an effect or by an operation, in virtue of which he is present in the creature in a new manner, and abides therein.”

⁵⁷ Terrien, *La grace et la gloire*, 1:433.

⁵⁸ Terrien, *La grace et la gloire*, 1:407.

⁵⁹ Boyer, *Tractatus de gratia divina*, 193, 198.

⁶⁰ Boyer, *Tractatus de gratia divina*, 193.

and third, through the “union with God that results from the possession and fruition of the divinity that charity offers.”⁶¹

The German Jesuit Hermann Lange is an eclectic on this point. Thus, he speaks favorably in rapid succession of Thomas’s position (we receive uncreated grace as the *object* of new acts of intellection and volition)⁶² and Francisco Suarez’s (by sanctifying grace a true *love of friendship* arises between God and man)⁶³ and Scheeben’s escalation of Suarez’s language of friendship with the imagery of nuptial union.⁶⁴ Lange’s own conclusion lays a strong emphasis on the Trinitarian indwelling in the soul through the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit, who personally dwells in the soul, also draws down into it the person of the Son of God. And the Son draws [down] the Father with him. Thus the circle is completed, and the *entire Most Holy Trinity* dwells as uncreated grace in the soul.”⁶⁵

Finally, Lercher for his part maintains that, though the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit is indeed an appropriated one,⁶⁶ this does not rule out a *real* indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the just. He accounts for this, however, along Suarezian lines, by positing that “habitual grace constitutes the just person a *friend of God* [*amicus Dei*].”⁶⁷ And this union happens not only through conformity of affections, but likewise through an “inseparable presence.”⁶⁸ In sum, though their manner of explanation is diverse inasmuch as the relation of created and uncreated grace is a disputed question between the schools, there is widespread recognition in this period of the need to account not only for a created grace that inheres in the soul of the just disposing them for divine life, but also for the manner in which this created grace, as the formal cause of human beings’ justification, gives them a new relationship to the Holy Trinity.

Far from considering grace to be a “supernature,” then, in the sense of some kind of extrinsic superimposition on the soul, the neo-Scholastics actually consider it to be a gratuitous gift of God *infused into the soul*

⁶¹ Boyer, *Tractatus de gratia divina*, 193.

⁶² Lange, *Im Reich der Gnade*, 116.

⁶³ Lange, *Im Reich der Gnade*, 119.

⁶⁴ Lange, *Im Reich der Gnade*, 122. See Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 171.

⁶⁵ Lange, *Im Reich der Gnade*, 126.

⁶⁶ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 579–80.

⁶⁷ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 578. See too 577: It is not enough to say “that the Spirit is present [in the just] through some *supernatural operation*, which is appropriated to him.” Nor does he think it is enough to say that “the Spirit is in the just as the object of acts of knowledge and love.”

⁶⁸ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 578.

by God so as to capacitate the just for a new relationship with the Holy Trinity.

*Human Nature's Obediential Potency: Palmieri, Pohle, Descoqs,
Garrigou-Lagrange, Gardeil*

There is of course another issue at play which lends itself to the *nouvelle* theologians' characterization of the neo-Scholastics' nature-grace theology as "extrinsicism." If the issue is not the latter's concept of grace, then perhaps it is their truncated understanding of human nature, which is characterized by (1) a receptivity for grace as a *potentia obedientialis*, (2) a conditional natural desire for beatitude as a velleity, and which (3) equate fallen man's condition with the state of pure nature, so that in any event the human person has been conceived by them in such a way that he now "turns in its own orbit" and has in general been secularized, the net result being that grace, *de facto* if not in theory, has become in their systems a "purely external 'decree' of God" that "disturb[s]" nature,⁶⁹ despite protestations to the contrary.

As the Jesuit Domenico Palmieri correctly notes, on the Thomist understanding,⁷⁰ there is a "twofold passive power" in the creature, one of which responds to "natural agency"—as the eye responds to light and color—the other responding to the "first agent," who can reduce nature with its powers to a higher act than is possible through natural agency. It is this latter that is called "*potentia obedientiae* [i.e., capacity to obey God]."⁷¹ Obediential potency as a category is important because, on the Scholastics' view, it alone preserves the gratuity of the supernatural as a *disproportionate* and thus properly "*super-natural*" perfection of nature, so much so that, without it, in Pohle's words, "any theory of supernature must remain fragmentary and incomplete."⁷² Given the correlation between natural agency and passive powers that it postulates, this concept of obediential

⁶⁹ Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 299.

⁷⁰ See ST III, q. 11, a. 1. See Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to see God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2010), 141–46, for Feingold's refutation of Étienne Gilson's interpretation of this passage.

⁷¹ Palmieri, *Tractatus de ordine supernaturali*, 80. Palmieri's treatment is very metaphysical in its cast, and so his principal concern in this section is to distinguish obediential potency from the natural active and passive powers of the soul. See also Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 1:455, for a definition of obediential potency and its upshot.

⁷² Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 1:455.

potency is accordingly also intimately bound up with the neo-Thomist understanding of natural desire as a conditional elicited desire, one which is metaphysically disproportionate to God as he is to himself and so can reach out to him only by way of a certain aspiration or wish for the seemingly impossible until this desire has been elevated by grace.

Thus, as the Jesuit Pedro Descoqs notes in his 1938 work *Le mystère de notre élévation surnaturelle* [*The Mystery of our Supernatural Elevation*], written in response to Guy de Broglie's revival in the 1920s and 1930s of the neo-Augustinian thesis of a natural desire for the formally supernatural, if we accept the latter thesis, Descoqs maintains:

Fact of the possession of God in himself thus becomes a normal prolongment of nature and nature's power in relation to the divine union is nothing more than a natural power. The spirit, intuitive faculty of the divine, despite all verbal accommodations otherwise, at the end of its innate desire does not have any line of demarcation, no essential distinction between nature and supernature: the transcendence, which the whole supernatural order necessarily implies, no longer seems to be anything but a word.⁷³

Moreover, Descoqs continues, as goes the real transcendence of the supernatural, so goes its gratuity: it is no longer anything but a word.⁷⁴

Despite the weighty objections in favor of an obediential potency for grace and a concomitant conditional elicited natural desire as a velleity, does this not then ultimately mean that human nature has been closed in on itself and turned to the order of nature, whence man is understood as having no or at least limited reference to God or supernatural revelation? After all, when we read, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange's commentary *De gratia*, does he not state that "obediential power signifies nothing but a non-aversion [*non repugnantiam*],"⁷⁵ from which it seemingly follows that *we* as human beings must be *indifferent* to its fulfillment?⁷⁶ Moreover, does this same conclusion not likewise follow from Gardeil's statement to the

⁷³ Descoqs, *Le mystère de notre élévation surnaturelle*, 118.

⁷⁴ Descoqs, *Le mystère de notre élévation surnaturelle*, 118–19.

⁷⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 309 (*De gratia*, 246).

⁷⁶ Thus Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 315: "This openness [of the spiritual nature for the supernatural existential] is not to be thought of merely as a non-repugnance, but an inner ordination." Rahner looks for this inner ordination in the "unlimited dynamism of the spirit," although this dynamism as we concretely experience it may itself be at least in part the product of the supernatural existential.

effect that pure nature is a candidate for the supernatural insofar as it “is not opposed to a complement and an achievement that God alone is able to bestow upon it”?⁷⁷

In fact, this conclusion does not follow. Garrigou-Lagrange and Gardeil are *not* saying that human beings are *existentially* or *psychologically* indifferent to the call of grace that elevates and heals human nature. What they do mean is that, considered from the metaphysical vantage point, the human capacity for elevation to the supernatural is a nonrepugnance in the sense that, *qua* potency, it is indifferent in terms of its actuation. Yet as *existent* human beings, we are *not* indifferent to the call of grace. First, this is so because, as Gardeil notes, our capacity for elevation arises from “the analogical structure of our intelligence,”⁷⁸ which we alone possess from among all the visible creation. It is in the soul’s nature as ordered to truth and goodness to be innately open to the further supernatural perfection that Christian revelation proffers along these lines by extending our natural aspirations further. As Gardeil notes regarding the natural desire to see God, it arises from the natural human desire to know the causes of created effects and is, by its nature, “a desire to contemplate openly the very essence of this cause.”⁷⁹ Thus, the doctrine of obediential potency does not mean that we as human beings are existentially indifferent to Christian revelation and the supernatural end it offers, nor does it mean that the soul is reified and treated as if it were like any other subhuman nature.⁸⁰ It

⁷⁷ Gardeil, *Structure de l'âme*, 1:266.

⁷⁸ Gardeil, *Structure de l'âme*, 1:348. See too 1:318–19: “The intellectual nature, with its own power, active and *vital*, is recognized, prior to any activity, in all its being . . . as being in passive obediential potency for everything that God is able to and wishes to work in it.”

⁷⁹ Gardeil, *Structure de l'âme*, 1:305.

⁸⁰ See Gardeil, *Structure de l'âme*, 1:303, where he notes that animals are not capable of the beatific vision. “It must be an intellectual nature.” On the consensus that emerged on obediential potency among Dominican Thomists and Jesuit Suárezians, the following remarks of Steven A. Long, in *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 234n34, are apropos (against de Lubac and Étienne Gilson): “How could all the interpreters of St. Thomas on this point be completely in error? Of course, such is not impossible. But it is not a likely supposition, nor is it reasonable to discard generations of theological and philosophic work on the force of such a supposition. Both Thomists and Suárezians read the Angelic Doctor as holding for obediential potency as pertaining to the relation of nature to grace. Their in-house disputation about the sense of ‘obediential potency’ cannot obscure the datum that, at bottom, each views it as a passive potency of a very particular sort, the sort involving a specific range of actuation to which a nature is amenable solely

simply means that we cannot effectively strive for this end until we receive a further actuation by the external active agency of God.

Moreover, there is a second reason that we as existent human beings might be interested in Christian revelation. The reason for this is that grace not only elevates our nature to a supernatural end (*gratia elevans*) but also heals our nature from the wounds of sin and, in any event, our natural frailties (*gratia sanans*). Discussion of this latter issue, however, requires a bit of nuance, insofar as with it we enter into a dispute especially between the Jesuit and Dominican schools about the extent of the so-called wounds of nature after the Fall.

The Wounds of Nature: Pohle, Rahner, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Others

In general terms, Jesuit authors, perhaps owing to their ever-present concerns about Jansenism, tend to be weaker on the effects of original sin on human nature after the Fall than their Dominican counterparts. For example, Pohle indicates his substantial agreement with the nineteenth-century German theologian Herman Schell's assessment that "this state [of pure nature] is conceived of as pretty much in agreement with the [i.e., fallen] state in which man actually exists, only minus the character of punishment and guilt that mark the absence of the higher prerogatives, and the powers of grace, which are at work in all human beings for redemption,"⁸¹ even if Pohle, contra Schell, also goes on to note that he thinks that there has been an increase in idolatry and concupiscence in fallen man beyond what would otherwise be the case.⁸² When Pohle comes to the question of the wounds of nature, he notes that "there is no agreement among theologians over the extent of the four"⁸³ wounds of nature, since one group speak of

through the active agency of an extrinsic cause. Today, many persons who have read neither Thomas, nor Thomistic commentators, nor Suárez, nor Suárezians, are equally convinced that all are incorrect on this point, and also are convinced that the scholastics were ahistorical. But *sed contra*: it seems that they were correct, and that however ahistorical their work, at least they did not judge authors without first reading them."

⁸¹ Herman Schell, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 2:293, as cited in Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 1:476 (*God: The Author of Nature and the Supernatural*, 228: I have modified Preuss's rendering from the German).

⁸² Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 1:476. Pohle also thinks that much of what we now characterize as the wounds of sin—he singles out concupiscence and ignorance, together with death and life's sufferings—would also be common to the state of pure nature, at least to some extent.

⁸³ St. Thomas's account of the four wounds is outlined below in a citation from Garrigou-Lagrange.

a weakening of nature in the sense of an actual *deterioration* [*Verschlimmerung*] of the natural powers of the soul themselves, whereas the other group speaks of a mere penal consequence of the *privation* of supernatural innocence.”⁸⁴ For his part, Pohle notes the complexities of this dispute and leaves it formally unsettled, although his remarks cited above indicate about where he stands on this spectrum.

It is this commonly held Jesuit position—with roots in the works of Suarez⁸⁵—that stands behind Rahner’s complaint that the average textbook theology of his day presents man “in the present economy” as otherwise equivalent to the “man of ‘pure nature.’”⁸⁶ Rahner’s concern here does seem to point to a real weakness with much of the textbook theology of his day, since the view in question, insofar as it potentially mitigates the deleterious effects of sin on man, has the real potential to minimize or at least naturalize man’s plight under the regime of sin, a plight which the grace of redemption responds to as *gratia sanans*.

It should be noted, however, that this is treated as a *disputed* question in the literature, a question in which, on my view, Dominican Thomists generally hold a more satisfactory view. So, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange describes the “state of fallen nature” as follows: “It is the state of nature despoiled of sanctifying grace, of the virtues attached to it, and of the gift of integrity, in other words, subject to pain and death as well as the four wounds of ignorance in the intellect, malice in the will, concupiscence in the concupiscible appetite, and weakness in the irascible.”⁸⁷ When Garrigou-Lagrange goes on to note that “Thomists generally hold that man in the state of fallen nature . . . has less strength for moral good” than in a state of pure nature, this is because “man is [now] born with his will directly opposed⁸⁸ to his final supernatural end and indirectly opposed [therefore] to his final natural end.”⁸⁹ Indeed, in debates in the literature

⁸⁴ Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 1:513.

⁸⁵ For discussion, see Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 135–37.

⁸⁶ Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship,” 299.

⁸⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 26. The author refers the reader to *ST* I-II, q. 85, aa. 3, 5, and 6.

⁸⁸ What Garrigou-Lagrange is referring to here is the well-known incurvature of the will to the *bonum privatum* in Thomistic discourse. See De Prado, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 1:32. This incurvature simultaneously diverts us from both our natural and supernatural ends, the latter directly, the former indirectly.

⁸⁹ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 26. The Jesuit Charles Boyer is also quite adamant that fallen man is in a worse condition than he would have been in a state of pure

between Dominicans and Jesuits, this dispute about the powers of fallen nature over against pure nature often plays out in the debate over whether fallen man is capable of, if not an *effective* love of God above all things (which involves keeping all the commandments),⁹⁰ then at least an *affective* love of God above all things.⁹¹ Garrigue-Lagrange defines an affective love above all things as a “simple act of love of God above all things with the intention of pleasing Him in all things and withdrawing from mortal sin.”⁹² Garrigou-Lagrange and Dominican Thomists generally deny that fallen man is capable even of this.⁹³ On the other hand, Jesuits such as Lercher,⁹⁴ Pesch,⁹⁵ Blasio Beraza,⁹⁶ and Pohle⁹⁷ affirm this, as does Richard Tabarelli, a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata.⁹⁸ On the other hand, Gerardius van Noort punts on this question, leaving it disputed,⁹⁹ as does Huarte, who thinks the question is “insoluble” and “of little value.”¹⁰⁰

nature: “Fallen man, if he is not raised up by the grace of Christ, is in a worse condition than he would be in a state of pure nature” (*Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 16). For, first of all, he is adverse toward his ultimate end; second, nor does he receive necessary help for the whole good pertaining to his connatural end; and third, he is under the thrall of demons. As such, he is “wounded in natural things, and despoiled in things having to do with grace” (16).

⁹⁰ For Garrigou-Lagrange on effective love of God above all things, see *Grace*, 62. I have not found an author who maintains that we can have an effective love of God above all things without the help of medicinal grace. See on this point, Tabarelli, *De gratia Christi*, 71–73, esp. 73: “Fallen man is not able to effectively love God without healing grace.” See also: Billot, *De gratia Christi*, 49; Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 3:463 (effective love without grace is morally impossible, albeit physically possible). See too Boyer’s nuanced discussion in *Tractatus de gratia Divina*, 74–77, as well as van Noort, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 21: “It is certain that fallen man is not able, without the help of medicinal grace, to love God with an effective perfect natural love.” See too Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 5:73–74.

⁹¹ Garrigou-Lagrange, in *Grace*, 63, notes that resolution of this question is the main controversy between Dominican Thomists and theologians who follow the Jesuit Molina on this point.

⁹² Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 62. Van Noort, in *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 21, defines an affective love of God above all things as: “a transitory act, by which man refers everything he has unto God and seriously proposes to please him in all things.”

⁹³ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 63.

⁹⁴ Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae*, 3:464.

⁹⁵ Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae*, 5:73–74.

⁹⁶ Beraza, *Tractatus de Gratia Christi*, 282.

⁹⁷ Pohle, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, 2:366–68.

⁹⁸ Tabarelli, *De gratia Christi*, 72.

⁹⁹ Van Noort, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Huarte, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, 114.

Debitum Naturae and Natura Pura: de Lubac, Terrien,
Descogs, and Others

Turning to the question of the Scholastic affirmation of the so-called *debitum naturae*, the question is whether this does indeed presuppose a “univocal” concept of being that denies a proper understanding of divine transcendence, as de Lubac suggests.¹⁰¹ De Lubac’s concern here is that the notion that God can owe anything to a creature implies a relation of commutative justice between God and creature, which in turn presupposes a certain equality between the two parties.¹⁰² Since this is obviously false, there would be no need then to posit the possibility of a state of pure nature to secure the gratuity of grace with respect to innocent man, since grace simply cannot be owed to the creature.

Briefly, it is easy enough to demonstrate that de Lubac’s objection to the *debitum naturae* in his *Surnaturel* rests on a mistaken premise. He does not understand the kind of “justice” the Thomist authors are appealing to. We can see this readily enough in Terrien’s *La Grace et La Gloire*, where the author, when defining the supernatural *per essentiam*, notes that it is such that it must extend beyond the *exigence* of nature.¹⁰³ To account for *this* exigency, Terrien has recourse to St. Thomas’s account of God’s *distributive* justice in *ST* I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.¹⁰⁴ There Thomas notes, in response to the objection that “God is no man’s debtor,” that there is also

¹⁰¹ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 485, and *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 88.

¹⁰² For the preconditions for a relation of commutative justice, see Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, vol. 2, *GottesLehre oder die Theologie im engeren Sinne* [*Doctrine on God or Theology in the Narrower Sense*], 3rd ed., ed. Michael Schmaus, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1948), no. 609. Scheeben maintains that there are two things necessary for a true commutative relationship between parties: independence and equality. Obviously, neither of these can exist between God and man. See too Thomas, *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 1: “Justice is simply between those that are simply equal; but where there is no absolute equality between them, neither is there absolute justice. . . . Now it is clear that between God and man there is the greatest inequality: for they are infinitely apart, and all man’s good is from God. Hence there can be no justice of absolute equality between man and God, but only of a certain proportion.”

¹⁰³ Terrien, *La Grace et La Gloire*, 2:330–31.

¹⁰⁴ See too Palmieri, *Tractatus de ordine supernaturali*, 6, where the author, after noting that the supernatural is *indebitum* with respect to nature, goes on to immediately cite: *ST* I, q. 21, a. 1; I-II, q. 111, a. 1, ad 2. See also 17–19 for Palmieri’s more extended treatment of the question of the *debitum naturae*. See too van Noort, *Tractatus de gratia Christi*, who directs the reader to *ST* I-II, q. 111, a. 1, ad 2, where Thomas applies the notion of *debitum naturae* to secure the gratuity of grace over and above the “condition of nature.”

a justice that God *owes to himself*, and more particularly, *to his own wisdom* so as to manifest his goodness in creation. This kind of justice, which is called distributive justice, is what secures the integrity of creation, and it is by it that God orders things in such a way that they manifest the divine goodness.¹⁰⁵ This brings us to the distinction between being negatively and positively unowed that we encountered earlier. Creation is negatively gratuitous, since God did not have to create. But since God did freely choose to create, there are certain entailments that follow in the train of this decision. For grace to be positively unowed, then, it must not be entailed in the first creation, which has its own integrity. Otherwise, it would have been “due” to Adam and so would only be grace with respect to sinners, but not with respect to innocent man.

The neo-Thomist authors employ the notion of *debitum naturae* and the corresponding notion of the *possibility* of a state of pure nature—which of course has never been realized historically¹⁰⁶—as a firewall against Baianism, thereby securing the gratuity of grace as an unowed, disproportionate, and therefore *super-natural* perfection of human nature over and against the integrity of the first creation. Thus, Terrien frames his discussion of pure nature as a midpoint between Pelagianism, on the one hand, and the related errors of Martin Luther, Michael Baius, and Cornelius Jansen, on the other.¹⁰⁷ His conclusion after his historical survey is that: “It follows that we cannot reject what is commonly called the *state of pure nature* without placing the Catholic doctrine of the supernatural and grace in peril. In other words, we can and even must consider a state [i.e., a providential order] to be possible and absolutely realizable in which the rational creature would have come forth from the hands of its author with purely natural gifts and without the present ordination to the beatific vision; in a word, outside the whole order of grace and glory that is promised us.”¹⁰⁸ Nor is Terrien alone in his concern here, since Pesch’s point of departure is the same as Terrien’s, insofar as he too deploys the *natura pura* hypothesis as a firewall to the nature–grace integralism of Baius.¹⁰⁹ The *natura pura* hypothesis has nothing to do with man turning on his own axis or being

¹⁰⁵ For discussion of the idea of *debitum naturae* in the Thomistic tradition, see Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 223–29.

¹⁰⁶ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 23: “All theologians agree that this state of pure nature never existed.” The difficulty, of course, is that “Baius and the Jansenists denied its *possibility*” (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁷ Terrien, *La grace et la gloire*, 2:351.

¹⁰⁸ Terrien, *La grace et la gloire*, 2:357.

¹⁰⁹ See Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae*, 3:146–48.

epistemically insulated from God. The reason for this is that *natura*, on a Thomistic conception, is always ordered to God.

The question that arises with consideration of the possibility of a state of pure nature is whether God could have created man with an ordination to God that follows from the principles of his nature and its native powers without the assistance of supernatural grace leading him to a supernatural end. This is why, while speculating on what man's natural end would be in a state of pure nature, the Jesuit George Joyce identifies it *with knowledge of God*. He writes: "Certainly man's ultimate beatitude even then [i.e., in a state of pure nature] would have consisted in the knowledge and love of God; *for a rational nature cannot find beatitude elsewhere*. But it would have been a knowledge and a love commensurate with his natural powers."¹¹⁰ Descoqs for his part tentatively advances a thesis with antecedents in Cajetan on the possibility that man's natural last end would consist in some kind of intuitive nonabstractive possession of God that would nevertheless not reveal God as Trinity or in general "in the intimate perfections of the transcendent supernatural order."¹¹¹ On any conception, however, man in the *status naturae purae* is conceived of as being open to God as First Cause and as transcendent source of truth and goodness, a natural orientation in man which then serves as the foundation for the analogical extension of man's spiritual acts in the supernatural order once these latter acts are elicited by God from man's obediential potency.

Conclusion

I hope to have given reasons for holding that the "extrinsicist" label is itself an extrinsic and inaccurate denomination. At a minimum, it is certainly not the only way to characterize the authors' own conception of their thought, and in at least some instances it is downright erroneous, as for example, when de Lubac, Rahner, and Bouyer depict the neo-Scholastics' understanding of created grace as a superstructure that effectively suffocates nature while remaining extrinsic to it.

If the neo-Scholastics were not in fact extrinsicists, what accounts for the *nouvelle théologie's* polemical characterization of this literature? Although

¹¹⁰ Joyce, *Catholic Doctrine of Grace*, 50 (emphasis added).

¹¹¹ Descoqs, *Le mystère de notre élévation surnaturelle*, 126: "Is it thus absurd to conceive of a real vision of God, author of nature, which would not reveal him according to his intimate perfections of the transcendent supernatural order, but which, while remaining in a certain way proportionate to our nature, would nevertheless be intuitive and would surpass the way of abstract concepts or of infused species?"

this question goes beyond the limits of this essay, I suggest that the answer has to do with the pre-acceptance of a certain strategy thought to be able to revitalize Christian faith in the early twentieth century, against the inroads of Kantian or Feuerbachian humanisms.¹¹² Arguably, we can see this in the counterposed nature–grace constructions of Maurice Blondel¹¹³ and especially the Jesuit Pierre Rousselot,¹¹⁴ as well as the works of Joseph Maréchal

¹¹² See Long, *Natura Pura*, 3: “If one inherits a reduced and anti-theistic idea of ‘nature,’ and if one also inherits an absolutization of the libertarian idea that human freedom lies naturally outside the divine causality and providence, then the denial of any natural proportionate end distinct from supernatural beatitude may seem essential to safeguarding the theonomic character of the human drama. . . . De Lubac’s position would be the only one available to the thoughtful Christian were it necessary to accept as true the remote judgments that formed the problem situation to which he was responding—but . . . it is not necessary to accept them.” Long’s argument here reminds me of Alasdair MacIntyre’s in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008 [repr.]). MacIntyre thinks that Nietzsche’s critique of the Enlightenment-era moralists is definitive. But the question still remains: were the Enlightenment-era moralists correct in their rejection of Aristotelian virtue ethics? If not, then Nietzsche’s argument is seriously undermined.

¹¹³ Foundational here is Blondel’s *L’action* of 1893. For a recent edition, see *Action (1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007). Of course, behind Blondel also stands nineteenth-century traditionalism—its diverse French instantiations and the Tübingen school—as well as the ontologisms of Gioberti and Rosmini. For an account of the traditionalist and ontologist reactions to post-Kantian thought, see, for an erudite overview at least, Gerald A. McCool, S.J., *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999 [3rd printing]). It is worth noting that McCool’s volume—written as a kind of 1977 Transcendental Thomist victory dance over the grave of Joseph Kleutgen, S.J.—is extremely hostile to neo-Scholasticism. His argument really only succeeds if Rahner and Lonergan are the only possible heirs to St. Thomas’s epistemology—a dubious proposition. For a contemporary rethinking of the role of the agent intellect in Thomas, see Andrea Ayala, “The Agent Intellect in Aquinas: A Metaphysical Condition of Possibility of Intellectual Knowing as Intuition.” Unpublished dissertation: (PhD diss., St. Michael’s College and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology, 2018).

¹¹⁴ Important here are Rousselot’s *L’intellectualisme de S. Thomas* of 1909, already cited, and his pair of articles—“Les yeux de la foi,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910): 241–59, 444–75; “Réponse à deux attaques,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 5 (1914): 57–69—now collected in the English edition *The Eyes of Faith* (“The Eyes of Faith,” trans. Joseph Donceel, S.J., with introduction by John M. McDermott, S.J.; “Answer to Two Attacks,” trans. Avery Dulles, S.J., with introduction [New York: Fordham University Press, 1990]).

and the Louvain School of Transcendental Thomism.¹¹⁵

The initial impetus to this line of thought is given by Blondel in his original *L'Action* of 1893, in which Blondel posits that a phenomenology of human action can demonstrate that human nature comes to its fulfillment only in the philosophically undetermined supernatural, the content of which is filled out by Christian positive revelation. Although Rousselot's point of departure is different than Blondel's, his thought nevertheless embodies a similar tendency, one which is expressed however in a revaluation of Thomistic epistemology. Rousselot engages in the question of man's relationship to the supernatural by means of a rethinking of the human mind's relationship to *esse* (being), positing that the human mind is a faculty ordered to being not, in the first instance, through the medium of the abstracted *conceptus* (concept), but instead through possessing an a priori dynamism for the First Truth itself which is expressed in the act of judgment.¹¹⁶ As Rousselot scholar John McDermott notes, Rousselot "conceived knowledge as a tendency toward its goal and effectively rendered man connatural with that goal, specifically the First Truth, God Himself, and with all that led to that goal."¹¹⁷ For the neo-Scholastics, this position runs the risk of denying the supernatural *quoad substantiam* even while affirming the effect's supernaturality on the side of the efficient cause.¹¹⁸ As such, Rousselot's conception represents a different

¹¹⁵ For important early works by Joseph Maréchal, see *Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance* [*The Point of Departure for Metaphysics: Lessons on the Historical and Theoretical Development of the Problem of Knowledge*], 5 vols. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965 [4th ed]). Maréchal's volumes originally appeared between 1922 and 1947.

¹¹⁶ See McDermott, introduction to Rousselot, "Eyes of Faith," in *Eyes of Faith*, 16. For Rousselot's subordination of the concept to the a priori horizon of infinite being, see *Eyes of Faith*, 71: "For some, our intelligence gathers up intelligible *replicas* of things, and these representations are not *intrinsically* modified by the total dynamism of the subject. For others, what is most knowing in knowledge depends essentially on the relation of the subject to his ultimate End."

¹¹⁷ McDermott, introduction to Rousselot, "Eyes of Faith," in *Eyes of Faith*, 17. For further discussion of Rousselot's position, see Declan Marmion, "Transcendental Thomism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe, with Thomas L. Humphries (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 701–17, at 706: "Many of Rousselot's emphases including the natural desire for the vision of God, the continuity between the natural and the supernatural realms, the relation between faith and reason, and the limitations of conceptual knowledge would be developed by De Lubac, Rahner, and Lonergan."

¹¹⁸ This is similar to Fernand Litt's upshot of Jansenism, in *La question*, 144: for the

point of departure and a different metaphysics on nature and grace than that of the modern schoolmen, whether Jesuit or Dominican. These are the emerging battle lines that generate the conflict between the *nouvelle théologie* and the new schoolmen on the question of the relation between nature and grace. N.V

Augustinus of Jansen, “there is no elevation [of human nature] to a supernatural end; the supernatural is defined solely from the point of view of efficiency,” i.e., with sole reference to the efficient cause. This is also Litt’s assessment of Baiainism on 143.