

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

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MAN IS PERFECTED by virtue, for those actions whereby he is directed to happiness, as was explained above (q. 5, a. 7). Now man’s happiness is twofold [*Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*], as was also stated above (ibid., a. 5). One is proportionate to human nature, a happiness, to wit, which man can obtain by means of his natural principles. The other is a happiness surpassing man’s nature, and which man can obtain by the power of God alone, by a kind of participation of the Godhead, about which it is written (2 Pt 1:4) that by Christ we are made *partakers of the Divine nature*. And because such happiness surpasses the capacity of human nature, man’s natural principles which enable him to act well according to his capacity, do not suffice to direct man to this same happiness. Hence it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles, albeit not without Divine assistance.¹

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 62, a. 1, c. “Per virtutem perficitur homo ad actus quibus in beatitudinem ordinatur, ut ex supradictis patet. Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas, ut supra dictum est. Una quidem proportionata humanae naturae, ad quam scilicet homo pervenire potest per principia suae naturae. Alia autem est beatitudo naturam hominis excedens, ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest, secundum quandam divinitatis participationem; secundum quod dicitur 2 Petr. 1, [4], quod per Christum facti sumus *consortes divinae naturae*. Et quia huiusmodi beatitudo proportionem humanae naturae excedit, principia naturalia hominis, ex quibus procedit ad bene agendum secundum suam proportionem, non sufficiunt ad ordinandum hominem in beatitudinem praedictam.

The reason and will are naturally directed to God, inasmuch as He is the beginning and end of nature, but in proportion to nature. But the reason and will, according to their nature, are not sufficiently directed to Him in so far as He is the object of supernatural happiness.²

Others destroy the gratuity of the supernatural order, since God, they say, cannot create intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision.³

Introduction: “What Is the Human Being?”— The Two Types of Answers

One might propose that the fulcrum on which theology is balanced is an answer to the question, or some version of it, What is the human being? Or, in more precise theological terms, What is the ultimate end of the human being, and in which way and to what degree is this end constitutive of human nature? The answers theologians offer to this question belong largely to one of two overarching types.

One type of answer begins with a statement, for some of almost canonical status, from Augustine’s *Confessions*: “Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.”⁴ Resting in God is the ultimate end of humanity and, short of reaching this end, human life will remain essentially unfulfilled

Unde oportet quod superaddantur homini divinitus aliqua principia, per quae ita ordinetur ad beatitudinem supernaturalem, sicut per principia naturalia ordinatur ad finem connaturalem, non tamen absque adiutorio divino.” For consistency’s sake, all citations from the *Summa theologiae* (ST) in English are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa theologiae* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948). The Latin original offered in the notes is taken from Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, 3rd ed. (Turin: Edizioni San Paolo, 1999), which offers an improved version of the Leonine edition.

² Ibid., q. 62, a. 1, ad 3. “Ad Deum naturaliter ratio et voluntas ordinatur, prout est naturae principium et finis, secundum tamen proportionem naturae. Sed ad ipsum secundum quod est obiectum beatitudinis supernaturalis, ratio et voluntas secundum suam naturam non ordinantur sufficienter.”

³ Pope Pius XI, encyclical *Humani Generis* [August 12, 1950], no. 26. “Alii veram ‘gratuitatem’ ordinis supernaturalis corrumpunt, cum autem Deum entia intellectu praedita condere non posse, quin eadem ad beatificam visionem ordinet et vocet.” Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*. Lateinisch-Deutsch. Ed. Peter Hünermann, 40th ed. (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 2005), no. 3891; this latest edition will subsequently be cited as *DH* followed by the section number. The 1975 edition, edited by Adolf Schönmetzer, will be cited as *DS* followed by the section number.

⁴ St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, OSB (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 39: “Our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.”

and, in the end, pointless. For rational creatures such a resting in God can be nothing short of “seeing God face to face,” that is, contemplating the infinite ocean of God’s essence forever, which constitutes the rational creature’s perfect felicity. Hence for some theologians human beings are creatures hardwired by God for communion with God such that theology has to stipulate a fundamental obligation for God to fulfill this destiny which human beings as creatures, by definition, cannot reach on their own. But such an exigency placed by creation on the Creator might very well go too far—and indeed, such a problematic version of Augustinianism as contended by the sixteenth-century Louvain theologian Michael Bajus was condemned by the Church’s magisterium.⁵ If, however, the Augustinianism of Bajus went too far in stipulating a divine obligation, might it at least be the case that the ultimate end of human fulfillment in the beatific vision is anticipated in the form of an inmost desire for this end, a desire rooted deeper in human nature than intellect and will? Might it be the case that this very desire is ontologically constitutive of what it means to be human in all respects, that is, constitutive of the human being as rational soul or spirit (*Geistseele*) and thus constitutive of the inner dynamic of intellect and will? Might this desire, without entailing any exigency for God to fulfill it, form the essential human élan for transcendence, the profundity of which can only be grasped in the inchoate moments of a completely gratuitous fulfillment, when the desired end begins to inform the human being from above as faith, hope, and love? Is the human being always made essentially for communion with God, such that the incarnate Son, the eternal God-Man, not only represents the prototype of the ultimate end of humanity, of genuine human fulfillment in the beatific vision, but also anticipates the destiny of indeed all creatures, the universal *apokatastasis*? Is human nature, due to its constitutive end being genuinely transcendent, already originally graced in a way such that the inchoate dynamic fulfillment of this end must be understood as an intensification—albeit an infinite intensification—of this original grace to its eventual fulfillment and vice versa, the original grace as nothing else than the very anticipation of the eventual fulfillment? In short, isn’t it all a matter of fundamentally the same grace, just of gradations in intensity? Isn’t human nature itself most fundamentally but a function of grace? This type of answer, which takes its

⁵ One of the theses condemned in Pope Pius V’s bull “Ex omnibus afflictionibus” (1567) claims: “Humanae naturae sublimatio et exaltatio in consortium divinae naturae debita fuit integritati primae condicionis, et proinde naturalis dicenda est, et non supernaturalis.” *DH*, no. 1921.

patronage from Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, finds its most brilliant Eastern-Orthodox voice in the twentieth century in Sergei Bulgakov, is most prominently represented in the Western Catholic tradition in a highly nuanced form in the theology of Henri de Lubac, and has been recently radicalized by the Anglican theologian John Milbank in his Bulgakovian reading of Henri de Lubac's theology.

Another type of answer, however, begins with Psalm 8: "What is man that thou art mindful of him and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" (Ps 8:4 RSV) The human being is a fragile creature with a limited life span, prone to all kinds of deficiencies of a physical, moral, and intellectual kind, surely a rational creature, but one whose intellect even in its highest flights of abstraction and speculation remains earthbound, limited by the exigencies of space, time, the deliverances of the senses, and the corruptibility of the body. Moreover, human beings are creatures whose nature is deeply wounded by original sin and whose concrete life is burdened and diminished by a dense web of personal and systemic sin. According to this type of answer, Christ became incarnate first and foremost because of and in response to human sin, for the sake of salvation and not primarily to perfect creation by inchoately ushering in its transcendent end.

And what about a natural desire for the vision of God? Like Abraham having not the slightest inkling about his eventual calling and surely no desire for it, but being unexpectedly and inexplicably called and following the call, like Israel being created out of the "nothingness" of Egyptian slavery and being called to something for which it had no antecedent desire whatsoever of its own (Lv 19:2), "the many" (Mk 10:45) from Israel and the nations are called to a supernatural destiny categorically transcending the range of human imagination and hence desire, a destiny that grants its own supernatural desire with the call to it, and a fulfillment of the destiny in a glory of such utter transcendence that human nature can only be elevated by God to such a state. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:9–10a RSV). Because the human being has been made capable for this end (*capax Dei*) by God, human nature is in no way transmuted into something else by such an end. However, since this end so utterly transcends every aspect of created human nature, there can be no innate natural desire whatsoever in the human being for this end. Heavenly beatitude is as categorically different from earthly felicity as is God from creation. Hence the desire for the former cannot be innate in human nature (whereas desire for the latter indeed is) but must be in and of itself a gift from above. However, in order to perfect human nature instead of transmuting it, this

gift from above must indeed be met by a corresponding conditional desire, hence a desire not *innate* to human nature itself, but *elicited*. This unique, conditional openness to the supernatural, the attainment of God, has been understood as a specific obediential potency, *specific* because of the very constitution of the human rational soul and its intellective and volitional faculties. This type of answer finds its patronage in the late Augustine, was deepened and nuanced by Thomas Aquinas, was developed variously as well as controversially by the Thomist commentatorial tradition (partially in reaction to Bajanism as well as Jansenism), and has deeply informed Catholic theology until the middle of the twentieth century.

The Controversy over *la nouvelle théologie*

These variant types of answers to the question concerning the “nature and destiny of man” informed the most significant and intense theological battle among Catholic theologians in the middle of the twentieth century. The argument erupted between what was at the time a dominant neo-scholastic Thomism (predominantly the French Dominican Thomism of Marie-Michel Labourdette⁶ and the “Thomism of the strict observance,” represented at the Angelicum in Rome first and foremost by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange)⁷ and an emerging movement, dubbed very early on by its adversaries as *la nouvelle théologie*, which after a period of marginalization in the wake of the encyclical *Humani generis* (August 12, 1950) became the avant-garde and eventually with and after Vatican II the dominant theological movement.⁸ Arguably, the very center of the debate, the eye of the storm, was formed by the collision of two variant overall theological visions, the one informed by Gregory of Nyssa’s reception of Origen, and the other by Thomas Aquinas’s reception of the late Augustine. However, many other complex issues informed the controversy and contributed to its acrimonious nature. A tightly interconnected set of questions were (and continue to be) involved, including:

⁶ For a commemorative volume of his largely forgotten contribution, see “Un maître en théologie: Le Père Marie-Michel Labourdette, OP,” *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992).

⁷ See now for a very accessible introduction to the person and work, Richard Peddicord, OP, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2005).

⁸ For a helpfully nuanced account of this historically as well as theologically complex controversy, see Aidan Nichols, OP, “Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie,” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 1–19.

1. the nature and method of theology and its proper discourse;
2. the role of metaphysics (Thomistic, Scotist, or Suarezian) in the constitution of theological arguments and
 - a. the philosophical question of a natural teleology and its theological interpretation, as well as
 - b. the relationship between philosophical and theological knowledge;
3. the role and method of the interpretation of Scripture as informing theological discourse;
4. the role of the patristic Western and especially Eastern theological tradition for contemporary theology;
5. the interpretation of the genesis of “modernity,” its subtle influence on Baroque scholasticism and hence also on neo-scholastic theology;
6. the place and role of the *nouvelle théologie* in general and Henri de Lubac’s theology in particular before, during, and after Vatican II, as well as the specific issue whether Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Humani generis* indeed aimed at Henri de Lubac’s early work;⁹ and, underlying all of the previous questions,
7. the correct method of interpreting and receiving the theological as well as philosophical thought of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁰

This struggle had its root and beginning in pre-WWII France and focused initially on two projects launched by the French Jesuits, the two series *Sources Chrétiennes* and *Théologie*. Both series, each in its own particular way, were seen to question and challenge more or less directly the principles and methods of neo-scholastic theology. The book, however, around

⁹ Feingold and Milbank agree in the judgment that the encyclical indeed did, while Henri de Lubac and many de Lubac scholars think the encyclical, as a matter of fact, did not aim at his work. See on this question the instructive introduction by David L. Schindler to the 1998 edition of the English translation of Henri de Lubac’s *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder & Herder/The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), esp. xxi ff, as well as Henri de Lubac himself in his *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Elisabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 60–79, 89–90.

¹⁰ There was indeed also a political context to this conflict accounting in part for its particularly acrimonious nature. See Nichols, “Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie,” 8ff.

which the theological conflict became most intense, was Henri de Lubac's monograph *Surnaturel*,¹¹ which appeared in 1946 in the series *Théologie*.

The contended issues that came to a head with the publication of *Surnaturel* and the subsequent theological conflict are far from dead and bygone. That they remain *quaestiones disputatae* is plainly documented by numerous noteworthy publications, including two from 2001, one from 2002, and another from 2005: *Surnaturel: Une controverse au coeur du thomisme au XXe siècle* [Actes du colloque organisé par l'Institut Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin les 26–27 mai 2000 à Toulouse] (Toulouse: *Revue Thomiste*, 2001); Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001); Georges Cottier, *Le Désir de Dieu: Sur les Traces de Saint Thomas* (Paris: Éditions Parole et Silence, 2002); and John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, IN: Eerdmans, 2005).

The following remarks are as fragmentary as they are preliminary in their refusal, in such a limited space, even to gesture toward a conclusive interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, a detailed reconstruction of the debate elicited by de Lubac's *Surnaturel*, or a comprehensive engagement of de Lubac's own work. To do justice to any one of these worthy goals would require nothing less than an extensive monograph.¹² Rather, I shall have to confine myself to submitting some observations about the most recent interventions into this debate.

Observation 1: Lawrence Feingold's Provocations, or Why Feingold Is Not Feinberg and Why the Former Should Receive a Serious Hearing

The present symposium has been elicited by the recent work of Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001). His study constitutes a contribution of rather far-reaching historical and doctrinal implications, sufficiently controversial to amount to a serious scholarly provocation. To put it in the briefest way: Feingold, in a study more extensive in scope than *Surnaturel* itself, substantially challenges the charge of Henri de Lubac—now

¹¹ Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques. Nouvelle édition avec la traduction intégrale des citations latines et grecques* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991). For a very instructive introduction to *Surnaturel* and the ensuing conflict, see Bernard Sesboué, SJ, "Le *Surnaturel* chez Henri de Lubac," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 80 (1992): 373–408.

¹² See the recent extensive study by Éric de Moulins-Beaufort, *Anthropologie et Mystique selon Henri de Lubac: "L'esprit de l'homme" ou la présence de Dieu en l'homme* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2003).

widely accepted—that much of the Thomistic commentatorial tradition, first and foremost Cajetan, introduced “renaissance distortions” into their interpretation of Thomas Aquinas and so rather profoundly obfuscated the authentic teaching of the *doctor communis*, especially regarding the relation between human nature and the vision of God. For de Lubac and his Jesuit confrères, as Aidan Nichols aptly put it, “the true ‘nouvelle théologie’ was the late Scholasticism defended à l’outrance by Garrigou and with much more nuance by Labourdette. This was the upstart theology alien not only to the Fathers but the Golden Age of the thirteenth century itself.”¹³

Feingold’s challenge of this widely received and settled notion is indeed not a minor provocation. In his recent opusculé, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural*, John Milbank characterizes Feingold’s work as “arch-reactionary,” “written to reinstate a Garrigou-Lagrange type position,” and his exegetical method as “much like that of the proof-texting of a Protestant fundamentalist,” hence representing the “die-hard,” “palaeolithic” neo-Thomism. Moreover, in a less than subtle form of invective, Milbank denies his interlocutor the honor of being named correctly by consistently misnaming him throughout as “Feinberg.”¹⁴ The readers of Milbank’s treatise—most of whom in all likelihood are neither experts in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Henri de Lubac, or Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in particular nor of Catholic theology in general—are thus invited to entertain the suspicion of some sinister right-wing ecclesiastical conspiracy. And since Feingold’s tome is, quite unfortunately, virtually impossible to lay hands on as well as (should one succeed in getting hold of it) a much more demanding read than Milbank’s opusculé, very few of Milbank’s readers will be able to double-check the all too quick dismissal of a serious piece of theological scholarship the implications of which are, however, unsurprisingly, less than supportive of Milbank’s own project. But why should anyone care about the truth of the charge if one of the presently leading opinion formers of contemporary Anglo-American Protestant theology has sent out such weighty signals as “arch-reactionary, die-hard, palaeolithic neo-Thomism”? The associations seem to be all too clear to leave any doubt about the purpose of such antecedent rhetorical disqualification. Anyone willing seriously to consider Feingold’s arguments (and for

¹³ Nichols, “Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie,” 17.

¹⁴ Milbank, *Suspended*, 26, 79, 84. The possibility, however, that the consistent use of the misnomer “Feinberg” simply reflects a neglect of contingent details, cannot be definitively excluded, since, after all, the reader has to recognize behind “Jacques Mainain” the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain (25, note 9).

that matter Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas), by the sheer dynamic of the connotations entailed, must be a supporter of the Spanish Inquisition, a defender of the Papal States, and an admirer of the Franco-, Vichy, and Pinochet regimes in addition to anything else implied by association as arch-reactionary. It is sad to see such an astute and critical mind as Milbank's submit in such an unnuanced and uncritical way to the thoroughly modern political geography of "left" and "right" in order to situate and prejudice matters doctrinal and theological, a habit, surely by now as widespread in contemporary theology as it is thoughtless, and achieving nothing else than comfortably condemning matters of theological enquiry and discourse to the Procrustean bed of a policing political correctness and hence of the final domestication of matters ecclesial and theological under the extrinsically superimposed rubrics of political liberalism.

Because of this unfavorable treatment, if not to say simply unjustified dismissal of Feingold's work in Milbank's footnotes, in the following I will give generous space to Feingold's own voice, probably more than should be regarded as useful, were the book easily available. What has elicited Milbank's ire? Three questions are indicative of a larger dispute: (1) whether de Lubac's critique of key Thomist commentators, especially Cajetan, obtains; (2) the correct interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's thought on the exceedingly complex subject of the *desiderium naturale visionis Dei*; and (3) how theology itself is to be done and how it relates to philosophy. Milbank has a high stake in all three questions insofar as he is interested in presenting de Lubac as "along with Sergei Bulgakov, one of the two truly great theologians of the twentieth century,"¹⁵ (the former's *Surnaturel* is "arguably the key text of the twentieth century")¹⁶ and in drafting both for his own particular project—in marked contrast to Hans Urs von Balthasar¹⁷—into a vision that, like

¹⁵ Ibid., 104.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ The student, close friend, and translator of de Lubac's works into German who, according to Milbank's intimations, never fully understood de Lubac's vision, and therefore—again for Milbank a regrettable theological deficiency—made more substantive concessions to the encyclical *Humani Generis* than his mentor de Lubac was ever willing to do. According to Milbank, von Balthasar's capitulation to *Humani Generis* can be clearly discerned "in the way von Balthasar's dogmatics seems to float free of ontological conceptualizations into a 'mythical' realm that is highly voluntarist and personalist, and in the end at times only tendentially orthodox" (13). One not only wonders what the normative point of reference of Milbank's use of the term "orthodox" is ("Radical Orthodoxy"?), but also whether the deep and explicitly acknowledged indebtedness of Hans Urs von Balthasar to

Sergei Bulgakov's,¹⁸ is ultimately indebted to Origen of Alexandria, a vision "at once more strictly orthodox *and* more radically humanist." In short, de Lubac is assigned the role of forerunner to the self-proclaimed movement of Radical Orthodoxy and its continuation of "Origen's vision of *apokatastasis*: the universal Christological salvation of spirits and through this, the eternal re-establishment of all things."¹⁹

It is precisely Milbank's consistently Bulgakovian reading of Henri de Lubac and his tendency to receive Aquinas's thought in as neo-platonic or Dionysian a way as possible that makes Feingold's book so irritating for him. While Milbank's project is neither guided nor framed by the norms and criteria of Catholic theology, his reaction is nevertheless indicative of how not a few contemporary Catholic theologians might react to Feingold's book as well. For Feingold indeed challenges numerous assumptions received and settled in the first three decades after Vatican II. The first is methodological: In the wake of neo-Marxist sociology, the linguistic turn in Anglo-Saxon philosophy, and the hermeneutical and poststructuralist developments in continental philosophy, theology for many a contemporary Catholic theologian can only be conceived as defensible and intelligible in a thoroughly historical-contextualist and constructivist mode. Every theological claim must needs be advanced, read, and assessed in light of the historical, communal, and political context in which it is produced and to which it is addressed. The only way to forward arguments is by situating and out-narrating opponents as well as offering rhetorical and aesthetic appeals leading to the volitional as well as conceptual conversion of the interlocutor. Propositional discourse as informed by metaphysical realism and discursive, conceptual argumentation is therefore at present widely dismissed as a suspiciously disembodied and philosophically outdated mode of speculative theology, oblivious to the historical, pragmatic, and practice-oriented nature of theology itself and thus vulnerable to being constantly

the metaphysics of being as advanced by the two twentieth-century, Thomist philosophers Gustav Siewerth and Ferdinand Ulrich, must have been a form of subtle self-deception, not to mention the form of self-deception exercised in his small, but weighty book on de Lubac. For a critique as concise as devastating of Milbank's reading of von Balthasar's theology, see the instructive review essay by Edward T. Oakes, SJ, "On Milbank's *The Suspended Middle*," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4 (2006): 667–96, esp. 682ff.

¹⁸ Bulgakov's theological vision—thoroughly impressive in its systematic coherence, comprehensive scope, and speculative penetration—can possibly be best appreciated in his late work, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

¹⁹ Milbank, *Suspended*, 108.

co-opted by deeply entrenched as well as concealed discourses of power and interest. This wholesale rejection of what was seen as the ossified discourse of textbook neo-scholasticism was accompanied—in the wake of Heidegger as well as Wittgenstein—by hailing the “end of metaphysics” in general and the Aristotelian Thomist metaphysics in particular. And since—on the basis of Leo XIII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris*—Thomas Aquinas had again been instantiated as the loadstar of a renewed Catholic philosophy, according to an understanding that interpreted Vatican II as the license to break with that very tradition, he had to be put aside as outmoded too.

Yet in recent years, there has occurred a remarkable revival of interest in Thomas Aquinas’s thought (a revival to which Milbank himself has contributed). However, this revival, for the most part, is eager not to steer again a course of confrontation with the meanwhile well-established *nouvelle théologie*. Rather, this Thomist renewal—in the wake of Chenu and Torrell—characteristically draws on the very best of the historical reconstruction of an authentic Thomas behind the interpretative discourse of the once greatly esteemed, but now equally widely despised Thomist commentatorial tradition, a Thomas whose theology is properly foregrounded and again linked to its original “Sitz im Leben” in the contemplative tradition of Dominican spirituality. At the same time, an increasing philosophical interest in Aquinas has reemerged, but one much more attentive to the historical and social embeddedness of philosophical discourse (Alasdair MacIntyre), in dialogue with analytic philosophy of religion (Norman Kretzmann, Eleonore Stump, et al.) as well as post-Wittgensteinian philosophy of language (Victor Preller, Cornelius Ernst, Herbert McCabe, Fergus Kerr, David Burrell).

A large part of Feingold’s provocation rests in the fact that he advances his enquiry and arguments as if none of the above had ever happened. There are no nods or even the slightest acknowledgment into the directions of any of these more recent forms of Thomism. Rather, he concentrates exclusively on Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus (as well as some Scotists), the Thomist commentators (including Suárez) up to Garrigou-Lagrange and Henri de Lubac. The reason for what seems to be a narrow-minded obsession with the “Thomism of the strict observance,” its interlocutors, and critics is that the scope of his enquiry corresponds with quite appropriate precision to the one in which de Lubac advances his critique of most of the Thomist commentatorial tradition on the question of nature and the supernatural.

Moreover and possibly more importantly, Feingold provokes by operating in a mode of discourse very unfamiliar to theological readers by now largely unaccustomed to the conceptual precision and rigor once cultivated

by the “schoolmen.” Differently put, Feingold’s mode of discourse is highly mimetic of the virtually forgotten tradition of Thomist commentators. Hence his *modus operandi* can arguably be understood, precisely by way of his eventual engagement of de Lubac, to continue and thereby help reinstate a particular tradition of discourse (MacIntyre), a move that can be described as “arch-reactionary” or as “prophetically proleptic” or even as “radically orthodox” depending on what one thinks to be at stake in the very recovery of such a discourse of scholastic enquiry and argumentation. Surely the macro-issue ultimately is whether to interpret what is properly Augustinian and properly Thomist by way of an Origenist and Bulgakovian vision (like Milbank) of the eternal God-Man (entailing, by a Bulgakovian “necessity” of love, that is, of ultimately irresistible sophianization, the *apokatastasis ton panton*),²⁰ or whether to receive what is properly Augustinian and properly Thomist on the predestination of the saints as well as on gratuitous, efficient grace by way of the theology of the late Augustine as received by the Second Synod of Orange (529),²¹ as confirmed in the late theology of grace in Thomas Aquinas, and as reconfirmed by the Council of Trent.²²

The more proximate, but also more implicit dispute between Feingold and de Lubac, however, is over *how* to access and interpret the interpretation of the Thomist commentators itself. What makes Feingold so provocative is that the *form* of his discourse—in stark contrast to de Lubac’s way of reading the commentators—is shaped not by a historical hermeneutic but by reconstructing and thus entering their own way of conducting a speculative theological enquiry, a mimetic exercise reconstructing and thus continuing the commentators’ discursive mimesis of Aquinas. In his own very attempt of retrieving an even older form of

²⁰ Bulgakov, in logical consequence, applies what he calls “the necessary principles of universal salvation” (518) to Satan: “Satan’s very being, his createdness by the omniscient God, is, so to speak, an ontological proof of the inevitability of his future salvation. Even Satan in his madness does not have the power to overcome the fact of his own being, its divine foundation, that is, the sophianicity of all creation, by virtue of which ‘God will be all in all.’ Satan cannot fail to be convinced by his own nature of the insanity of seeking freedom in self-willfulness rather than in knowledge of truth, which alone can give true freedom. ‘Liar and the father of lies’ who ‘abode not in the truth’ (Jn 8:44), he will end up by subordinating himself to the truth, and evil will thereby disappear completely from God’s creation.” Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 517.

²¹ See *DH*, nos. 370–400.

²² “Hoc concilium, utpote solummodo provinciale plurimis ignotum et mox per saecula oblivioni traditum, disputationibus demum Concilii Tridentini memoriae redditum est.” Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 36th ed., 131.

theology, de Lubac, on the contrary, transposes the speculative theological discourse of the commentators into a historical-hermeneutical frame of inquiry (this transposition ironically forming nothing but a quite characteristic move of critical scholarship in a genuinely modern sense, and as such completely extrinsic and foreign to the *modus operandi* of the commentators). Hence what might look to a reader uninitiated into the discursive habits of the commentators like the equivalent of “Protestant fundamentalism” and its propositionalist proof-texting (a charge that the modern liberal Protestant theologians in the Enlightenment tradition liked to place onto the threshold of the scholasticism of Lutheran and Reformed Orthodoxy) represents in Feingold’s case his way of *entering* the commentatorial tradition with its propositional-discursive mode of operation and, moreover, turning this mode of operation consistently and cogently against de Lubac’s interpretation of the commentators as well as his interpretation of Aquinas. In other words, Feingold refuses to engage de Lubac in the discursive mode by way of which the latter chose to critique the commentators, that is, by way of a primarily historical exegesis of theological language, its development and use, and the related development and flux of theological ideas.²³ Rather, Feingold insists on engaging de Lubac’s own account by way of the metaphysical realism (which makes his work a “Garrigou-Langrange type position”)²⁴ and its rigorous discourse in which the Thomist commentators conducted their interpretation and enquiry.²⁵

This particular conflict opens up wide-ranging questions on the nature of the relationship between thought and language and more specifically on what the relationship between the broadly historical (of ideas, concepts, motives) and the strictly speculative and discursive should be in the interpretation of the oeuvre of Thomas Aquinas. Feingold provokes by returning to and, by implication, rehabilitating an older discursive tradition (albeit, and here the *nouvelle théologie* is unquestionably right, not *the*

²³ One of the most paradigmatic studies in which this approach comes clearest to the fore is de Lubac’s *Corpus Mysticum: L’Eucharistie et L’Eglise au Moyen Age* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1949).

²⁴ Milbank, *Suspended*, 26, note 10.

²⁵ Most recently the Aristotelian Thomist realism of how world, concepts, and language relate (implicitly shared by Feingold with the Thomist commentators and a set of assumptions to which indeed de Lubac’s work is submitted in Feingold’s engagement of it) has been very ably reconstrued and defended in relation to philosophy’s “linguistic turn” by John P. O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

oldest way of doing theology) and submitting de Lubac's theology to the conceptual rigor of this tradition. Feingold is so irritating because he picks up the ball where it was dropped—with the broad acceptance of the theological approach advanced by Henri de Lubac and other representatives of the *nouvelle théologie*—without signaling awareness of what has happened in Catholic theology since. For a doctoral dissertation this is a forgivable sin; if Feingold ever were to consider publishing a version of this work in the form of a book for a wider audience, he would do well to find a way to acknowledge, if not engage, at the least the reemergence of a Thomism in many instances significantly different from the one Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange represented.

However, although Feingold's approach is for sure "untimely," I can see no *prima facie* reason simply to dismiss him as intellectually unworthy of anything but less than subtle forms of scorn and contempt. On the contrary, in light of the fact that Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* has pointed out that the historical-hermeneutical approach is not sufficient for the full task of Catholic theology, but that Catholic theology's commitment to the truth requires a genuine speculative mode of operation,²⁶ Feingold's approach might not be exactly as untimely as it could seem at firsthand to those deeply shaped by the intellectual conventions of the last forty years. Moreover, it should be noted that, one might say, ironically, Feingold displays a historical consciousness *sui generis*, one present in Milbank (in significant contrast to de Lubac's *de facto* operation) only in form of its negation. Both de Lubac and Feingold, in their very dispute over the right interpretation of the Thomist tradition, are highly aware of the conceptual as well as speculative exigencies caused by Bajanism as well as Jansenism and their condemnation, in addition to other developments up to and including the encyclical *Humani Generis*. De Lubac and Feingold occupy the same ecclesial ground, with a shared, even if variously interpreted, set of doctrinal norms and magisterial decisions.

²⁶ "With regard to the *intellectus fidei*, a prime consideration must be that the divine Truth 'proposed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and rightly interpreted by the Church's teaching [Aquinas, *ST* II–II, q. 5, a. 3, ad 2] enjoys an innate intelligibility, so logically consistent that it stands as an authentic body of knowledge. The *intellectus fidei* expounds this truth, not only in grasping the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions, in which the Church's teaching is framed, but also, indeed primarily, in bringing to light the salvific meaning of these propositions for the individual and for humanity. . . . For its part, *dogmatic theology* must be able to articulate the universal meaning of the mystery of the One and Triune God and of the economy of salvation, both as a narrative and, above all, in the form of argument." Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 66; cf. also nos. 95–98.

Milbank's interpretation of de Lubac is, on the contrary, to say the least, notably unencumbered by the normative doctrinal commitments that inform the horizon shared by de Lubac and Feingold, unencumbered to the degree that he interprets de Lubac's modification, in light of the concerns expressed in the encyclical *Humani Generis*, of his early *Surnaturel* in the later two volumes *The Mystery of the Supernatural*²⁷ and *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*²⁸ as a purely extrinsic form of deference to magisterial pressure.²⁹ Simultaneously, Milbank's dismissal of von Balthasar's theological project is largely fueled by the impression that, allegedly unlike de Lubac, the former took the encyclical *Humani Generis* too seriously to heart by presumably submitting to some version of nature-grace extrinsicism.³⁰ However, it might never have really occurred to Milbank that neither Henri de Lubac nor Hans Urs von Balthasar nor Lawrence Feingold, nor for that matter any of the Catholic theologians and philosophers adverted to in his small book, would want to take the stance that a happily unencumbered oppositionalism to the Church's magisterium and the normative dogmatic tradition is intrinsic to the role and vocation of the Catholic theologian. (In the case of Milbank's own criteriology, it remains utterly unclear by what normative criteria Hans Urs von Balthasar should be understood as only marginally orthodox, Henri de Lubac fully, or even radically, orthodox, and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, by implication, heterodox—other than those subjectively entertained by the author.) The struggle between the sets of concerns that de Lubac stands for and the ones Feingold represents, however, only become fully visible and truly weighty in a theological context in which the First Vatican Council as well as the Second Vatican Council matter normatively and in which the encyclicals *Aeterni Patris*, *Humani Generis*, and *Fides et Ratio* as expressions of the pope's ordinary magisterium continue to inform the work of theology, its methods and modes of discourse. Hence, the wider question, not only but especially for Catholic theology, which Milbank's situating of Henri de Lubac in his own project and his all too facile dismissal of Feingold's defense of the commentatorial tradition opens up, is the question in which way and to what degree theology's

²⁷ *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965) [*Le mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1965)]. See the instructive introduction by David L. Schindler in the new 1998 edition.

²⁸ *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) [*Augustinisme et théologie moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1965)].

²⁹ Milbank, *Suspended*, 35ff.

³⁰ See Edward T. Oakes's trenchant critique of this aspect of Milbank's construal.

formal object is deeply informed by the normative dogmatic tradition as well as the pope's magisterium. Theologians who operate under the presupposition that the dogmatic tradition as well as the living magisterium constitutively inform theology's formal object will indeed assume that the concerns expressed in the encyclical *Humani Generis* about the enduring importance of maintaining a hypothetical state of pure nature, and hence the theonomic principle of nature, are of ongoing relevance for the task of theology and will indeed assume that the magisterial rejection of Bajanism and Jansenism has lasting implications for the way the gratuity of the supernatural order is theologically conceived. If there is indeed an ongoing, legitimate difference possible about the above questions, a productive theological conflict and tension, the mode of discourse in which such an engagement takes place might lean more to the historical-hermeneutical mode as advanced by the *nouvelle théologie* or more to the speculative-discursive mode as advanced by the Dominican Thomism that engaged and criticized the *nouvelle théologie*, but in either mode it will want to take account of the Church's doctrinal tradition as well as the living ordinary magisterium. It seems that Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar occupy a terrain of normative doctrinal and theological commitments shared with Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Lawrence Feingold that Milbank can only dismiss as the regrettable submission to the purely extrinsic pressures of dogma and magisterium, the truth claims of which consequently make little if any difference in his reconstruction of Henri de Lubac's theological project.

*Observation 2: The Aquinas of Milbank's Radicalized Bulgakovian
Lubacianism Made Strange, or Aquinas the "Other"*

The question whether, and if so, to what degree Milbank's intensification of de Lubac's theology along Bulgakovian lines is legitimate cannot be pursued at this point. However, some remarks are in order pertaining to the reading of Thomas Aquinas he advances to foster such an intensification. Appealing to recent French philosophers of religion and philosophical theologians Courtine, Boulnois, Marion, Schutz, and Lacoste, Milbank stresses three motives, which in their combined force presumably give Thomas Aquinas himself a rather Bulgakovian appearance: "first, spirit as intrinsically linked to grace, second, the entire cosmos as drawn through humanity to beatitude; third, grace as gratuitous because a gift can be a gift without contrast to gift."³¹ A bit further on, a fourth moment emerges, this

³¹ Milbank, *Suspended*, 88.

time unequivocally negative: “the regime of pure nature.”³² While Milbank rightly emphasizes that, according to Aquinas, “Adam was created from the outset with the reception of grace,”³³ the very rendition “regime of pure nature” signals a profound misunderstanding: For Aquinas as much as for any other of the scholastic theologians there could never have been some “regime” that would not simply be identical with the execution of divine providence, that is, divine governance. Hence, either the state of pure nature is assumed (as it is not in Aquinas) to belong—even as an instance—to the extant providential order as it coincides with the economy of salvation, or “pure nature” is assumed as hypothetically obtaining in another order of divine providence (as it is in Aquinas). Because of frequent confusions regarding this latter topic, I will take it up first. Next, I shall turn to the question of the fundamental and indispensable difference between nature and grace, the ensuing double gratuity, and finally, by drawing upon St. Thomas’s teaching on predestination, address the Bulgakovian dynamic of the entire cosmos being drawn through humanity to beatitude. Finally, I will briefly address the question whether the rational creature is “intrinsically linked to grace.”

In the course of my remarks I am going to consider texts primarily of the later Aquinas, that is, of his Roman period and of his second Parisian regency in order to make strange the Aquinas proposed by Milbank’s radicalized Bulgakovian Lubacianism. During his Roman period St. Thomas, for the first time, had direct access to the full text of such important treatises of the late Augustine as *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, *De correptione et gratia*, *De dono perseverantiae*, and *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, and possibly came across echoes of the widely lost and forgotten canons of the Second Synod of Orange—an encounter with a salutary impact on his late theology of grace that ever so subtly promotes the new, contingent, and supernatural gratuity of grace above and beyond the ontological thrust of the exitus-reditus scheme.³⁴ These texts from Aquinas serve as pointers to a significant strand of thought in his later theology on the specific gratuity of grace, texts that strongly suggest that the commentators first and foremost

³² Ibid., 89.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ For detailed accounts of this rather complex matter, see Henri Bouillard, *Conversion et Grace chez S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 97–102; Max Seckler, *Instinkt und Glaubenswille nach Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1961), 90–98; Joseph P. Wawrykow, *God's Grace and Human Action: "Merit" in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 266–76.

continue conceptually to unfold the implications of his theology of grace. Moreover, these texts paradigmatically represent central strands in Aquinas's theology that strongly resist an adoption of the *doctor communis* into an overarching theological scheme shaped by the visions of Origen and Bulgakov.

1. The hypothetical state of pure nature as entailed in the notion of differing orders of divine providence: De malo, q. 5, a. 1, ad 15

While St. Thomas never assumed an extant state of pure nature, he explicitly entertained as a legitimate thought the possibility of a state of pure nature in a different order of divine providence. Such an assumption, however, presupposes the relative integrity of the principle of nature, both ontologically as well as epistemically. We find these matters quite instructively addressed by St. Thomas in *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 15.

In *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1,³⁵ St. Thomas treats the question "Is Privation of the Vision of God a Fitting Punishment for Original Sin?" and defends the position that indeed the privation of the vision of God is a fitting punishment for original sin. He does so by arguing that if two things belong to something's perfection—the first being capable of a great good but with significant external help, the second needing no or little help but being a small good—then the first is still far better than the second. Hence it is much better to attain a great good with much help than to attain a little good with little or no help at all. "Therefore, rational creatures surpass every other kind of creature in being capable of the highest good in beholding and enjoying God, although the sources from their own nature do not suffice to attain it, and they need the help of God's grace to attain it."³⁶

Thomas emphasizes up front that to attain the perfect end of the beatific vision, every rational creature—be it angel or human—is in need of a particular divine help, sanctifying grace. However, due to the particular constitution of the human nature, it being an essentially composite nature of soul and body, an additional help is necessary, namely original justice:

³⁵ As is often the case so also here, Aquinas addresses in the first article of a particular question the most central issue and lays it out in such a way that it provides the basic structure of how the rest of the articles tackling other aspects of the question are ordered.

³⁶ *De malo*, q. 5 a. 1, c.: "Creatura ergo rationalis in hoc preeminet omni creature, quod capax est summi boni per diuinam uisionem et fruitionem, licet ad hoc consequendum nature proprie principia non sufficiant, sed ad hoc indigeat auxilio diuine gratie." *The De malo of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 408. In the following, this edition will be referred to as *De malo*, Davies edition.

If the body and the senses be left to their nature, as it were, they burden and hinder the intellect from being able freely to attain the highest reaches of contemplation. And this help was original justice, by which the mind of human beings would be so subject to God that their lower powers and their very bodies would be completely subject to them, nor would their reason impede them from being able to tend toward God. . . . [T]his help, whereby the body is under the control of the soul, and sense powers under the control of the intellect, is almost a disposition for the help whereby the human mind is ordained to see and enjoy God.³⁷

Original justice, being gratuitously given *to* what has been created and hence to be distinguished from human nature *per se*, is a quasi-disposition for the help of sanctifying grace. Hence, sanctifying grace acts upon a human nature readily fit for such an operation, the one being neither intrinsic nor extrinsic to the other, but of a perfect and perfectly gratuitous fittingness (*convenientia*). Original sin, however, destroys this quasi-disposition, the help of original justice, as the result of which sanctifying grace—that is, “the help, whereby the human mind is ordained to see and enjoy God”—is withdrawn as the fitting punishment.

And when persons by sinning cast away the means whereby they were disposed to obtain a good, they deserve that the good that they were disposed to obtain be taken away. And the very taking away of the good is a fitting punishment for the sin. And so the fitting punishment of original sin is the taking away of grace and thereby of the vision of God for which grace ordains human beings.³⁸

Thomas clearly distinguishes in this question among (1) a *composite nature*, that is, a reality to be intellectually grasped according to its proper constituents, that is, as species, irrespective of the particular *state*—original justice—this composite nature is to be found in at the beginning, (2) the specific gratuitous help of *original justice*, being not integral to human nature, but rather constitutive of the particular *state* in which created humanity originally existed according to the given providential order, this original justice being the disposition for (3) the help of *sanctifying grace*, both helps being categorically different from the created nature and also different in kind from each other.

Let us consider now objection 15. This important objection denies that the privation of the vision of God is a fitting punishment for original sin, which goes like this: If human beings had been endowed with just

³⁷ Ibid., 409.

³⁸ Ibid.

natural powers (*homo naturalibus constitutus*) and had never sinned, they would have been indeed without the vision of God (which in any case can only be attained by grace). But since punishment is rightly owed for sin, the deprival of the vision of God cannot be called punishment for original sin. Thomas responds to this objection that humans endowed with only natural powers (*homo in solis naturalibus constitutus*) would indeed be without the divine vision if they were to die in such a supposed state (precluding hence any further divine agency before the separation of body and soul); however, this lack of the divine vision would in no way be punitive, since “the debt of not having it” would not apply to them: “For it is one thing, not to be bound to have, which does not have the nature of punishment but of defect only, and it is another thing to be bound not to have, which does have the nature of punishment.”³⁹

Aquinas is unquestionably entertaining here the concept of a *hypothetical state of pure nature*, hypothetical because under the present order of providence such a state clearly never obtained.⁴⁰ The obtaining order of providence, on the contrary, coincides with the economy of salvation, according to which the human being, as created, was originally gifted with the help of original justice and elevated by sanctifying grace. To put it differently, according to Aquinas—and as Milbank rightly emphasizes—humanity was originally created immediately in a state of grace. However, another order of providence seems for St. Thomas hypothetically entertainable in a perfectly legitimate way, and under such an order the non-attainability of the divine vision seems also to be perfectly thinkable. What seems, by entailment, also to be perfectly conceivable in his answer to the objection is the continuity of the self-same human nature under different orders of providence. Consequently, the state of graced nature presupposes an anterior created nature, the latter never *de facto*

³⁹ This translation, which I prefer to the one offered by Richard Regan in the Davies edition is to be found in St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. John A. Oesterle and Jean T. Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 214. “Aliud est enim non debere habere, quod non habet rationem pene set defectus tantum, et aliud debere non habere, quod habet rationem pene.” *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 15; *De malo*, Davies edition, 412.

⁴⁰ *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1: “Human beings would have been created uselessly and in vain if they were to be unable to attain happiness, as would be the case with anything that cannot obtain its ultimate end. And so, lest human beings begotten with original sin be created uselessly and in vain, God from the beginning of the human race intended a remedy for them by which they would be freed from such frustration, namely, Jesus Christ, the very mediator between God and human beings. And the impediment of original sin could be removed through faith in him.” Davies edition, 409.

obtaining without the former, however being an ontological principle with its own integrity, the two being related to each other by way of a supreme fittingness, but without any intrinsic continuity between each other. For different orders of providence do not entail an ontological transmutation of the human being, nor is the rational soul—while *capax Dei*—becoming something else in a hypothetical order in which the human being is ordered to a lesser felicity than the vision of God. Hence, for Aquinas, the creation of a rational soul, capable of the vision of God, yet destined to a lesser felicity does not seem to be a contradiction in the very created nature itself, nor to constitute a punishment per se. However, in comparison to the *de facto* obtaining providential order, such a lesser felicity can still be characterized by Aquinas as a *defectus*, to be understood rather neutrally as the absence of that which simply was never supposed to be there in the first place.

Reflection about a *hypothetical state of pure nature* seems rather clearly to have its root in Aquinas's own thought rather than to be a retrospective projection of the Thomist commentators. Such reflection, however, entails that God's creative activity insofar as it results in a subsistent reality, in distinct species, obtains ontologically and is hence epistemically accessible as well as intelligible in a multitude of created "natures," including the human nature, quite independently from superadded divine helps and gifts to that nature. This is the case even though in the *de facto* obtaining providential order these helps and gifts were indeed given, according to Aquinas, from the first instance of human existence; one of which (original justice) was destroyed by the fall and the other (sanctifying grace) withdrawn in consequence of it. While human nature remains a constant, subsistent reality under a variety of hypothetical divine providential orders, the superadded divine helps and gifts belong to the *de facto* economy of grace known solely by divine revelation.

Moreover, it is indeed important to emphasize that for Aquinas human nature under the condition of sin in the present order of providence is emphatically not to be understood as the result of a fall into some state of "pure nature." Rather, original sin has affected human nature in such a way that in the present order of providence, after the loss of original justice, human nature is wounded. That is, because of the first sin, human nature is now continuously marked by the deficiency of a disordered disposition (*peccatum naturae*), which antecedes the free exercise of the will (*ST* I–II, qq. 82–83). Hence, St. Thomas consistently differentiates between the concrete historical condition of human nature *sub conditione peccati*, which belongs to the extant order of providence as it coincides with the economy of salvation on the one hand, and on the other hand

a *hypothetical state* of pure nature. What is presupposed by such a nuanced and theologically indispensable differentiation is the relative integrity of the principle of nature, ontologically as well as epistemically. Put differently, the relative integrity of the principle (or the order) of nature is the necessary condition for the possibility of differentiating properly between the realities of creation, creation *sub conditione peccati*, and redemption. Failing to do so would inevitably lead to deficient theological positions, such as doctrines denying sin's impact on human nature, or doctrines defending the essential corruption (allegedly due to original sin) or the essential transmutation (presumably due to deification) of human nature. Hence, it is not accidental at all that St. Thomas defends the necessity of the sacraments as a healing remedy after sin based on this principle: "Man's nature is the same before and after sin, but the *state* of his nature is not the same. Because after sin, the soul, even in its higher part, needs to receive something from corporeal things in order that it may be perfected: whereas man had no need of this *in that state*."⁴¹

2. Desiderium naturae versus desiderium gratiae:

St. Thomas on 2 Corinthians 5, 5–10

For Aquinas, as for all Christian theology, everything that is, is God's gift (*creatio ex nihilo*). However, there is—in the present order of providence as coinciding with the economy of salvation—a second gift. Because God is the giver of both gifts and because the second (sanctifying grace) has to come by way of the first (being), there indeed cannot obtain an essential heterogeneity between them in respect of their origin. At the same time, however, what we might arguably call the *donum primum* and the *donum ultimum* do not simply represent two aspects of the self-same gift. Rather, there obtains a significant difference between both gifts: While God is the omnipotent *first* cause of both gifts, God, being the *sole* cause of the first gift, creation, grants the rational creature proper *secondary* causality in the comprehensive realization of the second gift, beatitude. While the first gift brings about free will by constituting it via God's exclusive creative agency, the second gift involves the proper actualization of free will in the realization of the gift (not, however, in a constitutive,

⁴¹ ST III, q. 61, a. 2, ad 2, emphasis added: "Ad secundum dicendum quod eadem est natura hominis ante peccatum et post peccatum, non tamen est idem naturae status. Nam post peccatum anima, etiam quantum ad superiorem partem, indiget accipere aliquid a corporalibus rebus ad sui perfectionem: quod in illo statu homini necesse non erat."

but in an appropriately accompanying way).⁴² Moreover, the second gift is to be differentiated from the first gift in that (1) the second gift necessarily presupposes the first gift (not in the chronological order, but in the logical as well as ontological orders) while the second gift is not necessarily entailed by the first; (2) the second gift brings the first gift, in the case of the human being, to a gratuitous, ultimate supernatural perfection and fulfillment; (3) the second gift discloses in the case of the rational creature—by initially ordering the first gift, created human nature, to the supernatural end and secondly perfecting it—the intrinsic ontological openness of the first for the second gift as well as the former's surpassing fittingness for such a supernatural perfection; and (4) the second gift is all of this without canceling out the connatural, proportionate end that comes with the prior gift, created human nature.

A quite remarkable instance of how St. Thomas distinguishes such a connatural end and the respective desire directed to it from an end that is infinitely disproportionate to human nature and hence requires the distinct supernatural desire that corresponds to such an end, can be found in one of Aquinas's commentaries on the Pauline corpus of letters: 2 Corinthians 5:5–10⁴³. In lectures 1 and 2 of his commentary on 2 Corinthians 5, Aquinas distinguishes between a *desiderium naturae* and a *desiderium gratiae*,⁴⁴ and displays the subtle dynamic between the two in this difficult passage of St. Paul's text. St. Thomas begins his second lecture (on vv. 5–10) with the

⁴² I regard Bernard Lonergan's early study *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 1 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) still to be the benchmark analysis of Aquinas's profound treatment of this utterly complex topic.

⁴³ 2 Cor 5, 1–10 RSV: "(1) For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, as house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. (4) For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (6) So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body."

⁴⁴ In order to make the same distinction, he also uses the pair *naturalia desideria* versus *supernaturalia desideria*.

observation that in this section of his letter the apostle shows us that the author of the desire for the heavenly habitation is, in a very specific way, God, and that this desire is quite different from, indeed in contradiction to, the *desiderium naturae*:

Hic ostendit auctorem supernaturalis desiderii de habitatione caelesti. Causa enim naturalis desiderii quod nolumus expoliari est, quia sc. anima naturaliter unitur corpori, et e converso. Sed hoc, quod caelestem inhabitationem superindui cupiamus, non est ex natura, sed ex Deo.⁴⁵

Since the human being is a composite nature, the soul is naturally united with the body (being the sole substantial form) such that there is a natural desire to abhor the separation of the two, which is natural death. Hence, the *desiderium naturae* is an *innate, necessary* desire for the ongoing integrity of the human composite nature. It is a desire that reflects the very constitution of human nature per se in its relative integrity as an ontological principle with perfect epistemic intelligibility. However, the desire “to put on our heavenly dwelling” does not come from our nature, but from God in a distinct and quite specific way. Most interesting here is the contrasting use of *ex natura* and *ex Deo*. *Ex natura* is, of course, nothing else than the singular effect of God’s creative agency (*creatio ex nihilo* as well as *creatio continuans*). In contrast, *ex Deo* must refer here to an act (1) categorically distinct from the former, (2) in no way in any prospective intrinsic continuity with it, (3) but rather in a surprising, *newly gratuitous* relationship with and hence in clear distinction from the former:

Cuius ratio est, quia quamlibet naturam consequitur appetitus conveniens fini suae naturae, sicut grave naturaliter tendit deorsum, et appetit ibi quiescere. Si autem sit appetitus alicujus rei supra naturam suam, illa res non movetur ad illum finem naturaliter, sed ab alio quod est supra naturam suam. Constat autem quod perfrui caelesti gloria, et videre Deum per essentiam, licet sit rationalis creaturae, est tamen supra naturam ipsius, non ergo movetur rationalis creatura ad hoc desiderandum a natura, sed ab ipso Deo, *qui in hoc ipsum efficit nos*, etc. Sed quomodo hoc efficit subdit, dicens: *Qui dedit pignus*, etc. Circa quod sciendum est, quod Deus efficit in nobis naturalia desideria et supernaturalia. Naturalia quidem

⁴⁵ S. Thomae Aquinatis in omnes S. Pauli Apostoli epistolas commentaria, vol. 1, (Turin: Marietti, 1929), 449. “Here he discloses the author of the supernatural desire for a heavenly dwelling. For the cause of a natural desire that we be not despoiled is that the soul is naturally united to the body, and vice versa. But the desire to be clothed upon with a heavenly dwelling is not from nature but from God.” (Translation by Fabian R. Larcher, OP)

quando dat nobis spiritum naturalem convenientem naturae humanae. *Inspiravit in faciem ejus*, etc. [Gen 1]. Supernaturalia vero dat quando infundit in nobis supernaturalem spiritum, sc. Spiritum Sanctum. Et ideo dicit: *Dedit nobis pignus spiritus*, id est, Spiritum Sanctum causantem in nobis certitudinem hujus rei qua desideramus impleri. *Signati estis Spiritu promissionis Sancto*, etc. [Eph 1].⁴⁶

This text speaks for itself. According to Aquinas, God effects in us natural as well as supernatural desires: *Deus efficit in nobis naturalia desideria et supernaturalia*. The former are understood in this context strictly per se (as integral to a distinct species in its natural constitution), that is, *not* exclusively as desires as they might characterize the human being extant *sub conditione peccati*, but as desires of a composite, mortal *nature* irrespective of the providential order in which it is found. Because of their natural spirit (*spiritus naturalis*), as it is fitting for human nature, human beings are endowed with *naturalia desideria*. The supernatural desires are, on the contrary, given by God, *ab ipso Deo* over and above the *naturalia desideria*. Categorically different from the former, the supernatural desires are the distinct effect of the Holy Spirit's mission, desires that indeed are the very pledge of the Spirit himself.

Most decisive, however, is the explicit statement:

Si autem sit appetitus alicujus rei supra naturam suam, illa res non movetur ad illum finem naturaliter, sed ab alio quod est supra naturam suam. Constat autem quod perfrui caelesti gloria, et videre Deum per essentiam, licet sit rationalis creaturae, est tamen supra naturam ipsius,

⁴⁶ Ibid. "The reason for this is that upon every nature follows a desire suited to the end of that nature, as something heavy naturally tends downward and seeks to rest there. But if a thing's desire is above its nature, that thing is not moved to that end naturally, but by something else, which is above its nature. Now it is evident that to enjoy eternal glory and to see God by his essence, although it is appropriate to a rational creature, is above its nature. Therefore, the rational creature is not moved to desire this by nature, but by God himself, 'who prepared us for this very thing.' How this is accomplished he adds, saying, 'who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee [pledge].' In regard to this it should be noted that God produces natural desires and supernatural desires in us: the natural, when he gives us a natural spirit suited to human nature: 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life' [Gn 2:7]; but he gives the supernatural desires when he infuses in us the supernatural spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit. Therefore he says, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee, that is, the Holy Spirit producing in us the certainty of this thing, with which we desire to be filled: 'You were sealed with the Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance' [Eph 1:13–14]" (Translation by Fabian R. Larcher, OP).

non ergo movetur rationalis creatura ad hoc desiderandum a natura, sed ab ipso Deo.⁴⁷

Aquinas operates here very clearly with the distinction between an appetite or desire proportionate and connatural to human nature and being capable of directing human beings toward their connatural end, and a supernatural desire, given from above, directing human beings to their ultimate, supernatural end. Although the fruition of heavenly glory and the vision of God's essence is a permitted end (*licet!*) for the rational creature, because it utterly transcends human nature the rational creature cannot be moved naturally to this end but must be moved to this end by God by way of a supernatural desire given by the Holy Spirit.

Hence it hardly amounts to a retrospective projection of a deplorable Baroque severance between nature and grace back into Aquinas when the seventeenth-century French Dominican theologian and Thomist commentator Jean Baptiste Gonet claims that "innate appetite is from God as Author of nature, and as the Creator of natural forms. However, the desire for the clear vision of God cannot be from the Author of nature. Therefore, there cannot be an innate appetite for it."⁴⁸ In order to confirm Gonet's thesis, Feingold rightly draws upon Aquinas's commentary on 2 Corinthians 5 and states:

According to this text, nature herself does not give a natural desire for an end that is above the nature of the creature. Such a desire directly for a supernatural end must be infused directly by God, working above the natural order, through the gift of grace. De Lubac claims that this distinction between "God as Author of the natural order" and "God as Author of the supernatural order," or between "God as the object of natural beatitude" and "God as the object of supernatural beatitude," is not found in St. Thomas.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid. "But if a thing's desire is above its nature, that thing is not moved to that end naturally, but by something else, which is above its nature. Now it is evident that to enjoy eternal glory and to see God by his essence, although it is appropriate to a rational creature, is above its nature. Therefore, the rational creature is not moved to desire this by nature, but by God himself" (Translation by Fabian R. Larcher, OP).

⁴⁸ Feingold's translation from Gonet, *Clypeus theologiae thomisticae contra novos ejus impugnatores*, 6 vols. (Bordeaux 1659–69; Lyons 1681; Paris 1875) vol. 1 in I, q. 12, disp. 1, a. 5, §2, n. 86, 224, cited in Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001), 655.

⁴⁹ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 656f.

Feingold displays a significant number of texts by Aquinas that prove the contrary.⁵⁰ He concludes:

Thus it is clear that for St. Thomas, the natural love of God above all, which man has in common with all creatures, is not directed to God insofar as He can be seen in the beatific vision. Instead it is directed to God as the source and end of natural perfections, which generates a 'natural friendship' with God (*In I Cor.*, c. 13, v. 13, lect. 4). The love or desire for God (or conversion to God) insofar as He can be participated in through grace, and seen face to face, is spoken of by St. Thomas as charity, a love which is exclusively the product of grace. . . . Therefore, it is clear that for St. Thomas, it would be very wrong to say that there is an *innate* natural desire or love for God insofar as He can be participated in only through grace. Such a love or inclination directed towards God as He can be possessed supernaturally in the beatific vision must itself be the product of a *supernatural* intervention of God, infusing the theological virtues.⁵¹

Feingold's correct emphasis on the sole efficient causality of God's supernatural intervention in eliciting the supernatural desire, however, does *not* per se invalidate the insistence upon a natural desire for the vision of God. We find in this text two clearly distinguished operations of God—and corresponding gifts from God—one being the very constitution of human nature as a subsistent reality (with an end proportionate to this nature and its corresponding natural desires), the other being God's sovereign salvific operation in relationship to extant human beings, a second gift drawing the first beyond the confines of its original giftedness and thus not destroying but perfecting it in a way prospectively as inconceivable as unanticipatable, yet retrospectively to be understood as perfectly fitting the first gift as it has been created for and is intrinsically open to the reception of the second gift. The necessary precondition for the fitting reception of the second gift, however, must be a readiness in the first gift for the second, a potential in the first gift that allows for a transnatural expansion (elevation), an expansion infinitely disproportionate to human nature. However, because it is a genuine potential of the first gift, its infinitely disproportionate expansion does not transmute the particular constitution

⁵⁰ Ibid., 658f, note 72: *ST* I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 4; *ST* I, q. 62, a. 2, ad 1; *ST* I, q. 63, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* I–II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3, ad 1; *ST* II–II, q. 26, a. 3; *Quodl.*, I, q. 4, a. 3 [8], ad 1; *De car.*, q. un., a. 2, ad 16; *De spe.*, q. un., a. 1, ad 9; *In I Cor.*, c. 13, v. 13, lect. 4; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 4, ad 14 and 15; *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, ad 4; *Comp. theol.*, I, q. 174, n. 2; *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 4, ad 1; *In II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5; *In III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4.

⁵¹ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 659f.

of the first gift, its specific nature, into another nature. That is, in the beatific vision, human beings remain human beings. (They are not, in an Eckhartian sense, “melted” into the divine essence itself.) Would such a specific natural potential of the first gift (the technical term in the Thomist tradition became “specific obediential potency”),⁵² however, not require a corresponding, proper natural desire? While such a desire would need to correspond in potency to the second gift (hence a desire for the vision of God), it could not be a desire *innate* to human nature itself (that is, a *desiderium naturae*), because such a desire would necessarily reflect the connatural end of the composite human nature. Rather, this natural desire for the ultimate supernatural end would need to be *elicited* by the same faculties by way of which the second gift is received: intellect and will. And precisely in the vicinity of this *elicited* desire, quasi-preparing and undergirding it, we find the proper instantiation of that ontological élan so often emphasized by Milbank as the comprehensive dynamic of the creation’s *reditus* to God. Such an élan indeed plays a fundamental and indispensable role in the thought of the *doctor communis*.

This élan, however, is treated by Aquinas in a highly nuanced way that Milbank fails to recognize. For it falls, first and foremost, under the category of “natural love” and, more precisely, comprises the equivalent of what Jacques Maritain, in his brilliant analysis of the four necessary loves (developed by Aquinas in the treatise on the angels in his *Summa theologiae*) has identified as the first and the second love. The first is a love, by which

every creature naturally loves the supreme Whole more than itself with a radical élan consubstantial with its essence. . . . It naturally exists in *every creature, with or without sense or reason*, and is not free. It is inamissible; a being cannot lose it except by losing its nature and ceasing to exist. It continues to exist in the sinner and in the demon.⁵³

The second love is a version of the first, namely the love

through which *every creature capable of knowledge* loves the supreme Whole more than itself, instinctively or by a spontaneous élan and not because it knows Him, due solely to the fact that it loves necessarily, and with an *elicited* love, whatever is its *good of nature*. . . . Here there is no knowl-

⁵² See Steven A. Long’s astute treatment and defense of this concept in his contribution to this volume.

⁵³ Jacques Maritain, *The Sin of the Angel: An Essay on a Re-Interpretation of Some Thomistic Positions*, trans. William L. Rossner, SJ (Westminster: Newman Press, 1959), 20.

edge of God properly speaking, no idea of God from which an elicited love for God might proceed.⁵⁴

These first two loves, according to Thomas, cannot fail; they endure even in hell. Not so the next two. The third is the

“elicited love of nature” which, before any option or election, arises at once in every intellectual creature as a spontaneous, immediate movement of the rational appetite at the instant and by the mere fact that the intellect knows the existence of the Principle of all good, the Self-subsisting Good which is the common good of all.⁵⁵

While a movement necessary in itself, this love depends indirectly on the free will, “insofar as it can be prevented by free will, like any other indeliberate motion of the elicited appetite.”⁵⁶ Finally, “in every intelligent creature there exists a natural inclination . . . to love the supreme Whole more than himself with an elicited love of *free option*. The intelligent creature is inclined by his nature to this love which is essentially free in its very mode of emanation.”⁵⁷

Hence, de Lubac’s famous dictum from *Surnaturel* that “the spirit is the desire for God”⁵⁸ is indeed correct—on the ontological level of natural love. As will become sufficiently clear later, for Aquinas neither the innate ontological love pure and simple, nor the intra-elicited ontological love of God above all, translates into an *innate* natural desire for the vision of God. For, as Maritain rightly stresses, according to Aquinas, the human being, as composite nature fundamentally different from the angel, receives all knowledge by way of the senses. Hence, since there is no *innate* knowledge of God,⁵⁹ the human being’s *natural* desire for the vision of God, if it is an *intellective* desire (which, according to Aquinas, it is), must be called forth via the senses by the first gift, creation, as it points, by way of its causal order, not ineluctably, but consistently, to its primal origin, the Giver of the gift. It must, hence, be an *elicited* desire, intending a transnatural and ultimately infinitely disproportionate end that, however, because of the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 20–22.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁸ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 500 (“L’esprit est donc désir de Dieu,” *Surnaturel*, 483).

⁵⁹ The *intellectus agens*, pace Milbank, does not provide such a knowledge, even most implicitly.

nature of the intellect, remains integral to the connatural human end as proportionate to human nature—short of the gift of sanctifying grace.⁶⁰

3. Double Gratuity

Milbank, in his Bulgakovian radicalization of de Lubac and by entailment of Aquinas argues that the two gifts, the second in a unique way perfecting the first, are to be seen in a continuum, a seamless dynamic of varying intensity, reflecting a fundamental ontological élan drawing the entire cosmos through humanity to beatitude. Can St. Thomas's theology be drafted for a project that assumes a single non-contrastive gratuity, seamlessly connecting creation and deification in a comprehensive unitary and universalistic vision? On the contrary, Aquinas's theology of grace entails a clear double gratuity; moreover, his doctrine of predestination forestalls any attempt to claim his patronage for such a theological project.

In his profound and, in light of the widespread contemporary theological confusions about Christology, highly relevant treatise on the hypostatic union in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, questions 1–15, Aquinas dedicates the second *quaestio* to the problem of the precise mode of the union of the Incarnate Word with the human nature. Relevant for our particular problem is article 10 of question 2, where he asks whether the union of the incarnation took place by grace. In his response, Aquinas first offers a crisp summary of his definition of grace originally submitted in question 110, article 1 of the *prima secundae*: “Grace is taken in two

⁶⁰ This elicited desire indeed needs to be satisfied supernaturally for an absolutely perfect human felicity to occur. The Thomist who, according to my lights, got the matter exactly right *ad mentem S. Thomae* is Jacques Maritain—and Feingold's long analysis is in substantive agreement with Maritain on this point: “Beatitude signifies perfect felicity, *ultima perfectio rationalis seu intellectualis creaturae* (the ultimate perfection of the rational or intellectual creature) [ST I, q. 62, a. 1]. And the very notion of perfect felicity might well be understood in various senses which are more or less strict, from the *eudaimonia* of the sage of antiquity, to the joy which surpasses all that the mind of man has ever conceived. As far as I am concerned, I do not much like the expression ‘natural beatitude,’ for I do not think that there is any *absolutely* perfect felicity as long as the natural (trans-natural) desire to see God (a desire which in the Angel must be still much more profound than in man) is not supernaturally satisfied. Nevertheless, I shall use the expression ‘natural beatitude’ . . . because quarrels over words are uninteresting, and because St. Thomas himself does not hesitate to use the word beatitude [‘Quodammodo beatitudo . . . dicitur,’ ST I, q. 62, a. 1] in order to designate the state of pure natural happiness . . . in which the Angel was created.” Maritain, *The Sin of the Angel*, 97.

ways: first as the will of God bestowing something; secondly, as the free gift of God.”⁶¹

First, according to this definition, one might want to assume that St. Thomas regards creation itself as the first grace, since it surely is the first and foremost of all gifts.⁶² However, quite interestingly, St. Thomas does not mention creation in this context at all. Rather, he immediately relates grace to human nature, a principle of relative but distinct ontological integrity and hence relative but distinct epistemic accessibility: “Now human nature stands in need of the gratuitous will of God in order to be lifted up [*elevetur*] to God, since this is above its natural capability.”

Second, a crucial term—if not the crucial term—in the above quote is the verb “to be lifted up,” in the Latin passive *elevari* (active: *elevare*; noun: *elevatio*). Human nature—notice that Thomas does not say here, the “human person”—stands in a *passive* relationship to a *specific* agency of God, an agency fundamentally distinct from *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continuans*, in that it is an agency that presupposes human nature (notice, however, not a subsistent “state of pure nature”) as a distinct species, sufficiently conceptually penetrable in its distinction from other natures in order to make relevant ontological claims about it and in relationship to which grace operates qua *elevatio*, because *hoc sit supra facultatem naturae suae*.

Third, St. Thomas distinguishes between two ways of *elevatio*, one *per operationem*, another *per esse personale*. The first, by operation, occurs “as the saints know and love God.” The second, by personal being, occurs only in Christ, “in Whom human nature is assumed so as to be in the Person of the Son of God.” As St. Thomas reminds his readers in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, question 4, article 1, ad 2, the elevation bringing about a union by operation is indeed possible because of “the likeness of image [...] found in human nature.” This likeness consists in human nature being *capax Dei*, namely, “by attaining to Him through its own operation of knowledge and love,” which are the essential characteristics of the intellectual soul. And it is precisely this *capax Dei*, this inherent potentiality in human nature that grace reduces to act, to unitive knowledge and love, whereby human nature is elevated to God *per operationem*. Both ways of

⁶¹ “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut in Secunda Parte dictum est, gratia dupliciter dicitur: uno modo, ipsa voluntas Dei gratis aliquid dantis; alio modo, ipsum gratuitum donum Dei.”

⁶² For a profound metaphysical meditation of creation as gift (long before the presently as fashionable and as tiring debate over whether a gift can be given set in), see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982).

elevation presuppose the integrity of the prior gift, even *sub conditione peccati*, and by entailment the supplementary nature of the second gift. It is not explicitly denied by Aquinas in this place that the second gift, quasi by infinite intensification of the first, extends efficaciously and hence infallibly to all rational creatures. However, it is by no means accidental that Aquinas chose his *sed contra* in question 2, article 10, preparing his response in light of the objections, from St. Augustine's late work *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, where Augustine argues that it is a mystery why faith is given to some and not to others and that the elect are not called because they believe, but that they may believe. The quote from the *sed contra* itself is taken from book 15 in which Augustine argues that the incarnation provides the supreme example of grace's specific gratuity, for Christ's human nature could have done nothing to deserve to be united to the Word.⁶³ What is clearly presupposed in this article, namely a distinct double gratuity, is constitutive of the whole architecture of Aquinas's mature theology of grace.

The clear and categorical distinction between the first gift of creation and the grace of elevation is rooted deeply in Aquinas's doctrine of God, and especially in his Trinitarian reflections. In his discussion of the missions of the Son and Spirit in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, question 43, article 3, he starts with the axiomatic distinction between two kinds of God's presence: First, "God is in all things by his essence, power, and presence, according to his one common mode, as the cause existing in the effects which participate in his goodness." There is, however, a second, special, and superior mode according to which God is present, a mode characterized by Aquinas with the terms "above and beyond" (*super*) and "in a new way" (*novo modo*):

Above and beyond this common mode, however, there is one special mode belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. And since the rational creature by its own operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature, but also to dwell therein as in his own temple (*ST I*, q. 43, a. 3).

And the latter, St. Thomas states, happens by sanctifying grace: "The Holy Ghost is possessed by man, and dwells within him, in the very gift itself

⁶³ "Ea gratia fit ab initio fidei suae homo quicumque Christianus, qua gratia homo ille ab initio suo factus est Christus" (cap. 10; *Patrologia latina* 44, 982). Thomas continues: "Sed homo ille factus est Christus per unionem ad divinam naturam. Ergo unio illa fuit per gratiam."

of sanctifying grace.” It is the latter claim, that the Holy Spirit dwells within the human being in the gift of sanctifying grace (*in ipso dono gratiae gratum facientis*) that perfectly justifies that, while human nature qua rational soul is surely capable of it, this “indwelling” of the Spirit by way of elevating human nature through sanctifying grace is infinitely beyond and categorically different from God’s presence in the first mode, the presence of the Creator in the creation. If one turns to St. Thomas’s discussion of the mission of the divine persons, it might indeed be perfectly defensible to call the very indwelling in the mind of the Trinity by sanctifying grace (ST I, q. 43, a. 5) a *donum ultimum* since by this very gift “the soul is made like to God” (ST I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2: *anima per gratiam conformatur Deo*), resulting in an ultimate beatitude to be obtained “by the power of God alone, by a kind of participation of the Godhead, about which it is written (2 Pt 1:4) that by Christ we are made *partakers of the Divine nature*” (ST I–II, q. 62, a. 1). Different from this *donum ultimum*, the gift of union with God by the indwelling of the Trinity by sanctifying grace, is the very precondition for it, a first and fundamental gift, which we might want to call the *donum primum*, creation as the gift of a relation to God that issues in a procession of creatures caused and upheld by the triune God’s exemplar, efficient, formal, and final causality, a relation, however, that subsists in its own relative, but proper integrity:

For God is in all things by his essence, power, and presence, according to his one common mode, as the cause existing in the effects which participate in his goodness. Above and beyond this common mode, however, there is one special mode belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. And since the rational creature by its operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature, but also to dwell therein as in his own temple. So no other effect can be put down as the reason why the divine person is in the rational creature *in a new mode*, except sanctifying grace.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ ST I, q. 43, a. 3, emphasis added: “Est enim unus communis modus quo Deus est in omnibus rebus per essentiam, potentiam et praesentiam, sicut causa in effectibus participantibus bonitatem ipsius. Super istum modum autem communem, est *unus specialis*, qui convenit creaturae rationali, in qua Deus dicitur esse sicut cognitum in cognoscente et amatum in amante. Et quia, cognoscendo et amando, creatura rationalis sua operatione attingit ad ipsum Deum, *secundum istum specialem modum* Deus non solum dicitur esse in creatura rationali, sed etiam habitare in ea sicut in templo suo. Sic igitur nullus alius effectus potest esse ratio quod divina Persona sit *novo modo* in rationali creatura, nisi gratia gratum faciens.”

Let us now move further back in Aquinas's doctrine of the Trinity in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, question 38, article 1, where St. Thomas asks whether "gift" is a personal name. For here again we encounter the sheer absence of a simple seamless continuity of infinite intensification between the two forms of divine presence as well as of some kind of intrinsic dynamic leading from the one to the other in a way already "inscribed in" or "anticipated by" the first. Rather, we encounter a twofold differentiation, the first by now being quite familiar: There obtains a crucial difference between the nature of the rational creature, on the one hand, and all other creatures, on the other hand. For only rational creatures can enjoy a divine person by being united to God. "Other creatures can be moved by a divine person, not, however, in such a way as to be able to enjoy the divine person, and to use the effect thereof." There is, however, a second crucial differentiation to be made regarding the *donum ultimum*, now pertaining specifically and exclusively to the rational creature. For "the rational creature does *sometimes* [*quandoque*] attain thereto; as when it is made partaker of the divine Word and the Love proceeding, so as freely to know God truly and to love God rightly."⁶⁵ The rational creature qua rational is endowed with the albeit purely passive capability of being united to God by way of its own powers acting according to their proper secondary causality; this capability is reduced to act by the Holy Spirit himself, who is given from above by way of sanctifying grace that simultaneously elevates human nature for the reception of such an infinitely disproportionate gift. However, unlike the gift of creation that is perfectly universal and by way of which God is present by essence, power, and presence, the enjoyment of the divine persons occurs *quandoque*, *sometimes*.

That the qualification *quandoque* is far from being a casual side remark finds its possibly clearest expression in St. Thomas's treatment of predestination in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, question 23, wherein he answers affirmatively the question whether human beings are predestined by God, resting his response to the objections on a *sed contra* in which he cites Romans 8:30 (RSV): "And those whom he predestined he also called." The opening sentence of his response is crucial: *Deo conveniens est homines praedestinare*. It is fitting for God to predestine human beings. The *convenientia* or fittingness refers to the end to which predestination pertains. As Aquinas argued in the preceding question 22, divine providence directs all things to their proper ends (*ST I*, q. 22, a. 1 and 2). However, regarding the human being Aquinas distinguishes between a twofold (*duplex*) end,

⁶⁵ "Ad quod quandoque pertingit rationalis creatura; ut puta cum sic fit particeps divini Verbi et procedentis Amoris, ut possit libere Deum vere cognoscere et recte amare."

one which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature; and this end is life eternal, that consists in seeing God which is above the nature of every creature. . . . The other end, however, is proportionate to created nature, to which end created being can attain according to the power of its nature. . . . Hence, properly speaking, a rational creature, capable of eternal life, is led towards it, directed, as it were, by God.

Here again we have the clear distinction between an end proportionate to created nature (something that must be perceptible in its own right and makes sense ontologically as a subsistent principle with a respective end proportionate to it) and an end “which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature” (*qui excedit proportionem naturae creatae et facultatem*). Moreover, the use of the term *convenientia* signals that the relationship between the two ends cannot be captured by the all too simple alternatives “intrinsic” or “extrinsic.” There is no continuity from the first end to the second, a continuity that might suggest some kind of innate and inchoate anticipation of the second in the first; nor is the first “closed up” to the second, such that it can only be “opened up” for the second gift by being miraculously transformed by the latter into something essentially foreign to its specific natural constitution. *Convenientia* rejects these alternatives by referring the matter to the mystery of God’s goodness, which is identical with God’s justice as well as mercy, utterly unfathomable in the glorious simplicity of the divine perfection. The ineradicable difference, however, between the first gift and the grace of predestination is marked by an echo of the oblique *quandoque* in two other instances. First, in question 23, article 2 (with a *sed contra* from Augustine’s *De dono perseverantiae*, chapter 14) Aquinas returns to Rm 8:30 in his response to the question whether predestination places anything in the predestined. Denying the question he emphasizes that

providence is not anything in the things provided for; but is a type in the mind of the provider, as was proved above (22,1). But the execution of providence which is called government, is in a passive way in the thing governed, and in an active way in the governor. Whence it is clear that predestination is a kind of type of the ordering of some persons [*aliquorum*] towards eternal salvation, existing in the divine mind. The execution, however, of this order is in a passive way in the predestined, but actively in God.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ ST I, q. 23, a. 2, c.: “Providentia autem non est in rebus provis; sed est quaedam ratio in intellectu provisoris, ut supra dictum est. Sed executio providentiae, quae gubernatio dicitur, passive quidem est in gubernatis; active autem in gubernante. Unde manifestum est quod praedestinatio est quaedam ratio ordinis aliquorum in salutem aeternam, in mente divina existens.”

Second, in question 23, article 7, where on this particular matter St. Thomas stands in clear agreement with the late St. Augustine: "The number of the predestined is certain . . . not only by reason of his knowledge, because, that is to say, He knows how many will be saved . . . ; but by reason of his deliberate choice and determination."⁶⁷ The reason for the *quandoque* as well as the *aliqui* is the mystery of God's principal preordination.⁶⁸ And it is at this particular place where the irresolvable differentiation between God's loves becomes most pertinent. In his treatise on grace, *Summa theologiae* I–II, question 110, article 1, St. Thomas distinguishes between two aspects of God's love to the creature:

For one is common [*dilectio generalis*], whereby He loves all things that are (Wis 11:25), and thereby gives things their natural being. But the second is a special love [*dilectio specialis*], whereby He draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to a participation of the Divine good; and according to this love He is said to love anyone simply, since it is by this love that God simply wishes the eternal good, which is Himself, for the creature.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ That this account is far from some type of "blue print" statically and quasi-mechanistically imposed upon thing-like rational creatures is implicitly addressed in q. 8, ad 3, where he makes the crucial metaphysical distinction between the first universal cause and secondary causes: "Secondary causes cannot escape the order of the first universal cause . . . , indeed, they execute that order. And therefore predestination can be furthered by creatures, but it cannot be impeded by them."

⁶⁸ Thomas does not avoid the difficult question of reprobation either. It is important, however, to note that he implicitly follows the canons of the Second Synod of Orange in rejecting any notion of an active divine reprobation. Rather, God permits some [*aliquos*] to fall away from the ultimate end (which entails the reality of sufficient grace); ("Unde, cum per divinam providentiam homines in vitam aeternam, ordinentur, pertinet etiam ad divinam providentiam, ut permittat aliquos ab isto fine deficere. Et hoc dicitur reprobare." *ST I* q. 23, a. 3, c.). However, as divine providence entails both the divine intellect (providence in the narrow sense) and the divine will (divine governance as the execution of providence), the divine permission not only entails the divine knowledge of such a falling away but includes the will to permit a person to fall into sin: "Sicut enim praedestinatio includit voluntatem conferendi gratiam et gloriam, ita reprobatio includit voluntatem permittendi aliquem cadere in culpam, et inferendi damnationis poenam pro culpa" (*ibid.*).

⁶⁹ *ST I–II*, q. 110, a. 1, c.: "Una quidem communis, secundum quam *diligit omnia quae sunt*, ut dicitur *Sap.* 11, [25]; secundum quam esse naturale rebus creatis largitur. Alia autem est dilectio specialis, secundum quam trahit creaturam rationalem supra conditionem naturae, ad participationem divini boni. Et secundum hanc dilectionem dicitur aliquem diligere simpliciter: quia secundum hanc dilectionem vult Deus simpliciter creaturae bonum aeternum, quod est ipse."

Hence, Thomas explains, “grace” can signify something that is bestowed by God on the human being. Then he emphasizes again the logic of the *quandoque*: “Nevertheless the grace of God sometimes signifies God’s eternal love, as we say the grace of predestination, inasmuch as God gratuitously and not from merits predestines or elects some.”⁷⁰

The very fact that St. Thomas describes the efficacious elevation of some to the beatific vision as the grace of predestination is a clear indication that in his theology there obtains an explicit and distinctive double gratuity such that the first gift, created human nature, originally gifted with the help of original justice and through sanctifying grace ordained for the vision of God differs categorically from the ontological élan reflected in the four necessary loves, according to Maritain’s analysis, as mentioned above. These four necessary loves, however, indicate an antecedent fittingness of the first for the second gift, as becomes increasingly clear by reflecting upon the first gift, the rational creature *qua* particular nature in its proper integrity, in light of the second gift, the elevation of human nature *per operationem* to personal communion with the triune God. Passages like the above suggest that St. Thomas was intent upon preserving the strict gratuity of the grace of predestination by operating with the logic of a double gratuity, first the gift that constitutes its own reception (creation), then the gift that infallibly, though entailing the proper secondary causality of free will, constitutes communion with God, the Giver of both gifts.

In the course of this brief excursion we encounter an Aquinas who thoroughly resists Milbank’s attempt of assimilating his theology into the latter’s radicalized Bulgakovian Lubacianism for at least two reasons: First, while St. Thomas never assumed a state of pure nature in the present order of providence, he clearly assumes the principle of nature—and hence a hypothetical state of pure nature—with its own relative but proper integrity as an entailment of creation that ontologically obtains and is accessible to the intellect. Second, Aquinas’s doctrine of the grace of predestination makes it impossible—despite the very prominent role of the ontological exitus-reditus scheme in the overall architectonic of his thought—to press his theology into the service of an overarching Origenist-Bulgakovian vision of universal *apokatastasis*. The ontology of the exitus-reditus is a necessary precondition entailed in the first gift in order for grace “to

⁷⁰ ST I-II, q. 110, a. 1, c.: “Quandoque tamen gratia Dei dicitur ipsa aeterna Dei dilectio: secundum quod dicitur etiam gratia praedestinationis, inquantum Deus gratuito, et non ex meritis, aliquos praedestinavit sive elegit.”

come on the way of being,”⁷¹ that is, to elevate human nature to a supernatural perfection without its transmutation into another species. The complexity of this position (ontological élan as well as grace of predestination) is precisely reflected in the question of the rational creature and its natural desire for the vision of God to which we now turn.

*Observation 3: Is the rational creature “intrinsically linked to grace”?
Or, What is ultimately at stake in Feingold’s Thomist engagement
of Henri de Lubac’s position?*

For a detailed discussion of the crucial texts in Aquinas regarding the natural desire of the vision of God⁷² I happily refer to the excellent and cogent discussion in Steven A. Long’s contribution to this symposium. I could at best only reproduce his precise argumentation, which I regard as a correct interpretation of Aquinas and the Thomist commentators. Moreover, his interpretation convincingly invalidates the critique raised by Milbank that Feingold only cites paragraphs 11–13 of *Summa contra Gentiles*, book III, question 25, while “the ontological and neoplatonizing prelude is omitted from his discussion entirely!”⁷³ Long’s precise interpretation of Aquinas shows plainly that even without an explicit treatment of *Summa contra Gentiles* III, question 25, articles 1–10—which indeed should have been explicitly treated—Feingold’s overall analysis of the broad coherence between Aquinas and the Thomist commentators obtains.

Rather than repeating Long’s excellent analysis, I regard this as the opportune place to give voice to Feingold himself. As mentioned earlier, I choose this approach because Feingold’s book is very hard to track down, and therefore the subsequent extended quotations may be the only way to gain an initial appreciation of the utterly serious and substantive nature of Feingold’s engagement of Henri de Lubac’s position.

*1. Feingold’s reconstruction of Henri de Lubac’s position
on the desiderium naturale visionis Dei*

a. De Lubac’s fundamental concern: The intrinsic nature of a spiritual creature’s finality

De Lubac argues that the finality of a spiritual creature is intrinsic and cannot be changed without changing the nature. . . .

⁷¹ Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus: Das Wagnis der Seinsfrage*, 2nd ed., ed. Martin Bieler and Florian Pitschl (Freiburg: Johannes Verlag, 1998), 333.

⁷² *De Veritate*, 14; *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 25; *Compendium Theologiae*, 103–7 et al.

⁷³ Milbank, *Suspended*, 26, fn. 10.

De Lubac's fundamental concern is to remove an "extrinsicist" view of man's relation to his supernatural end, which he thinks is inherently linked with the theory of the possibility of a state of pure nature, as put forward by Suárez, and with the way the natural desire to see God was interpreted by authors such as Cajetan, Báñez, Suárez, and those who followed them.

For de Lubac, the "essential finality" of man is the vision of God. This finality cannot be changed without changing our nature. Man as he is today has only one end that is in harmony with his nature as it now exists—the vision of God. This end, therefore, is "inscribed" or "imprinted" on man's nature as he concretely exists (prior to any gift of grace) (491).

- b. De Lubac's central philosophical argument: The *actual* final end of a *concrete* nature

This conception is based on a fundamental philosophical notion, central to de Lubac's position, according to which the actual final end of a thing is necessarily something which determines its nature ontologically, from within. Since we know by faith that we have been destined to a supernatural end, it follows that even before we receive the gift of grace, our nature must be intrinsically determined by our destination to this supernatural end. One and the same "concrete nature" cannot have two distinct possible finalities, one natural and the other supernatural, which God could assign by an external decree, without changing the nature itself. Such a notion implies a "watered-down idea of what finality is." Rather, two different finalities determine two different natures (or two different "concrete natures" or "historic natures"). In other words, *the actual finality of a thing is always the "essential finality" of a thing, postulated by its very essence.*

Thus de Lubac opposes the idea that our supernatural end is something "superadded" by God on top of and distinct from a "natural end," to which our nature would be directed in virtue of its own intrinsic principles. . . .

It is precisely this possibility of a divergence between actual finality and natural (or essential) finality, with regard to the spiritual creature, which de Lubac rejects, as a notion that is philosophically and religiously unacceptable, contrary to the authentic notion of finality (493ff, emphasis added).

- c. The finality of the spiritual creature expressed in the natural desire to see God, understood as the *innate* inclination for the *actual* final end

De Lubac's interpretation of the natural desire to see God is intimately connected with his understanding of finality in the

spiritual creature. Natural desire is understood as the innate inclination of a being for its actual final end, or as the “expression” of the finality of a thing. This corresponds with the notion of *appetitus naturalis* or *inclinatio naturalis* in St. Thomas as applied to inanimate creatures and the faculties of the soul. According to St. Thomas, this natural appetite is “determined to one” by nature. The natural end of a thing always determines a natural appetite for that end.

Therefore, the fact that man actually has a supernatural finality necessarily determines a natural desire for that supernatural end, according to de Lubac. The natural desire to see God, therefore, is nothing other than the necessary attraction of spiritual beings to the end imprinted on their nature by God. It is precisely the presence in us of our finality, inscribed within us, for the vision of God. . . . [see the important section from *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 70–72, cited at this point.]

De Lubac is affirming here a natural appetite for beatitude in the *particular* object in which it actually consists, and not just for beatitude in *general*. Since the end for which God has ordained us is quite determinate in the mind of God, consisting in the beatific vision, de Lubac concludes that our natural desire must be equally determinate, since natural desire and final end are correlative terms. We must have a *concrete* natural desire for our *concrete* final end, as it has been actually determined in the mind of God. Since we are actually destined for the vision of God, we must have a specific natural desire for this vision. This natural desire will be the desire of our nature (*desiderium naturae*) for its true and specific finality, in the actual plan of God’s providence (495ff).

Therefore, de Lubac can assert both (a) that a state of pure nature is impossible for human nature as we now possess it (that is, for man as we know him, who possesses a natural desire to see God), and (b) that God could perhaps create other rational creatures without ordering them to the vision of God (and without giving them a natural desire for that vision). Thus the possibility of a state of pure nature for *other* rational beings is left open, neither being asserted nor denied. However, the possibility of a state of pure nature is clearly denied with regard to men possessing the same (concrete) nature as ourselves (507).

2. Feingold’s characterization of the central metaphysical issue at stake between Thomas Aquinas (and the commentators) and Henri de Lubac

- a. Thomas Aquinas: The metaphysical principle “form determines end” and the supernatural finality superadded by the principle of grace and the supernatural virtues

For St. Thomas, the possession of a certain form determines a relation to a given natural end that is called for by that form. In CG, III, c. 150, n.5, St. Thomas states that “each thing is ordered to the end that is fitting to it according to its form: to different species there belong different ends.” From this he concludes that a new supernatural form—grace—must be “super-added” to human nature so that it can be *ordered* to an end that is “above human nature”: “Sed finis in quem homo dirigitur per auxilium divinae gratiae, est supra naturam humanam. Ergo oportet quod homini *superaddatur* aliqua supernaturalis forma et perfectio, per quam convenienter *ordinetur* in finem praedictum.” [“But the end to which man is directed by the help of divine grace is above human nature. Therefore, some supernatural form and perfection must be superadded to man whereby he may be ordered suitably to the aforesaid end.”]⁷⁴

This clearly implies that human nature in itself without grace is not naturally or essentially ordered (and cannot be fittingly ordered) to an end that is above human nature, precisely because “each thing is ordered to the end that is fitting to it according to its form,” proportionate to its nature (521f).

b. Henri de Lubac: The imprinting of a supernatural finality upon human nature prior to the gift of grace

For de Lubac, on the contrary, the “imprinting of a supernatural finality” upon our nature is prior to the gift of grace, and is involved in the very constitution of our nature, as it concretely exists in us. The first fundamental problem with de Lubac’s position is how the denial that our nature is *ordered* to the vision of God prior to grace can be reconciled with his repeated assertion that a supernatural finality has been imprinted on our nature, prior to grace. Being ordered to an end according to one’s nature, and having a finality imprinted on one’s nature seem to be equivalent notions. It seems therefore that de Lubac’s position entails a fundamental contradiction, and that he must logically choose between (a) his repeated affirmation that our nature itself is intrinsically determined by having received a supernatural finality (also referred to as an “essential finality”), prior to the reception of grace, and (b) the affirmation (which is the constant teaching of St. Thomas) that our nature itself is not *ordered* to a supernatural end without grace (523f).

De Lubac presupposes that the actual or *de facto* end must necessarily be the end “essential” to the nature, or inscribed upon that nature, as it concretely exists.

⁷⁴ Translation from *Summa contra Gentiles. Book Three: Providence, Part II*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 232.

However, we cannot conclude that because God has destined man for an end that is above his nature, transcending the natural inclination of his faculties, that such an end is therefore necessarily a finality “imprinted on the nature” itself, or an “intrinsic” or “ontological” end, or an “essential finality.” All that we can conclude is that if God destines us to a supernatural end, it is fitting that He give a *new form*, added to our nature (*super-additur*), by which we are fittingly ordered to that supernatural end. This new (accidental) form must necessarily be *above our nature* (sanctifying grace), so as to make us proportionate to an end which is above our nature, connatural only to God.

If this new form which determines us to a supernatural end is above our nature, then this supernatural finality cannot be said to be “imprinted in our nature itself.” Nor can the finality that is generated by this supernatural form be considered to be an “essential finality.” It is ultimately contradictory to suppose that our nature itself—without the addition of a supernatural principle—could be intrinsically determined by a supernatural finality, or have a supernatural finality inscribed upon it, or have an “essential finality” that is supernatural. If this were the case, *our nature itself would be in some sense supernatural*, in virtue of St. Thomas’s axiom that everything is ordered to its end in virtue of its form, as well as the principle invoked by de Lubac that “finality is something intrinsic, affecting the depths of the being.” However, a “supernatural nature” is a contradictory notion. An end that is actually imprinted on our nature itself (an “essential finality”) can never truly be “supernatural.” If the end is supernatural, it cannot be imprinted on our nature prior to our reception of grace, for grace alone is sufficient to order the intellectual creature to a supernatural end (526–29).

c. The different meanings of “grace superadded” in de Lubac and in Aquinas

[F]or de Lubac, grace should be conceived as “super-added” to our nature only insofar as it renders us properly disposed and capable of achieving the end which was already inscribed in our nature prior to the gift of grace. It should not be conceived as “super-added” in the sense of giving us a “new finality.”

However, for St. Thomas, grace is not conceived only as a necessary *means* to achieve an end to which our nature is already essentially ordered. On the contrary, grace is necessary first for us to have a being and dignity such that the vision of God is a fitting and proportionate end for us. The infused moral virtues are necessary so that we may operate for that supernatural end, but grace is situated by St. Thomas on a different level. It makes

present within us a supernatural finality by giving us a mysterious proportionality with the divine nature. Thus it can be said that for St. Thomas, our supernatural finality is “imprinted on our being” first by sanctifying grace (529ff).

3. *Feingold's characterization of the central tension in Henri de Lubac's account of the desiderium naturale: the created spirit*

- a. The innate appetite or natural inclination being necessarily directed to the actual final end

The vision of God is certainly not “proportionate” to human nature without grace, as de Lubac also recognizes. [*The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 111–12: “However profound, however lofty it may be, created spiritual nature is in no way ‘proportionate’—except ‘as the effect to the cause, or the potency to the act’—to what infinitely surpasses it.”] However, de Lubac fails to draw the necessary conclusion from this. According to St. Thomas, the natural inclination of our will is directed to the end that is *proportionate* to our nature, and not to the *actual* end to which God has destined us, which is supernatural. This is a direct consequence of the fact that our actual end is supernatural. A supernatural end necessarily exceeds the proportionality of the nature which has been elevated to it, by definition. Therefore, it necessarily also exceeds the natural inclination (or innate appetite) of the faculties of that nature, since natural inclination is based on proportionality and similarity. De Lubac's fundamental deviation from St. Thomas in this matter consists in supposing that natural inclination or innate appetite is necessarily directed to the *actual* final end to which God has destined a creature, and not rather to the end *proportionate* to the nature of the creature (534).

- b. The natural inclination or innate appetite generated by the natural form according to Thomas Aquinas

Natural inclination or innate appetite must be based on the nature of the creature, since, being prior to knowledge, it can only be generated by the *natural form* that is possessed. However, it is clear that there is nothing in the natural form of the creature, prior to the gift of grace, such that it could generate a natural inclination or innate appetite for the vision of God. A natural desire for the vision of God, prior to grace, can only be an elicited desire caused by some knowledge of God's effects, and thus it will be directed to a knowledge of God's essence as First Cause, according to the profound interpretation of Sylvester of Ferrara. The presence of sanctifying

grace, on the other hand, generates a new “super-added” pre-cognitive inclination directly for the vision of God, as the object of our supernatural beatitude. This new inclination follows on grace, “*per modum naturae*.”

In short, there is no basis for the thesis that the end to which God actually destines a creature—if that end is *supernatural*—necessarily generates a corresponding innate appetite or natural inclination for that end (and only for that end) in the creature, prior to the reception of grace (535f).

- c. The unresolved tension in de Lubac’s account: The natural desire to see God—purely natural, or also somewhat divine?

There is an unresolved tension, in fact, in de Lubac’s thought as to whether the natural desire to see God should be conceived as purely natural, or as also somehow divine. According to the logic of his system, there are strong reasons for both affirmations. It must be considered as natural, on the one hand, insofar as it is identified either with the nature itself, or with its foundation and depths. On the other hand, however it must be considered to be somehow divine or supernatural for it to accomplish the role that de Lubac assigns to it. The imprinting of a supernatural finality on our nature, creating an innate inclination to our supernatural end, understood as God’s “call,” can only be the result of the gift of a *supernatural* form added to our nature (539f).⁷⁵

If our nature can make no claim to the supernatural finality that has been imprinted on it, and does not in itself imply that finality, then the imprinting of that finality cannot properly be understood to belong to the nature itself, for otherwise my nature would “claim” it and “imply” it, as an essential constituent element. For example, our nature itself “claims” and “implies” the presence of reason, hands and feet, ordination to a fitting final end, etc. St. Thomas expresses this through the notion of *debitum naturae*. Therefore, this finality, if it is truly not claimed by the nature, must logically be something added to our nature (at least insofar as the nature is considered “abstractly”).

This implies that what de Lubac refers to as our “concrete” or “historical” nature should really be conceived—in order to

⁷⁵ Page 540 note 68: “It is basically for this reason that Karl Rahner introduces his ‘supernatural existential,’ for he reasons that a principle which intrinsically orders us to a supernatural end must itself be supernatural. In this he is quite coherent. St. Thomas agrees that we are ordered to our supernatural end by supernatural principles: grace and the supernatural virtues. However, for Rahner, this principle is not grace, but something prior to the reception of grace.”

be coherent—as a composite formed by two elements: (a) our nature itself, as such (referred to by de Lubac as our “abstract” or “generic nature”), with the addition of (b) a supernatural finality imprinted on that nature which determines in us a natural desire to see God (an “imprint” which would logically itself be a supernatural element). [note 78: This is essentially the solution of K. Rahner] (542f).

4. *The resolution of the tension in de Lubac's account:
Either Thomist or Bulgakovian/Milbankian*

One ironic outcome of Feingold's critique and Milbank's modification of de Lubac's position is that Milbank's radicalized Bulgakovian Lubacianism constitutes precisely the other side of Feingold's Aristotelian Thomism. Both Feingold and Milbank agree that (a) the concern expressed in *Humani Generis* was indeed aimed at de Lubac, and (b) that the later de Lubac's way of responding to the encyclical's concern was not fully satisfying—for both because de Lubac never jettisoned the fundamental assumption about the constitution of the created spirit for a single supernatural end expressed in the *innate* natural desire for the vision of God.

a. The tension summarized

In order to coherently hold that our supernatural finality is “essential” to us, de Lubac would logically have had to eliminate the distinction of abstract and concrete human nature altogether, and maintain that human nature as such is necessarily determined by a supernatural finality, which thus is essential to it and would be included in man's definition itself, in any hypothesis or economy of salvation. According to this solution, an “uncalled” rational nature (if it is possible) would not be human nature at all, but would be a completely different nature or species, having a different definition, with a different essential finality. This would mean discarding the possibility of an abstract human nature different from our concrete human nature in not containing a supernatural finality imprinted on it. Although this solution would be philosophically more coherent in certain respects, and is supported by several passages of Chapter 4 of *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (in which de Lubac implies that members of a hypothetical “uncalled” humanity would really have a different nature), such a solution poses great theological problems, defining a created nature, as such, by a supernatural end. In any case, the mature de Lubac did not wish to take this step in an unambiguous way, so as not to turn our supernatural end into a mere *sequela creationis*, and also perhaps

so as not to be in conflict with the teaching of *Humani generis*. In fact, such a solution would render impossible de Lubac's threefold distinction, seen above, between (1) the creation of a spiritual nature, (2) the imprinting of a supernatural finality, and (3) the offer of grace, so that the first does not imply the second, and the second does not imply the third (546ff).

b. The alternative resolutions

In conclusion, de Lubac is in perfect harmony with St. Thomas and with the Christian tradition in denying that our nature itself, as it actually exists, has the slightest supernatural element. However, this cannot be reconciled with his interpretation of the natural desire to see God as the expression of a supernatural finality imprinted on our nature in creation itself, prior to the reception of grace, determining us to an *inevitably supernatural end*. A choice must be made. Either the supernatural finality imprinted on our nature must be recognized to flow from a *supernatural element given with our constitution itself* (as K. Rahner affirms); or one must reject altogether the thesis that a supernatural finality has been imprinted on our nature, prior to grace, opting instead for the thesis that an ordination to our supernatural end is impressed on our being first by sanctifying grace. Clearly the principles of St. Thomas and the Christian tradition demand the latter option (550).

c. Feingold's rejection of "grace extrinsicism": the *specific obediential potency* of the rational creature, that is, the rational creature's *natural* openness to the *supernatural*

For St. Thomas, the existence of an elicited natural desire to know the essence of God shows that a call by God to the beatific vision is tremendously fitting, since it is the only end in which we can find perfect beatitude and in which all natural desire can come to rest (emphasis added)

In addition, St. Thomas combats a certain type of "extrinsicism" by showing that our ordering to a supernatural end is realized through principles which are truly possessed by us in a continuous way in the form of supernatural habits which generate a new inclination, so that our supernatural end is attained in a way that is "connatural" in a certain sense. Although these principles ordering us to the vision of God remain extrinsic to our *nature* (for they are supernatural and thus "super-added" to the nature), they are not extrinsic to the *person* who possesses these supernatural habits.

The difference is that for St. Thomas, this intrinsic ordering and inclination comes through "super-added" (supernatural) principles, whereas for de Lubac, it comes through the

nature itself, as it is historically realized in us, bearing an *innate and absolute* natural desire for its actual end (551f).

It is certainly true, as de Lubac emphasizes, that rational creatures constitute a special case with regard to their finality. St. Thomas notes that a great dignity of the rational creature lies in the fact that it can be raised to an end exceeding its natural faculties and proportionality; it alone is naturally *open* to the supernatural, in virtue of the very nature of the faculties of intellect and will. Thus it can be elevated through the gift of grace to receive a new finality to which its nature itself is not ordered. This has been analyzed above as a specific obediential potency of the rational creature (553).

- d. The novelty or paradox of de Lubac's position: The idea of an *innate* natural desire for the vision of God

The novelty or paradox of de Lubac's position lies in his claim that a desire can be absolute or unconditional, and at the same time still remain inefficacious and imperfect (558).

[On the contrary, St. Thomas's] position is based on the axiom that innate appetite, since it derives directly from the natural form possessed, is always directed to an object *proportionate* to the nature of the creature. . . . An elicited (imperfect) natural desire, on the other hand, is not limited by the proportionality of the creature, because it is based on knowledge, and something can be known to be desirable even though it exceeds the proportionality of the creature, as is manifestly the case with regard to the vision of God.

I hold that the latter line of interpretation, represented by Suárez, is correct, and that the former line of interpretation, represented most prominently by de Lubac, contradicts many texts and principles of St. Thomas. The idea of an *innate* natural desire for the vision of God—although it may appear plausible at first sight—is fundamentally incompatible with the Thomistic synthesis (636).

- e. Avoiding the paradox; or, the philosophical and theological necessity of the possibility of a state of pure nature

[T]he existence of an innate appetite for the vision of God logically implies the impossibility of a state of pure nature. However, the possibility of a state of pure nature is necessary for both philosophical and theological reasons, and has been taught by the Church's Magisterium. It is philosophically necessary for the coherence of the natural order, and theologically necessary to preserve the full gratuitousness of grace.

If there is only one final end (or only one beatitude) that is possible for man's nature as such—the vision of God—then

that end, together with the means necessary to obtain it, will be due to human nature. In such a case, the vision of God, together with grace and the theological virtues, would no longer be gratuitous in the sense in which St. Thomas understands these gifts to be gratuitous (666f).

*5. St. Thomas transcending the alternatives of the
“extrinsicism” and “intrinsicism” of grace*

Finally, it must be noted that Feingold captures with admirable nuance the intriguingly complex as well as precise position of St. Thomas and the Thomist tradition over against the rather crude alternatives of the alleged Thomist submission to a “grace-extrinsicism” on the one hand and the proposed panacea of the intrinsicism of a “grace-continuum of infinite intensification” on the other hand:

It should be noted that the assertion of the “possibility of a state of pure nature,” (which should be understood as the possibility or non-absurdity for an intellectual nature to be created, and yet not to be called to a supernatural end) does not imply that it would be equally fitting for God to elevate an intellectual creature, as not to elevate him. On the contrary, St. Thomas shows that it is more fitting to our nature and its natural (elicited) aspirations, for God to elevate us to the supernatural end of the vision of God. This is shown by means of the natural desire to see God. *Perfect* beatitude is possible only in the vision of God, for only this can bring to rest all natural desire.

Nevertheless, despite the fittingness of our elevation, it is very important to assert that it would not be absurd or incoherent (that is, it would not be impossible with regard to the order of God’s providence) for human nature to exist without being elevated to a supernatural end, in which case it could only attain an imperfect beatitude. However, the existence of a truly *innate* natural appetite for the vision of God (which thus would be absolute), would make it not merely less fitting for human nature to exist without being elevated to a supernatural end, but also ultimately absurd, as was affirmed by Jansenius and his followers, together with the Augustinian theologians Noris, Bellelli and Berti, and finally by de Lubac and those who follow him.

Therefore, in order to coherently affirm the possibility of a state of pure nature, one must reject the existence of an innate appetite for the vision of God, as Suárez maintained in opposition to the earlier solution of St. Robert Bellarmine, Toledo and Soto (as well as Scotus), which maintained an innate appetite for the vision of God without rejecting the possibility of a state of pure nature (667).

The subtle and nuanced argumentation of this last section gives the lie to Milbank’s characterization that Feingold resurrects an “arch-reactionary,”

“die-hard,” “palaeolithic” neo-Thomism intent on defending a “regime of pure nature.” Moreover, Feingold himself advances at this very point the kind of aesthetic argument of ontological fittingness, based on *convenientia*, that Milbank hails as the latest achievement of what he characterizes as only a very recent Fribourg–Toulouse Thomism, presumably chastened by the *nouvelle théologie*. Hence it is not really surprising that Milbank fails to recognize that for Feingold, *convenientia* in this section has nothing whatsoever to do with the mere “epistemological likelihood,” which according to Milbank is Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s (and by implication Feingold’s) understanding of *convenientia*.⁷⁶ Finally, in light of this particular passage, it becomes clear that the question of whether there exists in the human being an *innate* natural desire for the vision of God is a question debated in highly nuanced ways long before the days of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, and Henri de Lubac, SJ, and hence in all likelihood a question that will continue to be debated long after them, though now in light of the concern expressed in *Humani Generis*.

Coda

It has become clear, first, that how the question of nature and grace is resolved has in at least some cases a subtle, but nevertheless immediate, impact on resolutions to the question of the nature and scope of salvation. In other words, if, as the early de Lubac states in *Surnaturel* and as Milbank likes to take him, spirit indeed is the desire for God, then Bulgakov’s universal *apokatastasis* is indeed the logical explication of a fundamental entailment of de Lubac’s theological vision of a Christian humanist universalism.

It has become furthermore clear that it is ultimately unconvincing on the question of nature and grace to drive a consistent and comprehensive wedge between the thought of Thomas Aquinas on the one hand and the tradition of the Thomist commentators on the other hand. In other words, the Thomist position that the natural desire to see God is an *elicited* natural desire is by no means a Renaissance or Baroque distortion of a presumably “original,” more or less Areopagite Aquinas, but a faithful and consistent interpretation of the comprehensive position of the *doctor communis*.

Finally, it has become clear that the reading of St. Thomas’s theology of grace as exclusively reconstructed in light of an Areopagite ontology of participation, in order to help warrant the vision of a Bulgakovian Lubicianism, simply is untenable. The humanism St. Thomas advances is integrally united with an Augustinian theological position on predestination

⁷⁶ Milbank, *Suspended*, 84ff.

and grace as stated in the Second Synod of Orange and reconfirmed at the Council of Trent.

I should add, nevertheless, that while the universal *apokatastasis* was never adopted as a comprehensive dogmatic position by East or West,⁷⁷ universal human salvation remains a legitimate theological expression of the infused, supernatural virtues of hope and charity and hence a matter of fervent prayers of intercession, as consistently argued by Hans Urs von Balthasar.⁷⁸ Transposing universal salvation, however, from the scope of Christian hope and prayer to the core of Christian doctrine and theology would at the very least be a grave mistake of categories, if not the unwarranted anticipation of divine judgment in the form of theological speculation, even be it a Christological speculation as brilliant and gospel-centered as in the case of Karl Barth's doctrine of election.⁷⁹

Hence, to return to the beginning of these observations, the first type of answer to the question, What is the human being?, in all its profound humanist attraction suffers from the speculative excess of a premature systematic closure, precisely at the point where theology has to practice the *askesis* of leaving the end to God. Although, obviously, the second

⁷⁷ Indeed, it was explicitly rejected by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, that is, the Second Council of Constantinople, 553, in a first, formally preconciliar, anathema, a statement issued by the assembly of bishops, in which they confirmed in an elaborated version the anti-Origenian canon promulgated by the Synod of Constantinople in 543. (For the anti-Origenian canon of 553, see *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* [Berlin, 1914ff], vol. IV/1, 248ff.) The statement can be interpreted minimalistically as a rejection of the idea that one can know certainly that no one will be eternally damned; more straightforwardly and less minimalistically read, it seems simply to condemn any position that would want to deny the concrete possibility of eternal damnation for some, as argued already by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* XXI, 17.

⁷⁸ See for a discussion more accessible than the sprawling *Theo-Drama*, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"? with a Short Discussion on Hell* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988); and the insightful discussion of von Balthasar's nuanced position by Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eschatology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 113–27.

⁷⁹ Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* II/2 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1942), 1–563. The remarkable sophistication of Barth's speculative Christological anticipation consists in the very fact that he stops short of stating explicitly what is clearly entailed by the logic of the argument itself for, as Barth himself acknowledges, there indeed is no explicit biblical warrant for universalism. To which degree Barth's restraint at this point remains a merely dialectical, rather than eschatological, reserve, however, depends on whether one reads the long concluding exegetical excursus on Judas Iscariot (508–63; esp. 551 and 563!) as a question mark or rather as an exclamation mark to his whole doctrine of election!

type of answer does not follow by necessity from the argument thus far advanced⁸⁰—an argument primarily pertaining to the correct interpretation of Thomas Aquinas—I shall nevertheless insist upon submitting that it is indeed in the second type of answer where we find such *askesis* most properly practiced. And in order to sustain the proper theological *askesis* this side of the eschaton, it strikes me to be indispensable as well as of eminent *convenientia* not only to acknowledge the proper difference that obtains *realiter* between nature and grace, in order to do justice to the specific gratuity of the grace of predestination, the *donum ultimum*, but moreover, and presently more importantly, to develop a coherent account of the relative and limited integrity of the principle of nature, which preserves the proper gratuity of the first gift, the *donum primum*, and hence does justice to the ineluctable double gratuity entailed in the economy of salvation. Where everything is grace all the way down in one and the same way, albeit of infinitely differing intensity, everything that has been brought into being, must have its end in God, by necessary ontological entailment. While undoubtedly a grandiose speculative vision, it, however, is neither the teaching of the Scriptures nor of the Church.⁸¹ N V

⁸⁰ Moreover, the two types of answers do not cover all, albeit by far the most, positions taken by Christian theologians. One such answer not addressed by the two types submitted—a nuanced form of Augustinianism—indeed combines two particular features of both types by defending the possibility of a divinely permitted ontological self-annihilation of the persistently evil rational soul. This answer does indeed entail neither the *apokatastasis ton panton* nor the doctrine of the eternal punishment of souls as defended by St. Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* XXI, 17. For a forceful and brilliant defense of a version of this third type of answer, see Paul J. Griffiths, “Self-Annihilation or Damnation? A Disputable Question in Christian Eschatology,” forthcoming in *Pro Ecclesia* 16 (Fall 2007).

⁸¹ I am indebted to Kent Dunnington and Nancy Heitzenrater Hütter for attending to the prose of this essay and to Paul J. Griffiths and Bruce Marshall for pressing me in most incisive ways regarding the fundamental conceptual, logical, and normative question underlying this particular effort as well as the larger theological question itself. Only by way of a subsequent essay can I hope to do at least some initial justice to their questions and concerns.