

De Lubac on Natural Desire: Difficulties and Antitheses

CHRISTOPHER J. MALLOY
University of Dallas
Irving, Texas

HENRI Cardinal de Lubac (1896–1991), learned, profound, and noble, challenges godless readings of the world grounded proximately in modernity. De Lubac’s diagnosis is that modernity’s godless readings had roots in the “hypothesis of pure nature” developed especially from Thomas de Vio, a.k.a. Cajetan (1469–1534), to Francisco Suárez (1548–1617). According to the hypothesis, there corresponds to human nature a naturally obtainable and fulfilling natural end. Positing such an end, de Lubac maintains, renders God irrelevant in the natural order and consequently impertinent when he calls. In fact, de Lubac insists, man as he is concretely constituted has an innate and unconditional desire for supernatural union with God.¹ This desire marks concrete human nature as such; it is not the result of actual or habitual graces. Consequently, concrete man can achieve no genuine rest in a purely natural end.

Recently, de Lubac’s thesis, which won wide support for decades, has been challenged. This article seeks to contribute to the renewed debate, focusing chiefly on the theological issues at stake. The article will, first, expound de Lubac’s thought, his diagnosis of the problem of then contemporary theology and his proposed solution. Second, it will offer an evaluation, tracing two implications of his solution and identifying two presuppositions of his diagnosis.

I assume the following: A meaningful world is one in which a rational being—that which alone can be created for its own sake—is able to obtain an end that, even if not ultimate, brings genuinely finalizing rest and joy.

¹ See Joseph A. Komonchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac,” *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 585.

This assumption does not forestall the debate, for one may still ask whether any world that is not meaningful is possible. As to the first implication of de Lubac's solution, if the assumption is true, we must countenance the following dilemma. Either (a) since no world that is not meaningful is possible, should God create beings identical with us in nature, he is bound to grant the grace whereby the beatific vision may be obtained, or (b) God can create beings identical with us in nature and not offer them grace, since the divine freedom is such that there can be a world without meaning. The former horn of the dilemma destroys the gratuity of grace. The latter horn portrays a meaningless world as possible, thus presupposing the divine freedom as possibly arbitrary, all the while, of course, unwittingly omitting to countenance this meaninglessness. I say "unwittingly" because de Lubac is immersed in a (proper) consideration of God's *actual* supernatural benevolence, and this immersion is to his credit. Still, if the gratuity of grace rests on possible arbitrariness, one may reasonably object to the thesis, especially since de Lubac identifies earlier roots of modernity's problems in voluntarism. As to the second, de Lubac's solution also implies that moral rectitude would be impossible for concrete man without entitatively supernatural grace.

De Lubac's solution is the outcome of his diagnosis, which is grounded in insufficient appreciation of the divine traces that would be present in man in a purely natural state. This deficit is displayed both through de Lubac's conception that man in a purely natural state would be autonomous and also through his correlative denial that human nature as such could be meaningfully called if its appetite could find genuine rest in a purely natural end. I turn now to the exposition.

Exposition of de Lubac's Thought

De Lubac's Diagnosis

De Lubac perceived two speculative problems in mid-century: an assumed autonomy of man vis-à-vis God and the separation of grace from nature. The more obvious problem was the widespread conception of man as being radically autonomous from God. Enlightenment thinkers and Nietzsche had seen the God depicted by tradition as a heteronomous, extrinsic tyrant condemning depraved man. Understandably, modern and post-modern thinkers threw off the shackles of religion and theism and defended godless readings of the world.

The second problem, the hidden root of the first, involved trends in Catholic theology, before and after the Enlightenment. Catholic theology was marked by the urge to separate grace from nature and theology from

philosophy.² Though this theology rejected the Enlightenment divorce between God and the world, it implicitly accepted a thesis that, becoming a worldview, led to the secularism it rejected. This thesis was the so-called “hypothesis of pure nature.” Sundry were the versions and sub-theses of the hypothesis. I shall suggest an articulated version of the hypothesis in the Evaluation section. It should suffice here to state the thesis in a generic way: There corresponds to human nature a naturally attainable and fulfilling natural end.

De Lubac levels three charges against this hypothesis. First, portrayed as self-sufficient for the attainment of a connatural end, human nature is erroneously conceived as independent of the divine power: “In that economy, as they present it, all of man’s moral life would depend exclusively on his own innate powers, exercised in full autonomy, ‘almost as understood by Aristotle.’”³ Again, “If we begin by dissociating the two orders completely, in order to establish the existence of a natural order that could be fully and finally self-sufficient, we are all too likely to end up by seeing not so much a distinction as a complete divorce.”⁴ De Lubac drives home the point by noting that thinkers as far apart as Michael Baius (1513–89) and Augustine could agree that under any conditions, man requires divine help. De Lubac summarizes their agreement on this point:

man is so made that on any hypothesis to fulfill his destiny he has need of God’s external help. For both of them, a state in which man would be left to his own wisdom and powers, in which he would have to develop and perfect himself unaided, is quite out of the question. In this sense neither of them has any room for the idea of ‘pure nature.’⁵

² See Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 174f. [hereafter, *Surnaturel*]. Unless otherwise stated, translations of *Surnaturel* are mine.

³ Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 47 [hereafter, *Mystery*], citing Guy de Broglie, “De gratuitate ordinis supernaturalis ad quem homo elevatus est,” *Gregorianum* 29 (1948): 463. See also *Surnaturel*, 153f. See, briefly treating this claim, Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010), 314–15. The “closed-in” view is commonly traced to Denis the Carthusian and Cajetan, but these readings are arguably mistaken (Feingold, 78 and 102–20). Echoing de Lubac is Nicholas Healy, “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace: A Note on Some Recent Contributions to the Debate,” *Communio* 35 (2008): 542ff.

⁴ *Mystery*, 35. See also Henri de Lubac, “Le mystère du surnaturel,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1949): 89 [hereafter, “Le mystère”].

⁵ Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 1 [hereafter, *Augustinianism*].

Even though their agreement is only superficial when contrasted with their crucial differences, neither Augustine nor Baius could brook a system in which man is conceived as not needing God's aid. So, in spite of the sometime *de facto* and *ad hoc* utility of the hypothesis of pure nature in defense of the gratuity of grace,

was not the relative autonomy which [the hypothesis] granted to nature, as it defined it, a temptation to independence? Did it not encourage in this way the 'secularization' let loose at the Renaissance and already anticipated in the preceding centuries by the Averroist movement? . . . Was it not too wide a concession to opponents to admit the hypothesis of a state—and as a result to acknowledge in us a whole sphere of activity—in which it was not the principles of sovereign charity and unconditional submission that reigned, but those of commutative justice?⁶

Of a kind with this illusion of autonomy is a deceptive mirroring of the supernatural in the natural. Proponents of the hypothetical state spoke of natural graces and of friendship with God, of "a disinterested love of God, a love that is 'most excellent' [*excellentissimus*] and 'above all things' [*super omnia*], directed towards 'the author of nature,' and existing as a fruit of 'pure nature.'" Consequently, de Lubac maintains, grace (supernatural grace) is rendered an irrelevant repetition.⁷

Second, connected with this flip side of the illusion of autonomy is the presupposition that God would owe a purely natural man a proportionate end. De Lubac considers this presupposition patently false: God is thereby conceived as man's debtor. Supposedly, to man in the state of integral nature there would be an end proportionate and due, just as to man in the state of grace there is, supposedly, an end proportionate and due.⁸ De Lubac links this erroneous conception with the errors of "Pelagianism, or Baianism."⁹ The systems of both Pelagius and Baius are "naturalizing." That is, both make union with God something proportionate to man; consequently, union with God is naturally "owed." Pelagius contends that one can perform good works by one's own power, without an inward grace, and thus, merit union with God. Baius affirms the necessity of grace, on account of nature's impotence, but he conceives of union with God as being the end to which man is entitled. Since man is entitled to

⁶ *Augustinianism*, 233.

⁷ *Mystery*, 40. See also "Le mystère du surnaturel," 88; and *Surnaturel*, 247–57, in the context of the entire chapter. De Lubac rejects this inclusion.

⁸ See *Mystery*, 62.

⁹ *Mystery*, 48; see also *Surnaturel*, 488.

this end, grace is owed him: "The integrity ensured by this gift of the Spirit was in no way something gratuitous for it was not a better good, but something whose absence would properly have constituted an evil, an evil against nature."¹⁰ Such errors are echoed in various ways in the hypothesis of pure nature, which proffers

a "beatitude" which the creature requires and which God owes him. In the "purely natural world" where this creature lives, all idea of God's free gift is lost. How can one say that such a picture, in either possible form, is in harmony with any idea we could have (no matter whether from reason or revelation) of the one true God? Is there any justification for formulating as possible a hypothesis by whose terms God must in justice assure man of any beatitude, however "natural"? Is there any justification for proposing in this way a possible order in which God would, in the strict and proper sense of the word, owe man something?¹¹

De Lubac urges this critical observation vehemently, as we shall see. The hypothesis of pure nature, as construed above, makes God man's debtor because, de Lubac insists, it involves the claim that it would be against the divine wisdom and justice to establish an order in which it is *per se* impossible, in that order, for a creature to attain a proportionate end.¹²

Third, de Lubac charges that in the hypothesis of pure nature, the character of created spirit as such is betrayed, being said to have no aspirations beyond a limited ambit, to be self-enclosed, to be uninterested in

¹⁰ *Augustinianism*, 4. See also *ibid.*, chaps. 1 and 2. On the other hand, there is Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638), who subjects fallen man to strict predestination. Despite the apparent opposition between Jansenism and Baianism, both are fundamentally agreed on this: Innocent man would be owed grace and, when offered it, would control it of his own accord (see *ibid.*, 36–38, 64, and 67–68). According to de Lubac, even some pious persons subscribed to the possibility of an autonomous exercise of human agency. One senses in the background William of Ockham (*Quod*. I, q. 16 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 9 (St. Bonaventure, NY: 1980), 87:11–15 and 88:22–28]). In contrast to this conception of a somewhat autonomous self-actualization, see *ST* I, q. 105, aa. 3–5.

¹¹ *Mystery*, 48.

¹² I say "*per se* impossible" instead of saying, with the commentatorial tradition, that such an order must have at least some (rational beings) who attain the natural end. For examples of this tradition, see the commentary of Sylvester of Ferrara (1474–1528) on *ScG* III, chap. 51, par. 1; and Cajetan's commentary on *ST* III, q. 9, a. 2, par. 1. A similar description, though not approval, of this tradition is found in S. Dockx, "Du désir naturel de voir l'essence divine selon saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Archives de philosophie* 27 (1964): 91f. In my opinion, saying simply "If such were *per se* impossible, God's justice and wisdom would be threatened" aims at the principle involved: To such-and-such a nature, such-and-such an end ought not (*sin aside*) for the most part be impossible of attainment.

God. The reason for the charge is this: Man in the state of pure nature would, according to proponents, have only an “obediential potency,” that is, a non-repugnance, to grace. Now, the primary instance of “obediential potency” is, de Lubac submits, the “miracle,”¹³ wherein God by his absolute power can effect whatever is possible in any given thing, even though there be in that thing no inclination to such an effect.¹⁴ Constricting the natural desire to a case of obediential potency for a miracle, Suarez and others ended up describing it as a mere “velleity,” an impossible wish.¹⁵ In effect, the dualist theory denies “all natural desire to see God.”¹⁶ As de Lubac implies, a spiritual being in the purely natural state would be “called to close itself definitively within itself.”¹⁷ De Lubac challenges this limitation of spiritual aspirations: “It is a mark of that spiritual creature not to have its destiny circumscribed within the cosmos.”¹⁸ St. Thomas, he says, “could recognize in the human spirit something else than a totality closed in upon itself or upon this world.”¹⁹ Though flittingly mirroring the supernatural, the hypothesis leads, ultimately, to a morality without religion and tears²⁰ and to the death of personal relationships,²¹ tempting man to independence from God.²² How little the difference between man thus conceived and the atheistic and deistic detours of Enlightenment humanism!

Does [this thesis] not lead us to suppose a being similar to that so often presented by rationalist philosophies—both ancient and modern: a being sufficient to himself, and wishing to be so; a being who does not pray, who expects no graces, who relies on no Providence; a being who, depending on one’s point of view, either wants only to continue as he is, or seeks to transcend himself, but in either case stands boldly before

¹³ See *Mystery*, 140–43; *Augustinianism*, 127 (n. 109), 191–92, 199–205, and 212–13.

See also Komonchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century,” 586.

¹⁴ See *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 1, ad 18.

¹⁵ See *Augustinianism*, 162f., esp. n. 55; see also *Surnaturel*, 433.

¹⁶ *Mystery*, 10.

¹⁷ Henri de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2000), 55, emphasis mine (hereafter, *Le mystère*. Unless otherwise indicated, translations referencing *Le mystère* are mine).

¹⁸ *Mystery*, 110.

¹⁹ *Augustinianism*, 174. See also *ibid.*, 158–63, 169, 174, 190–91, and 214–15; *Mystery*, 28–29, 31f., 60 (n. 16), 108–9, 115, 128f.; “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 87; and L. Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” *Nouvelle revue théologique* 75 (1953): 562 (both parts of this two-part essay are contained in the same volume).

²⁰ See *Mystery*, 47.

²¹ See *Mystery*, 48, and above, note 6.

²² See *Surnaturel*, 153–55.

God—if he does not actually divinize himself—in a proud and jealous determination to be happy in himself and by his own powers?²³

Given these terrific weaknesses, the hypothesis is objectionable in itself. Of course, de Lubac here and there avows, God could have created such a purely natural order.²⁴ Moreover, de Lubac admits the hypothesis once had utility, when it was deemed necessary for the protection of the gratuity of grace and the freedom of God, for an equitable solution to the fate of deceased, unbaptized infants, and in defense against a certain excessive pessimism about human nature.²⁵ In its chief use, however, to identify the gratuity of the supernatural, the thesis is in fact entirely irrelevant. In the concrete order, man by nature desires a *supernatural* end.²⁶ So, to suggest that some “purely natural man” does not desire this end in no way establishes the *actual* gratuity of grace. Indeed, the hypothetical order of pure nature involves some other man, an abstract man, “a different ‘me.’”²⁷ “What have I to do with him?”²⁸ Between these two men, placed in these two orders with different finalities, there can be no identity of acting subject because no identity of nature: “The difference between the one and the other does not affect solely their individuality; it cannot but affect the nature itself.”²⁹ As a result, the “pure nature” theorists utterly fail to accomplish their chief end.

Since the thesis is incapable of identifying the gratuity of grace in the present order, one need not hold it. Given the divorce of religion and reason it occasions, it ought not to be held. For in fact, a man persuaded that this pure nature prolegomenon underpins the Gospel of Christ is confronted with a dilemma: (1) renounce himself totally, only to find an unrelated self in grace, or (2) renounce the offer of grace as superfluous to his ownmost concerns. The markings of this alternative constitute a sad *Wirkungsgeschichte*: A ghetto Christianity impotent to transform culture pitted against an Enlightenment ideology that at bottom rejects the faith. Paradoxically, these three agree: Catholic proponents of “pure nature,” Enlightenment deists and atheists, and Christian defenders of “total depravity.” Together they hold that

²³ *Mystery*, 47.

²⁴ See *Augustinianism*, 106, and *Mystery*, 14, 54, 74, 75, etc.

²⁵ See *Augustinianism*, 107–16, and 231–32, and n. 66. See also *Surnaturel*, 103 and 180.

²⁶ See *Mystery*, 31.

²⁷ *Mystery*, 59.

²⁸ *Mystery*, 62.

²⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Le mystère*, 87. See also *ibid.*, n. 1, and *Mystery*, 59 and 101–2. The position taken here is at least rhetorically firmer than that in “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 91–94.

the principles of human nature do not incline man to supernatural union with God.³⁰

De Lubac's Solution

Against these drawbacks, de Lubac underscores the relevance of grace, defends its gratuity, and articulates the depths of human dependence upon God. Central to the accomplishment of these aims is his famous thesis: Man in the present order has an innate, unconditional, and inefficacious desire for the supernatural vision of God.³¹ How does this thesis achieve these aims?

First, since the desire is innate and concerns the ultimate, grace answers the inmost human exigence.³² As innate, the natural desire does not first arise at the provocation of experience; it is neither accidental nor alterable.³³ De Lubac hereby parts with those who insist the desire is “elicited,” brought on by experience. He grants that an “elicited” desire

³⁰ See Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Br. Richard Arnandez (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 122 (hereafter, *Brief Catechesis*).

³¹ Dockx (“Du désir naturel de voir l’essence divine”) also holds this thesis, presenting to my mind the best exegetical argument of Thomas’s texts in its favor. Dockx’s claim is that created intelligence as intelligent nature has subsistent being (God) and thus union with him as its ultimate perfective object. Hence, created intellect naturally desires the vision of God. Note: for Dockx, the desire is *not* an elicited act of the will triggered in light of a judgment of convenience; it is *not* the intellect’s desire as moved or movable by the agent intellect; it is *not* an obediential potency to the universal divine causality. Rather, this desire is proper to the intellect, just as any form has a relation to its proper object. As a result, the intellect innately tends towards beatific union with God (see 55–81). This tendency, however, is not an operation but a relation (*habitus*; *rapport*) or proportion of the perfectible to the perfection, of matter to form (see 61f. and 64f.). Dockx explains: In precision from its mode of operation and in consideration solely of its adequate object, intelligence has being as its object. Now, there is an innate appetite for the proper object of a power as form. So, created intellect has an innate appetite for being itself subsisting. Yet, no created intellect can attain subsistent being; it can attain it only indirectly, by “abstracting” from a consideration of particular beings. There arises in the intellect a “drive” (*poussée*) to see God (63), and no act of intelligence short of the vision will ever appease this appetite (64). More recently developing the notion of the intellect’s distinctive appetite, but not concurring with the thesis of a natural desire for the supernatural, is Reinhard Hütter, “Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God: A Relecture of *Summa contra Gentiles* III, c. 25 *après* Henri de Lubac,” *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 573–79, working from an article by Marie-Joseph Le Guillou.

³² See *Mystery*, 136–37. The desire must, of course, run even deeper than that weight of selfishness that so characterizes us (see *Augustinianism*, 69).

³³ See *Mystery*, 54f.

arises, but the elicited desire signifies a more profound, ontological desire.³⁴ One might not discover the innate desire consciously, but that does not tell against its profoundly determining effects.³⁵

Not only innate, the desire is also unconditional; it is so absolute that its eternal non-fulfillment would cause the pain of damnation:

In me, a real and personal human being, in my concrete nature—that nature I have in common with all real men, to judge by what my faith teaches me, and regardless of what is or is not revealed to me either by reflective analysis or by reasoning—the “desire to see God” cannot be permanently frustrated without an essential suffering. To deny this is to undermine my entire Credo. For is not this, in effect, the definition of the “pain of the damned”?³⁶

The “pain of damnation” would strike anyone who, sharing *our* human nature, is confronted by the permanent frustration of this desire. Some wish to entertain the thought of a *limbus puerorum*, wherein “metaphysical” suffering does not take place, but to do so involves missing the mark of human psychology.³⁷ Since the desire for God concretely present in man is innate and unconditional, its everlasting frustration *must* constitute suffering.³⁸

³⁴ It could be called “the ontological appetite of intellectual substance, practically identical with its finality” (*Augustinianism*, 125). See also *ibid.*, 124–25 and 141–42; *Mystery*, 136f.; and Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 301–3, and Feingold’s evaluation in *ibid.*, 324–29. Here, de Lubac considers that he is following Scotus. Of course, for the latter, this “innate appetite” is, actually, “nothing more than an ontological relationship towards whatever perfects a thing” (*Scotus on the Will and Morality*, selected and trans. by Allan B. Wolter, ed. by William A. Frank [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997], 43). Dockx’s approach seems mixed: He describes the desire as a simple relation, on the one hand, and as a drive and a (divine) movement on the other hand (see “Du désir naturel de voir l’essence divine,” 80). If it were simply a relation to that which can most perfect the desirer, the desire would not be a “weight” of nature, and the portrait would resemble Scotus’s (see Feingold, 35f., n. 17). Yet, Scotus denies that the souls of unbaptized, deceased infants are afflicted (for references, see Feingold, 56, n. 30; and Serge-Thomas Bonino, “The Theory of Limbo and the Mystery of the Supernatural in St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, trans. Robert Williams and revised by Matthew Levering [Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009], 148f.). Would Dockx find this acceptable?

³⁵ See *Mystery*, 54 and 136–37.

³⁶ *Mystery*, 54; see also *ibid.*, 54–57, and “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 91f.

³⁷ De Lubac nevertheless appears sympathetic to an extent with the thought of Francis Toletus (1532–96) on the *limbus puerorum* (see *Augustinianism*, 141–42 and n. 169).

³⁸ See de Lubac, *Mystery*, 203f.

At times, de Lubac indicates or implies that this desire would necessarily obtain for any created spirit as such, that no created spirit could have any other genuinely finalizing end than the vision of God; a purely natural finality is impossible.³⁹ According to this line of thought, any created spirit that failed to obtain the vision of God would suffer the aforesaid affliction.

De Lubac's second achievement, identifying the gratuity of grace, can now be set in relief. Though innate and unconditional, the desire is inefficacious.⁴⁰ It is "no kind of divine seed" of glory; it cannot achieve its

³⁹ For direct statements to this effect, see *Mystery*, 55, 110, and 198–200; "Le mystère du surnaturel," 106–8 and 116; Henri de Lubac, "Duplex Hominis Beatitudo," *Recherche de science religieuse* 35 (1948): 297; and *Surnaturel*, passim. See also the references in note 62. In addition to these direct statements, there are indirect ones. First, de Lubac remarks, "For St. Thomas, the end of created spirit 'in every hypothesis is God himself, in other words the supernatural'" (*Mystery*, 67, n. 41, citing Dom M. Capuyns, Review of *Surnaturel*, in *Bulletin de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 5 [1947]: 252). With this favorable citation of Capuyns, de Lubac goes well beyond those who deny merely that Thomas ever speaks of the "concrete possibility" of a purely natural end (see *Mystery*, 12, emphasis mine). Second, there is de Lubac's remark on a contention by Thomas that the soul, being created immediately by God, has as its end an immediate re-union with God (see *De unione Verbi incarnati*, a. 1; see also *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10): "Whatever weight we attach to his argument, whatever its exact significance, how could anyone maintain that for him, in a 'purely natural universe,' the human soul would not have been directly created by God?" (*Mystery*, 67). Third, in his early work, there is a more emphatic denial of the intelligibility of a purely natural finality (see *Surnaturel*, 456 and 468–71, and also Michael Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade: Über die Beziehung des Menschen zu Gott nach Henri de Lubac*, no. 13, Sammlung Horizonte [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1979], 199f. and 374). It should be noted, however, that de Lubac offers qualifications in later texts: "Even if one went on to say that any natural finality has become concretely impossible for that created spirit, that existing being, it could never be an absolute judgment, but only one from supposition [*ex suppositione*]" (*Mystery*, 101; see also "Le mystère du surnaturel," 105). Some object that, because of de Lubac's insistence that created spirit can have no other end than the vision, this supposition must boil down to a "supposition of creation." To this contention, Figura answers that de Lubac is thinking "from above down"; that is, it is not that the existing world exacts what is due from God; rather, it is that God wills this end, and thus makes what is fit for it (*Der Anruf der Gnade*, 364f.; see also Malevez, "La gratuité du surnaturel," 576–78; and Healy, "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," 541). Healy correctly insists that de Lubac speaks of a twofold beatitude. Healy also faithfully displays de Lubac's pronouncement on the character of natural beatitude, on that aspect of beatitude that corresponds to the capacity of nature: It is terrestrial, unstable, transitory, mixed, and immanent (see 553–55).

⁴⁰ "The supernatural is the object of an absolute though inefficacious desire, without ceasing to be absolutely gratuitous" (*Surnaturel*, 438; see also *ibid.*, 453f; *Augustinianism*, pp. 171f; and *Mystery*, 85f., 111, and 137).

end.⁴¹ Moreover, this desire in no way entitles man to its end: The desire “of itself achieves nothing, since it indicates no kind of debt or requirement.”⁴² De Lubac thus identifies the gratuity of grace in a radical manner and in any order. Even in *Surnaturel* (1946), he presents the following remarkable citation from William of Ockham (1285–1347): “God is a debtor to no one in any way.”⁴³ It should be noted that although Thomas, following Augustine, recognizes that God is debtor to no one, Ockham has added the phrase *quocumque modo*.⁴⁴ In turn, de Lubac augments Ockham’s addition: “In no sense and according to no title—neither natural nor moral—do we have rights over God. ‘God is debtor to no one in any way.’ These words of Ockham are the refrain throughout the tradition.”⁴⁵ Since God is sovereign and free, in no sense is any creature on a par with him; the “two” are not comparable as those who confront each other within a larger context of justice. God is the measure.

Seeing that some failed to take cognizance of his categorical denial of any creaturely claim or entitlement, de Lubac later *stressed* a “double gratuity”: creation *ex nihilo* and call *ex gratia*. Admitting the possibility of a purely natural order, he accepted Pius XII’s warning in *Humani Generis* (1950): “Others destroy the true ‘gratuity’ of the supernatural order when they say that God is not able to establish beings gifted with intellect without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision.”⁴⁶

De Lubac sides with Augustine against Pelagius and his unwitting disciple, Baius: “All, rightly speaking, is grace (although a distinction is to be made between one grace and another).”⁴⁷ With Augustine, he admits that in some sense there is a reward for works; it is but God’s crowning of his own gifts.⁴⁸ In truth, however, there can be no question of any created nature having as its due the supernatural: “In my view, which is that of every Catholic, any idea of a claim of created nature in relation to the supernatural should be absolutely excluded.”⁴⁹ There is neither a juridical claim nor

⁴¹ *Mystery*, 84. See also note 94.

⁴² *Mystery*, 137.

⁴³ “Deus nulli est debitor quocumque modo” (William of Ockham, *In I Sent.*, d. 41, q. 1 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 4 (St. Bonaventure, NY: 1979), 608:16f.]).

⁴⁴ See Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, III, chap. 16; and Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 309 and 380–82.

⁴⁵ *Surnaturel*, 487–88. See also *Surnaturel*, 489; *Augustinianism*, 12; *Mystery*, chaps. 5 and 12; and Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 309–12.

⁴⁶ Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 26 (DS 3891).

⁴⁷ *Augustinianism*, 2.

⁴⁸ See *Augustinianism*, 16.

⁴⁹ *Augustinianism*, 29. See also de Lubac *Mystery*, 207.

an ontological claim: “Every demand must be banished.”⁵⁰ It is erroneous to admit any debt in either order, even if men were without sin.⁵¹ It cannot be emphasized enough how frequently de Lubac insists upon the point:

God could have refused to give himself to his creatures, just as he could have, and has, given himself. The gratuitousness of the supernatural order is true individually and totally. It is gratuitous in itself. It is gratuitous as far as each one of us is concerned. It is gratuitous in regard to what we see as preceding it, whether in time or in logic. Further—and this is what some of the explanations I have contested seem to me not to make clear—its gratuitousness remains always complete. It remains gratuitous in every hypothesis. It is for ever new. It remains gratuitous at every stage of preparation for the gift, and at every stage of the giving of it. No “disposition” in the creature can ever, in any way, bind the Creator.⁵²

Since de Lubac has identified the radical gratuity of grace in any order, he has identified it for concrete man, whose “supernatural finality is not hypothetical but a fact.”⁵³

At this point, we can appreciate de Lubac’s third accomplishment: Innately and unconditionally drawn to the vision, unable to achieve it or to claim it, man is radically dependent upon God. He must approach God as a humble recipient. As Nicholas Healy nicely puts it, the natural desire constitutes “a kind of created infrastructure that opens nature from within to receive and participate in the new and unimagined gift of deification,”⁵⁴ desired “only in the context of a friendship that is gratuitous.”⁵⁵ Created spirit is, as indicated above, radically unlike anything else; non-rational things may be able to achieve their ends by the powers given them, but man depends on the free offer of grace, since he is made to be dependent. This poverty marks his grandeur: “There can be no question here of any kind of *debitum naturae*, anything owed to nature, no suggestion of anything resembling a demand. Man’s longing for God is in a category of its own.”⁵⁶ It is a paradox: “Man cannot live except by the vision of God—and that vision of God depends totally on God’s good pleasure.”⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, no. 63, *Théologie* (Aubier, 1965), 47.

⁵¹ See *Mystery*, 183f.

⁵² *Mystery*, 236f. See also *Augustinianism*, 233; and *Mystery*, 84–86 and 130.

⁵³ *Mystery*, 62. See also “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 91–99.

⁵⁴ Healy, “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” 561.

⁵⁵ Healy, “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” 548.

⁵⁶ *Mystery*, 88.

⁵⁷ *Mystery*, 179; see also *ibid.*, 58, and “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 116.

A spirit who understood and accepted his dignity would not grow fearful in the face of this need.⁵⁸ He would not have it any other way, for union with God is not only beatitude and rest but *leitourgia*, love, and adoration.⁵⁹ A holy soul will bear itself before God humbly, stating that its wish is “Only yourself, oh Lord.”⁶⁰ Here, de Lubac places his finger on the pulse of the mystical life. He adds that such humility must be coupled with a renunciation of merit: The holy soul wishes to receive God only as a gift and not as a reward.⁶¹

In sum, theologies based on the “pure nature” hypothesis show little understanding of the dynamism and dignity of created spirit. Unlike all natural *things*, even animate, the intellectual being rises above itself spontaneously. It is not satisfied with that which it can grasp. The hypothesis of pure nature thus betrays created spirit, mechanically applying the axiom “every form has its proper and proportionate end” to created spirit. Yet, the axiom *can* apply only to non-intellectual beings.⁶² De Lubac identifies the relevance of grace by pointing to an innate and unconditional desire for the vision of God, yet, he maintains, despite man’s indigence owing to this exigence, grace is wholly gratuitous.

⁵⁸ See “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 110.

⁵⁹ See the conclusion to *Surnaturel*, and *Mystery*, chap. 12.

⁶⁰ In my opinion, this point holds good for both the natural and the supernatural orders. Of course, the “ecstasy” in the natural order would be infinitely inferior to that of charity. So, in either order, God would be loved for his own sake. Since this ecstatic love would be the ruling appetite, the very character of the desire for knowledge of him would bear this mark. On this, see Servais Pinckaers, “The Natural Desire to See God,” *Nova et Vetera* 8 (2010): 627–46.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade*, 319, 324, and 375–77, pointing especially to the conclusion of *Surnaturel*, to “Le mystère du surnaturel,” and to the concluding chapter of *Mystery*. This is undoubtedly the horizon within which to understand the imprecise remarks of Pope Benedict XVI on merit (see *Spe Salvi*, 35). Healy’s entire piece is bedewed with this precious insight.

⁶² De Lubac teaches that created spirit, as such, is open to something more than that which it can attain by natural powers, implying that anything short of realization of this openness would end in frustration. See *Augustinianism*, pp. 22, 169–79; and *Mystery*, pp. 31–32, 102–18, 130, and 136f; see also Healy, “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” *passim*. For his part, Dockx argues in effect that created spirit forms the single exception to the above-cited axiom because of the proportion, in the order of formal causality, of created intellect to the divine intellect: The intellect as intelligence, capable of the intelligible, is proportionate to the First Intelligible. Of course, its active power is entirely disproportionate, and in respect of this power, created spirit can be said to have its proportionate end.

Evaluation

De Lubac rightly saw that the modern crisis was rooted, in no small part, in the expulsion of the divine from nature. For all the good associated with his work in this regard, which is not to be denied (as, much less, is the splendid quality of his works on sundry other topics), it seems a number of questions can be raised as to the accuracy of the diagnosis and the efficacy of the solution. I contend that de Lubac's solution implies two problems and that his diagnosis is premised upon two weaknesses. But first, a statement of my own thesis and two critical notes on de Lubac.

The "hypothesis of pure nature" usually involves more than one claim. My proposal involves the following four claims. (1) In accordance with the principles of his nature, man (as man) has a connatural, attainable, adequate though not perfect, end. (2) This end does not share the formality of the object of graced desire. (3) In any divinely instituted order inclusive of man, there remains a role for this natural (though not necessarily ultimate) end, precisely in virtue of which (that is, in virtue of the backdrop of this in itself meaning-sustaining end) the call to grace and glory *can* be seen as gratuitous. (4) In an order in which God intends the deification of rational beings, the stuff of the natural end would obtain in the realization of the ultimate end, there being a twofold, hierarchically differentiated attainment of God, one generic and the other specific, one imperfect and the other perfect, the former subsumed by the latter, neither attainable without the other by any agent that has acted freely.

Next, a critical remark. De Lubac's insistence that no created spirit can be adequately satisfied with a proportionate end⁶³ is in tension⁶⁴ with his explicit admission, several times stated, of the legitimacy of the *hypothesis* of a purely natural state. That is, these positions are inconsistent—unless one swallows the implication that any purely natural state would be bereft of meaningful finality, which is to say, intelligibility.

Finally, a critical observation. There is "a fundamental ambiguity" in de Lubac's corpus with respect to the relation between the natural desire and human nature.⁶⁵ The relation is characterized in more than one way. At times, as indicated above, the desire is identified with the finality of *this* human nature or even with human nature itself.⁶⁶ At other times, *this*

⁶³ See note 39 above.

⁶⁴ See Malevez, "La gratuité du surnaturel," 563f., 681, n. 64, and 682f.

⁶⁵ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 329.

⁶⁶ "The desire to see Him is in us; it is we ourselves; yet, it is fulfilled (comblé) only by pure favor" (*Le mystère*, 209; see also *Mystery*, 62f.; *Augustinianism*, 142; "Le mystère du surnaturel," 111; *Surnaturel*, 483 and 488; and also Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade*, 272f.).

human nature is distinguished from the desire that God impresses upon it.⁶⁷ In his later work, de Lubac draws a threefold ontological (not temporal) distinction to underscore the double (we could say triple) gratuity: the creation of human persons, the imprinting of the desire for the supernatural, and the actual offer of grace and glory. According to this conception, (a) from the existence of God, no created thing follows of necessity; (b) from the creation of rational beings, the imprinting of the desire for the supernatural does not follow as something in any way necessary or due; and (c) from the imprinting of this desire, the offer of grace does not follow as something in any way necessary or due.⁶⁸ Of course, if the difference between two men with two different finalities is indeed a difference of species, then the gratuitous “movement” in stage (b) is not to the point.⁶⁹ David Braine helpfully steers us away from reading de Lubac as speaking with philosophical precision here. We should read him instead as presenting us with human *persons* in this concrete order of divine wisdom.⁷⁰ If we do this, we are left with the relevant double gratuity: the creation of a man with an innate, unconditional, and inefficacious desire for the supernatural and the divine call to grace and glory. These observations lead me to my questions regarding the implications of de Lubac’s solution.

⁶⁷ See *Surnaturel*, 486–87. Here, the desire could not be unless God intended to meet it.

⁶⁸ See *Mystery*, 80–81, 84–86, 102; see also Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 332–35; and David Braine, “The Debate between Henri de Lubac and His Critics,” *Nova et Vetera* 6 (2008): 583.

⁶⁹ Curiously, de Lubac seems to have recognized this in 1949 (see “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 101–3). Further, to the “three elements” to which he refers here (*ibid.*, 103) he adds, in *Mystery*, a fourth, a really existent “me” who has not been endowed with a natural desire for the supernatural. On the mature distinction, see Figura, *Der Annuf der Gnade*, 358–61.

⁷⁰ Thoughtfully representing de Lubac’s instincts and insights, Braine contends that whereas human nature is not specifically different under different orders of providence, yet human persons are radically different under different orders of providence. In virtue of what are they different? Feingold would maintain that they could be different only in virtue of having different essential or accidental principles. Not the former; therefore, the latter. Braine points not to either but to *relation*: Such persons have/are relations to God that are fundamentally different in this order of providence than they would have/be in a possible, purely natural one (see “The Debate,” 547–57 and 559–72). In fact, we could not be dealing with the same *persons*, since it is “ontologically impossible” to jump from one order to another (see Braine, “The Debate,” 571, 583, and 588). (Healy gets at the same thing [“desire of the human heart” (“Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” 546)] but maintains de Lubac’s terms [see, e.g., 542, 547, and 552].) For a response to this suggestion, see note 114 below.

Implications of de Lubac's Solution

Purely Natural Man Miserable?

Given the recourse he takes to shore up the gratuity of grace—his employment of Ockham's statement—does not Lubac imply that we by nature, even without sin, would be *beings toward misery*?⁷¹ The thrust of Ockham's passage, at least as de Lubac wields it, is that God in no way pays any debt.⁷² De Lubac in practice follows Ockham's *denial* that any creaturely exigence is such that it would be repugnant to the divine justice for God not to meet it. For Ockham, "If the finite goodness of a created nature does not constitute a *decisive* reason for God to love it enough to create it, the fact that certain conditions are required for its finite flourishing does not combine with divine self-love to generate an overriding reason to situate the nature in advantageous circumstances either."⁷³ Ockham takes his principle to its conclusion: God could in justice refuse eternal life to one whom he has made deform through charity. Moreover, God could damn such a one, even though he has actually kept God's precepts:

Punishment is owed [to the sinner] because God has thus ordained it. For, as God creates any creature by his mere will, so by his mere will he can do with his creature whatever pleases him. For, just as, if someone were always to love God and do all the works acceptable to God, God could annihilate that person without injury [to his justice], so after all those works God could give him, not eternal life but eternal punishment, without injury [to his justice]. And the reason is that God is no one's debtor, but whatever he does to us, he does out of mere grace.

⁷¹ Here, there is *some* similarity between Baius's position and de Lubac's, except that Baius responds by destroying the gratuity of grace. De Lubac's twofold response will appear in what follows.

⁷² For his part, Augustine scrupulously grounds pain in sin, whether original or actual, and he supposes a "middle" state between actual sin and righteousness, whereby those who die before the use of reason may be neither rewarded nor punished: "But that defect would not be worthy of condemnation unless it were voluntary" (Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, chap. 15, trans. Thomas Williams [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993], 100). For the grounding of blame in sin, see *ibid.*, chaps. 15–22. For the affirmation both of a life "intermediate between sin and right action" and also of a judgment "intermediate between punishment and reward" see *ibid.*, chap. 22, p. 116. Though it is reasonably said that man in the state of integral nature would not be free from suffering, yet (and this is my point), his final end would not be *per se* impossible of attainment.

⁷³ Marilyn McCord Adams, "Ockham on Will, Nature, and Morality" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul Vincent Spade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 264.

Therefore, by the fact that God does something, he has done it justly. For it is obvious that Christ never sinned, yet he was punished most vehemently unto death.”⁷⁴

It is unthinkable that de Lubac would wish to go as far as this.⁷⁵ Still, he articulates no other *viable* way, given his positive thesis, of identifying the gratuity of grace.⁷⁶

1. The Implication. So, de Lubac’s answer to the question concerning the gratuity of grace is that God owes nothing to anyone in any way.

⁷⁴ William of Ockham, *In IV Sent. (Reportatio)*, q. 5 (*Opera theologica*, vol. 7 [St. Bonaventure, NY: 1984], 55:11–21). See also William of Ockham, *In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1 (*Opera theologica*, vol. 3 [St. Bonaventure, NY: 1977], 452:1–5, 453:11–22, 454:12–17). One must hold this thesis “so that God may be necessitated by nothing to confer eternal life on anyone. Thus, this opinion greatly diverges from Pelagius’s error” (*In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 3, 454:26–455:2]). For Feingold’s criticism of de Lubac on this point, see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 377–84.

⁷⁵ See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 381f.

⁷⁶ Figura adverts to this solution to the difficulty presented by a natural desire for the supernatural (see *Der Anruf der Gnade*, 378f; see also 363 and 368). Still, he prefers to consider de Lubac as approaching the question from the top down (see note 39 above). Paradoxically, de Lubac criticizes the theory of pure nature as having its genesis in voluntarism (see *Augustinianism*, 109 and 111; *Surnaturel*, 169f.; and Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 297–99 and 339–43). Henri Rondet, to whom de Lubac refers, also ascribes the “separation” of glory from nature to the birth of voluntarism. However, significantly, Rondet locates the key to this story in the loss of the place of *debitum*: The connection between *grace* and glory was gradually attenuated, until William of Ockham sundered it (see William of Ockham, *In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 3, pp. 452–56], and *In IV Sent.*, q. 11 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 7, 207:11–22]; see Henri Rondet, *Gratia Christi: Essai d’histoire du dogme et de théologie dogmatique* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1948], 240–46; and Armand Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in the Light of Its Principles*, no. 133, Studies and Texts [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999], 261f.). Contrary to what I am proposing here, Laurence Renault argues that it was Ockham who first introduced into theology the philosophical principle that one can have a natural desire only for that for which one has a capacity (see Laurence Renault, “William of Ockham and the Distinction between Nature and Supernature,” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 191–202). Lawrence Feingold, in his review of the collection edited by Bonino (*The Thomist* 74 [2010]: 632–36), points out a number of deficits in Renault’s analysis, such as his failure to draw an adequate distinction between Scotus and Thomas. I would note, further, that Renault’s presentation of Thomas lacks contour. Most importantly, it is Ockham’s denial of any *debitum* whatsoever that really represents the innovation, and this denial is in spirit diametrically opposed to the thesis of a proportion between desire and capacity which Renault traces to Ockham as to its font.

Now, if this answer is viable, there is a possible order in which the following obtain: (1) created persons have an innate, unconditional, and inefficacious desire for the supernatural vision of God; (2) the everlasting frustration of their desire is identical to that which constitutes the suffering of the damned; (3) these persons actually do obey the natural law; yet (4) God without injustice or failure in wisdom never meets this desire. The net result of such a situation would be an innocent human being suffering the pain of the damned. It is of some solace that de Lubac avows that truly innocent suffering would not be a “penalty.”⁷⁷ Still, would it not be ontological frustration of an absolute desire?⁷⁸ Thomas, by contrast, teaches, “That which is according to nature can be called neither punishment nor evil, for that which is natural for each thing is in every case fitting for it.”⁷⁹ Hence, for Aquinas, the lack of vision for one who died in a purely natural state would not constitute a punishment: “It is one thing not to be bound to have something [i.e., not to be bound to be in some condition, namely, the condition of *not having* the beatific vision], which does not have the character of punishment but of defect only; it is another thing to be bound not to have it [i.e., to be bound not to have the beatific vision], which has the character of punishment.”⁸⁰ We should be precise about what Thomas means: The lack of vision for a man in a purely natural state (a) would not be “inflicted” by judicial order on account of guilt, as is absence of vision for the damned, and also (b) would not “afflict.” How, on de Lubac’s principles, could one establish the non-afflicting character of the loss of vision for any innocent human, short of taking recourse in grace, which is not owed, or in some ad hoc solution?

Turning to the concrete order, one may ask how de Lubac’s thesis could, without demanding grace, establish the non-afflicting character of the loss of vision for someone in our order who died before acting freely.⁸¹ Before pursuing this question, I must acknowledge a few things. (a1) The actual fate of unbaptized, deceased infants is one thing; (a2) the longstanding doctrinal permissibility of *limbus puerorum* is another; and (a3) its intellectual integrity is yet another.

⁷⁷ See *Surnaturel*, 456.

⁷⁸ On the absolute desire, see *Surnaturel*, 484. On the ontological frustration, see Steven Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature as a Theonomic Principle: Reflections on the Nature/Grace Controversy,” *Nova et Vetera* 5 (2007): 138.

⁷⁹ *ST* I–II, q. 85, a. 6, sc 2.

⁸⁰ *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 15.

⁸¹ Hence, the precipitous movement to forbid theories of Limbo.

Regarding (a1), the contemporary solution favors a hidden communication of grace, constituting a respectable and hope-filled solution *provided* it preserves the gratuity of grace and does not neglect the ordinary means of its communication. All should recognize the second (a2) unless some magisterial statement to the contrary settles the matter. With Thomas, I will be arguing for the third (a3). (b) The theological labor towards the theory of *limbus puerorum* was convoluted and controverted. One who would assess these labor pains cannot ignore the generally agreed historical observation that the distinction between the natural and supernatural realms was not conceptually established until Philip the Chancellor (†1236).

The difficulty facing us is this. Some humans die before being capable of actual fault, though, as we know by faith, each is culpable of original guilt upon ensoulment. Clearly, participation in original guilt merits loss of vision, loss of that exceeding good in no way due to nature. However, would it be fitting for beings innocent as to personal fault to be tormented? And would they not be tormented if they suffered either pain of sense or anguish at the pain of loss?

In his career, Thomas offered two ways of resolving the difficulty concerning the fate of infants who die without baptism. In his early work, he contended that infants in limbo are not afflicted because their desire to see God remains an imperfect will or *velleitas*.⁸² Being just and wise, such separated souls *virtuously* moderate their desire according to that true insight in the Stoic ethic.⁸³ Further, they share in divine goods in a natural way, and in this sharing they even rejoice.⁸⁴ Though not described as “beatitude,” the end causative of such joy would be tantamount to a post-terrestrial heightening of what Thomas elsewhere describes as the beatitude proportionate to human capacity. Here in his commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences*, Thomas situates this natural rest within a horizon of wonder emerging from a crowning human desire for knowledge of the essence of God.

In *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, Thomas presents a different solution. The souls of departed, unbaptized infants do not desire the supernatural

⁸² See *In II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, obj. 2 and ad 2. For some of Feingold’s remarks on the *limbus puerorum*, see his *The Natural Desire to See God*, 203, 213, 228, 247–50, 350–53, and 368. Maritain dislikes the term “velleity” but regards the desire as conditional (see Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God*, trans. Peter O’Reilly [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954], 98f.). On *velleitas* in this connection, see Bonino, “Theory of Limbo,” 135–37.

⁸³ See Bonino, “The Theory of Limbo,” 132–34. Cf. *Mystery*, 128, 195f.; and *Surnaturel*, 484–91.

⁸⁴ See *In II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2 and ad 5.

vision of God because they have no idea of God under this formality. *Although punished*, they would not be afflicted.⁸⁵ They “do not lack the natural knowledge that the separated soul by its nature deserves.” And what is such knowledge? “It belongs to natural cognition that the soul know that it is created for happiness, and that happiness consists in the attainment of the perfect good.” Yet, of course, that good is not identical with God unveiled in vision; of this, the deceased infants have no clue.⁸⁶ Thomas makes no appeal, even in the concrete order, to preternatural gifts preserving such infants from possible awareness of such a surpassing end.⁸⁷

Clearly, Thomas’s opinion has developed. How shall we understand this development? I would suggest that key features of both solutions can stand together, the former being taken up and nuanced by the latter. My contention here rests upon another claim, namely, that Aquinas’s principles lead one to distinguish the species of the natural end from the species of the supernatural end.⁸⁸ (Towards the end of

⁸⁵ See *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3.

⁸⁶ *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3 (Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 241). Aquinas is indeed describing such infants (a) not only as punished and unfortunate in light of their call, but (b) as not afflicted by this punishment because of their ignorance of their de facto end, and also (c) by implication, even naturally blessed. By contrast, see Braine, “The Debate,” 561. There is a crucial distinction between actual and original sin at stake here. Bonino stresses that this natural beatitude is not a separate beatitude from supernatural beatitude. It is a generic, unspecified form of fulfillment, objectively intermediate between the pilgrim state and ultimate beatitude, the supernatural vision (Bonino, “Theory of Limbo,” 142f.). I would stress a distinction of formal objects as a way of precisising the distinction Bonino rightly draws here. Bonino makes a good case for his reading in light of *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, ad 3, which implicitly locates the “penal” character of the loss of vision in its contrareity to the natural desire. Whereas de Lubac reads such desire as an urgent pressure immediately directed towards the supernatural, Bonino by contrast upholds the relative sufficiency of the “stuff” naturally attainable (the ‘certain imperfect beatitude’) and denies that we are immediately ordered to the vision (see Bonino, “Theory of Limbo,” 145).

⁸⁷ Bonino describes such solutions as “extrinsicist” (Bonino, “Theory of Limbo,” 131f.). By contrast, Braine seems to teach the necessity of such gifts *even* in a purely natural order (see Braine, “The Debate,” 566).

⁸⁸ One can also discern this in Thomas’s corpus. The formal object of the utmost yearning of the human heart—an understanding of the essence of the first cause—is different from that of the desire rooted in grace. Thomas alludes to the distinction of formal objects in various places (see, e.g., *ST I-II*, q. 5, a. 5, ad 3; *De caritate*, a. 2, ad 16, and a. 9; see also Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 138, 140–41, 145–47, 154). The ground of this distinction is the principle that different species have different ends, each species having its connatural end (see *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 6, ad 5; *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 2; *Quaestio disputata De*

this essay, I will discuss the integral unity of both in the concrete order.) The *De malo* references this distinction: These souls can have no clue about God as he is disclosed through faith and vision, for these disclosures are of a different kind (formality) than that to which nature gives them access. So, the second solution stands. On the other hand, knowledge of the essence of the first cause is a *desideratum*, although it must be justly moderated while allowed to inspire a wonder guiding the dynamic progression of natural beatitude's "felicity in motion." Thus, the first solution stands.⁸⁹

Aquinas has his ways out of the horrible test case posed above. De Lubac, however, is reticent to grapple with it: "If it were absolutely

anima, a. 7, obj. 10 and ad 10; ScG III, chap. 150, par. 5; ST I, q. 62, a. 6, ad 3; and ST I q. 75, a. 7, obj. 1 and ad 1). The *finis proximus* is not called *proximus* because any order must have direction to the *finis ultimus supernaturalis* but because in the present order the two are in play in a hierarchically ordered manner that allows the asymmetrical compenetration of both without confusion (see note 216 below). Now, since human reason cannot fathom the formality of supernatural beatitude, faith is necessary, so that one may be made aware of the goods of grace and glory (see ST II–II, q. 4, a. 7). Since the supernatural good is arduous of attainment, because of sin and because of its infinitely surpassing character, hope also is required for there to be a completed, unconditioned movement of the appetite (see *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 5; *ibid.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 3, q1a 1; ScG III, chap. 153, par. 5; and ST I–II, q. 40, a. 1, ad 3; recently treating this topic with relevance to the concrete order, and so treating not natural but divine hope, is Hütter, "Natural Desire," 573–77). So, without hope, even faith would not beget a movement of man towards the vision (*In III Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 5, q1a 4, ad 2 [Mandonnet, p. 847, par. 163]). Of course, there can be an inchoate desire for what is possible or not possible (see *De virtutibus*, q. 4, a. 1, and *Compendium theologiae* II, chap. 7). Yet, one can choose to love only that which is possible of attainment (see *In IV Sent.*, d. 14, q. 1, a. 2, q1a 2), for choice regards a completed appetitive act. Desire for what is impossible remains incomplete or conditioned; it is a *velleitas* (see *In II Sent.*, d. 22, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1) but not necessarily a "superficial" one (cf. *Supernaturel*, 433). Since the appetite is not inclined naturally to a good that is out of proportion with it, the supernatural end is not naturally desired (see *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 7). Finally, if one is to tend to the supernatural good as is befitting a citizen, just as by nature one tends to the *finis ultimus cui* (see note 177 below), one requires charity (see *De caritate*, a. 2). In certain texts, Thomas compactly treats these considerations together (see *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, q1a 3, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2; *ibid.*, q. 27, a. 2; ScG III, chap. 150, par. 5; *Super I Cor*, chap. 13, lect. 4, par. 806; *Super II Cor*, chap. 5, lect. 2, par. 160; *De spe*, a. 8, ad 8; ST I, q. 62, aa. 1–2; ST I–II, q. 62, aa. 1–3). For a brief discussion of de Lubac's handling of these texts, see note 95 below.

⁸⁹ Maritain marvelously describes the desire (see Maritain, *Approaches*, 97–100). Showing the theologically scientific relevance of the theory of *limbus puerorum* is M.-R. Gagnebet, "L'amour naturel de Dieu chez saint Thomas et ses contemporains II," *Revue thomiste* 49 (1949): 68–70.

necessary—though the attentive reader will have grasped by now that I do not think it so—to try to imagine the essential activity of a created spirit to whom God did not will to give any access to his own joy . . . ”⁹⁰ Without counting the cost to his theory, de Lubac laments that the only “end” attainable by such a being would be incessant “circling” around an unknown God. Yet, since any man with our concrete natural desire could have only a supernatural finality,⁹¹ this “not attractive” circling would be vanity.⁹² “There must of necessity be some ultimate goal when one will finally be wholly in act. Otherwise the journey can only be one of despair. The spirit which never reaches its goal, the vision of God, has failed to achieve its destiny.”⁹³ Despair!

It must be kept squarely in mind that de Lubac is speaking not merely of sinful men but of any man that would share our nature without grace. Indeed, if he remains consistent to his teaching on created spirit *as such*, he is speaking of any possible created spirit, for he often insists that created spirit can have no natural and theo-centric end,⁹⁴ that to it there corresponds no natural finality.⁹⁵ Consequently,

⁹⁰ *Mystery*, 203. For his earlier consideration of this terrible end, see *Surnaturel*, 459f.

⁹¹ See note 39 above.

⁹² See *Mystery*, 204.

⁹³ *Mystery*, 204. Elsewhere, de Lubac charges that to fear the spirit’s natural and inevitable restlessness is to lack faith (“Le mystère du surnaturel,” 110).

⁹⁴ See *Surnaturel*, 240–57 (in the context of the chapter), and 451–60. See also notes 16–19.

⁹⁵ See note 39 above. Thomas’s numerous texts on the *duplex hominis beatitudo* seem ripe material for a rejoinder (see Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 137 and 141; and Dockx, “Du désir naturel de voir l’essence divine,” 51). Yet, has the second set of texts been neglected? It has not. (1) Dockx, approaching the matter with speculative vigor, aims to deal with the *principles* underlying any and all of these texts (see note 31 above). (2) Laporta also treats the “two sets” of texts: “The entire effort of this work was to show that Thomas, by using the terms ‘natural appetite’, ‘natural desire’, etc., does not usually speak of a conscious, psychological activity but of the unalterable finality of every created nature” (Jorge Laporta, “Pour trouver le sens exact des termes *appetitus naturalis*, *desiderium naturale*, *amor naturalis*, etc. chez Thomas d’Aquin,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 40 [1973]: 92). Laporta specifies, with regard to humans, that Thomas speaks now of natural desire according to the one true ultimate end of any man (beatific vision) and now of the natural desire from the point of view of what is attainable by natural powers (the end proportionate to the agent intellect, ultimately intellectual activity when freed from the need for phantasms—contemplation of separate substances). (3) Finally, de Lubac also addresses these texts, as Healy rightly notes (see “Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” 553–57). One way in which de Lubac treats these texts is that he discerns therein three different comparisons between

de Lubac must choose one of the following strained readings of Pius XII's teaching. Either (a) the Pope's teaching affirms the possibility of some order of intellectual creatures *without* an innate desire for vision; thus read, the teaching would be (for de Lubac) totally irrelevant for identifying gratuity in the concrete order.⁹⁶ But, to the contrary, the Pope's teaching includes the causal reason: Those destroy the gratuity of grace *when/since* they thus deny this possibility. Or (b) Pius affirms that God could create intellectual creatures with such a desire yet without efficaciously ordering them to the vision. Read thus, *Humani Generis* implies as really possible a meaningless world. Is either of these readings *conveniens*?

It is instructive, in relation to Pius's teaching, to observe the difference between de Lubac and Rahner on the question of what is "due." In *Mystery*, de Lubac calls Rahner to witness for him a couple of times. De Lubac refers to the desire ever evoked by the supernatural existential as similar to what he means by natural desire.⁹⁷ He then cites approvingly Rahner's conclusion regarding this existential: "The loss of a good which is possible but not the object of an ontological ordination prior to free endeavor (*voluntas ut res*) can only be felt as a painful evil when the loser wills it *freely*."⁹⁸ For both theologians, this taut passage is to be interpreted as not descriptive of our desire for God. Both claim that man as he presently exists would feel everlasting

perfect and imperfect beatitude: evening knowledge—morning knowledge; that natural knowledge that one will also enjoy while glorified—vision of God; and merely terrestrial knowledge of God—vision of God. For this breakdown, see *Surnaturel*, 451–65, and "Duplex," 290–99. It is to be admitted that Thomas quite often pits a pilgrim beatitude—whether natural or supernatural or both—against the heavenly beatitude. It is not valid to conclude that therefore his *principles* do not admit a natural, adequate but imperfect, post-terrestrial, and *theo-centric* end (see note 177 below). However much one points to the space de Lubac leaves for the traces of natural beatitude in the one true beatitude (see, e.g., Healy, 553ff. and 562–64), these do not amount to an intelligibility—constituting admission. Another way de Lubac resolves the difficulty imposed by these texts is having recourse to the notion of an "inefficacious" desire (which he understands to be absolute) for the supernatural (for references to de Lubac, see note 40 above; for a response, see note 153 below).

⁹⁶ See, e.g., Healy, "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," 551f.; and Mansini, "The Abiding Theological Significance of Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel*," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 605.

⁹⁷ See *Mystery*, 55, n. 4.

⁹⁸ *Mystery*, 57; citing Karl Rahner, "The Relationship Between Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, 312, n. 1. Rahner's essay is a development of his initial response to the following anonymous article: D. "Ein Weg zur Bestimmung des Verhältnisses von Natur und Gnade," *Orientierung* 14 (1950): 138–41.

deprivation of vision as painful, even should the loss not be occasioned by a conscious, free act.⁹⁹ Still, the thesis de Lubac hopes to exact from this passage in *Mystery* is quite other than Rahner's meaning. Rahner roundly criticizes the description of the desire for the supernatural as being natural or constitutive, since such a characteristic would make grace due to concrete man.¹⁰⁰ Why? Presumably, Rahner finds a meaningless universe impossible. On at least three counts do these theologians differ. (1) For Rahner, the abiding supernatural existential, being neither grace nor an essential human principle, could not touch a race of innocent people without the divine commitment actually to offer grace. These would be two aspects of a single gratuity (ontologically) *additional* to the gratuity of creation.¹⁰¹ For de Lubac, the desire belongs to nature. (2) Rahner holds that the silent waiting that man as man would live would constitute a meaningful existence, genuine fulfillment within a horizon of wonder.¹⁰² So, for Rahner, man as such (prescinding from sin) would be intelligible and not vain without grace.¹⁰³ As is implied by de Lubac's thesis,

⁹⁹ The actual fate of infants dying without baptism is tangential to the point I am making.

¹⁰⁰ See Rahner, "Relationship," 303–15. Malevez sums up the trenchant critique well: "Without doubt, here as well, one can say that God owes it to himself to grant [grace] to us, but this does not remove the necessity of admitting that he also owes it to us to grant us this grace. Once his decree to create is supposed, he must grant to man himself a destiny without which his nature is neither intelligible, nor definable, nor possible" ("La gratuité du surnaturel," 576). For an excellent treatment, see David Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential," *Theological Studies* 65 (2004): 98–104 and 111–14.

¹⁰¹ As Coffey argues, the existential is the beginning of the offer of grace. Grounded in God's intention to give himself to man, it can be said to constitute the penultimate *material* disposition in man for divine indwelling, sanctifying grace being the ultimate disposition already aligned with the quasi-formal causality of indwelling (see Coffey, "The Whole Rahner," 115).

¹⁰² "Perceiving God's silence is also an answer that makes the listening meaningful" (Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, trans. Joseph Donceel [New York: Continuum, 1994], 151; see also 69–73). Coffey elaborates this underdeveloped but discernible element in Rahner's thought (see Coffey, "The Whole Rahner," 111–13).

¹⁰³ Of course, one may ask two questions regarding Rahner's thought about the state of pure nature. First, need we be as skeptical as he about arriving at some knowledge of what man would be like were he in that state (see Malevez, "La gratuité du surnaturel," 687–89)? Second, does what Rahner allows himself, by transcendental analysis, to describe man to be correspond to an intelligible form of existence? Rahner (see *Hearer*, chap. 2) to a certain extent makes man simply an embodied spirit who is waiting for a possible, historically delivered "word" from God. The indication that the human texture is (also) historical is well taken,

man as such (prescinding from sin) would be utterly meaningless and vain without grace. (3) Granted, for both Rahner and de Lubac, the vision is, in the concrete order, the object of an ontological ordination that marks every single spirit prior to free endeavor. For both, the permanent lack of the vision could not but be felt as the pain of the damned, unless one took refuge in ad hoc solutions, which both theologians seem to eschew. Notwithstanding this agreement, for Rahner, any person afflicted by the permanent lack of supernatural beatitude would have to be guilty of at least original sin. For de Lubac, a person so afflicted could be entirely innocent.

There is thus a terrible poignancy in de Lubac's Pascalian exclamation, "The inborn grandeur and wretchedness of the spiritual creature!"¹⁰⁴ Although sin and grace magnify it, this exclamation stands apart from sin, for man's condition is a "mysterious lameness, due *not merely* to sin, *but primarily* and *more fundamentally* to being a creature made out of nothing which, astoundingly, touches God."¹⁰⁵ The lameness of which he speaks is not reducible to the absolute dependence of every created being upon God, both directly and through the mediation of interactive secondary causes pertinent to that order. It is a lameness vis-à-vis an end specifically supernatural, the only end one desires *by nature* and the very one unattainable except by a divine condescension of a specifically different sort than that pertinent to the order "already" constituted.¹⁰⁶ Precisely insofar as de Lubac insists on the radically special character of spiritual "nature"—that which has no proportionate end—he unwittingly conjures up this specter of a naturally miserable man, describing it as "the paradox itself of human nature (or, rather, of created spirit)."¹⁰⁷

yet the vector of ultimate human inquiry, it seems to me, is rather vertical than horizontal. The eros towards the universal ultimately discovers (in principle, that is) angelic substances, spiritual persons. Further, this eros drives towards the discovery and contemplation of the divine being, which must most of all be personal. Hence, the movement towards the universal transcends into a movement towards non-material individuals and ultimately the infinite individual. The natural human *telos* is quasi-angelic. Both the inquiry and the life requisite thereto require friendship, as does the full flowering of that end.

¹⁰⁴ *Augustinianism*, 174.

¹⁰⁵ *Mystery*, 113–14, emphases mine.

¹⁰⁶ The implications of de Lubac's thought match his own description of Gregory of Valencia's thought (see *Augustinianism*, 111).

¹⁰⁷ *Surnaturel*, 456. Dockx, it seems, would also leave any innocent and non-predestinate persons in this pickle (see Dockx, "Du désir naturel de voir l'essence divine," 93). De Lubac, however, finds the situation "healthy" ("Le mystère du surnaturel," 110). Alasdair MacIntyre describes Aquinas's reading of Aristotle in similar terms

2. **Alternative Redeeming Strategies for de Lubac.** The irrationality of the above implication appears to have moved de Lubac, at times, to discover alternative solutions. First, he sometimes entertains an opposite extreme, stepping out from his voluntaristic shelter for the gratuity of grace and approaching the logic of neo-Platonic emanation and return: “As a result—at least so it seems—how could the just and good God frustrate me, if it were not I who by my own fault turned myself away from him freely?”¹⁰⁸

Second, sometimes he finds shelter by conceiving the gratuity “from above down.”¹⁰⁹ It is not the desire that binds God, but God who freely decides to call man, and thus creates him with this innate desire: “If there is in our nature a desire to see God, this cannot be except because God wants for us this supernatural end which consists in the vision.” Because God wills the vision for us unceasingly, he unceasingly gives us this desire so that “this desire is nothing else than his call.”¹¹⁰ This line of thought from *Surnaturel* is later made more circumspect. The desire may cautiously be read as a sign of grace: “But, one may perhaps say, it remains true none the less that once such a desire exists in the creature it becomes the sign, not merely of

(see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990], 137f.). MacIntyre, as Aquinas, is interested in the actual order of things. His contention is thus accurate that one who discovers the inadequacy of any humanly attainable end must wash ashore in a Hobbesian dispersement of soul and quest for power. My point is that if this description is taken to be an accurate description of homo sapiens, then any divine institution of rational nature without grace must be unintelligible.

¹⁰⁸ *Le mystère*, 80. See also “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 91. On the neo-Platonic association, see Mansini, “*Surnaturel*,” 608f.

¹⁰⁹ See Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade*, 318–19, 323–27, 364–66, and 373f.; and Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 563 and 569–71. Balthasar once exercised this strategy: see Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Who Is Man?” in *Spirit and Institution*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), vol. 4 of *Explorations in Theology*, 25f.

¹¹⁰ *Surnaturel*, 486f.; see the entire Conclusion. See also “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 117. S. Dockx’s solution to the dilemma is the same: It is not that God is obliged but that he is wise in all his works (see Dockx, “Du désir naturel de voir l’essence divine,” 87). The question is begged. Utilizing *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1, Dockx contends that even when considered as sinner, “Man cannot be made in vain” (88). Thomas does not say that sinful man cannot be made in vain. He says, “In order that he not be made frustrated and in vain,” God intended a redeemer. God could, however, have left all men in sin forever; it would be they who were in vain, not he who was unwise. Rahner’s critique of D. (“Ein Weg zur Bestimmung des Verhältnisses”) is applicable to Dockx’s article as well (see note 100 above).

a possible gift from God, but of a certain gift. It is the evidence of a promise, inscribed and recognized in the being's very self."¹¹¹ The certainty of the sign's reference remains, even though recognition of this desire and its reference requires revelation.¹¹²

As has been abundantly noted by de Lubac's critics, the first strategy undermines the gratuity of grace.¹¹³ Neither does the "from above down" approach constitute an answer. Effectively, the "above down" approach identifies only a single gratuity, the divine freedom to create or not to create a world in which intellectual creatures innately desire him and by grace can attain him. The approach is praiseworthy in its focus on the concrete. And in the concrete order, nature is for grace just as the end is first in the order of intention. Notwithstanding, we have here no identification of a double gratuity because we have here no discerning metaphysical gaze on the principles responsible for created effects.¹¹⁴ Thus, the approach begs the

¹¹¹ *Mystery*, 207. See also *Mystery*, 25, and *Le mystère*, 81: "Ma finalité, dont ce désir est l'expression. . ." Again, it is a *certain sign* but only because God determines in advance to give himself freely (see "Le mystère du surnaturel," 117). See also *Surnaturel*, 467, 469, and 486–88; and Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 301f. and 305–7. When arguing thus, de Lubac avows *not* to say, with Edmund Brisbois, "There is naturally in the human will a desire for the divine vision, independent of man's vocation to his supernatural destiny" (Edmund Brisbois, "Le désir de voir Dieu et la métaphysique du vouloir selon saint Thomas," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 63 [1936]: 1113). Rather, for de Lubac, the desire is radically grounded in the elevation of man, as inchoately supernatural (see *Mystery*, 101–2). In the context of de Lubac's argument, this passage from Brisbois affirms an innate and overwhelming desire, conscious or no, regardless of the call to deification. Brisbois in fact presents a subtle thesis: There is an ontological *élan* to the beatific vision, short of the call to deification, but such an *élan* would be compatible with a psychological rest short of the vision, for, in order that it may come to act, it must be awoken by the divine call (see Brisbois, "Le désir de voir Dieu," 1108f.).

¹¹² This change in de Lubac's thought concerning the demonstrative value of the desire does not touch the issue of gratuity (see *Surnaturel*, 468–71; "Le mystère du surnaturel," 117–19; and *Mystery*, 208).

¹¹³ Texts such as these have worried some of his critics (see, e.g., Rahner, "Relationship," 304–13; Malevez, "La gratuité du surnaturel," 681f.; Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 369f., 383f., 389–92, and 428; and Mansini, "Surnaturel," 605–7). I include Rahner because he recognized de Lubac's thesis as what is at stake in the article by "D." cited in note 98 above (see Coffey, "The Whole Rahner"). Malevez (see 673–75) criticizes Hans Urs von Balthasar for begging the question as well. These criticisms are pertinent to certain drifts in contemporary theology that seek support in some elements of de Lubac's thesis.

¹¹⁴ I think Braine's thoughtful intervention that de Lubac meant to speak of *persons* and not of *natures* (see note 70 above) also falls prey to this neglect. The intervention cannot here be given a response sufficient to do it justice. I would simply

question: Could God constitute a man with this innate and inefficacious desire and yet not call him to glory?¹¹⁵ Clearly, this approach cannot identify the requisite gratuity of grace.¹¹⁶

raise one question. On what is the relation founded? There must always be a foundation of a relation that is real. In the persons of the Trinity, this "foundation" is the opposed relations themselves, which subsist. The real relation that is the status "created" arises on account of the real subsistence of dependent being. So, does not the mere claim that relation pertains to "person" as providentially ordered by God beg the question? Why does not Braine intelligibly trace this relation to a distinct intrinsic foundation? For, if the essential and accidental principles in two persons are identically the same (specifically), but the orders of providence are supposedly distinct, of what is one speaking when one appeals to "relation"? Clearly, the category "created" would belong to each person. So, what is the foundation of the distinctive relation in the special order? (The mandate to find a foundation is not merely Thomistic; see Augustine, *De Trinitate*, V, chaps. 3 and 4.) So it would seem, Braine is speaking of a radical divine tempering of the existential situation. But if we follow this thought out, are we not led back either to Rahner's tracks (see text below) or to de Lubac's (imprecise but at least intelligibly *grounded*) tracks? For his part, Mansini also brings the distinction between nature and person into play here. We are utterly different as persons, although we are the same as having the same human nature. So far, he would seem to be in agreement with Braine. I strongly suspect, however, that Mansini would not be reluctant to trace that difference metaphysically to super-added principles, for he does not hesitate to indicate as principles of the differences our own human actions. These indeed make us radically different: Two roads diverged . . . (see "*Surnaturel*," 606f.).

¹¹⁵ This is the response necessary to accusations of "essentialism," etc. (see Malevez, "La gratuité du surnaturel," 567f. and 682f.). A frequent critic of essentialism, Lonergan offered a reflection on the natural desire in 1949 (Bernard Lonergan, "The Natural Desire to See God," in *Collection*, vol. 4, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988], 81–91). Here, Lonergan contends for the priority of world order to distinct essences. Essences, he maintains, function as quiddities of parts of possible world orders; what comes first is world order; in light of some world order, certain essences would be fitting. This view of things in mind, Lonergan dismisses the premises of what he labels "essentialism" and "closed conceptualism." Essentialists assume that possible world orders emerge only in light of possible essences, world order consisting in various possible and contingent nexuses among the selection of possible essences. Thus, essentialists determine certain limits of world orders in light of preconceived notions of essences. Accept these assumptions, Lonergan maintains, and one can argue (a) for the possibility of an order without grace and (b) that the location of the dual gratuity of grace rests against the backdrop of a possibly satisfying natural beatitude. Reject these assumptions and one can still argue for (a) but not for (b). In rejecting (b), Lonergan begs the question of how to establish the special gratuity of grace. Of course, the divine will is constituted by one act. The issue is that if grace is to be doubly gratuitous it must be possible for God not to offer grace to men such as we (even prescinding from sin). Further, we might ask Lonergan

Still, for both difficulties, we should consider what de Lubac more deeply wishes to affirm.¹¹⁷ Various lines of his thought offer the elements for three irreducibly distinct scenarios one might deduce from his principles: (1) The desire cannot be in man except as inchoately supernatural, instilled only with the view to deification; (2) The desire can be instilled without such a view; and (3) The desire is entirely natural but, because a meaningless world seems repugnant to God's justice, God owes it to himself to deify man. If (1), the desire must be a certain sign of the call, cannot be entirely natural, and is the

what is "ordered" if "order" is intelligibly first? And if we ask this question, we run into the question of finality, since essence and finality are necessarily correlative.

On the other hand, Lonergan recognizes a natural beatitude that, albeit imperfect, "excludes all sorrow, all regret, all wishing that things were otherwise" ("Natural Desire," 87). One grants Lonergan the intellect's desire to know, but the requirements for the intelligibility of a world order and the gratuity of grace seem to make of natural beatitude something other than sheer "paradox." Instructive is his later thought. Still holding the thesis of a natural desire to see God, Lonergan produced the following in 1955. This piece is remotely similar to Dockx's 1964 piece, though it seems sustainable in those of its elements that leave in tact the stability of a purely natural end: Bernard Lonergan, "Excursus: The Natural Desire of the Intellect," in *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 645–59. In this piece, he calls on (b) to identify the gratuity of grace (see "Excursus," 653). Apparently, unlike de Lubac, Lonergan saw *Humani Generis* as apropos. In addition, in this piece, he *denies* that the lack of satisfaction of the full scope of the desire to know must result in no imperfect beatitude. Indeed, he states, "We deny that naturally speaking the blessed would not have everything they want. We concede, however, that they would not have everything that the divine omnipotence could bestow upon them" (*ibid.*, 657). For a good treatment of the difficulties of Lonergan's several forays into this question, see Guy Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire in the Light of Feingold," *Nova et Vetera* 5 (2007): 185–98.

¹¹⁶ See Bishop André-Mutien Léonard, "The Theological Necessity of the Pure Nature Concept," in *Supernatural: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 325f.

¹¹⁷ In what follows, I agree with Braine and Healy that the common criticism of de Lubac (see note 113 above) involves failure to appreciate de Lubac's meaning (see Braine, "The Debate," 573f. and 583f.; and Healy, "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," 536, 540–42, 547f., 553, and 561–64). As I see it, his critics find the possible world (enunciated in the text above) to be so unintelligible (see Healy, 544) that they suppose de Lubac could not have held it to be possible; thus, they conclude, he implicitly held that grace must be given. In truth, for de Lubac, insofar as God is covenantally beneficent, yes; insofar as he is simply just, no. De Lubac, and also Braine and Healy, thus identify the gratuity of grace, but de Lubac, and also Braine and Healy, do this at the cost (1) of failing to specify the specific gratuity of grace and (2) of losing the intelligibility of the natural order. See also note 175 below.

beginning of the end. De Lubac sometimes says as much. If (2), the desire is no infallible sign, and there is a possible order in which man is naturally miserable. De Lubac implies and sometimes states as much.¹¹⁸ If (3), grace must be given to one who commits no fault. De Lubac sometimes says as much. He holds distinctly each of these positions in concert with his laudable aim. In my opinion, he holds the first and the third positions for reasons he finds *conveniens*,¹¹⁹ while his default doctrinal position is the second, which implies as possible a naturally miserable order in which everything is so completely “grace” that one cannot account for the special entitative gratuity of deification.¹²⁰ Required for such precision would be taking cognizance of what is due to some creature (*debitum*) on the presupposition of a given order.¹²¹ I now proceed to sketch this proposal.

3. **Thomas on *debitum naturae* (what is due to nature).** Concerning the *debitum naturae*, there is a *via media* between naturalism and voluntarism,¹²² one that avoids the Scylla of God as debtor and the Charybdis of the divine as absolutely arbitrary (howsoever actually beneficent): “Although God is not a debtor to any creature, yet there can be something due to the creature, that, namely, which is required for it to imitate the exemplar of divine wisdom.”¹²³ It is the very character of justice that implies debt,¹²⁴ and debt implies “a certain order of exigence or necessity of something to that to which it is ordered.”¹²⁵ God renders

¹¹⁸ See *Mystery*, 31, 84, 179, 183, and 203f.

¹¹⁹ I thus disagree with the common diagnosis (see note 113 above) and agree with Braine (see note 117 above). If he sticks to his logic, de Lubac would have no difficulty describing the possible world taught by Pius XII as either totally irrelevant or, if relevant to us, lacking “intelligibility.” The early de Lubac would have no difficulty finding such a world also to be lacking “goodness” (cf. Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 682).

¹²⁰ See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 381f. That the gratuity regards the *utmost* exigence is less significant than that it regards a *specification* of the natural *élan* (see Rahner, “Relationship,” 307–9 and 312f.; Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 576f. and 683–85; and Reinhard Hütter, “*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold’s and John Milbank’s Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God,” *Nova et Vetera* 5 [2007]: 131).

¹²¹ Lawrence Feingold’s impressive dissertation demonstrates the importance of this topic. I am grateful to him and to Steven Long for helping me clarify the following argument.

¹²² See *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2.

¹²³ *In IV Sent.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, q1a 1, ad 4.

¹²⁴ See *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 6, ad 3.

¹²⁵ *ST I*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.

what is due not according to commutative justice, which regards those who have mutual, real relations and who encounter each other within a wider context of justice. God is the distributor of all perfections: He gives or provides a thing its substantial being, all the perfections supposed by that substance, the perfections ordered to that substance, the end to which that substance is ordered, and the attainment of that end. Hence, only distributive justice pertains to his relationship with the world, for he is the measure of all.

God renders what is due according to a twofold order: Everything is ordered to God as to the ultimate end, and some created things are ordered to other created things, both subsisting things and accidents. So, something is owed to God and something is owed to created beings. As regards the first, it is God who renders to himself what is due, for it is due that the order he establishes be fulfilled. The second order of debt depends on the first, for God creates according to a pattern of his wisdom.¹²⁶ He renders what is due in the second way in order that the truth of some divine idea be preserved in that of which it is an exemplar.¹²⁷ God necessarily creates wisely but is debtor to none, for all things are ordered to him, he to none, and any order including created exigencies hangs on his (ever wise) mercy.¹²⁸

The debt that concerns us pertains to this second kind, which can be divided into what pertains to the condition of nature and what is due to meritorious activity.¹²⁹ The former is distinguishable into what pertains to subsistence and what pertains to operation or well-being.¹³⁰ According to subsistence, that is due a thing which pertains to its existence, essence, and proper principles. According to operation and well-being, that is due to a thing which befits its condition and conduces to its good operation. It befits the condition of a man in the state of integral nature to be in an upright condition, to have natural justice.¹³¹ To provide such pertains to the divine justice.¹³² It pertains to divine liberality vis-à-vis any terrestrial man to offer grace and supernatural justice. Moreover, this liberality is so perfect with respect

¹²⁶ In addition to *ST* I, q. 21, a. 1, see *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2, and q. 23, a. 6.

¹²⁷ See *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 6, ad 3.

¹²⁸ See *ST* I, q. 21, a. 1 and, esp., a. 4. See also *In IV Sent.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, q1a 1.

¹²⁹ See *ST* I–II, q. 111, a. 1, ad 2.

¹³⁰ See Dockx, “Du désir naturel de voir l’essence divine,” 83f. Sundry texts in Aquinas include *De veritate*, q. 12, a. 3, ad 17; *In Boet. De Trinitate*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2; *De Divinis nominibus*, chap. 8, lect. 4, pars. 775–77; and *ST* I, q. 25, a. 5.

¹³¹ This is political, not despotic, order; hence, a certain concupiscence is compatible with natural justice.

¹³² See *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2, ad 17.

to man that—at least during the pilgrim state—God could withdraw supernatural justice and reduce a man to a naturally good state, without threat to the divine justice.¹³³ (Observe that this supposition depends for its intelligibility on an identity of nature and hypostasis between the man supernaturally elevated and the same person so reduced.)¹³⁴ Yet, God could not, except on account of sin, withdraw natural justice without an infringement of his divine justice, which infringement would be an affront to the first sense of *debitum*.¹³⁵

Pertinent to the good operation of something is its specific operation, that perfection which is its end, the *finis quo* (the end by which),¹³⁶ to which there corresponds a proper object and with respect to which the intelligibility of its nature derives. Now, to each species there is a distinct, connatural end.¹³⁷ Hence, men and angels, who as to their proximate

¹³³ See *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2, ad 17. In this careful and differentiated response, Thomas, reflecting on what pertains to divine justice, indicates that, although God could withdraw supernatural righteousness without injustice, he could not withdraw natural righteousness from a human being. And Thomas also affirms, elsewhere (*De malo*, q. 5, a. 3), that to a separated soul in the state of natural righteousness natural knowledge is due. Of what could this be knowledge other than of God as first cause? On this, see also Hütter, “*Desiderium*,” 100f. Cf. *Mystery*, 71; “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 93–98; and Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 565 and 572.

¹³⁴ I would note, further, that although Thomas contends that men and angels were created in the state of grace, he describes the contrary position not as impossible but as less fitting and less probable (see *ST I*, q. 62, a. 3, and the surprising expressions, no doubt slips but revealing ones nonetheless, in *ST I–II*, q. 109, a. 2, and *ST I–II*, q. 114, a. 2; see also Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 185). De Lubac’s contention that we would be dealing with two essentially different men, and thus two persons, is not consonant with Thomas’s thought. More importantly, “nature” of its nature is a universal, applicable to many; thus, its very character is “abstract” although the essential principle in a man is concrete. So, to disparage as “abstract” someone’s notion of nature is to disparage the very category “nature.” On this, see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 335f. Of course, if a man in the state of pure nature is of a different essence than I, then Pius XII’s teaching is as pointless a defense of gratuity as de Lubac claims the hypothesis of pure nature to be.

¹³⁵ See *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 1, ad 3.

¹³⁶ See *ST I*, q. 105, a. 5. Things are for their operations. The proposition that the imperfect is ordered to the perfect obtains with respect to an identity of formal object (see note 88 above).

¹³⁷ Long peppers his essay with this claim (see “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 143; 146, n. 16; 148, n. 18; 151; 152; 155f.; 159; and 174). To be precise, Thomas teaches that a species is derived from its end taken formally, not materially. That is, if we would indicate that end which specifies a species, we must take account not only of the *thing* but of the *formality* under which we attain it (see note 88 above). One may also indicate the following text: “Each thing is

end attain God under different formalities, are of different species, though they are gratuitously directed to an ultimate end.¹³⁸ This connatural operation pertains to the *debitum ex conditione naturae* (what is due according to the condition of nature).¹³⁹

Actual attainment of the ultimate end, however, is not in the power of any creature, even one deified by grace. Hence, a creature can be said only to merit attainment of the ultimate end, on the promise of God who predestines and calls a man to this end and infuses his grace as the assistance whereby it may be merited condignly.¹⁴⁰ Condign merit involves a true title to eternal life and so pertains to the *ratio* of *debitum*.¹⁴¹ This debt respects the internal relations of the effects of the

ordered to the end fitting for it according to the character of its form (*secundum rationem suae formae*): for different ends belong to different species" (ScG III, chap. 150, par. 5). Thomas is not speaking here of "operation" and "beatitude" but of "form" and "end." See also *Super II Ad Corinth.*, chap. 5, lect. 2, pars. 160f. The point made here is, in part, a response to Dockx.

¹³⁸ See *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 7, obj. 10 and ad 10. Feingold drives this crucial distinction home (see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 254, 297–99, 319–22, 332, 336–37, and 382–85). See also Malevez, "La gratuité du surnaturel," 688. For an excellent treatment of the continuing place of nature and its proportionate end for persons endowed with or called by grace, see Hütter, "Desiderium," 98–117.

¹³⁹ See *ST I–II*, q. 110, a. 1, circa finem; see also Dockx, "Du désir naturel de voir l'essence divine," 84f. Natural things achieve their proximate ends and *in this achievement* they attain the divine similitude to which they are proportionate (ScG, III, chaps. 17–18). Hence, God remains the ultimate end by way of the proximate end.

¹⁴⁰ See *ST I*, q. 62, a. 4; *ST I–II*, q. 114, a. 3; and *Super Epist. Ad Rom.*, chap. 8, lect. 4, par. 655.

¹⁴¹ In his commentary on Romans, Thomas raises a difficulty. Paul states, "To one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due" (Rom 4:4, RSV). The statement has had a twofold exposition. Thomas judges, correctly in my estimation, that the literal sense is that a to-be-justified person does not work, since justification cannot be condignly merited (for this point, see *Super Epist. Ad Rom.*, chap. 6, lect. 4, par. 517). What is interesting is Thomas's iteration of another, then entertained, exegesis. Some read the statement as true and applicable of one who is already graced. While Thomas will not agree that Paul has such a person in mind here, yet, what Thomas says of this person he holds to be truth. Read in this way, the statement requires a word of precision (I stress it): "not reckoned as a gift alone but as something due (*secundum debitum*)."

Such a claim raises a difficulty, however, apparently conflicting with Paul's statement in Rom 8:18: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy of future glory" (Vulg.). The latter passage seems to make one conclude, "Accordingly, that recompense is not rendered according to debt but according to grace." Thomas solves the apparent contradiction with his standard distinction of two ways of considering the works of the justified: (1) simply as products of free will, or (2) as produced by the free

supernatural order. Because of this order, to which all freely acting persons are at least called and for which all are freely bought by Christ, certain persons are blessed with the power to become sons (Jn

will insofar as it is moved by its principle, God predestining. Although considered in the first way, such works “do not have anything condign, that the reward of eternal life may be given them,” yet in the second way, “the aforesaid reward is owed them as something due,” for they have become sons (Rom 8:14). In connection with this non-literal reading, Paul’s “who does not work” is understood with regard to *external* works, which, because some might not have occasion to perform them, are not in all cases required (*Super Epist. Ad Rom.*, chap. 4, lect. 1, par. 329–30). For the literal exposition, which regards the man to-be-justified, see *ibid.*, par. 331.

In earlier texts, Thomas states that, by meriting, which presupposes election and grace, we make something our due (see *In III Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 4, q1a 1, ad 1), as by sinning Adam made death our due (see *In III Sent.*, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1, q1a 1). See also *In II Sent.*, d. 38, q. 1, a. 2. This latter text gives evidence of a proportionate proximate end being due to a thing of a given nature, for the end proper to each thing is its proper operation. The ultimate end, God, to which each thing is ordained as to its end, is not obtained except through the medium of this proximate operation. Here, we encounter the desirable precision: It is not God whom one makes due to oneself through acts of charity but rather the consummate operation (glory) by which one is united to God, himself the end to which one is referred. Now, that this text identifies the ultimate operation of man as the beatific vision should be read as follows: The perfection naturally attainable by man remains ineffably less than the perfection of the beatific vision, though sufficiently terminative to bring adequate rest to the appetite (on this, see Hütter, “Natural Desire,” 570, 573–79, and 586f.). *Therefore*, natural perfection is not ultimate. Further, on account of its less than perfect character, natural perfection is *per se specifiable* by the supernatural end (see Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 683–85, and Hütter, “*Desiderium*,” 101). Clearly, the supernatural end is not “due” to human nature, though Thomas in this article speaks of the proper end as being due. Again, Thomas writes, “Mereri, sicut dictum est, est facere aliquid sibi debitum. Hoc autem contingit tribus modis. Uno modo quando aliquis facit de non debito debitum; sicut aliquis primo motu caritatis meretur vitam aeternam, faciens eam debitam sibi, quae prius ei debita non erat” (*In III Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, and 5; see also *ibid.*, a. 2). Earlier, he had specified that the natural “vision” of God (“vision” here is to be understood quite analogously) is naturally due to the angels (*In II Sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1). Again, he writes, “Dupliciter autem aliquid debitum existit: uno quidem modo secundum naturam, alio modo secundum operationem. . . . Secundum operationem autem, sicut merces operanti debetur. Illa ergo dona sunt hominibus divinitus gratis data quae et ordinem naturae excedunt, et meritis non acquiruntur, quamvis et ea quae pro meritis divinitus dantur, interdum gratiae nomen vel rationem non amittant: tum quia principium merendi fuit a gratia, tum etiam quia superabundantius dantur quam merita humana requirant” (*Compendium theologiae* I, chap. 214). Implied here is that what is rendered according to merits is due on the supposition of its principles, grace and the virtues, and the call according to which these are infused. Indeed, as

1:12), heirs of the promise (Gal 4:7 and Rom 8:17) whose good works God promises to reward. Those who die in divine grace are heirs to eternal life.¹⁴² This point is not hindered by the fact that, on account of the infinitely tender mercy of God, just as punishment will be lighter than guilt, so the reward rendered will exceed merit.¹⁴³ To work something greater than justice (according to a certain equality of proportion)¹⁴⁴ is one thing; to work something less is another.¹⁴⁵ Borrowing Paul's image of "clay" in the hands of the potter, Thomas

mercy founds the natural order and the justice pertinent to orders of exigence established therein, so mercy founds the supernatural order and the justice of orders of exigence promised therein. The teaching continues in Thomas's mature works. See *ST* I–II, q. 111, a. 1, ad 2, wherein Thomas links merit with that which is due. As is clear to anyone with a remote understanding of Thomas, *dona supernaturalia* are not due to man. *Dona supernaturalia*, as the very question indicates, regard the following: grace, infused virtues, gifts, etc. Significantly, *vita aeterna* does not fall under the *dona supernaturalia* simply as a principle of action. Grace, infused virtues, gifts, etc., are principles of action and, as such, they are not merited. *Vita aeterna*, though the supreme gift, also constitutes an object attained by proportionate action. Since grace and the theological virtues and infused moral virtues, etc., render human action capable of attaining it, *vita aeterna* is also something condignly merited. Thomas clarifies, in *ST* I–II, q. 112, a. 2, ad 1, that whereas grace is not merited, glory is. Similarly, he makes clear in *ST* I–II, q. 114, a. 3, sc, that the reward is rendered according to (covenantally established) justice.

¹⁴² See *ST* I–II, q. 114, a. 3, and *Super Epist. Ad Rom.*, chap. 8, lect. 4, pars. 652–55. This title, supreme, packs compositely other gifts. On account of the dignity of deification with which God initially constituted men, they were "naturally" (i.e., supernaturally) immortal. On account of this gift of immortality, "it was due to [man] to receive an incorruptible body" (*debeatur sibi incorruptibile corpus* [*Super Epist. Ad Rom.*, chap. 5, lect. 3, par. 416]).

¹⁴³ See, e.g., *In Psalm 35*, par. 4; *ST* I, q. 21, a. 4; and *Compendium theologiae* I, chap. 214.

¹⁴⁴ See *Super II Ad Corinth.*, chap. 4, lect. 5, par. 150.

¹⁴⁵ See *In IV Sent.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, q. 2. This *quaestiuncula* is quite significant. It will be pointed out that Thomas twice states that he is "speaking of the ordinary [divine] power." There are no grounds that I see for interpreting this to mean that God could by his absolute power withhold what is due. Rather, in drawing the distinction between the ordinary or ordained power and the absolute power of God, Thomas maintains that God could have created other things and could have ordered creation otherwise than he has. To us, some other order of things might appear *inconueniens*, but it would not in fact be unjust (see, e.g., *ST* I, q. 25, a. 5, ad 3). Any order would be patterned upon divine wisdom. In the *quaestiuncula*, Thomas says that God could not act against the just order established, speaking of his ordinary power, just as he could not make something without it imitating him, insofar as it participates being. But in no order could any created thing not imitate God!

One may also urge that the common assertion that William of Ockham invented the distinction between the powers of God is erroneous; it is. Yet, Ockham's innovation by "his association of God's absolute power with the ontological singular"

draws an analogy between natural debt and supernatural debt: Whereas it is not due to unformed clay that it be formed this way or that, yet it is due to clay formed nobly that it be put to noble use; so, as it is not due to nature to receive grace, yet it is due to one deified to receive glory.¹⁴⁶ Further, *per impossibile* (supposing the impossible), were damned persons to convert to God by grace, “it would be unjust (*iniquum*) for them to be punished perpetually after they had gained a good will.”¹⁴⁷ Similarly, God would violate his own justice if he were to deprive an already beatified creature of the vision of God.¹⁴⁸

As the *debitum naturae* does not make God debtor to the creature but to himself, neither does Christian merit make God a debtor to us.¹⁴⁹ God brings to completion that which he initiates, for he is faithful to himself. The heart of the matter, therefore, is that since God

(Mary Anne Pernoud, “The Theory of the *Potentia Dei* According to Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham,” *Antonianum* 47 [1972]: 92) is most significant indeed. Each “thing” is considered chiefly as a singular, and formal causality is minimized because both conceived as plural in individuals (see André Goddu, “Ockham’s Philosophy of Nature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, 148f., and Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols., no. 26, Publications in Medieval Studies, ed. Ralph McNerny [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987], chap. 15) and considered an individual in relation to prime matter (see Maurer, *Philosophy of William of Ockham*, 399f.), which is said to have its own being and intelligibility (see Adams, *Ockham*, 646f.). For Ockham, the *forma totius* is an empty concept (see Maurer, 393f.). What remains to be appreciated in the causal relations among things is chiefly efficient causality. Hence, different kinds of motion are reduced to local “motions of the parts” (Goddu, 149). Ockham’s emphasis on freedom of indifference, moreover, eclipses final causality, since it is the agent’s willing X that establishes X as end. In such a framework, talk of the due order of one thing to another loses traction; accidents proper to certain ways of *being* are too easily dismissed as non-necessary instrumental efficient causes. And of course God can do without these (see William of Ockham, *Quodl.* 6, q. 6 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 9, 604f.: 18–20]). Adherence to the profound difference between Aquinas’s thought and these notes of Ockham’s metaphysics should caution one from concluding that their readings of *potentia absoluta* were not significantly different (cf. Pernoud, 91). Whereas Ockham teaches that God can both absolve someone from sin and save him without the infusion of created grace (see William of Ockham, *Quodl.* 3, q. 10, a. 2 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 9, 241:35–43]; idem, *In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1 [*Opera theologica*, vol. 3, 452–56]; and Maurer, 261–63), Aquinas holds grace to be the formal cause of deification, without the infusion of which “the remission of sins cannot be understood” (*ST* I–II, q. 113, a. 2).

¹⁴⁶ See *In IV Sent.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, q1a 1, ad 2; see also Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 225.

¹⁴⁷ ScG IV, chap. 93, par. 2.

¹⁴⁸ See *ST* I–II, q. 5, a. 4.

¹⁴⁹ See *ST* I–II, q. 114, a. 1, ad 3.

is faithful to himself, there is a proper place for debt. This means that we are speaking, ultimately, of the intelligibility of the divinely willed motions in creation. For Thomas, no motion is intelligible without respect to its end. To deny either *debitum naturae* or Christian merit thus strikes either at the very intelligibility or at the “efficacy” of the divine motions in creatures. In willing some order, God wills the attainment of the intrinsic end of that order—the manifestation of his glory through creatures’ attainments of their ends. Although not each thing must needs achieve its end in every case, yet, I would argue, the very intelligibility of the order as a whole requires the non-impossibility *in that order* of the attainment of the end of the order, which attainment will involve, ultimately, the chief things in that order. Indeed, the very inclination each thing has for its proportionate end is instilled in it by the author of nature¹⁵⁰ who in authoring an order promulgates a law that corresponds thereto.¹⁵¹

*To say, then, that there is an innate natural inclination to an end surpassing both the resources within the natural order and the divine providential solicitude formally pertinent thereto is to say that God, as author of nature, creates to no end, that he instills a motion that has no aim.*¹⁵² It is here that we discover a theo-logical rebuttal to de Lubac’s appeal to Ockham’s statement in defense of an absolute, innate, yet inefficacious desire: *Since* God is debtor to himself, the order he establishes must be possible of fruition.¹⁵³ The to my mind self-evident assumption that undergirds

¹⁵⁰ See *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4, and *Sententia libri Ethicorum* I, lect. 2, par. 21.

¹⁵¹ *ST* I–II, q. 93, a. 6. If law is ordered to an end, just what “end” could God ever have in mind by the natural law of reason if there were no relatively sufficient finality?

¹⁵² See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 227–29 and 370–72. Cf. Dockx, “Du désir naturel de voir l’essence divine,” 91.

¹⁵³ Two points in response to de Lubac’s anthem of an absolute and inefficacious desire are in order. First, Thomas nowhere, to my knowledge, states unequivocally that there is a real albeit insufficient order to or desire for the supernatural end. There is one apparent exception: *In Boet. De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, ad 5. Indeed, one might take this text as a genuine exception. Or, one might take it, as one can take *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4, as inconclusive. (On Sylvester of Ferrara’s interpretation of the former text and texts similar thereto, see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 184–88 and 399, n. 6.) Even in the midst of texts stressing the natural desire to see God, Thomas can, as Long notes, express himself more precisely: “Intellectus igitur quantumcumque modicum posit de divina cognitione percipere, illud erit sibi pro ultimo fine, magis quam perfecta cognitio inferiorum intelligibilium” (*ScG* III, chap. 25, par. 6; see Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 144). Relevant to a full analysis of the entire argument in *ScG* III, chaps. 25–51, is a well-rounded reading of Thomas that appreciates nuance and complexity. Aquinas himself invites this nuance in key places; see, for instance, *ScG* I, chap. 11,

my evaluation is thus dialectically validated: To hold as possible a meaningless world is simply absurd.¹⁵⁴

4. **A Final Lubacian Strategy.** I consider that the above reflections also undercut the viability of de Lubac's final strategy to identify the gratuity of grace, namely, his appeal to our desire to receive the gift *as* something gratuitous and unexpected.¹⁵⁵ Guy Mansini has raised the objection that to desire something with a "precisive *qua*, [a] specifying *as*" is to have a consciously molded desire.¹⁵⁶ Such a desire could not be innate; it would have to be elicited; thus, it need not be unconditional. If Mansini's argument holds, it cuts off the effectiveness of this final appeal. However, further elaboration seems to me desirable.

I find three difficulties with the Lubacian appeal. A person depicted as one who desires beatific union with God but remains not-expectant, one "holding-[himself]-in-readiness,"¹⁵⁷ appears to me both unfittingly

par. 5 (sic enim homo). For a recent and contextualized exegesis of ScG III, chap. 25, see Hütter, "Natural Desire." Second, when Thomas claims that natural principles do not suffice, he does not mean that they really and innately but insufficiently incline. In each case, he draws an analogy between principle and finality: As natural principles order or incline to connatural ends, so supernatural principles order or incline to supernatural ends. The latter principles are therefore necessary for there to be said inclination (see note 88 above). I would point to the following text: "The end towards which the divine generosity directs or predestines man, namely, the fruition of himself, is in every way elevated above the faculty of created nature. . . . Therefore, by his natural principles alone, man does not sufficiently have an inclination to that end." De Lubac concludes that Thomas holds he does have an insufficient inclination. Thomas intends nothing of the sort: "Therefore, it is necessary that there be superadded to man something by which he may have an inclination to that end, as by his natural principles he has an inclination to the end that is connatural to him. . . . For as that end is ordained for us by God not through our nature, so the inclination to the end is worked in us solely by God" (*In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, q1a 3). Thomas manifests the principle underlying this point elsewhere: "The act of anything is not divinely ordered to something exceeding the proportion of the power which is the principle of the act." It is a matter of divine institution "that nothing act beyond its power" (*ST I-II*, q. 114, a. 2). Thomas's diction "not sufficient" or "insufficiently" need not imply "a real but insufficient"; it certainly implies nothing of the sort when he states, "Free will is not a sufficient cause of [read 'condign'] merit" (*ST I*, q. 62, a. 4). Has Thomas become semi-Pelagian? In short, Thomas means that nature and natural principles incline to the supernatural end *only* when moved by grace, actual and/or habitual.

¹⁵⁴ See Léonard, "The Theological Necessity," in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 328.

¹⁵⁵ Healy ("Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace") sets this strategy in relief.

¹⁵⁶ See Mansini, "Surnaturel," 605f.

¹⁵⁷ Healy, "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," 547 (see also 548 and 561f.).

heroic and tragic. (a) Such a one seems oriented towards God as Father before God has become his Father, that is, before God has adopted him as son. His disponibility renders him already gracious towards God. But one cannot present oneself to God graciously with a graciousness that is not received (1 Cor 4:7). There can be no son who has no father (Jn 5:19f.), just as no son can “contribute” to his own generation,¹⁵⁸ unless we are speaking of acts of free will preparatory to justification. But since such acts do not produce justifying grace but only dispose one thereto—whether because enabled by actual graces (Dominican thesis) or because recognized graciously by God (Franciscan thesis)—even in this light no one is made a child of God even by the will of man (Jn 1:13f.). Mansini’s remark that de Lubac here turns apologetics into mystagogical catechesis targets this difficulty.¹⁵⁹ (b) Appearing tragic, such a person exhibits the root difficulty, for it is an *absurd world* that constitutes the condition for the possibility of such remarkable patience. That absurdity renders the patience nihilistic. It is tantamount to a meaningless holding oneself, as some post-modernists say, “in a mature proximity to absence.”¹⁶⁰ (c) Granted, I cannot place particular demands upon my friend, and God is an ultimate friend, truly through charity and in some respect even in a purely natural order. Still, we must draw distinctions. Two unrelated men who encounter one another may or may not engage in actual friendship; their resources are limited. Neither has a claim of friendship on the other. Yet, if one is son to the other, if they are brothers, if they dwell in the same city, if they share a nature (!), we can begin to speak of claims of justice that are not destroyed but protected by any friendship that might develop. Further, should one approach the other in an offer of friendship, the other is not wrong to take this offer as a gesture of intended friendship and to base his decisions in accordance with that judgment. That is, friendship is also a state, not a kind of existential stringing-out of possibly continuing affection—not a tease made delightful only through surprising renewals. Now, in establishing a created order, God takes that initiative. He already gestures. Thus, there is a lack of parity in our comparison

¹⁵⁸ Cf., Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Last Act*, trans. Graham Harrison, vol. 5, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 86: “This ‘passive actio’ is a condition [Mitbedingung] of the ‘active actio’ and imparts to the latter a certain quality of ‘letting go.’”

¹⁵⁹ See Mansini, “*Surnaturel*,” 616 in the context of 612–17.

¹⁶⁰ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 58–81.

between two unrelated (!) men and between the human being and God. The very creative act signals a real commitment on God's part to a dynamically coherent order. The human response of pursuing hopefully (in a natural sense) the fulfillment of natural inclinations would thus only wrongly be conceived as placing demands upon God. Such hopeful pursuits flower organically. But what meaning can Lubacians find in any world without grace?¹⁶¹

Finally, of course, one must grant the precious insight that de Lubac (and Healy and others) offer: The greatest saints wish to love without conditions, and so, they (more and more frequently) stress that their desire is to love, not to "merit." Their heaven does not rest with vision but beats with ecstatic love. Who can gainsay them? Notwithstanding, it would be a mistake to interpret (and then pit) the saints' wishes against dogmas—for instance, that we "truly merit" eternal life (Trent, Session VI, Canon 32). Saints are awakened to this love that shines upon them. The trajectory of their love is the trajectory of ever more purified intentionality, beginning with a desire for their own good and reaching the point at which only the beloved counts and *therefore* union with him. The saints do not transgress the teachings of Trent with their minds but transcend them with their hearts.¹⁶²

In connection with this concern about a meaningless world, one can ask whether de Lubac implies the moral *wretchedness* of created spirit.¹⁶³

Purely Natural Man Morally Wretched or Sub-personal?

First, the naturally realized despair, outlined above, seems to point in the direction of natural wretchedness. Unless somehow such innocent creatures were supernaturally or preternaturally (i.e., with an ad hoc solution) preserved from *awareness* of their awful state, they would despair.¹⁶⁴ Such a state, even if it could not be *theological* despair, would seem to hinder

¹⁶¹ Pinckaers importantly contends that the human person who awaits God non-expectantly would attain an "imperfect *yet real*" beatitude ("The Natural Desire to See God," 642, emphasis mine). In good Franciscan (!) fashion, he even describes the situation as involving "a very pure joy that could, in principle, constitute a real bliss, though imperfect" (644).

¹⁶² This transcendence is the hermeneutical key to oblations such as St. Thérèse's and to total consecrations to Mary Immaculate, the sacrificial characters of which are premised upon the teachings of the Church (see Trent, Session VI, chap. 16, and canons 26 and 32).

¹⁶³ It ought to go without saying that such wretchedness could be only of a completely different order than that of offense against the intimate advance of the Trinity.

¹⁶⁴ It seems to me entirely contrary to the spirit of de Lubac to think of such odd possibilities; see only *Mystery*, 203f.

virtuous action. Would, then, preventative graces be “due”? But nothing can be due! So, natural and innocent man would be unable to live a virtuous life. But if this were the case, grace would not perfect but destroy what is natural.¹⁶⁵

Second, natural moral wretchedness is found in the early de Lubac’s examination of a pair of disputed texts regarding angelic sin. (Though Thomas’s texts concern angels, they have implications for features of human life, and de Lubac seems willing to draw them.)¹⁶⁶ The dispute: According to some, Thomas implies (from *prima pars* on) that, were angels created in the state of pure nature, they could not sin. These interpreters point to texts in which Thomas teaches that purely natural angels would enjoy all natural goods pertinent to them upon their creation. Thus, it could be only with respect to supernatural goods, to which alone they as separated substances would be in potency, that they could sin. So, they could sin only if God were to offer grace.¹⁶⁷ They would sin only if they refused it. This reading is disputed by others who point to Thomas’s consistent teaching that no created thing can by nature be impeccable.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ See *ST I*, q. 60, a. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Gagnebet makes a reasonable case that what de Lubac teaches regarding the angels applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to his views regarding man (see M.-R. Gagnebet, “L’amour naturel de Dieu chez saint Thomas et ses contemporains,” *Revue thomiste* 48 [1948]: 396, referring to de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 432, and 247, n. 2). De Lubac’s note makes reference, approvingly, to Jean Mouroux, *Sens chrétien de l’homme* (Paris: Aubler, 1945), 176–81; in English translation: *The Meaning of Man*, trans. A. H. G. Downes (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 182–86.

¹⁶⁷ See *De malo*, q. 16, a. 3; *ST I*, q. 63, a. 1, ad 3, and *ibid.*, a. 3. One can add whatever one wishes concerning the interrelations of these angels (the higher teaching the lower); all such interrelations would not, it seems to me, interfere with Thomas’s basic point that separated substances naturally attain their natural ends instantly. There may be another pertinent difficulty, however. Although the issue is enormously tricky, I venture a question: Might such readings be differently construed were they more grounded in advertence to a distinction between (a) love of one’s own beatitude and (b) an ordering of self to God as *finis cui*, not, indeed as to one who benefits from our action (see *ScG III*, chap. 18, n. 5) but as to one to whom we dedicate ourselves, to whom we will the good? On the other hand, Gagnebet’s analysis in favor of such readings is impressive and difficult to contest (see “L’amour II,” 1949, 72–86).

¹⁶⁸ See *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 7; *ScG III*, chap. 109; and *ST I*, q. 63, a. 1. Is this implicit in *ScG III*, chap. 1, n. 5 (see also Hütter, “Natural Desire,” 539f.)? Of course, the first group agrees that no creature is “naturally impeccable” since by this phrase is meant only “that which has in its nature certain principles such that sin is absolutely repugnant to it” in any order (see the following fine article: C. Courtès, “La peccabilité de l’ange chez saint Thomas,” *Revue thomiste* 53 [1953]: 158, n. 5). After all, *ST I*, q. 63, a. 1 houses the ‘ad 3’ just noted.

So, this second group concludes, by “goods pertaining to the natural order”—with reference to which Thomas says no angel can sin—Thomas signifies those goods “within the reach” of an angelic nature. Such goods exclude both supernatural goods and also that good which is the angel’s natural but theo-centric end. (Goods within an angel’s reach would include self-knowledge, knowledge of some natures lower than that angel, acts of will dependent upon such knowledge, etc.) Inasmuch as he rejects the former group, de Lubac is closer to the latter group.¹⁶⁹ Now, if the reading by the first group is accurate (and about this I am uncertain), these texts bear unmistakable witness to the intelligibility of a natural finality. At any rate, whereas the champions of the second group do not hold that such angels would *of necessity* sin, de Lubac’s early work implies that the angels would. There, he holds that angels can have no natural and theo-centric end.¹⁷⁰ Thus, they can have no natural, elected “turning to the Creator.” Their only possible natural love of God above all would be pre-elective and pre-moral. Such love is the natural love present even in the demons.¹⁷¹ The love necessary for a free love of God—and here, de Lubac appears to include any rational spirit—is the “*amor gratuitus*, alone meritorious because in it alone is morality completed.”¹⁷² “[C]ompleted” does not mean “further perfected” but “actually achieved,” and such achievement requires grace: “A spirit . . . must come to its ‘conversion,’ that is to a choice, and this makes it necessarily enter into the supernatural or exclude itself therefrom.”¹⁷³ Here, de Lubac is speaking about any

¹⁶⁹ See *Augustinianism*, 169; and *Surnaturel*, 231–60. For a treatment of the tacit dialogue between Maritain and de Lubac, see René Mougél, “The Position of Jacques Maritain Regarding *Surnaturel*: The Sin of the Angel, or ‘Spirit and Liberty,’” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 59–83.

¹⁷⁰ See references in note 94, especially *Surnaturel*, 240–41. Long’s diagnosis is on the mark (see Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 134f., n. 3, and 151).

¹⁷¹ It is analogically present in all created things, for God is the end of all things (see *ST* I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 5, and note 139 above).

¹⁷² *Surnaturel*, 250.

¹⁷³ *Surnaturel*, 256f. For a brief exposition of de Lubac’s explicit claims and the apparent scope thereof, see Gagnebet, “L’amour,” 1948, 394–97 and idem, “L’amour II,” 1949, 48–54 and 72f. For Thomas’s thought to the contrary, see, e.g., *ST* I, q. 60 and *De caritate*, a. 2, ad 15. The discussion in *ST* I, q. 60, is highly nuanced and relates “natural love” to various other loves—supernatural, rational, elected, etc. Although Thomas holds that there remains a “natural love” of God in the demons—one that could not be elected—such a love is not the only one that he calls “natural” in this question. Again, in *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3, Thomas simply cannot be asking about a natural, non-elected love (see Gagnebet, “L’amour II,” 1949, 45. The nub of the problem is stated well on *ibid.*, 92).

spirit.¹⁷⁴ Consistently, de Lubac adds that natural love reaches God only as principle of being *but not as object*.¹⁷⁵

Thomas, to the contrary, describes natural rational love (*dilectio*) as reaching God as the principle *and end* in the state of integral nature.¹⁷⁶ Further, for Thomas there is not only a non-elected natural rational love of God but also a freely elected, natural rational love of God.¹⁷⁷ M.-R. Gagnebet has

¹⁷⁴ Was the early de Lubac in agreement with the nominalist John Bockingham, who claimed that any soul God can create must be either in mortal sin or worthy of the beatific vision (see *Augustinianism*, 109)?

¹⁷⁵ See *Surnaturel*, 251 and 255. Although Braine does not state the matter thus, he implies that a virtuously lived life in the state of pure nature would not be possible without certain preternatural gifts (see “The Debate,” 565). That Braine implies a natural misery is evident from the references given in note 120. Besides these references, I would indicate Braine’s clear definition of “extrinsicism”: that conception according to which “the gift of grace when given comes as something entirely unnecessary to the good life as such—necessary only to give mankind the means to a higher end, a greater beatitude” (571; see also 575). If one allows for a possibly softened sense of “entirely unnecessary”—which allowance I believe would still allow the spirit of the point Braine wishes to make—one can object to the description of this conception as “extrinsicist.” First, the objection. By simply turning the tables, I would submit that if grace is absolutely necessary to the *intelligibility* of created man, then grace is necessary. And grace would be so necessary should created man have no proportionate end that could meaningfully satisfy his appetite. Second, the softening. Of course, certain preternatural gifts and certain determinations of natural law could be described as highly fitting, though probably not as “absolutely necessary.” Aquinas walks a delicate tightrope on this matter, offering diverse arguments for the giving of divine law (see *ST* I–II, q. 91, a. 4). Only the first reason in the *responsio* indicates necessary grounds for divine law even for those without sin—that God ordains men to a supernatural end. For an exposition of Aquinas on this matter and for criticisms of de Lubac’s *Surnaturel* also relevant to Braine’s thesis, see Gagnebet, “L’amour II,” 1949, 50–72. Gagnebet maintains both that man in a natural state would be capable of a fully moral life and that his end would *not* be obtained terrestrially but only post-terrestrially (see 61–72). (Gagnebet’s analysis is profound and, in my opinion, accurate.) To be sure, Braine does call to mind the *actual* order of grace, human freedom, and sin as concretely grounding the gratuity (see, esp., 584f. and 589). Sin no doubt makes grace triply gratuitous. Human freedom—if not simply nominally conceived—does render the effects of grace (but not the divine will, as Lonergan reminds us, refusing to ascribe to any created motion any divine attributes) contingent. But to render the effects of grace contingent is not to identify the gratuity of grace.

¹⁷⁶ See *ST* I–II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 3; *De virtutibus*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 9; *Super I Ad Corinth.*, chap. 13, lect. 4, par. 806; and *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁷⁷ A person in a purely natural state can love God above himself naturally and freely. See *In III Sent.*, d. 29, a. 3; *De divinis nominibus*, chap. 4, lect. 9 and 10; *ST* I, q. 60, a. 5; *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3; *Quodl.* I, q. 4, a. 3; and *ST* II–II, q. 26, a. 3. Especially

amply demonstrated this claim.¹⁷⁸ (Of course, according to Aquinas, sin so dampens human nature's vigor that it is not possible for postlapsarian man to elicit a free act of love for God without grace.)¹⁷⁹ Since turning to the Source and End of being is the acme of what natural law calls for, were one unable to turn to the first cause freely even in the state of integral nature, one would be, in any order without supernatural grace, both naturally miserable and also naturally wretched (or sub-personal).¹⁸⁰

noteworthy is Thomas's affirmation that this natural love could be used "more or less" by a rational creature (in the state of integral nature) in preparation for grace (see *Quodl.* I, q. 4, a. 3, ad 2). For a good, recent presentation, see Thomas Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth Century Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 70–86. For references concerning de Lubac's rhetorical criticism of the possibility of a free, natural, and God-centered love, see note 7 above.

¹⁷⁸ See M.-R. Gagnebet, "L'amour," 1948, 424–46, and idem, "L'amour II," 1949, 31–102.

¹⁷⁹ See *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3. Thomas describe the human condition after sin, the condition into which we are born (antecedent to our experience of immoral neighbors), as one in which we spontaneously prefer our limited, private good to the true common good. The explanation he gives is that nature, though not altered in its principles, is wounded, so that a man cannot without grace achieve the most important things for which he is naturally constituted, things he could achieve were he in a state of integral nature. A static image of this wound could be a fractured plate that has not fallen asunder. A dynamic image might be a car whose engine, though intact, has suffered harm: It can putter at 35 MPH but it cannot do its factory-advertised maximum. Just why this is so, or how, is difficult to discern. That Adam has not only lost gifts but acquired disorder is clear, but why does the generative act produce other than a man intrinsically in a natural state, whose concupiscence is materially natural, and only extrinsically in a state of sin (in virtue of the divine judgment)? Might another explanation be the ubiquity of God's condescension to man and the concrete determination of free man's sole ultimate end? In short, man is confronted by God's offer of himself. Thus, one cannot lovingly choose to love God in a purely natural way; one cannot lovingly choose to have a purely natural relationship with the God who calls, for to do so would be to offend seriously that very God, exposing the truth that one never in fact loved him (that is, freely) at all. Whoever loves a friend is ready to respond to that friend, and whereas finite friends can advance intimacy unfittingly or immoderately or in an untimely or imprudent manner, the Uncreated Friend's every move is fitting. For a fine account of the vitiation of the natural inclination in fallen man, see Jacques Maritain, "La dialectique immanente du premier acte de liberté," *Raison et raisons* (Paris: Egloff, 1947), 139–46.

¹⁸⁰ To explain Thomas's texts on angelic sin, one can attend to Thomas's teachings on the radical freedom of the will with regard to specification of the object and formation of practical judgments. Also, one can heed Thomas's teaching on love of the *finis cui*. For a list of texts in the commentatorial tradition defending the view that angels could not sin unless called to the beatific vision and that their

Because de Lubac seems driven to his positive thesis in virtue of his presuppositions concerning a purely natural order, I now turn to consider these.

Presuppositions of de Lubac's Diagnosis

Purely Natural Man Autonomous?

De Lubac considers that were man not to have an absolute and inefficacious desire for the supernatural, he would not be radically dependent upon God. But on the contrary, neither Thomas nor reliable defenders of the theory of "pure nature" leave space for autonomous self-actuation.¹⁸¹ It must be granted that there have been some deviations.¹⁸² However, even "average" theological approaches avoid such deviations.¹⁸³ In any case, we may dismiss deviations as irrelevant.

When Thomas entertains the powers of the integral state of human nature, he adds the cautious reminder: Man can do nothing "without the divine help." This divine help is not the *auxilium* of entitatively supernatural grace; it is the natural providential help, requisite in the natural order, just as the *auxilium* of grace is uniquely requisite in the supernatural order.¹⁸⁴ Were man created in a purely natural state, God, transcendentally causing every reduction of potency to act,¹⁸⁵ would sustain him in a good state of being, moving him to his fitting end interiorly and by the instrumental agency of an unspeakably vast array of interconnected secondary causes.¹⁸⁶ The divine causality would be all encompassing efficiently, exemplarily, and with respect to finality. Further, a being's achievement of its end, a return to the First Being according to its own

"being not impeccable" is a predicate ascribed to them because there is possible a world in which they are peccable, that of the call to glory, see *Surnaturel*, 315ff. For a classic defense that the predicate "peccable" applies to any but the glorified angels, see Jacques Maritain, *The Sin of the Angel: An Essay on a Re-Interpretation of Some Thomistic Positions*, trans. William Rossner (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959). For a lucid treatment of Thomas's appreciation of created freedom, see Tobias Hoffmann, "Aquinas and Intellectual Determinism: The Test Case of Angelic Sin," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 89 (2007): 122–56.

¹⁸¹ See, e.g., *ST* I–II, q. 109, aa. 1–3; see also Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 224, n. 44, and 314, n. 69.

¹⁸² Healy points to some examples (see "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," 545f.).

¹⁸³ See, e.g., the following work of a professor of letters: Louis Mercier, *American Humanism and the New Age* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1943), 72–77.

¹⁸⁴ See *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 1.

¹⁸⁵ See *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1 and *ST* I, q. 105, a. 5.

¹⁸⁶ See, e.g., *ST* I–II, q. 98, a. 4, ad 3.

modality, would manifest the splendor of being-itself-subsisting.¹⁸⁷ In fact, the Thomistic view on the ubiquity of divine causality continues to raise consternated eyebrows.¹⁸⁸ It is thus difficult to fathom on what grounds de Lubac and others could content themselves, on this point, with a critique of a strawman.

Purely Natural Man Incurious?

Finally, does not de Lubac presuppose the irrelevance of grace to a man in a purely natural state when he describes such a one as not being dynamically open to God?¹⁸⁹ Apparently, de Lubac finds the only relevance of grace in the coupling of his positive and negative theses: "It is precisely because the ultimate finality of *this* human nature is supernatural that it *can* receive sanctifying grace. There is in it not only an 'obediential potency' [*potentia obedientiae*], but a certain 'natural order' [*ordo naturalis*] to the receiving of that grace, whereas in the case of miracle such 'ordo naturalis' does not exist."¹⁹⁰ But on the contrary, human beings *qua* human (that is, conceived apart from grace) are uniquely fit for a divine self-disclosure.

¹⁸⁷ See ScG III, chap. 25, par. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Scathing remarks have been made about a recent, rather straightforward, Thomistic defense of the ubiquity of providence. See Long, "On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature," 167–72, and his earlier essay (Steven Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," *Nova et Vetera* 4 [2006]: 557–605). Long's diagnosis is profound: Modern man accepts from Molina an "aseity of the will." Also apathetic towards the supernatural, modern man thus considers himself all-sufficient (see 171). Notwithstanding these remarks, I find Lonergan's solution more attentive to the analogy of faith than either the two-lane highway Long seems to espouse or the four-lane highway Molina embraces (see Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* [Toronto: 2000]). Further, I sympathize with Braine's criticisms of a certain monergism (see "The Debate," 587–89). However, perhaps here I have fallen prey to the medicinalism I shall charge against Lubacians (see the end of this essay).

¹⁸⁹ See note 94 above. In addition, de Lubac at times describes the natural end, as conceived in this hypothesis, as though it were thought to be equally alternative to the supernatural (see *Surnaturel*, 453). At other times, he admits the legitimacy of holding two ends, one subordinated to the other (see *ibid*, 452), yet he describes the subordinated one as not theo-centric. Incidentally, Braine helpfully asks us to follow Thomas's expression: a *twofold* end, not *two ends* (see "The Debate," 560). However, Braine also conceives of a purely natural order as implying "nothing beyond a mundane kind of existence," making it true from a certain perspective that man would thus be placed "back among the brutes" ("The Debate," 565).

¹⁹⁰ *Mystery*, 141–42 (emphases mine).

1. **Wonder within Imperfect Beatitude.** Were man created in a purely natural state, he would come profoundly to wonder about and love the first cause.¹⁹¹ One could even trace philosophical and mystical dimensions of this human desire.¹⁹² The origin of the speculative

¹⁹¹ The considerations to follow in the text are not antithetical to the work of Karl Rahner, different epistemological frameworks notwithstanding. For Rahner, rational man is self-transcending: In any particular act of cognition, man gathers a glimmer of the horizon, which recedes before him the more he seeks it. But in this receding of the horizon, man actually approaches it asymptotically. It would be false to ascribe to Rahner an “asymptotic” approach that blurred the distinction between the formality of the supernatural desire and the formality of the natural desire (Braine ascribes such a blurring to von Balthasar [see “The Debate,” 565 and 585]; Coffey rightly denies it of Rahner [see “The Whole Rahner,” 104f.]). This ever-transcending character of human knowing makes man uniquely fit for a divine self-disclosure, although we must, in an effort to consider this character, not color it too much with the tints and hues of concrete life, which is imbued already with the supernatural existential and with grace (see Rahner, *Hearer*; and Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 579f.). God in fact seizes everyone by creating each with an abiding ordination to grace, the “supernatural existential,” by which all that is in us is polarized by a “new,” inmost determination of our being, though one not identical to us in our natural being. Again, on the supernatural existential, see Coffey, 95–118.

I would take issue with Rahner’s theory insofar as it (a) appears paradoxically to make “machinelike” the personal and particular *movements* of grace in man and (b) seems to beg the question as to how it may be an “inmost determination” while not being either constitutive of natural being or itself the *habitus gratiae*. Still, might we find some parallels between aspects of the supernatural existential and the traditional notion of “actual graces”? I propose this as a furthering of Coffey’s suggestion (see note 101 above) that the supernatural existential might be seen, on the order of material causality, as the penultimate preparation for indwelling. (Sanctifying grace would be the ultimate disposition for indwelling.) Paramount for my suggestion is the insistence that God is absolutely immutable. Consequently, an “offer of self-communication,” if it is to constitute neither essential human principles nor habitual grace would seem to have to have some other ontological status. I suggest it may be a single term for the resultant existential complexity of the human condition due to the multifarious sets of actual graces by which God “hounds” after souls, thereby coloring the human condition (see Malevez, 678f.). Should man in a free, particular decision—and here, I would wish to part with Rahner’s sequestration of the decision to an *athematic* realm, however true it is that no man can with certainty judge his own heart—abandon this divine play, he would do violence to himself as concretely realized, turning God’s loving approaches into coarse whips (Mal 4:1–2). If we attend, with a metaphysical gaze, to the “principles by which” our condition is colored, we come to actual graces and not to principles of human existence. See, as an example of such effort, Brisbois, “Le désir de voir Dieu,” 1104ff.

¹⁹² Georges Cardinal Cottier, following Maritain’s reflections, has sketched the contours admirably in his essay “On Natural Mysticism,” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 273–94.

wonder would be the natural desire to know, which, upon encounter with things, would blossom into a desire to know their quiddities, their causes, and the quiddities of their causes.¹⁹³ In all his movements, moreover, a natural man would be drawn to whatever is good and true and beautiful. He would explore the heights of “natural mysticism.”¹⁹⁴ Philosophically, as he came rightly to grasp that there must be an ultimate cause of all things—whether he were a philosopher or a lucid human being (Wis 13; Rom 1; Acts 17)—he would desire to know the essence of this cause.¹⁹⁵ Further, he would recognize this cause—by way of affirmation, negation, and supereminence—to be personal, since “person” describes what is most perfect in being. Although this notion of “person” would be quite different from that unveiled through faith (whether to Abraham or through our Lord), it would be nonetheless genuine if plumbed.¹⁹⁶ But this philosophical approach could not but be coupled, in an upright man of flesh and blood, with a mystical desire. Indeed, these “two” approaches went hand in hand with the great neo-Platonists. Certain features of Plotinus’s mystical experience—and that of the great Hindu and Islamic mystics—could be found here, features all of which need not be traced simply to grace.¹⁹⁷ (While critiquing one aspect of neo-

¹⁹³ See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 38. See also, for an elaboration of the profound structural roots of the elicited desire, Hütter, “Natural Desire,” 561, 565f., and 585–91. Hütter weaves a delicate path in his contextualized exegesis of *ScG*, III, chap. 25. On the one hand, he holds, Aquinas affirms that man is *capax visionis*; man has an inclination by which he naturally reaches out to this vision. On the other hand, he stresses the difference between the simple motion of desire and the firm desire of what is possible (see “Natural Desire,” 573–77). This latter line of thought seems to pick up a theme otherwise apparently dropped, that the desire for knowledge of God is a desire “for knowledge itself of God” and not for “knowledge of God himself” (“Natural Desire,” 561, 565f., and 585–91). I raise the same question to Hütter that I raise to Feingold: Ought we not render this more precise by advertence to a distinction of formal objects? The natural wonder, rooted structurally in the essence of intellect, arises through knowledge of effects and arrives at the question, “What is this first cause?” The question cannot be answered except by the gratuitously offered vision of God, although the formality under which knowledge of God is desired by the grace leading towards vision is different from that of this strictly natural question.

¹⁹⁴ See Cottier, “On Natural Mysticism,” *passim*.

¹⁹⁵ Among the classic texts are the following: *ScG* III, chaps. 25 and 50; *ST* I, q. 12, a. 1; and *ST* I–II, q. 3, a. 8.

¹⁹⁶ See *ST* I, q. 29, a. 3. Lonergan maintains that one cannot show the impossibility of a natural religious worship of a personal God (“Natural Desire,” 88f.).

¹⁹⁷ See, for instance, Augustine, *Confessions*, VII. Although one has reason to contend against Augustine that a personal, distinct Logos cannot be found by human

Platonism, one need not critique all aspects.) Consequently, the vector of this twofold pursuit, speculative and mystical, would be eminently vertical as to its *telos*.

In an upright person, the desire to know and to be united with the first cause would be the crown of desires, but it would be contoured.¹⁹⁸ One would desire without qualification what could be naturally attained and would find rest in this loving contemplation of him through creatures.¹⁹⁹ Still, recognizing that one could not penetrate to the essence of the first cause either philosophically or mystically, one would be in a state of loving wonder. However, recognizing such penetration to be beyond one's capacity, one would not pine away with an unconditional desire but virtuously direct it towards fuller development of what is attainable. Further, the formal object of this desire would be distinct from that of the believer's desire.²⁰⁰ With such contours, about which more would necessarily obtain than can

experience, has one any reason to deny that there can be a "para-conceptual" approach to the divine by way of human ascesis? Again, see Cottier, "On Natural Mysticism," *passim*.

¹⁹⁸ Long captures this contour (see "On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature," 149f., and n. 20). Towards the end of *Surnaturel*, de Lubac describes three irreducibly distinct "thomistic" takes on the natural desire, as though it was not thought to have any contour (see *Surnaturel*, 478f.). The fact is that various positions are not incompatible. One can say that in some text Thomas is speaking of a natural desire, qua "modalized" by grace, to know the Holy Trinity. This does not exclude the fact that the natural desire, short of such modalization, would have the knowledge of the essence of the first cause as its object. Again, one may say that the desire remains a "velleity" in the sense that its non-realization would not cause suffering, though it would cause wonder, and yet deny that the formal species of the object of the velleity is the *supernatural* vision of God.

¹⁹⁹ See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 416–21.

²⁰⁰ This point is in partial response to both Lonergan and Dockx: Although in truth the beatific vision alone completely perfects the human mind (it is what Lonergan calls the "transcendental" or "adequate" object ["Natural Desire," 82f.]), it does not follow that the latter has the former as its natural end or formal object. The human mind is made to know being, but being is analogical, not univocal (according to Aquinas). So, although God is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, he does not fall within the range of the human (or angelic) mind's formal object. In fact, Aquinas maintains that the passive intellect is in natural passive potency only to those things of which it is capable in virtue of the agent intellect (see *De veritate*, q. 18, a. 2). See *Super II Ad Corinth.*, chap. 5, lect. 2, par. 160. Maritain says it best: "[It] is a desire which does not know what it asks" (*Approaches*, 97). I would illustrate the matter thus: A rational animal without eyes that wished to know the cause of periodic heat on earth, would want to know the cause of heat, but this cause actually is the luminous sun. On this remove, see note 88 above; see also Long, "On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature," 149; cf. Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 42 and 423.

judiciously be said, one finds the “both/and” that de Lubac rejects: Both a proportionate end and recognition of something desirable beyond this—a genuine but not ultimate beatitude.

2. **Specific Obediential Potency.** Thus we encounter the *tertium quid* between the caricature of non-repugnance²⁰¹ and the projection of an absolute but inefficacious desire—the horizon of wonder, what came to be called “*specific obediential potency*” for grace.²⁰² (De Lubac employs this term but only with reference to his thesis; so, if one grasps the argument, one will see no parity of conception.) The term “specific obediential potency” indicates the “*greatest dignity of an intellectual nature created in the image of God: its unique capacity to receive the grace of God in order to be elevated to a supernatural end.*”²⁰³

The term can be articulated as follows. A “potency” is the capacity for some perfection or act.²⁰⁴ Potencies are distinguished as active and passive. An active potency is the capacity to bring about some act: A potter has the active potency to make of clay a vessel, and a healthy man has the active potency to get up and walk. A passive potency is the capacity to be brought to some perfection. Passive potencies are of two types: natural and non-natural.²⁰⁵ A natural passive potency for some act or perfection (*T*) is the capacity something (*F*) has for *T*, to which *F* can bring itself in virtue of its natural active potency. A non-natural passive potency is the capacity *F* has for *T*, to which *F* cannot bring itself because *F* lacks the natural active potency. So, Thomas holds with Averroes, if *F* has no natural active potency for *T*, neither can it have for *T* any natural passive potency properly so called. There is no natural passive potency where there is no natural active potency.²⁰⁶ (Of course, one could make

²⁰¹ See Hütter, “*Desiderium*,” 107–17. Cf. Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade*, 157. De Lubac is aware of the caricature (see “Le mystère du surnaturel,” 89).

²⁰² See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 117–20, 339–43, and 413f.; and Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 150f. and 157–66. For de Lubac, the only “specific obediential potency” is the natural desire for the supernatural (see *Mystery*, 60 and 142f.).

²⁰³ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 159.

²⁰⁴ See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 149–54.

²⁰⁵ See *Compendium theologiae* I, chap. 104; see also Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 149f.

²⁰⁶ See *In II Sent.*, d. 12, q. 1, a. 1; *In III Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a. 1, q1a 1; *ibid.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 18, aa. 2 and 5; *ScG* III, chap. 156, par. 7; *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, ad 13. For texts pertinent to the obediential potency, from which texts principles may be gathered and an argument formed—if one submits experience and medicinally minded judgments to the discipline of theological science—see *De*

further nuances with respect to ordinations differently experienced within a species: For example, the male and the female with respect to generation.²⁰⁷) For sake of precision, we can distinguish non-natural potencies in view of the different agents that possess the relevant active potency. If the agent is created, the potency can be described generically as non-natural. If the agent can only be divine, the potency can be called obediential.

We can unpack “obediential potency” as follows, beginning with its description as generic. God can do all things that can be done, anything makeable, that is, anything not per se impossible.²⁰⁸ Anything that he does do, however, will be ordered in accordance with some wise plan.²⁰⁹ Because of God’s omnipotence, even though a given order of things has no active potency for X, if X is neither impossible nor repugnant to the order, God can realize it. Let us restrict the analysis to *possible* things. Although in some given order wherein there is no natural active potency for Q, there is nonetheless a potency for Q, an obediential potency vis-à-vis divine power. Let Q stand for *generic* obediential potency vis-à-vis the divine power.²¹⁰ There is a more precise obediential potency than that which is generic. Whereas Q indicates a potency common to many kinds, let Z stand for that which is possible only for a certain kind of thing (yet never with respect to any natural active cause). All Z are Q, but not all Q are Z. The limited conditions for Z being possible indicate *specific* obediential potency. The specification is on the part of the recipient: Only this kind can receive the perfection. Now, since only created intellect can be elevated to grace and glory, created intellect has a “specific obediential potency” to grace and glory. We

veritate, q. 8, a. 12, ad 4; *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, ad 13; and *Compendium theologiae* I, chap. 104; for a thorough discussion, see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 136–54.

²⁰⁷ I am grateful to graduate student Christopher Kellerman for challenging me toward this nuance.

²⁰⁸ In this respect, Ockham’s formulation (see Maurer, *Philosophy of William of Ockham*, 247, and Adams, Ockham, 1155) is a precision, leaving ample latitude; it is perfectly amenable to Aquinas’s thought.

²⁰⁹ There can be, according to Aquinas and also Ockham, no exercise of God’s power describable as absolute and not ordered. See note 145 above and Maurer, *Philosophy of William of Ockham*, 255–59. As Adams states, there is simply no medieval that understood the “two powers” of the divine will to signify “two distinct powers” in God; it is God’s only will that is considered in two lights (see Adams, Ockham, 1186f.). However, when we consider the details, crucial differences emerge.

²¹⁰ For Thomas on this, see *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, ad 13.

have pegged the specificity generically. The stuff of this specificity is found in the natural wonder adumbrated above.

The development of the category “specific obediential potency” and its dynamic realization in man at the crest of his desires makes it possible to identify both the unique fittingness of the call to glory and the intelligibility of a world with created intellects not called to glory.²¹¹ Upholding the goodness of a purely natural order does not put man and God on a par as contractual partners. Rather, it supports intelligibly a conception of the life of grace as *entirely gratuitous*, ever upheld by the gratuitous offer of grace. Earthen vessels are we, and not only because of sin. The gratuity of grace rests against the backdrop of the intelligibility of the same rational hypostasis without a divine call.²¹²

3. **Does the Appeal to Obediential Potency Imply Dualism or Extrinsicism?** The standard objection to the attempt to identify the gratuity of grace in the theory of obediential potency is that it leads to a dualistic, two-tier conception of nature and grace. It must be granted that even some great theologians have invited the charge by their phraseology. Matthias Scheeben comes to mind.²¹³ However, appreciation of Scheeben’s theology disposes of this concern. At any rate, a true grasp of the meaning of scholastic expressions should at least dispose of caricatures.

An explanation that grace neatly develops nature ought to be given. One might take a certain loose conception of Hegelian *sublation* as a model of the way in which grace builds upon nature according to the formula *gratia non destruit sed perficit naturam* (grace does not destroy but perfects nature).²¹⁴ What is the difference between man in the state of pure nature and a man called and divinized? One could reply: the latter has certain superadded forms: sanctifying grace, theological virtues, and gifts of the Spirit. Nevertheless, because of the way too many a reader receives formulas such as this, it is better to indicate the one overarching difference between the two men. The second man is a man whom

²¹¹ Braine’s criticism that the category is “thoroughly unspecific” seems to me off the mark (see “The Debate,” 557). *Only* intellectual creatures have this potency, and they have it in virtue of the *wonder* about God that they would have even in a purely natural order.

²¹² Coffey (“The Whole Rahner,” 100 and 111–13); Hütter (“Natural Desire,” 569); and Léonard (“The Theological Necessity,” 325–30) maintain this thesis as well.

²¹³ See Matthias Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1954).

²¹⁴ I take the Hegelian image from Brugger through Coffey, “The Whole Rahner,” 112.

God is *drawing* to himself. The causal analysis (superadded forms, etc.) helps indicate the various means whereby this personal calling is executed and achieved.²¹⁵ The elements of this divine *drawing*, featured in the Abrahamic life of those called by grace, hardly “sit upon” an at bottom natural man. To the contrary, these elements engage him in an unspeakably more radical dependence than that which a purely natural man would experience. He now subsists upon the words and graces coming down from God. As a reading of the *secunda pars* exhibits, the Abrahamic life discloses the tension between the *pondus* of human nature considered in itself and life in the Spirit. Of course, Abraham’s life also discloses our de facto alienated condition due to sin. I simply wish to highlight the former disclosure, for not everything can be said at once. Within this focus, it can be said that everything pertaining to Abraham goes with him, yet everything is put to a higher service. When God calls a man to himself in intimacy, he galvanizes all properly human dynamisms for an all-embracing end inclusive of every other licit and practicable end. However, this inclusion is not merely some external yoke; it indicates the *formatio* of what without that inclusion would have its sights set lower. Put in loosely Hegelian terms, the divine call affirms the goodness of what is natural in life, cancels natural life’s *limitation* of scope (a limitation able to be appreciated only hazily by reason—since the formal object of faith would be off the radar—but distinctly by faith), and employs the whole of that life with greater clarity and on a higher plane. An intramundane example can exemplify the sublation: Mozart introduces the two dimensional melody of *Ah! vous dirai-je Maman* into a three-dimensional flowering.

Putting it another way, Long remarks that when grace is offered, nature become “*modalized*.”²¹⁶ Henceforth, nothing within man can remain neutral with respect to the ultimate end.²¹⁷ The Friend who discloses himself can no longer be treated with as an acquaintance. Therefore, our fall through Adam’s sin not only deprives all human persons of a just relation to God, not only merits the loss of grace, but

²¹⁵ This sketch aims to point the way towards addressing legitimate concerns of de Lubac, Braine (see “The Debate,” 575), and Healy (“Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” *passim*). One finds a very suggestive indication of the biblical spirit of this narration of the pure nature hypothesis in Mansini, “*Surnaturel*,” 606f.

²¹⁶ Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 146; see also 147–50 and 153.

²¹⁷ The entire movement of the *Summa theologiae* may be read along the lines of Irenaeus’s exegesis of Paul: From animal man to rational man, from rational man to justified man, from justified man to spiritual man. There is a radical tension—what de Lubac would call a “death to self”—inscribed in this escalating, Abrahamic call.

also vitiates human nature's order to its connatural end.²¹⁸ In this light, de Lubac seems justly critical of the notion that original sin simply leaves us with a purely natural man.²¹⁹ Nevertheless, is he not wrong to charge that human nature as such—bereft of both grace *and* sin—would be tempted to rest in a purely mundane end?²²⁰

Conclusion

Effectively, de Lubac bade his readers abandon the then-regnant hypothesis of pure nature since, as he perceived, no purely natural order could be “theonomic.”²²¹ Further, he bade them subscribe to a natural desire for the supernatural.

His strategy may be framed as an anthropological question: What is created spirit like? The options de Lubac presents are these: Either it is totally uninterested in higher things or it deeply yearns for the beatific vision. Given these options, who would not choose the latter?

Having chosen the latter, however, one encounters theological and anthropological difficulties. Theologically, there is the following insoluble alternative: Either (a) because any world must be meaningful, God must offer grace should he create a spirit that does not sin; or (b) because the divine freedom is such that nothing is due to any creature in any way, a meaningless world is possible. Either a conception of grace as necessary or a conception of divine liberty as absolutely arbitrary even if contingently benevolent. Anthropologically, one countenances a naturally miserable and wretched or sub-personal man, a pure “vacuole” for grace.²²²

Going to the root of the matter, one can ask whether de Lubac sufficiently dealt with the Enlightenment threat at its roots. Or, rather, did he *presuppose* as non-theonomous and autonomous what “pure human nature” with a natural finality would be? This would be to concur not with the thomistic tradition but with key problematic features of the

²¹⁸ See note 179 above.

²¹⁹ See *Surnaturel*, 375, and *A Brief Catechesis*, 41–53 and 81–87. Rahner and Hans urs von Balthasar are also rightly critical thereof (see Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 575 and 581). Long’s response is apropos: Grace really can order nature to a higher end (Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 153, 155, n. 29).

²²⁰ See, esp., Malevez, “La gratuité du surnaturel,” 685f.

²²¹ Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 152f. and 167–83, and Hütter, “*Desiderium*,” 112–13.

²²² Long, “On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature,” 151; see also 152 and 175; see also Michel Bastit, “Is Thomism an Aristotelian System?” in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, ed. Bonino, 87–101. Cf. Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade*, 226, n. 55, and 372.

Enlightenment. The premise that led to the unhappy alternative need not stand. As Gagnebet lucidly states:

Saint Thomas had no need to suppose in our nature a chimerical ‘innate, absolute natural desire’ for the beatific vision in order not to conceive of grace as a purely extrinsic gift. He was content to recognize the openness of our spiritual faculties to the plenitude of being and of good.²²³

A remedy for the illusion of conceiving the creaturely order *qua* natural as turned inward, self-sufficient, wretched, and miserable might be found with a change of approach to the physical and moral worlds. We could, as Long suggests, aim to rediscover—naturally anterior to the travail of sin and despair—the world as disclosive of God’s power, deity, and wisdom (Rom 1:19f.; Wis 13:3–5).²²⁴ This rediscovery could bring us, in harmony with the spirit of de Lubac, to reject a godless interpretation of natural dynamisms: Rather than judging things to be blindly moving hither and thither, rather than judging human inclination to be inertial “conatus” or chance happening or will to power, rather, also, than following the pessimism of certain reformers, we might discern within a contemplative outlook that natural dynamisms have their order to an end (and ultimately to *the* end), the human being naturally bearing the melody of this symphony of ends.²²⁵ Here, there is something marvelous to ponder beneath the outrages of sin—the multifarious yet harmonious dialogue of finalities in the world.²²⁶ This is not a prescription to ignore sin and its devastation or to promote the heretical notion that a merely natural end is actually attainable by any son of Adam who acts freely; it is an effort to distinguish causally so as to unite fruitfully. If we approach such a gaze, we may discover not the wretchedness of concrete man *qua* human but the unique dignity of the rational being *qua* rational.²²⁷

Of course, difficulties and oddities present themselves for my thesis. These are of two sorts. (1) There is a first set of oddities or difficulties that

²²³ Gagnebet, “L’amour II,” 1949, 95.

²²⁴ Although there is no unstained child of Adam, our Lord and our Lady excepting, there is yet the nature itself, its powers, and its primal dynamisms to good. Without grace, these peter out for lack of vigor and thus significantly miss their mark.

²²⁵ It carries these naturally, yet, on account of sin, it does not carry them electively unless healed by grace.

²²⁶ I say beneath in the genetic order, not in some spatial order. Sin is a deprivation of the due good in rational beings. It is not that we find a realm untouched by sin. It is that we still find the powers with their fundamental dynamisms to the good. Sin is appalling because of its contradiction to these dynamisms.

²²⁷ I find an excellent example of this approach in Cottier, “On Natural Mysticism,” 273–94.

are central, closer to matters of principle. (a) How can my thesis account for the pain of the damned? (b) How can it account for the devastation of original sin and the de facto reality that any human person is either in the state of grace or in the state of sin?²²⁸ (c) Since despotic control over one's passions is a modally, albeit not entitatively, supernatural gift (i.e., a preternatural gift), concupiscence would naturally arise. But Aquinas argues from the existence of concupiscence to the impossibility of long obeying the moral law, even though any particular mortal sin can be avoided.²²⁹ Does this oddity not constitute a troubling scenario, the very one I find in de Lubac? (2) Ancillary perplexities arise when one examines portraits of hypothetical orders, even those that are not venturous. (a) Given the necessarily communal texture of the human enterprise, already exercised human freedom affects that which is to be exercised. Likely, in a purely natural order, some would miss the moral mark. If they did, might not external pressures on the morally upright develop to the point of making virtuous activity practically impossible?²³⁰ Would the divine providence be bound to answer with additional helps? (b) Would (non-glorious) bodily resurrection be *due*, or would it be completely gratuitous?

To these and questions like these I think two different but not incompatible sets of responses can be given. On the one hand, they (or some of them) can be utilized by theological wisdom in conversation with rational inquirers who do not believe by way of a "protreptic" wooing towards the faith, along the lines of Aquinas's own approach throughout the *Summa contra Gentiles*.²³¹ As I would argue, this precise kind of protreptic wooing would suggest to non-believers the relatively *inconveniens* character of a purely natural explanation of the given order. Even though the effects of sin and grace must constitute the real point of departure for discussion with non-believers, the protreptic I suggest simply contributes to our appreciation of the concrete order God has chosen, an order *absolutely* more fitting than a purely natural one.²³² Such wooing would be guided by a higher wisdom and indebted to what is disclosed to faith, but it might lead some unbelievers by appealing to the

²²⁸ See Braine, "The Debate," 546–50 and 576–80.

²²⁹ On this nuance, see Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*.

²³⁰ Braine, MacIntyre, and many others could raise this question.

²³¹ See Thomas Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas: An Interpretation of the Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); and Mark Jordan, "The Protreptic Structure of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*," *The Thomist* 50 (1986):173–209.

²³² See, for instance, ScG IV, chap. 52. The argument is not necessary but highly fitting, nor do the arguments conclude to the utter irrationality of any world with men without grace.

vector of that which comes under the formal object of natural inquiry. Still, such wooing need not premise as utterly unintelligible a purely natural order. Would not a critical thinker find such an apologetic irrational and so flee the ghetto? Consequently, another set of responses—attempted answers to these thousand difficulties—is in order.

The first set of questions is the more pressing. What follow are not definitive answers but sketches offered in the hope that such difficulties need not obscure the intelligibility of the core of my thesis, which is that, whereas the hypothesis of pure nature presents difficulties, de Lubac's thesis presents absurdities.

For his part, Rahner could answer (1a) with reference to the supernatural existential: The "sun of righteousness" is received by the malicious as an affliction. But if it is unfitting that grace be found in hell, one might appeal to the modalization of the natural desire by grace and to the malice that would ensue upon the pronouncement, "I never knew you."²³³ (1a) remains a difficulty calling for meditation on the ramifications of the natural love of God with respect to its modalization by grace.²³⁴ With regard to (1b), some may rely on the fact that various positions have been taken on original sin and its effects, some of which, though to many Pelagian, the Church has not (yet) seen fit to condemn.²³⁵ The position to which I allude is that fallen man as such is in the state of nature. I on the other hand would suggest that the havoc Adam wreaked upon himself included not only the sheer loss of original justice, a compact endowment of supernatural grace and preternatural gifts, but thereby also the loss of that good state of nature (natural justice) which he *could* have enjoyed as *debitum naturae* apart from grace and sin. Accordingly, we inherit a nature identical in species to Adam's but vitiated in state, as the difficulty in executing acts of virtue, for which nature is in principle a seed, exhibits.²³⁶ As to (1c), does it not seem, to the contrary, that it could not be impossible to obey the natural law in a purely natural order?²³⁷ If so, perhaps one should distinguish the kind of concupiscence we suffer by inheritance from the kind that would afflict

²³³ Cajetan provides a thoughtful reflection: The damned suffer over their punishment—their share in certain evils—and not over the evil of fault. But the saints delight over the good of God more than over their share in good. See his commentary on *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 5 (Leonine ed., vol. 8, 131a).

²³⁴ See Gagnebet, "L'amour II," 1949, 92.

²³⁵ I am thinking of certain opinions espoused by Gregory Biel (see Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000]).

²³⁶ See Torrell, "Nature and Grace," in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, 172–79.

²³⁷ On this, see Gagnebet, "L'amour II," 1949, 45–68.

a rational animal without preternatural gifts. Or, if such a distinction is not possible and if it were thus true that it would be impossible long to obey the natural law in a purely natural order, would not certain preternatural gifts seem to be due?

As to the second set, I take it that similar questions could arise about contingencies possible under de Lubac's hypothesis, for, if a natural desire for the supernatural were possible, surely there would be many possible scenarios, some quite odd to our minds.

Neither less significant nor more profound difficulties ought to derail scientific projects of theology, which ought primarily to work from and towards central principles. Short of a theology based in principles and worked out scientifically, one is tempted to direct the theological compass by medicinal considerations. Such considerations and their outcome may have practical utility, yet the diagnosis may labor under a misapprehension of the real causal situation. If diagnoses are badly made, so will be the corresponding prescriptions. Difficulties are not absurdities, but are absurdities affirmable? A reductionistic theological anthropology is what one risks theoretically. Practically, one risks ill-equipped moral theologies needlessly battling ill-framed questions.²³⁸ Rhetorically, one risks alienating rational dialogue partners and retreating into the ghetto.

Perhaps Fr. Gilbert Narcisse states it best: In moving forward we need a theology anchored in metaphysical wisdom yet attentive to the existential sphere in which we live and move and have our being. Advertence to a theologically differentiated consciousness—one that exercises an ontological approach on the one hand and recognizes on the other hand existential considerations (and messiness)—will thus be necessary if we are to save the truth of the phenomena while retaining a rightly ordered compass.²³⁹ Without neglecting questions and difficulties, one does not go astray—in fact, all disputants in this discussion can happily join—in pressing the ear to the concrete hope intoned by the deacon's chant: *Felix culpa!*²⁴⁰ N V

²³⁸ See Benedict Ashley's fine essay on these problems: "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* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 68–96. Upon reading his essay, I was happy to note that my portrait resembles Ashley's (see 79–81).

²³⁹ I find balanced and to the point the features of a possible future path for theology sketched by Gilbert Narcisse (see the conclusion of his essay, "The Supernatural in Contemporary Theology," in *Supernature: A Controversy*, 307–9).

²⁴⁰ I owe enormous thanks to Lawrence Feingold and Steven Long for their assistance on matters pertinent to this article. In addition, I am grateful to an anonymous peer reviewer for many helpful suggestions.