

The Debate Between Henri de Lubac and His Critics

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THE ARTICLES in the recent symposium in *Nova et Vetera* 5:1 (2007) on Lawrence Feingold's *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*¹ all seem exceedingly tantalizing. Those that seem most exact in their apparent refutation of Henri de Lubac all appear to be open to reply out of the texts of de Lubac himself, especially when fortified by considerations drawn from Etienne Gilson's *Being and Some Philosophers*.² Yet the work of Feingold himself, a work of such quality that it ought to be made more readily accessible, is open to no such easy reply. However, neither de Lubac nor his critics, not even Feingold, show awareness of some of the key background problems underlying their debate; and it is with a consideration of these problems that I shall begin.

Not every question was dealt with by St. Thomas, but he provides a structure within which we can deal with other questions in a way which accords with the principles of faith. Feingold demonstrates, at least to my satisfaction, that, at least in the areas under discussion, Cajetan remained scrupulously careful in the micro-exegesis of the aspects of St. Thomas's analysis which he chose to explore. However, in more than one area, while respectful of detail, he seems to have lacked a sense of St. Thomas's general perspective.³ In particular in the area of present concern, he showed a grave

¹ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001).

² Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952).

³ Cajetan's capacity to combine accuracy in detail with a lack of a sense of what is most important for general perspective is something which appears elsewhere, as in his treatment of St. Thomas on analogy, as Hampus Lyttkens in 1953 and

weakness in macro-exegesis in failing to register any adequate sense of St. Thomas's faithfulness to his Augustinian background. It is this which provoked de Lubac to write *Surnaturel*, which reached publication in 1946 and was followed by his more considered 1965 works *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* and *Le mystère du surnaturel* (to which I will refer in their English translations, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology* [1969] and *The Mystery of the Supernatural* [1967]), as well as his earlier article "Le Mystère du Surnaturel."⁴ As to the questions raised by de Lubac, it was not amongst de Lubac's gifts to attempt the analytic task of situating what he calls the "supernatural finality" of man within the structure Thomas has so accurately set up. Yet "supernatural finality" is a key element in what it meant for Jesus to be called Son of Man, and, as Luke makes clear, descended from Adam, and so must be of central importance within any Christian theology. The principal regret I would have about Feingold's distinguished work is he did not look beyond the logical defects of de Lubac's presentation, including his evidently irregular use of the term "nature," to what he intended to convey.

De Lubac and his rehabilitation within the Church since the 1960s is seen by some as a key mark of an advance in the Church's approach to theology since the 1960s, while for others he is seen as symbol of the revival of the essence of the modernism against which Pius X fought. With attitudes so polarized, it is crucial to do each of the disputing parties the justice of seeking out their exact meanings and intentions in their often-differing handling of some of the vocabulary used, and to seek out the truth. It is especially important to avoid the vitriol which underlays much of the debate of the period, and which survives today, a vitriol which does harm to the Church and hinders the pursuit of truth.

George Klubertanz, S.J., in 1960, amply demonstrated. The ill-effects of Cajetan's approach in this area are something I hope to have opportunity to explain elsewhere. It meant, for instance, that at a formative stage in his development, because of a misunderstanding of the significance of the distinction between *res significata* and *modus significandi*, Edward Schillebeeckx had nothing better to fall back upon in his account of how we use language in theology than the notion of "disclosure," used later in his Christology; cf. "The Non-Conceptual Intellectual Dimension in Our Knowledge of God According to Aquinas," in *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 2 (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 157–206, originally published in *Tidschrift voor Philosophie* (Louvain) 14 (1952): 411–53.

⁴ Henri de Lubac, "Le Mystère du Surnaturel," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 35 (1949): 80–121.

The Background Problem Underlying the Present Debate

A Common But Misconceived Understanding of the Doctrine of Original Sin

According to traditional Christian understanding, the original state of man was one in which he was in a state of having sanctifying grace, of actual charity towards God, and with the emotions so subject to reason as not to weaken his use of reason or his attachment in charity to God—the state of “original justice.” Man’s first sin was one of pride—which appeared in the form of presuming to try and take, by human action and initiative, a greater wisdom above human nature, rather than be led to it or taught it by God—a sin of the devil, not of the world or the flesh.⁵

In God’s desire or antecedent will, no human being would have sinned, and the human race would have remained one stock, one family. And so long as man continued faithful then it would be congruous that children be conceived and born likewise in a state of grace ordering them to growth in charity towards God, with the emotions still subject to reason, and by grace ordered towards glory in the vision of God. This was the future antecedently desired for the whole human race, a free gift from God’s liberality, not only to man in his original state, but to the whole of his genetic inheritance—not that grace would have been passed on by the genes, but that the original free gift was not only for the first human individuals created but for the whole human race thereby constituted.

In the same traditional Christian understanding, the result of sin by man in his original state was not just to affect the individuals concerned but to bring the whole of mankind into our present situation whereby inheritance leaves each person in a state of deprivation, without sanctifying grace, and without the emotions being subject to reason.⁶

⁵ It has been suggested that Adam’s sin was excessive love of his wife, giving his relation to his wife priority over his relation to God, since it was not Adam who was “seduced” by the serpent. However, considering Adam and Eve as representing the original human community, the underlying temptation was, as it were, to grab equality with God by force, something Jesus did not do, consenting to be born in a condition of human humiliation, not of the glory ultimately revealed as fitting for him (Phil 2:6).

⁶ Indeed, the fact that the emotions are no longer subject to reason makes it more difficult or impossible for a person to become fixed in evil, and so makes the path to repentance more open, although, when grace and charity are restored, the emotions still remain disordered, and grace is required for man to grow in fortitude and temperance to remain in charity and grace.

Therefore, if it is true that the human race is subject to original sin in this way, then this must mean that their not having sanctifying grace simply by inheritance constitutes a privation—it is, as it were, not like a whale's not having legs, but like a horse's not having legs, not just the non-presence of something, but the non-presence of something which ought to be present. In this situation, if a person remains free from actual sin, then he or she will reach the state described by Aquinas in *II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5, as a participation in natural goods including joy in the fullest possible natural knowledge and love of God.⁷ However, this will remain a state of deprivation, although in Aquinas's late view not pain (*dolor*) of any kind, not even mental affliction.⁸ Such a person is unfortunate, not fortunate, and not in a state of *eudaimonia*, or beatitude, in any unqualified sense. Aquinas never describes these persons as in a state of beatitude or as having attained their ultimate end.

Feingold tells us that one has to distinguish between God's [antecedent] intention from all eternity to elevate men and angels to the supernatural end of grace and glory (which Feingold, like Francisco Suarez, regards as extrinsic to man), by contrast with man's being actually ordered towards this supernatural end by having sanctifying grace as intrinsic to him.⁹ But the matter is not so simple. True, men in general are not conceived in grace and do not have their emotions subject to their reason, but this might seem just a matter of each man's being a distinct individual related only externally by genetic descent to the sinful ancestors who had lost their original grace, but this constituting a deprivation to no one beyond them. Why should this ancestry affect the extrinsically distinct descendants so as to give rise to a deprivation of the congruity of being conceived and born in a state of sanctifying grace so that, by perseverance and with the continued help of God, they might come to glory? Why should such a deprivation become something intrinsic to any human being who has this ancestry?

If it is a matter of extrinsic relations only, then to speak of man as born in sin as if he were damaged goods is a matter of words only, and it would seem that the traditional doctrine of original sin is empty—or a legal fiction, God's deeming man to be in sin, as if to justify "taking it out" on Adam's descendents in punishment of Adam, an altogether repugnant way of thinking!

Man, we are told, came into existence on earth in a state of "original justice," in a state of grace and of supernatural charity towards God, and

⁷ Cf. Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 411.

⁸ It is said "To a sin contracted without pleasure there corresponds a penalty undergone without pain."

⁹ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 418.

with the passions subject to reason and not blunting his singleness of heart towards God. The blunting of this singleness of heart would come, not from the passions, but from the desire for autonomy, his will free of God's direction, so as to be directed as he chose, not necessarily to the natural happiness proportionate to his natural powers, nor to a vision of God dependent upon God's gift.

But why, when man fell, and turned aside in pride, should this affect his descendants? Indeed his descendants might then lack this original justice, not to be conceived and born in a state of grace and of supernatural charity towards God, and not have their passions subject to reason—but why should they feel this as a privation? These were not things to which they had any right, so why should not the way to a natural happiness proportionate to their natural powers have still been open to them, without their being disturbed by a sense of the lack of these things to which they had no right? Yet according to the doctrine of original sin, we and all such descendants are deprived, and empirically do experience a sense of deprivation, a sense of lack of direction as if we had no ultimate end, or a sense that only some further providence of God for us, going beyond merely creating us, could give us a real meaning or direction—despite a natural happiness proportionate to our powers that is still open to us. Why should we be dissatisfied with a lot which is quite natural to us?

We need some better explanation than Suarez and his followers can offer.

*The Better Way of Conceiving the Doctrine of Original Sin:
Original Sin Is Only a Privation Because It Persists
Within the Context of a Continuing Will of God
for the Communal Salvation of Mankind*

In the plan of creation, just as the persons of the Trinity are differentiated in some way, so those created persons, angels and men, who are to be brought into a share of the divine life are each to be unique in some way. In the case of angels, there was therefore no point¹⁰ in creating two angels each identical in nature to one another (with the consequence that they do not need to be individuated by matter), but the case of human beings is different. Of their biological nature as language-speaking animals, human beings are communal, social beings, sharing the same nature, and differentiated by the different ways in which this nature flowers in different roles and relations, one human being to another. Accordingly, the original plan of God in relation to man was a plan not just in regard to

¹⁰ ST I, q. 47, a. 2.

one individual, but in regard to the whole human race. So we should say that the situation of every human person is to live in the context of a general plan on God's part for the whole human race, not just of a plan for each human being as an individual whereby God has the antecedent desire that, if the human being concerned be willing, this human being should be in or come into a state of sanctifying grace ordering him towards glory in the vision of God. That is, each human person lives in the situation that the wider plan has been already put into effect in God's first creation of the human race, with the result that so long as man continued faithful then it would be congruous that children be conceived and born likewise in a state of grace ordering them to glory in the vision of God.

Accordingly, although man has not continued faithful, God is not to be frustrated in this wider original plan that the whole human race should come as one spiritual community into a sharing of his divine life, but this end has to be achieved in a different way. Now each person is conceived and born into a situation in which it is no longer congruous that this be in a state of grace ordering him to glory in the vision of God, that is, with the means whereby, if willing, then with the continued help of God's grace, he will come to the vision of God. Rather, each person is conceived and born into a situation in which he still belongs to a human race called and invited to supernatural friendship with God, but is in a state of deprivation, lacking the grace he would have had by congruity if man had not sinned.

Therefore, sin did not lead God to alter his antecedent will that human beings should constitute one family coming in grace as a community to God. Accordingly, he did not change his general plan and start to treat each human being separately, as if the spiritual association between different human beings were now to be accidental. In that latter case, the human beings arising from each new conception and birth would *either* be conceived in a state of sanctifying grace, with their emotions subject to reason, each human being receiving grace individually so as to be, for so long as he were willing, separately taught by God and separately led into the way of supernatural charity to the vision of God, *or else* left to attain a natural happiness by his natural powers, a happiness proportionate to these natural powers, perhaps assisted preternaturally so that reason was not undermined by the passions, but not called and given the means to a supernatural life. In either case the human race would have been robbed of the character of being a spiritual community.

Rather, God did not alter how he had constituted man in creating him, and so he left the human family with the character of being a spir-

itual community. This had the twin effects: firstly that the sin of the first affected all, so that none would now be conceived in grace by inheritance simply in virtue of belonging to the human family, and there would need to be a different way for them to come to grace and glory in the vision of God and this to be in spiritual community; and secondly that the love and obedience of one, Jesus by his Godhead in a unique relationship as man to the rest of the human race, might later avail for all.

Thus, within this background, the situation is not the one commonly portrayed and given precision by Suarez, as I outlined it earlier. Rather, as Emil Mersch perceived, the idea that human beings inherit a condition of sin is not a matter of some injustice on God's part but an expression of God's keeping mankind intrinsically communal at the spiritual as well as the biological level. By maintaining human beings, each in their personal being, as members of a mankind intrinsically communal, so that there is a personal community between those in grace and those in sin, God made it possible not only for us to pray for one another, but also for the perfect love and obedience of Jesus, even to die on the cross out of love for man, to avail for the rest of humanity to bring them, so far as they are willing, to salvation—rather than a matter of the virtue of one individual to which other individuals can only remain external. As, because of our solidarity with one another as persons, the sin of one affected all, so also it became possible for the obedience and love of one to avail for all—otherwise, the obedience and love to death of Jesus would remain external to us. The point of the doctrine of original sin, the sin of one in virtue of man's solidarity affecting all, is seen in the fact that, in virtue of the same solidarity, the love of one can re-open the possibility of salvation to all.¹¹

As Aquinas expresses it, the sin of the first man was not just the sin of one or two individuals, but the sin of the human community (*collegium*) as constituted in the creation of man,¹² and it is only because of this that the first human beings' descendants are affected. Therefore, when he speaks of human nature as thereby penalized, corrupted (*depravatus*), debilitated (the word for "debility" is *langor*), infirm, or vitiated, he does not mean that the nature has been changed, but that persons are affected as members of the community with that nature, not in virtue of that nature.

Our actual situation is one in which the whole human race is positioned within the context of a general plan, an order of providence, within

¹¹ Emil Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, trans. Cyril Vollert from French 2nd ed., 1946: (St. Louis: Herder, 1951), 147–68, 172, 174–77, 296–322, 605, 447f., cf. 104–25.

¹² *De malo*, q. 4, a. 1.

which God does have the antecedent desire that human beings, if they be willing, should be in or come to a state of sanctifying grace ordering them to glory in the vision of God. Indeed, according to the teaching of St. Paul, it is not only the human race but the whole of creation which was made subject to futility in the hope the creation as a whole should be set free from bondage to decay,¹³ having groaned in labor pains until now, all in hope and preparation for the freedom of the glory of the children of God completed through the Spirit in our adoption and the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:19–23).

Not all questions are to be answered at once. Since man is no longer conceived and born in grace, there are questions as to how his possibility of coming to salvation may be affected by his inability to give deliberate response to Revelation before the age of reason, or by the continued possibility of sin, either by pride or through disorders consequent on the emotions, refusing the grace offered. But the main structure of the situation and its logic require to be established first, before these questions can properly be considered at all.

I turn now to the logical problems which arise in describing man's situation as I have sketched it.

The Problem of How to Describe the Logic of Man's Actual Situation

Person and Nature

In the first place, we should note that some of the key predicates involved in the discussion—"subsists," "is a person," "has a nature," etc.—are such as to apply to God and to creatures, and even to different kinds of creature, according to no one definition or set of criteria of application. They are, like "is living," "knows," "understands," "is wise," "exercises active power," and so forth, predicated by "intrinsic analogy"—that is, predicated in virtue of likeness to God, in whom all these perfections pre-exist in a more eminent and excellent way, in such a way as to apply primarily to God, even though we first learn the terms concerned in applying them to creatures.¹⁴ To subsist or be a *subsistentia* (*hypostasis*), in St. Thomas's use of the term, is to be a subject of true propositions and to be neither predicated of a subject

¹³ Although it is not part of our present topic to take the matter further, it is in these terms that we are to understand how it is that the origin and context of human life should be one in which the brute animals also suffer, something man is allowed to take advantage of only *faute de mieux* (Gen 9), but which is foreign to the Messianic kingdom (Is 11).

¹⁴ ST I, q. 4, a. 2; q. 13, a. 6. Cf. Francesca Aran Murphy, *Art and Intellect in the Philosophy of Etienne Gilson* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2004), 201.

nor present in a subject (being present in a subject here means being present in a subject as courage is said to be in courageous persons, and humanity is sometimes said to be in human beings). When he uses the terms “concrete” and “abstract” to make a logical distinction, “to be concrete” means to subsist or be a first substance in Aristotle’s sense. Now, when we are told that a “person is an individual of an intellectual nature,” we should understand this as meaning a *hypostasis* of a nature able to understand and think. Accordingly, the term “person” can be applied to angels and to human beings by similitude, as well as to the persons of the Godhead. (It has to be remembered that when Boethius used the term “person” of individual human beings and angels, he was using it in the way pioneered by the Cappadocian Fathers and the First Council of Constantinople in 381 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and thus in a way in use over the whole preceding some hundred and forty years before he wrote.)

In the second place, in Aristotle’s list of “categories,” that is, modes of predication (*praedicamenta*), the category of relation occupies a peculiar situation in that it can be applied without any implications as to the nature of what it is being applied to. Thus, in discussing the Trinity, St. Thomas remarks that “there are said to be only two predicaments in God, since other predicaments imply dispositions in that of which they are predicated”¹⁵—so the divine Persons differ in their relations to each other but this does not imply any difference of nature, the persons being all the same in nature.

Accordingly it was God’s plan *both* that in virtue of inheritance, that is, in virtue of a relation, the whole human race should come as a spiritual community into a sharing of his divine life *and* that in virtue of the same relation of inheritance, if man sins, all mankind should suffer a loss of the congruity whereby all would be conceived and born in grace, which we experience as the deprivation referred to as original sin. Each person inherits a part *both* in God’s whole gracious plan *and* in this loss, without either making any difference to his or her nature. When Mary was conceived in grace, this was not in virtue of any congruity, but in virtue of the sheer grace of God at a strategic point, a point of no turning back, in the development of God’s plan for man’s salvation, a point prepared for but not determined beforehand by salvation history as it had unfolded up to that point.

What belongs to nature, intellect and will, and what arises naturally from them, and belongs to every intellectual creature, even the least,¹⁶ constitutes only an aptitude for grace (which, according to de Lubac, is not in the least

¹⁵ Here I paraphrase *ST I*, q. 28, a. 2, ad 1.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, c. 57.

part a seed, germ, or any kind of inchoative possession of grace,¹⁷ but only a passive aptitude,¹⁸ or specific obediential potency¹⁹), the same as what Feingold refers to as an openness to grace, and in no way a mark of the existence of any supernatural finality. This finality arises out of something further, the overarching plan of divine providence.

This supernatural finality consists not in a “form” as something “real” *in the nature of human beings* (contrary to Feingold’s presumption²⁰), but is a finality belonging to them *as persons* arising in virtue of a relation. Therefore, contrary to Feingold’s argument,²¹ to speak of God’s giving a human being a supernatural finality in the sense de Lubac’s argument requires is not to make any change in human nature. Regrettably, de Lubac spoke of a different nature, but his argument and reasoning do not involve this. (Nor is it a “form,” as something “real,” in the person, for even if grace is promised to a person, or appointed as an end, it is not something real in the person when promised, or appointed as an end, but only at the time when actually given.) Properly speaking, all predication is primarily of the person, not of a person’s nature.

As I remarked at the start, de Lubac did not have the gift of using analytical philosophy in the service of theology in the way exemplified in St. Thomas. He therefore makes the mistake of regarding human nature, if realized in an order of providence distinct from the actual order of providence within which we actually come into existence and live, as a specific difference between two natures which are only generically the same. Instead, maintaining the use of the term “nature,” or *phusis*, exemplified in Aristotelian and most later philosophical usage, he should have said that supernatural finality is something given to persons in virtue of a relation, rather than that it gives them a distinct nature.

In *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, de Lubac tells us that the desire for the vision of God is not some “accident” in me, for example, resulting from some contingent peculiarity or some historical event with merely transitory effects, but independently of my deliberate will. He says:

It is in me as a result of: my belonging to humanity as it is, that is humanity which is, as we say, ‘called’. For God’s call is constitutive. My finality, which is expressed by this desire, is inscribed upon my very being as it has been put into this universe by God. And, by God’s will, I now have

¹⁷ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 109, 111.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁰ See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 526–28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 521–28.

no other genuine end no end really assigned to my nature or presented for my free acceptance under any guise except that of 'seeing God'²²

Feingold establishes that St. Thomas did indeed hold that by our nature as human beings we do have a natural end in the sense of an end proportionate to our nature and natural powers, that is, a natural end *quodammodo*, not *simpliciter*. Therefore by the statement I quoted, de Lubac makes it clear that, even if there is a natural end *quodammodo* in this way, *this* end is not the ultimate end to which God destined us as persons. Rather, our true ultimate end, our ultimate end *simpliciter*, is supernatural; and this supernatural destiny or finality is inscribed, he says, upon our "being." Unfortunately he does not explain this as meaning "inscribed upon us as *persons*," but as "now really inscribed in the depth of my nature,"²³ our natures being conceived of as instances of our nature as realized in "all those who make up mankind as it is"²⁴ as opposed to any non-historical, never actualized, human nature, such as might have arisen in a different order of providence.

The relations under consideration are conditions or attributes which are real in creatures but not in God. Thus, firstly, where efficient causation is concerned, the condition of being created and upheld in being by God is real in the creature but not in God, and logically it does not belong to the nature just as, for example, the relation of being a son of parents is real in the son, but not part of his nature. But God does not give being without a purpose, and this purpose is not a matter only of what can be attained by the use of the powers which belong to the nature of the thing created, but more broadly it includes God's general purpose for the creature within his overall plan for creation. The final cause sets the context of the exercise of efficient causality, God's creating of a being with limited nature and powers of its own—in this case including the power to cooperate in the generation of children—being set within this broader context. Accordingly, secondly, in the case of human beings, just as the causal rooting of human beings is something real in the human beings, but not belonging to human nature, so also being called to the vision of God as their ultimate end is something real in human beings as persons, in the sense of setting real conditions for good or ill on human life. In the same sense, membership of the spiritual community of the human race is real in human beings, arising by inheritance. Both the causal rooting and the supernatural finality arise in virtue of relations and belong to the person, not to the nature. Indeed, this seems the only consistent way in which we

²² De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 71,

can interpret Christian tradition, a way of interpreting this tradition witnessed to by Scripture and by the many different theologians from Augustine onwards cited by de Lubac.

True, the efficient causality is directed to the giving of being to the person as an individual, whereas the finality is directed towards the person in whatever relations to God and his fellow creatures God intends, but this does not prevent the effects of the relations concerned from being any less real or “ontological.” True, the efficient causality involved in createdness is naturally knowable,²⁵ whereas the finality concerned involves a knowledge of God’s actual order of providence which can only be known by God’s revealing it; but again this does not make the effects of the relations concerned any less real or “ontological.”

But neither condition, unlike nature and grace, is a principle of acts, powers, or virtues. In particular, the supernatural finality concerned is not a matter of a “form” operative within human beings, but of the finality given to human persons within God’s providential order for the whole of creation.

In the Christian conception, suggested by the book of Revelation, each person has a unique, personal individuality, an individual character, or “name” known only to God; this is a personal individuality, which in Christian thought is something he grows into, God’s providence for him becoming known in stages as it unfolds. This conception of each human being as being necessarily unique in that he is given this uniqueness by this providence of God for individuals (as de Lubac, in a natural enough way of speaking in modern parlance, would say, an “essential uniqueness,” using the word “essential” in no connection with the notion of nature or essence, but to express this special kind of necessity) is quite foreign to Aristotelian thought. For Aristotelian thought, the uniqueness of any individual is an accident arising from his situation in history and his development, the latter conditioned by the accidents of external factors as well as his own choices. Indeed, the modern way of thinking whereby each person has a unique personality or individuality, with conspicuous

²⁵ Man’s intellect as exercised in regard to natural things is able to judge that, since the natural powers of the natural things he has experience of do not extend to the perpetuation of the whole natural order of which they are part, and the natural powers of things like them could not be the cause of the existence of this order, so that what the working together of these natures leads us to expect in the future, though as we say “naturally necessary,” is not absolutely necessary. Further reflection yields a demonstration within the reach of natural reason that God exists as cause of the existence of the whole order of natural things. Therefore, the relation, real in creatures, of being created and sustained in being by God is in principle naturally knowable.

effects on educational theory, on attitudes to the disadvantaged, and in heightening our sense of the evil in the taking of life, is an inheritance from Christian thought unsupported by natural reason.

The supernatural finality de Lubac has in view can therefore be thought of as the key underlying feature in the general character of the personal individuality of the first man and of each of his descendants, that is, in the actual order of providence to every human being in his coming into existence.

When it is said that "the soul is naturally capable of grace," we should say that it is the person as made with intellect and will, and thereby in the image of God, who is being said to be thus capable. Hence, to say that man has a "natural *appetitus*," or, in the manner at least of Duns Scotus and de Lubac, a natural *desiderium* for the vision of God, is *just to speak of one aspect of the destiny* towards which it is God's antecedent purpose that all men should come. For, here as elsewhere, it must be kept as an absolute principle that the very nature of will as intellectual appetite requires that anything in the will should be founded upon something in the intellect, since otherwise will is not distinguished from sensual appetite, or even the tendencies intrinsic to the natures of inanimate things.²⁶ However, it is only by beginning

²⁶ Thus, in Christian teaching, by sanctifying grace in baptism infants receive implicit faith, and in the same act are given implicit hope and implicit charity founded on this implicit faith.

When the act of faith is described as an act of intellect commanded by the will, this formulation can misleadingly suggest that we choose to believe as if, in the act of living faith which gives salvation, the act of love moving the intellect and the act of intellect were two distinct existences in a Humean sense. On the contrary, in God's governing all things *suaviter*, our loving and trusting God (the trust including hope and reliance on his word) are not two separate acts, but the trust is formed by the love, both at the movement of God. This allows for the role of signs of the truth of what is believed so that, in believing, man does not violate his intellect. The intellect, seeing God at work in the signs, is not violated—as if the voluntariness of faith were a matter of arbitrary choice. If a man says, "I choose to believe her," referring to his wife, it suggests uncertainty and lack of trust, rather than trust. If I trust my wife's fidelity, although the circumstances suggest to others that this trust is misplaced, then I am certain of her fidelity and her word on the matter despite the circumstances.

Neither intellect nor will can function without the other, since a velleity or accord with will is intrinsic to the natural inclination of the intellect to truth, just as to be in some way moved by the intellect is integral to the will as intellectual appetite. (The generation of the Son and spiration of the Spirit within the life of God are not the work of God's will or free-will; nonetheless these processions are willing in so far as they are natural, not by natural necessity as if by violence, God's will being concomitant [*De potentia*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, and 12, in accord with the last parts of the corpus of the article].)

from the recognition of the person as the primary subject of predication where human beings are concerned, and then by thinking of the soul as the human intellectual principle in the person, and by thinking of intellect and will as aspects of this principle, rather than as powers predicated of it,²⁷ that we can avoid the idea of the natural *desiderium* for the vision of God as an exercise of the power called the will, elicited by some logically prior exercise of the power called the intellect.

And Aquinas sometimes speaks in this way, as when he refers to the soul as the principle of intellectual operation,²⁸ and says “the intellect which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the body.”²⁹

Therefore, in referring to the supernatural destiny or supernatural finality spoken of, the reality of being members of a community sharing a certain end, an end which is “natural” in relation to the overarching plan of divine providence for the whole of creation, the end concerned has to be understood as having more than one aspect. In God’s antecedent will, the destiny of each person is towards a vision attained through love formed by knowledge, a knowledge and love whose chief cause is grace.

Likewise, the privation suffered in original sin involves a privation of knowledge of this destiny and its possibility, not just a loss of orientation towards it. The person has therefore been injured as a person, intellect and will both involved, not only in will.

Thus, if we think of the expression “natural *appetitus*,” natural in relation to the underlying supernatural end within God’s overarching plan, as referring to this supernatural destiny or supernatural finality, we should think of it as an *appetitus* of the whole person, embracing intellect as well as will. And it is in regard to a natural desire (*desiderium*) for the vision of God in this sense that it is valid to say that it has God as its sole object. And in respect of this *appetitus* of the whole person, it is unproblematic that it should have God as its sole object (rather than being a desire for

²⁷ In Duns Scotus’s terms as properties, or in his word passions, of the soul, which he understands to be not ‘really’ distinct from the soul, but only ‘formally’ distinct from it, to use his technical terms. For Duns Scotus, the formal distinction, that is, strictly speaking, the ‘*distinctio formalis a parte rei*’ is not just a ‘logical distinction’, but a distinction rooted in reality, one might almost say grounded in some real distinction. In recent writings, this concept of formal distinction is most fully and exactly explained by Allan B. Wolter, in pp. 16–24, *The Transcendentals and their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1946), and in relation to the intellect and the will by Efreem Bettoni, in pp. 78–81, *Duns Scotus: the basic principles of his philosophy*, translated and edited Bernardine Bonansea (Washington DC: CUA, 1961).

²⁸ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 2; for the term “intellectual principle,” see a. 2, etc.; for “intellective principle,” see a. 6, etc.

²⁹ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 1.

the good in general, or for happiness antecedent to any knowledge of what this happiness might consist in) as de Lubac's argument requires.³⁰

The Underlying Agreements Between de Lubac and His Critics

The real agreements between de Lubac and Feingold, underlying different terminologies, should not be lost sight of, where they exist. Both Gilson and de Lubac insist on the inadequacy of the conception of obediential potency to capture St. Thomas's understanding of the openness and aptitude for grace which result from man's possession of intellect and will, the first things which make man to be in the image of God. St. Thomas calls this openness and aptitude for grace an "obediential potency" to distinguish it from "natural" potencies, and in this he was preceded by St. Albert and followed by Bernard of Auvergne, working between 1294 and 1307, and Capreolus, between 1407 and 1444, long before Cajetan, all using it to make the same contrast.

However, the term "sea-animals" includes seals, the sea-cows, and the cetaceans, as well as a multiplicity of different kinds of invertebrates. Neither "sea-animal" nor "land-animal" are proper classificatory terms, and the same is true with "obediential potency" and "natural potency," which explains why it is relatively rarely that St. Thomas uses the term in connection with our aptitude for grace. The passage from *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, ad 13, quoted by both Feingold and Steven Long,³¹ is an accurate statement of an element in St. Thomas's view, but it does not include what is central to this view. The expression "specific obediential potency" is thoroughly unspecific since it does not make it clear whether one species might have one specific obediential potency and another species another, that is, by itself it says nothing as to why the specific obediential potency of man should be more significant than that of water.

For it is only when the obediential potency is specific to intellectual beings that specificity makes a difference. For the point is exactly as Aquinas states it, namely that the possession of intellect and will, which makes man to be in the image of God, makes man apt for grace, so that, as de Lubac notes, for man to receive grace is not as such a miracle, because, unlike miracles, to receive grace is in accord with the *ordo naturalis*.³² In this regard Aquinas quotes Augustine who says "to be capable of having faith and to be capable of having charity belongs to man's nature;

³⁰ See, for example, de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 70–74, 254–57.

³¹ See Steven A. Long, "On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature as a Theonomic Principle: Reflections on the Nature/Grace Controversy," *Nova et Vetera* 5 (2007): 162, n. 40; 166, n. 44.

³² De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 183.

but to have faith and charity belongs to the grace of the faithful,”³³ and St. Thomas goes on to say “the justification of the ungodly is not miraculous, because the soul is naturally capable of grace; since from its having been made to the likeness of God, it is fit to receive God by grace.”³⁴

Moreover, as M.-M. Labourdette was quite correct to explain,³⁵ although the use of the term “obediential potency” defined as a pure non-repugnance would have been familiar to St. Thomas from Albert the Great and is clearly found in *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, ad 13, nonetheless ordinarily St. Thomas does not utilize this, in his eyes, insufficient notion. Labourdette cites his use of *capacitas*,³⁶ *aptitudo*,³⁷ *habilitas*,³⁸ and *ordo naturalis*.³⁹ In identifying this underlying reluctance of St. Thomas to content himself with the notion of “obediential potency,” Labourdette evidences the rightness of the instincts of Gilson and de Lubac, of which I shall speak below. However, I note that even here in a place where St. Thomas uses the word “natural” to mean in accord with the overarching divine order, as in *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1, explaining that “all creatures have it as if through nature what is done in them by God,” he goes on to say that “accordingly a twofold potentiality is distinguished in creatures: one natural to their proper operations or motions, and the other which is called obediential, to those which they receive from God”—his Augustinian perspective in no way excludes the use of the term “obediential.”

*St. Thomas Conceived the Possibility of Other Orders of Nature
Containing Beings with a Human Nature Without Any
Supernatural Finality, But Without this Playing Any Part
in his Consideration of the Gratuitousness of Grace*

Because the supernatural finality of which de Lubac speaks does not consist in a “form” as something “real” in the *nature* of a human being but arises

³³ Augustine, *de Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, Chapter V, Migne PL 44, 968 (see *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, V, On the Predestination of the Saints, chap. 10, p. 503).

³⁴ ST I–II, q. 113, a. 10: “iustificatio impii non est miraculosa, quia naturaliter anima est gratiae capax; eo enim ipso quod facta est ad imaginem Dei, capax est Dei per gratiam, ut Augustinus dicit.”

³⁵ I rely here on the reference in note 122 of Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 264, to Labourdette’s review of Laporta’s *La Destinée* in *Revue Thomiste* 1966 (288–89), a book many of whose ideas appeared in a 1928 article “Les notions d’appétit naturel et de puissance obédientielle chez saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *ETL* 5(1928) 257–77; see also footnote 73.

³⁶ ST I–II, q. 113, a. 10; III, q. 9, a. 2.

³⁷ *De malo*, q. 2, a. 11; and *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, ad 2.

³⁸ *De malo*, q. 2, a. 11.

³⁹ *IV Sent.*, d. 17, a. 5, qua 1; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 11, ad 14.

only in him or her as a person, arising in virtue of a relation, what man has *by nature* is only an aptitude for grace, not in the least part a seed, germ, or any kind of inchoative possession of grace, nor any kind of natural potency or power. Accordingly, the deprivation we are concerned with is not a deprivation in anything which belongs to human beings by their nature. Because of this, in principle, a natural or proportionate happiness after this life is still possible, such as to bring to rest all proportionate, innate, and unconditional natural desires that flow from human nature.⁴⁰ Logically, there is no privation *in what relates to the nature*. Rather, it is *the person* who still inherits the call and the invitation, and who is subject to deprivation.

This nature would have real existence in any human beings who were to exist in a state of pure nature in an order of providence in which God had no antecedent desire that these human beings should be in or come to a state of sanctifying grace ordering them to glory in the vision of God. And St. Thomas does envisage this as a possibility in some few passages,⁴¹ and even judges it profitable to consider this possibility in order better to understand our actual situation. And *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2, ad 17, its argument simplified in *ST I-II*, q. 81, a. 4, also envisages yet another order of providence quite different from our own, in which again God might have no antecedent will extending to the salvation of all human creatures.

Feingold, contrary to de Lubac, effectively shows that, in St. Thomas's view, such beings would still have had the aptitude for grace associated with having intellect and will and with being in that limited way made in the image of God, and would not have been analogous to the brute animals. Further, if one accepts the logic of Sylvester of Ferrara's arguments, they would still have had the velleity for knowledge of the hidden essence of the cause of all things, though not knowing whether such knowledge is even possible, but without being unhappy through not having it, having no disorder leading them to desire things inordinately which are not proportionate to their nature, any more than in mediaeval society a peasant might have reasonably envied a king.

Yet, in God's actual order of providence for the creation within which we actually live, St. Thomas envisages no such beings. All angels and demons, as well as all human beings, exist within an order of providence governed by God's antecedent will that they should be in or come to a state of sanctifying grace ordering them to glory in the vision of God. If

⁴⁰ Cf. de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 625.

⁴¹ *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 3; *De malo*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 14; *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 15, together with the odd argument in *II Sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3, which reappears in a simplified form in *ST I-II*, q. 81, a. 4; and *De malo*, q. 4, a. 7.

any fail in this, it is due to sin either directly or, in so far as the sins of one can affect others, indirectly.

However, it remains that, within this, our actual, order of providence, each angel and each human being has, as St. Thomas frequently expresses it, one ultimate end (*simpliciter*), but this is a *finis duplex*, comprising (1) an ultimate end proportionate to man's powers, therefore only ultimate in a certain respect, a natural beatitude within the reach of man exercising his natural powers, referred to as an imperfect beatitude and as a beatitude in a certain way (*quodammodo*) or in a certain respect (*secundum quid*), in the setting of (2) man's ultimate beatitude in the vision of God, perfect beatitude, which is alone beatitude in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter*), but which depends on grace and our receiving the supernatural virtues. Feingold establishes these theses as independent of the more disputed elements of Suarez's thought.⁴² But these very passages, in the very act of establishing that one can speak of such a thing as a natural end for man, show that man's perfect ultimate end, beatitude *simpliciter*, lies only in the vision of God.

One could say that in attaining this beatitude and in this beatitude being in a state of complete virtue, all virtues connected by charity, man incidentally is in perfect possession of all the virtues whose satisfaction could be attained by the right use of his natural powers, the end proportionate to his nature being in this way attained as it were incidentally. But the words "end" and "beatitude" are not used univocally of man's ultimate end in the vision of God, which is beatitude *simpliciter*, and of the end proportionate to his nature, which is only an end and a beatitude in a certain way (*quodammodo*). Therefore, Gilson is right to observe, "St. Thomas repeatedly said that the end of man is twofold (*finis duplex*); Dante repeatedly said that man has two ends (*fines duo*). This is not the same thing. . . ."⁴³ The importance of this distinction for the understanding of the relation of temporal and spiritual authorities in society will appear later.

Thus, as St. Thomas conceives the matter, he is quite consistent in holding that every intellectual being is called to the supernatural end of the vision of God, and therefore in saying with Augustine "naturaliter anima est gratiae capax,"⁴⁴ making this statement in regard to the order of providence God has actually instituted, and not saying it in regard to any possible order of providence, since these were not the subject of what he had to say about man's actual end and the way to it, which are the concern of Parts II and III of the *Summa*.

⁴² See Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 393–95, 398–404, and 625–26.

⁴³ Etienne Gilson, *Les metamorphoses de la cite de Dieu* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1952), 152.

⁴⁴ *ST* I–II, q. 113, a. 10.

It is in accord with this that the only beatitude which St. Thomas ever describes as beatitude *simpliciter* is the supernatural beatitude of the vision of God. Thus, when asking whether the angels are created in beatitude, St. Thomas answers with a qualified negative because to be created blessed without any turning of the will to God, that is, without any part being played by creaturely cooperation in consent or choice, is very far from being created in beatitude *simpliciter*. And, although in St. Thomas's later view the souls in Limbo suffer no *dolor* or pain of any kind, and enjoy a full unblemished joy in goods proportionate to human nature, nonetheless this freedom even from wishes for a supernatural happiness, which they know they could not enjoy, depends on ignorance of even the possibility of such a state for any human being. To be in a state which depends on such ignorance is to be in an unfortunate state and again so far from beatitude *simpliciter* that unsurprisingly St. Thomas never describes it as beatitude at all.

True then, St. Thomas does accept that God could have instituted some different general order of providence within which he created intellectual beings, and indeed beings human in nature, not called and ordered towards grace and glory, but with solely a natural end, as a corollary of his more general views.

However, this corollary plays no part in any argument in St. Thomas that in the actual order of providence man and angel alike depend upon grace, that is upon something as such gratuitous and outside the powers of nature, in order to obtain his unqualifiedly ultimate end, ultimate *simpliciter*. And the two examples which he considers of states lacking what this requires—the state of limbo discussed above and the imperfect happiness of this life, happiness in the sense that it satisfies Aristotle's definition of "activity in accord with virtue," which St. Thomas eloquently describes by quoting "man born of a woman, living for a short time is filled with many miseries" from the book of Job⁴⁵—both arise within this order of providence, man's actual historical situation in the actual history of creation as God has ordered it.

In regard to this, the actual order of providence, that is in regard to creation as it actually is and to what is in accord with nature (in the Thomistic sense explained below) within it, there is a valid saying *omnis intellectus naturaliter desiderat divinae substantiae visionem*⁴⁶ every intellect naturally desires the vision of the divine substance.

⁴⁵ ST I-II, q. 5, a. 3.

⁴⁶ *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, p. 73, found by de Lubac in *Commentaria Theologica*, vol. 2 (third ed., Lyon, 1963), col. 99 B, and occurring in Dr. Sestili's summary of St. Thomas's view quoted in MS, 246–47.

Therefore, de Lubac is right in holding that St. Thomas at no time relied upon the possibility that God could have instituted a different order of providence and within this could have created intellectual beings with a natural end in any argument to justify asserting the gratuity of grace within our actual order of providence.

*St. Thomas's Underlying Theological Perspective
That What Is According to God's Actual Order
of Providence for Nature Can Be Properly
Described as According to Nature*

St. Thomas has a conception of an overarching divine order according to which "whatever God does in things is not contrary to nature, but is nature in them, for as much as he is the author and controller of nature," somewhat as in the case of the tides the sun and moon over-ride the natural motions of water to go to the lowest place, so that "in this way all creatures do, as if on account of nature, what is done in them by God."⁴⁷ And this conception is part of the underlying perspective he draws from faith, alluding to St. Augustine, in the passage already quoted whereby "the soul is naturally capable of grace." And this is recognised by Feingold when he concedes that "there is some truth in the accusation with regard to Cajetan's inability to make analogical distinctions with regard to the principle that 'natural desire cannot extend above the faculties of nature.'"⁴⁸

(Feingold suggests that de Lubac thought he recognised a parallel neglect in Duns Scotus in his use of the expression *pondus naturae*, Scotus neglecting to take notice of the difference between the way a weight is drawn by gravity and the way an intellectual being is drawn to the good. In fact it appears that there was no such neglect on the part of Duns Scotus, since he explicitly says,

Even if love only remained it would not be merely a necessary tendency like gravitation but an operation worthy of intellectual nature. In fact, to be an operation, and to be such an operation [is something that] love does not derive from the intellect; rather it is something it is in conjunction with the intellect.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1.

⁴⁸ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 280.

⁴⁹ In B. Bonansea's rendering of Efreim Bettoni's translation of *Op. Oxon.*, IV, d. 49, q. *ex latere*, n. 17 in Bettoni, *op. cit.*, p. 85. In Bettoni's exposition, this is Duns Scotus's reply to the objection that without intellect, man would lose his dignity of rational being and the will would be nothing but an inclination similar to the tendency whereby heavy bodies fall towards their center of gravity. This immediately follows Bettoni's explanation of how, although for Duns Scotus the volitional

An earlier part of the same *quaestio* also shows that Duns Scotus is in accord with Aquinas in viewing a volitional act as necessarily depending on a previous intellectual act, and so, as will be relevant to our discussion later, he is in the same position as Aquinas in regard to the problems of describing the psychological aspects of man's advance to grace.)

A recognition of this more Augustinian use of the word "natural" by Robert Bellarmine is found by de Lubac in Bellarmine's saying "*Visio Dei, naturalis quoad appetitum, non autem quoad assecutionem.*"⁵⁰ In the same chapter, Bellarmine also says,⁵¹ in reply to an objection drawn from Baius, that

although this highest beatitude [the vision of God] is man's natural end, nevertheless it is an end that is disproportionate. In addition man has another natural end that is proportionate to him, which is to see the truth through reasoning. For this reason God could lead man through natural means to a proportionate end, not elevate him higher.

Bellarmino is thus absolutely representative of an approach which, like that of St. Thomas, combines acceptance of an underlying Augustinian perspective and intent with a capacity to draw on analytical distinctions of a more Aristotelian kind. And this is characteristic of St. Thomas's *Summa* as an ordered presentation of theology, that it is a work within which philosophical arguments and ideas are brought in to support and clarify faith, rather than for their own sake.⁵²

The way in which St. Thomas's perspective differs from that of Cajetan is explicitly highlighted when, in his exegesis of *ST* I–II, q. 1, a. 8, Cajetan offers the remark cited by Feingold that "thus although absolutely speaking there is not a natural desire of this kind for man, it is natural for man, in so far as he is ordered by divine providence to a heavenly mansion, . . ." ⁵³ However, in St. Thomas's way of thought and

act depends on and comes after the intellectual act in the order of generation, this is only because the intellectual act is naturally ordered towards the volitional act, which is the more perfect.

⁵⁰ *De gratia primi hominis*, c. 7, *Opera*, vol. 5 (Paris: Vives, 1873), quoted in de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 151.

⁵¹ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 463, n. 11.

⁵² Here one should see the *Summa theologiae* as set in contrast with the commentaries on Aristotle and the subsections of the *Summa contra gentiles* specifically directed to commenting on Aristotle, such as *SCG*, II, cc. 61 etc.

⁵³ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 294–95. Feingold explains this statement by reference to Cajetan's commentary on *ST* I, q. 12, a. 1, in respect of which Cajetan says the desire for the vision of God, although not natural to the intellectual creature absolutely speaking, is "natural to him presupposing the revelation of such

speech, it is the way man is ordered by divine providence which makes the desire natural *absolute*, or *simpliciter*, and it is only *in a certain way* that the desire is not natural. In other words, for St. Thomas, it is what Cajetan speaks of as the theologian's way of speaking,⁵⁴ which takes pride of place in judging what is *absolute*, or *simpliciter*, while our natural knowledge distinguishes what is natural in desires, or ultimate in ends, only in a certain way (*quodammodo*) or in some particular respect (*secundum quid*).

If I understand Feingold correctly,⁵⁵ Suarez seems to have taken Cajetan's blindness to the importance of a natural *appetitus* in man for the vision of God (in Cajetan's words "natural for man in so far as he is ordered by divine providence") to the extreme of repudiating the propriety of this use of the word "natural" altogether—regarding the ways of speaking of other theologians, conspicuously Robert Bellarmine, as involving mere equivocation.⁵⁶ Such blindness in respect of the possibility of using the word "natural" in two senses makes Suarez impotent to communicate a true Thomism to later thinkers. The primary sense refers to what is natural according to the whole order of the universe in the actual order of providence, that is, the order according to which God created it, something which the theologian and the faithful know by Revelation and of which others may have some God-given intimation in preparation for the receiving of Revelation and grace, and the secondary sense refers to what is natural in the sense of what belongs to particular species of individuals within such order, which is how philosophers mainly use the word.

Strengths and Weaknesses in de Lubac's Exposition

Some Mistakes in de Lubac's Exposition or Argumentation

From what I have said already, it is clear that there are some mistakes in de Lubac's exposition and some of his arguments.

Firstly, when St. Thomas or Cajetan speculates about a non-existent but possible human being in a state of pure nature, in an order of providence

effects," even though the passage concerned refers only to our knowledge of God's natural effects, and not to the supernatural effects known to us through revelation. But Feingold adverts to the possibility that Cajetan might have changed his perspective on this *ST* I, q. 12, a. 1 passage at a later date.

⁵⁴ Cajetan recognises the existence of this use of the word "natural" to mean "natural for man in so far as he is ordered by divine providence to his supernatural end" in other passages noted by Feingold in *The Natural Desire to See God*, 272–75, one of them noted earlier by de Lubac.

⁵⁵ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 667, n. 106, cf. n. 107.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 668, n. 108.

quite different from what God actually chose, a being without any supernatural destiny or calling, they are still speaking of a being which would have been made in the image of God in the first of the three senses distinguished by St. Thomas, a being in the image of God in having intellect and will, and not something to be grouped with the brute animals.

In St. Thomas's understanding, if such beings made the full use of reason within their natural power, they would still have some knowledge of the existence of God, carrying with it the duty of reverence and some customary social expression of reverence for God (duties belonging to the virtue of religion). However, although God could have chosen to institute a creation according to such an order, nonetheless their natural knowledge would not suffice to make them able to settle on any plan of life directed to any determinate end, or to have the connected virtue appropriate to such a determinate end, unless they had preternatural knowledge that in fact they had no end surpassing nature.

These conjectured beings are ones without the vision of the divine essence as their end. It is quite wrong to describe the ever-deepening knowledge possible to them, with the love it elicits, as asymptotically approaching the vision of God and kind of love which could have such vision as its fruit. However deep it reached, it would be as far and as different from the vision of God at the end of the deepening as at the beginning, quite contrary to the mathematical notion of an asymptotic approach such as Balthasar speaks of⁵⁷ and as de Lubac disparages.⁵⁸

On the other hand, from the standpoint of modern ways of thinking and speaking, de Lubac has the valid point in view of the fact that such a human being in a state of pure nature would have its life, as some would put it, solely "within the circles of this world" or, as it would have been put in earlier times, nothing beyond a mundane kind of existence—so that, even if a preternaturally given Paradise after death were conceived of, it would be conceived only according to earthly models, reminiscent of a world in which every vine would have seventy thousand branches, and every branch carry seventy thousand grapes, to use an image of early millenarists. From a certain point of view, to think in this way is from a modern perspective to place man back amongst the brutes. Whether or not such a human being would by nature be mortal would be a matter of further hypothesis, and what preternatural gifts God might give him to assist his continuance in natural virtue a matter of yet further hypothesis. Non-actual worlds are not objects of knowledge, and speculation about

⁵⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview*, trans. Joseph Fessio, S.J. et al. (German 1976; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 70.

⁵⁸ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 263.

them is of very limited use—instead leaving the imagination enormous freedom to construct fictional narratives, the imaginable not needing to be conceptually coherent. (I can tell a story in which a mathematician trisects an angle without needing to tell how he does it, and H. G. Wells's time traveller does not have to describe the state of his body at the time of his conception.)

Secondly, one might form the further hypothesis, following the logic of Sylvester of Ferrara, that such beings would still have had a desire for knowledge of the hidden essence of the cause of all things, but only as nothing more than what St. Thomas would call a *velleitas*, a wish for something if it were possible, even perhaps knowing it to be impossible. If this further hypothesis is viable, involving no conceptual incoherence and therefore compatible with some possible order of providence different from what God chose, then this hypothesis *might* also have included preternatural gifts preserving natural virtue in a way unimaginable to us, so that there would be no torture in not attaining knowledge not proportionate to their nature. In this way, they would not be unhappy through not having it, because they would suffer no disorder leading them to desire things inordinately which are not proportionate to their nature, as the mediaeval peasant would not be reasonable envying a king his possessions. However, the imagination is impotent to judge such questions of conceptual coherence.

De Lubac reasonably suggests that, for any being which had the vision of the divine essence as its end, to be aware of being eternally deprived of it would be to suffer the pain of damnation (*poena damni*), making the pain conditional upon knowledge that an end has been missed, in this like St. Thomas having in view the possibility of unbaptised infants being in ignorance of even the possibility of the vision of God, but leaving no place for a permanent limbo of virtuous pagans.

However, the impracticality of imagining such states as would arise in orders of providence quite different from the one within which we are set makes it unsurprising that de Lubac should allow himself to be led into some very tortuous discussion.⁵⁹ Thus he argues,⁶⁰ followed by von

⁵⁹ De Lubac suggests that the finality or calling of which he speaks is one which could not be permanently frustrated without “essential suffering” which would seem to “fit the definition of the pain of the damned” (de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 70, cf. 73, 261, 263, 265–67, 269). On examination, these pages may not refer to a state of absolutely pure nature but are of a state in which nature has been touched by a calling (263), although the presentation leaves this somewhat obscure.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 260–71, renewing his discussion of pp. 51–55.

Balthasar,⁶¹ that an intellectual being knowing that he would be evermore frustrated in seeking the vision of God would be evermore unhappy the deeper he gained insight into the hidden essence of God—whereas my argument just above suggests that this question should be left to the realm of the unanswerable.

However, thirdly, in the context of established ways of speaking of the “nature” of this or that thing, it was a disaster that de Lubac should express his thought in terms of man’s supernatural finality being imprinted within his nature. For what he meant was something more like what I expressed earlier in terms of “the key underlying feature in the general character of the personal individuality . . . of each and every human being in the actual order of providence.” And as I remarked, when he spoke of “essential finality,” he had in view a certain kind of necessity arising from the actual order of providence, and nothing to do with the essence or nature of human beings.

I say that this was a disaster because it led directly to the misunderstandings which give force to Feingold’s attack on de Lubac’s account,⁶² for the criticisms it contains would be perfectly valid if de Lubac had understood such expressions as “within the nature of a thing” in traditional terms, terms which, besides going back at least to Aristotle, have long been the established idiom of Western theology.

What one should say is that de Lubac’s actual intention or meaning is perfectly discernible upon careful reflection on the text of *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, but that his exposition is exceedingly confused for lack of any clear explanation of what he did mean by the “nature” of a human being—a defect not remedied in his *Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*.⁶³

On the other hand, the supernatural finality of which he spoke, constituting the foundation of the spiritual community in which every man and woman share according to God’s actual order of providence for creation and for us within it, is an integral feature of the humanity which Jesus inherited from Adam, implicated in the humanity which concerned Leo I and the Council of Chalcedon. This spiritual community is something the effects of which we daily suffer through original sin, but in virtue of which the obedience and death of Jesus can avail for our salvation, if we will consent. Thus, a pearl is set amidst all de Lubac’s defective exposition, that the humanity Jesus inherited from Adam was not just a

⁶¹ Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 70f.

⁶² Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 523–30, 608–17.

⁶³ Henri de Lubac, *Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Arnandez, F.S.C. (French 1980; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984).

humanity which might have existed in a different possible world, but one firmly rooted in our actual human history and involving a share in what has been referred to as the covenant with Adam—a covenant not a contract, a commitment freely entered into out of God's liberality and upon which God will not go back.

Fourthly, it is true that in posing the idea that it is only through Revelation that we truly know our own natures, de Lubac is not developing the ideas of St. Thomas, but the conception proposed by Duns Scotus and to be found in Toletus. This does not mean that it is a false conception. There is much that is true in Duns Scotus, but such things are not relevant to the argument in hand as to the exegesis of St. Thomas. Yet one has to make clear that what Revelation is needed for here is to give knowledge of what is natural for man in the sense of what is in accord with God's providence for him. By contrast, Revelation is not absolutely needed in order to know human nature as such, although, as with many other things difficult to know through the powers of natural reason and reflection, in our actual state Revelation furnishes more certain knowledge than philosophy, even of what belongs to the merely natural in human nature.

Fifthly, de Lubac's exegesis of St. Thomas in regard to the natural desire (*desiderium*) for the vision of God does not appear to be sustainable.

If we look at St. Thomas, and examine typical texts in which the "natural desire (*desiderium*) for the vision of God" is spoken of, such as SCG III, c. 50, it is evident that St. Thomas is speaking of a natural desire which is conditional upon knowledge of the existence of God as cause of all things. Granted such a knowledge, the intellect will not be satisfied merely by knowledge that God exists but only by knowledge of what God is, that is, knowledge of his essence, and the only knowledge of his essence which is so complete as to satisfy the intellect's desire is the knowledge received in the vision of God. But, whereas for modern man the existence of God has ceased to seem evident, from St. Thomas's standpoint it would be evident from God's effects to any unclouded intellect, and in the providence of God made evident by preternatural gift after death to any infant who died prematurely. However, it is a natural desire which can in principle be satisfied, though only through supernatural assistance, and in the actual order of providence under which the whole of creation exists through the divine gifts of grace and glory will always be satisfied, unless some obstacle is put to receiving these gifts by the will of the creature which can only happen with those who have reached the age of reason. Accordingly, in St. Thomas's conception, it is a natural

desire which, thanks to the divine gift, is not given in vain. Moreover, as is made clear in SCG III, c. 57, the gifts of grace, the light of glory, and the vision of God are open to any intellectual creature, even the least,⁶⁴ which we should remark includes children before the age of reason.

If, by “the natural desire (*desiderium*) for the vision of God,” de Lubac is speaking of some exercise of the power called the will, this must be founded upon some natural, inchoate knowledge of God. As we have seen, there are many texts in St. Thomas in which the natural desire St. Thomas speaks of is an elicited desire, elicited from the will either by knowledge of God as being the underlying cause of all things or by the knowledge of God given by faith.

But there are other texts in which it appears that the natural desire which precedes deliberation is a natural desire for happiness, antecedent to any knowledge of what this happiness might consist in, and in most men antecedent to any realization that it consists in knowledge of God or of his hidden essence. Understanding this requires speaking in the earlier mentioned way, thinking of soul, intellect, and will as referring to one principle of operation under different aspects, but, as we discovered, this is quite common in St. Thomas as in other mediaeval thinkers. However, this does not carry us to an unelicited, unconditional, natural desire (*desiderium*) for the vision of God in particular.

However, such weaknesses in de Lubac’s exegesis do not bring his conception of man’s underlying supernatural destiny or supernatural finality into prejudice. And as I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, the idea of a “natural *appetitus*” directed towards the vision of God in particular, natural in relation to the underlying supernatural end within God’s overarching plan, thought of as an *appetitus* of the whole person, embracing intellect as well as will, if taken as referring to this supernatural destiny or supernatural finality, is unproblematic. And it is this conception of man’s underlying supernatural destiny or supernatural finality which is needed for de Lubac’s main argument.

*Discerning de Lubac’s Intent, Sometimes Disguised
by Philosophical Informality in Ways of Speaking*

Feingold conveniently gathers the expressions which seem most objectionable to him into a list.⁶⁵ It is convenient to have this list, slightly adapted, before us. De Lubac describes the supernatural finality of which he speaks as “inscribed,” or “imprinted,” on man’s nature, “directing him

⁶⁴ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 70–72; Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 496.

⁶⁵ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 491–93.

from within,” and “a destiny. . . . which he could not ontologically escape,”⁶⁶ “something ontological which I cannot change as an object changes its destination”⁶⁷ and therefore an “essential finality,”⁶⁸ which cannot be changed without changing our nature.⁶⁹ De Lubac also speaks of “an essential destiny,”⁷⁰ and “a destiny which is an ontological thing,”⁷¹ and says that “[c]ongenitally, the end of the spiritual creature is something that surpasses the powers of his nature or any other creative nature.”⁷²

I have suggested that the supernatural finality with which de Lubac is concerned is the end which man has according to the order of providence in which the whole of creation is actually set, the plan actually chosen by God and operative in religion as it actually is. As such, this finality is something to be ascribed to each human *person* as such, and not to his *nature* as a human being, because it is a real attribute of the person but existing in the person only in virtue of a relation. It is St. Thomas’s discussion of the Trinity which equips us to make this distinction. However, it is not a distinction commonly applied to human beings within the scholastic tradition. For this reason de Lubac lacks any vocabulary adequate to describe how his supernatural finality can be intrinsic to every individual human being, so that all he can provide is the unspecific although correct description “ontological.” His description of this finality as “inscribed,” or “imprinted,” on the human being, or person, would be thoroughly appropriate, and it is indeed something which the human being, or person, cannot escape within this order of providence, which means he absolutely cannot escape it. And de Lubac’s remark that “[c]ongenitally, the end of the spiritual creature is something that surpasses the powers of his nature or any other creative nature” is absolutely correct in regard to all actual or possible spiritual creatures within the actual order of providence according to which God has actually chosen to create and govern the world.

However, lacking any tradition of applying the distinction of person and nature to human beings in his scholastic training, de Lubac fell into the pit of going beyond the ambiguous term “ontological.”⁷³ For de

⁶⁶ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 89.

⁶⁷ De Lubac, “Le Mystère du Surnaturel,” 94–95.

⁶⁸ Ibid.; and de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 81.

⁶⁹ De Lubac, “Le Mystère du Surnaturel,” 94–98.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 116.

⁷¹ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 81.

⁷² Ibid., 144.

⁷³ In Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 267–68, n. 127, Laporta is said to require that the natural desire should be an “ontological natural appetite” prior to and independent of knowledge (*La destinée de la nature humaine selon Thomas d’Aquin*, 88–89 [1928; Paris: Vrin, 1965]). This term was also used by Laporta in 1928,

Lubac goes on to call the supernatural finality concerned “an essential finality,” and to take it to be “inscribed,” or “imprinted,” on the *natures* of human beings, rather than solely on human beings as *persons*. It is this which leads him into the nonsense of distinguishing a “concrete, historical human nature” from human nature as realised in a different order of providence—as if historical horses differed from mythical horses by belonging to different species of the same genus.

Yet de Lubac’s instincts in insisting on a return to what he calls a “far more ‘personalist’ and far more ‘existential’ (though not existentialist!)” point of view seem absolutely right. He wishes to get away from the excessive naturalism and essentialism which he associates with the form the Thomistic tradition took from Cajetan through Suarez and John of St. Thomas to Garrigou-Lagrange.⁷⁴ What he is at war with is what he calls “extrinsicism” whereby the gift of grace when given comes as something entirely unnecessary to the good life as such—necessary only to give mankind the means to a higher end, a greater beatitude.⁷⁵ And indeed we do meet with such an extrinsicism in Suarez, as Feingold witnesses;⁷⁶ and as I observed at the start, it does make the doctrine of original sin seem incoherent or unintelligible. And de Lubac is not wrong to envisage Cajetan as the one who first gave this way of thinking of human nature in a way independent of God’s wider providence for man an established footing in the traditions of interpreting St. Thomas. And de Lubac is right to agree with Suarez in thinking of this as, in his time, a novel approach adopted by the *moderniores*.⁷⁷

Moreover, it is a recognition that, within creation as God freely chose to create and order it, the settled finality of man (God’s antecedent purpose) was and remains to attain to the vision of God, something beyond man’s natural powers to attain without God’s assistance, which de Lubac seeks to express when he speaks of man’s having this end as a matter of a destiny which he cannot ontologically escape, a destiny which neither he nor any other power could change. For it is ontologically impossible to jump from a situation in creation under the actual order of providence into another some quite different, merely possible order of things. And an order of providence in which the purpose of a human being’s existence could change radically from being purely natural to

describing the natural desire for the vision of God as an “ontological natural appetite,” but the only explanation of the meaning of the word “ontological” that Laporta offers is to say that it is “a metaphysical thing.”

⁷⁴ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 69–94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

⁷⁶ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 418.

⁷⁷ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 189.

being supernatural would be quite different from our actual order, and quite different from any envisaged by St. Thomas or by any of the Fathers of the Church before him. "Ontological" and "essential" are slippery words, and we must be careful how we use them. Whatever de Lubac intended in what he said using the word "ontological" seems correct, but has been brought into obscurity by mixing up the "ontological" with what is "essential" as opposed to "accidental" ("essential" and "accidental" also being words with more than one use).

Extrinsicism and Intrinsicism:

(1) The False Modernist Intrinsicism Alien to de Lubac

What Pius X and his collaborators were at war with in what they called "modernism" was what they called "intrinsicism" or "the principle of immanence." To quote the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of 1905:

Agnosticism is only the negative part of the system of the Modernist: the positive side of it consists in what they call vital immanence. . . . [W]hen Natural theology has been destroyed, the road to revelation closed through the rejection of the arguments of credibility, and all external revelation absolutely denied, it is clear that this explanation [of religion] will be sought in vain outside man himself. It must, therefore, be looked for in man; and since religion is a form of life, the explanation must certainly be found in the life of man. Hence the principle of religious immanence is formulated.

Moreover, the first actuation of religion [like every other vital phenomenon] is due to a certain necessity or impulsion; but it has its origin, speaking more particularly of life, in a movement of the heart, which movement is called a sentiment. Therefore, since God is the object of religion, we must conclude that faith, which is the basis and the foundation of all religion, consists in a sentiment which originates from a need of the divine. This need of the divine, which is experienced only in special and favourable circumstances, cannot, of itself, appertain to the domain of consciousness; it is at first latent within the consciousness, or, to borrow a term from modern philosophy, in the subconscious, where also its roots lie hidden and undetected.

Should anyone ask how it is that this need of the divine which man experiences within himself grows up into a religion, the Modernists reply thus. . . . In the presence of this unknowable [the unknowable beyond the boundaries which the external world and consciousness set to the progress of science and history], whether it is outside man and beyond the visible world of nature, or lies hidden within in the subconscious, the need of the divine, according to the principles of Fideism, excites in a soul with a propensity towards religion a certain special sentiment, without any previous advertence of the mind: and this senti-

ment possesses, implied within itself both as its own object and as its intrinsic cause, the reality of the divine, and in a way unites man with God. It is this sentiment to which Modernists give the name of faith, and this it is which they consider the beginning of religion.

Further that religious sentiment which is perceptible in the consciousness is revelation, or at least the beginning of revelation. . . . God Himself, as He manifests Himself to the soul, indistinctly it is true, in this same religious sense, is this revelation.⁷⁸

Such an “intrinsicism” makes faith the outworking of internal religious feeling only, and gives religious belief a purely subjective character, and gives dogma and worship no more status than that of being public expressions of religious sentiment, so that dogma is in no way “objectively” true.

By contrast, Christian understanding requires that faith have some extrinsic root and that this is primarily in the public revelation of God in history, through the external signs of faith, such as the teachings of the prophets and miracles, the teaching and work of Christ, and the testimony of the apostles and the unfolding of this testimony in the preaching of the Church.⁷⁹ It is not enough to say that faith should arise just from the internal workings of the human mind and heart, nor even just from these combined with the working in “grace” of an objectively existing God internal to the mind and heart.

If this is what is meant by extrinsicism, then both de Lubac and, before him, Maurice Blondel⁸⁰ were extrinsicists.

However, this has not protected de Lubac from denigration.

Pius X's *Pascendi* in effect represents Modernism as holding that the supernatural virtues stem naturally from roots natural to man, because man is possessed of a vital religious sense which causes him to know and desire the “absolute” naturally.

To some, de Lubac's 1946 book *Surnaturel*, now almost unobtainable and difficult to access, was rightly or wrongly held to teach that “God . . .

⁷⁸ Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, §§7–8.

⁷⁹ In the absence of these, some other extrinsic means such as some private revelation by an angel (St. Thomas suggests) will be provided, so that nobody who has attained the age of reason will die lacking some means of knowledge of God's dispensation for man. St. Thomas's discussion suggests that the faith the peasant requires for salvation must extend to at least this: that God exists, that he extends to man the possibility of a supernatural end, and that this possibility has required the work of a Mediator.

⁸⁰ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 38 ff. (109 f), 245–46; cf. 24, de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

cannot create intellectual beings without calling and ordering them to the beatific vision," the proposition condemned by Pius XII in *Humani Generis* (1950). In fact, *Surnaturel* appears to teach that, as intellectual beings, they cannot but be thus called, but still maintains the freedom of God in giving the grace ordering them to this vision. However, this distinction between being called and being ordered, whether or not it would help, is ignored by some critics. And they also ignore that, whether or not in the original *Surnaturel* he ever actually intended to teach the doctrine later condemned, he repudiated any such view as early as 1949. Despite this, they still take him to be the key person to insert what amounts to a quasi-Hegelian thesis that grace is an inevitable development of nature and therefore not gratuitous, into the mainstream of the theology which would emerge from the Second Vatican Council as an influential tendency in modern Catholic theology despite its heretical character. Indeed it is taken as unimportant whether he actually held this view, of which more traces can be found in Karl Rahner than in de Lubac. What is unjust is that they see his rehabilitation as a symbol of the imagined acceptance of such Neo-Modernism into Catholic theology. However, the Hegelian conception of life in grace as an inevitable development of nature, and grace therefore not gratuitous, sometimes expressed in terms of man's having by his nature an intrinsic right to participation in the divine nature, and so a right to participate in the divine nature simply by being man, is an idea totally alien to de Lubac, as can be seen from the detail of his attack upon Baius.

The Hegelian conception seems to make man essentially divine and involve some kind of pantheism—or even worse, a combination of pantheism with process-theology, as if our growth in self-knowledge and self-realization could be thought of as God himself coming to know himself, the fragments of himself being drawn into unity.

However, of any such wild developments de Lubac appears totally innocent. He did not question the gratuitousness of grace, and none of his followers took him to have brought it into doubt. Further, his books show no trace of the interiorization of Revelation, no trace of the idea of a possible interior way to God, alternative to the way by means of historical Revelation, such as Jacques Dupuis draws from Rahner, no trace of the rationalism of Rahner's *Foundations of Faith*, and no trace of pantheism.

Extrinsicism and Intrinsicism:

(2) The Kind of Extrinsicism Which de Lubac Attacks

Both intrinsicism and extrinsicism are terms which have carried many meanings. De Lubac introduces the term "extrinsic" into his discussion

in *The Mystery of the Supernatural* on page 89. What he has in view is the idea of a destiny not inscribed in each human being, as a person, in virtue of God's providence for human beings, but a destiny which could have been given to him from the outside when he was already in existence⁸¹—or if given to him from the first moment of his existence, something which could be removed from him without him thereby suffering any deprivation, properly so-called. Supposedly human beings might have continued with a free will “keeping all its original strength and the possibility of ‘a certain state of happiness *in suo ordine in gradu*,’”⁸² or, de Lubac says, “as some express it, a certain ‘natural possession’ of God as the only end to which they were called by anything actually inscribed within them.”⁸³ When de Lubac objects to this way of thinking and the associated notion of the order of grace as something super-added to the order of nature, he is not objecting to the ideas of grace as perfecting nature or super-added to nature (ideas often expressed by St. Thomas), a nature set within an *ordo naturalis* or order of providence in which man is intended for salvation, but to the idea of grace as super-added to a nature already self-sufficient within some more limited order of its own. To de Lubac, to think of God as establishing an order of nature including human beings within which these human beings have a self-sufficiency in themselves even without grace, and then to think of grace as an extra gift which God gives to them, is a monstrosity—it suggests a human being established, as it were, alongside God, as one person might be alongside another, and in this position capable of giving or refusing gifts, and capable of entering into a contract which might be binding upon God. It was, for him, something like a philosophically deistic conception of man's nature set within a philosophically theistic framework, but a framework which was theologically deistic in the way it conceived God's workings in ordering things towards grace, conceiving these as if worked from outside intervening—and conceiving the actual order of nature as an order into which grace might not have entered, into which it just happened to enter as a kind of extra. Instead, for de Lubac as for St. Thomas, God is ever present innermost to things in giving being and this giving of being is part of the same integrated eternal plan or

⁸¹ Cf. de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 81.

⁸² De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 90, citing Suarez, *De gratia* (Vives ed., vol. 7, 206ff., 216–21).

⁸³ De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 90; cf. 51–61. Although Suarez rejected the term “natural possession” later used by Charles Boyer (de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 53), he gave exact expression to the idea, so attractive to Descots, but execrated by St. Bernard and Vasquez (59–60).

already prescribing a supernatural finality for man. And, if it is true that it was Blondel who coined the word 'extrinsicism' for the view which made the order of grace in this way extrinsic to the natural creation,⁸⁴ then, judging from de Lubac's correspondence with him,⁸⁵ the roots of Blondel's objection to this extrinsicism were similar to those of de Lubac.

Every human being whatsoever, in virtue of the ultimate supernatural end common to all human beings, that is, the antecedent will of God that all men be saved, is in the position expressed in Psalm 139:

Lord, you have searched me and you know me,
 You know when I sit down and when I rise up,
 You discern my thoughts from afar.
 You mark when I walk or lie down,
 all my ways lie open to you.
 Before ever a word is on my tongue,
 you know it, Lord, through and through.
 Behind and before you besiege me,
 your hand is ever laid upon me.
 Too wonderful for me, this knowledge,
 too high, beyond my reach.
 O where can I go from your spirit,
 or where can I flee from your face?
 If I climb the heavens, you are there.
 If I lie in the grave you are there.

.

For it was you who formed my inward parts,
 knit me together in my mother's womb.

.

Already you knew my soul,
 My body held no secret from you
 When I was being fashioned in secret
 And moulded in the depths of the earth.

This, then, is the context of every disposition or movement of will, voluntary or not voluntary.

*The Psychological Aspects of Man's Advance to Grace for de Lubac:
 Life in Our Actual Situation*

Modern man in the wake of Feuerbach's embracing of atheism, in his case substituting humanity for God, has had a sense of being out of joint in

⁸⁴ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 491.

⁸⁵ See pp. 183–88, *At the Service of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, USA, 1993.

some way, expressed in Marx's writings in the idea of alienation, and elsewhere in a widespread sense of need (*exigence*) of God, or of some kind of *angst*, or more generally of a lack of direction or point in a person's life. There exists a self-confident rationalism which would see this as a leftover of a Christianity thought of as an earlier superstition. Yet in the exigencies of the extremities of war and natural disaster, in the frequent paling and boredom with the satisfactions of Western material life and sexual freedom, in the uncertainties and insecurities arising within human relations and with their absence, and in the West often largely hidden and disguised fears and distresses associated with the approach of death, it is difficult to envisage this self-confident rationalism as having a deep hold on the heart of man and woman. Yet these things present themselves to us, apart from the suggestions of faith, only as empirical phenomena.

Mankind, I have suggested, is constituted a spiritual community, a community in respect of sharing a common, ultimate, supernatural end, a community in which each has membership in virtue of the relation of inheritance. And this membership is real in the conditions it sets, belonging to each of them as a person, in virtue of relation, not by nature. But in virtue of this solidarity, sin at the start deprives all of their orientation to this end, putting them in a state of alienation from the end for the sake of which they had been given existence. There is, as it were, a void to be filled, a privation, ontologically a condition of need. However, as I remarked earlier, whereas the efficient causality whereby the truth that God is the underlying cause of the existence of the world, giving being to everything in it, is in a real way naturally knowable,⁸⁶ God's purpose

⁸⁶ This natural knowledge of God as efficient cause must not be envisaged as if even for the common man it was a matter depending upon complex reasoning. It arises simply from our experience of things and changes in things as dependent upon causes, and our realization (in an "intuitive induction" to use the useful term explained by William Kneale in *Probability and Induction* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949]) that any such series or system of things, each showing dependence in various respects upon other things, must itself as a whole and in the action of its parts depend on something which is not thus dependent upon anything but exists and acts of itself. Such inchoate movement of thought is direct, involving no use of negation and therefore no application of the laws of non-contradiction or the excluded middle, and no application of any supposed "principle of sufficient reason." Such experience and such realization can be brought into question when an attempt is made to give them exact formulation. However, one must not confuse the genuineness of the initial insights with the edifices of debate concerning such formulations, mistakenly supposing that the natural knowledge referred to requires the common man to enter into such debate. Cf. David Braine, *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 24, cf. vi-vii, and 187-88.

in creating and upholding the natural order and natural things and his overarching plan or providence for the whole can only be known by God's revealing them.

Man's intellect as exercised in judgements as to what to do, and considering the ends to which he is inclined of the general types with which he is familiar, realizes that there is no rest to be found in the attainment of these ends which leave desire unsatisfied, and cannot exclude that there be some end which surpasses such lesser ends in such a way as to satisfy desire. And man finds himself, as it were, inexplicably restless for lack of knowledge of such an end or, if he realizes that it lies in knowledge of the hidden essence of God as the cause of all things and of all good, restless for the lack of the means to attain a knowledge of this essence of a sort which would give rest. However, by natural reason, he knows neither the possibility of such knowledge nor of the existence of any means to it. The question of possibility is relatively academic. By contrast, that it is part of the actual order of providence that a man should be brought, not just to some knowledge proportioned to his natural powers, but to the vision of God's essence, that is, to the vision of God, coming to this only by God's help-giving grace and the light of glory, is something man can know only by Revelation, or teaching by God.

St. Thomas would have us understand⁸⁷ that, where supernatural knowledge by faith in God's teaching is concerned, God has to reveal or propose a truth to be believed, and man has to assent, and for this assent there has to be a twofold cause, the one external, as in the inducement produced by seeing a miracle or through being persuaded, for example, by a sermon, and the other (the chief one) the inward cause of being moved by God to an assent beyond natural power (at least in that in this field the same miracle, sermon, or argument might leave another unmoved, and in any case the certainty of faith cannot arise by persuasion alone). Further, in being taught by God, man acquires a share of this

In much Western society, since towards the end of the twentieth century, we have entered a situation in which children are brought up at home and at school within the ambience in which the idea of taking God into account or the possibility that he might exist is simply absent from their living and thinking or that of their parents, and the idea that his existence might be evident from creation is regarded as the preserve of religious minorities and perhaps, strangely, some physicists. All this is the result of the way in which matters in themselves relatively evident were culturally obscured in the eighteenth century by intellectual fashions of thought which became increasingly accepted as providing the criteria of what is rational despite their surprising lack of support for reason.

⁸⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 6. a. 1.

learning, not all at once but little by little, according to his mode of nature, and everyone who learns needs to believe in order that he may acquire science to a perfect degree.⁸⁸

Adapting this presentation to the circumstances of later intellectual debate, from the time of Pascal onwards, but more especially since the time of the Enlightenment and the Romantics, we should perhaps envisage the world as loaded with signs and persuasive arguments suggestive of the truth of faith, albeit all in the midst of apparent counter-signs and counter-arguments. In this setting, we should envisage grace as active both in encouraging faith directly, and in the context of the beginnings of faith in making men more alert to hope and more desiring of the special intimacy with God, the perfect good, which these beginnings of faith make them aware as something to which they are invited.

The doctrinal perspective of Genesis is that the cosmos is set within a divinely ordered history. In considering the Old Testament, while recognizing the key importance of certain historical reference points and the general shape of the history presented, we can say that in many matters it makes no difference whether the human author intended a particular part of his account as an actual history or as merely representative of the shape of God's providence—just as the teaching of both the human and divine authors of Scripture is likewise the same, whether the book of Job about the temptation of a Gentile, or the book of Jonah about the conversion of the Ninevites, be conceived as histories or as moral tales.

In Genesis, man is portrayed as being within the continuing embrace of God's goodwill after the Fall from the very beginning, first in God making garments to protect mankind from the effects of incontinence, then in his promise to the woman in respect of her seed. Then we find that Eve announces the birth of Cain by saying "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord," that Cain and Abel make sacrifice to God, and, while he accepts Abel's sacrifice, he does not condemn Cain but only explains that virtue is more vital than sacrifice. Later God protects Cain from the punishment due to his murder, and blesses his progeny with success. The Priestly account in Genesis 5 is particularly clear that it is Adam as Adam created in the likeness of God (v. 1) who 'in his own likeness, after his image', begets Seth (v. 3), doing this under the original blessing on Man, male or female, as created (v. 2).⁸⁹ The blessing continues in the long life and care given to Seth's descendants, and in the particular

⁸⁸ ST II-II, q. 2, a. 3.

⁸⁹ Cf. 147, Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* I, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961).

closeness of God to Enoch and Noah. In this way, Genesis gives us to understand that from the beginning, even after the fall, God continued to have a supernatural destiny for man in view, and man always continued and continues to live in a context fertile with occasions for God to offer grace. This is a picture borne out by the studies of Jean Daniélou, in his emphasis on Scripture's showing us God as giving grace to men outside the covenant with Abraham—the supernatural finality of which de Lubac speaks being described in terms of God's covenant with Adam, a covenant of which we know only through Revelation.

Irenaeus regards it as a heresy to deny the salvation of Adam, while Abel, Enoch, Melchizedek, and Noah figure amongst the just in every ancient Jewish and Christian conception. All such just of the Old Testament period, including the Gentile Rahab, listed in Hebrews, each as justified by faith, are represented as in waiting, to be made perfect only with us (Heb 11:40).

Therefore, within the context of the antecedent will of God that all men should be saved, although men do not always notice or recognize the signs and roots of persuasive argument suggestive of the truth of faith, we should not see this as the result of a reluctance on the part of God to give grace. Rather, the significance of man's supernatural destiny, or, which is the same thing, this antecedent will of God that all men should be saved, is that God is ever ready to give grace. And when God gives grace, at one and the same time man realizes himself to be in the state of privation or lack of orientation spoken of as the effect of original sin and realizes the remedy. But according to St. Thomas's presentation, we should expect man to learn, to be led forward in faith by grace, "not all at once but little by little."⁹⁰

The Key Theses of de Lubac About St. Thomas Which Remain Valid

Firstly, St. Thomas did not rest his reasons for holding grace to be necessary for salvation, and for holding that this grace was gratuitous and not something owed to creaturely human beings (whether as intrinsic to their nature, as to have four legs is part of the nature of a horse, or as something merited because of virtue and good behavior), upon any considerations about purely natural states of human beings in possible but non-existent orders of providence different from that which God actually chose to make actual.

Secondly, in all his thinking about man in the *Summa*, St. Thomas's concern was with man as he exists in the actual order of providence insti-

⁹⁰ ST II-II, q. 2, a. 3.

tuted by God, and not with generalizations about other conceivable but non-existent orders of providence. In this, he wrote as a theologian using his natural powers of reason and philosophy where they lent support or clarification for the things of faith. He was not concerned—and one may generalize and say that most men, unless perhaps in some works of science fiction or fantasy are not concerned—with any such imaginary human beings. And it is with real human beings in our actual order of providence that, in various different ways, Fyodor Dostoevsky and most Russian authors, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Lévinas, are concerned, to take but the beginnings of a sample—human beings subject to a sense of *Angst*, alienation, or some global lack of direction.

Thirdly, within our actual order of providence, it is not possible for actual human beings to organize their lives successfully as if God did not exist or was an optional object of man's concern. Yet de Lubac suggests that the conception of a possible state of pure nature and of man as having two ends has fostered the contrary view. And we can see dramatic examples of this.

Of course, to St. Thomas the existence, power, and divinity of God would be things clearly evident from the things God has made (Rom 1:19–20) in any order of providence; and for human society in any order of providence, happiness would lie in a life of virtue orientated to the possibility of contemplating God as much as is possible to man, and reverencing him with proper worship according to the virtue of religion.

But within the actual order of providence, it is impossible for human beings to organize their lives successfully without taking account of the divine in a much more radical way. Loss of orientation to God has put human society into a situation in which it is prey to in-built tendencies to corruption through preoccupation with riches, the satisfaction of sensual pleasure, and ambition for power, rendering it subject to much more cruel and harmful forms of domestic and civil strife and making it the individual prey to in-built tendencies to lack of direction or of joy in anything, emotional extremes, a sense of emptiness and despair. And each person, as he or she grows up and as he or she approaches and reaches the age of reason, is at the same time set within a culture encouraging neglect or blindness to the graces offered to him, and making it difficult to hear suggestions inviting more openness.

A preoccupation with this worldly life, for some very successful in some material and emotional ways (even though made insecure by disease and death, violence and war, and lack of control of the environment), combined with enormous advances in understanding within physical science and in things pertinent to medical advance, has made the centering of man's

interest upon man himself seem more reasonable and has promoted an ill-supported rationalism. These have provided a context encouraging the relegation of the evaluation of arguments concerning the ultimate cause of the existence and order of the cosmos and judgements about what things are worthwhile and right to the area of subjective judgement, rather than of rational determination. This tendency has been fortified by the rationalist anticipation that it would turn out to be possible to give a physicalist account of everything physical in man, including all the physical aspects of his behavior—despite the inadequacy of the dualistic treatment of man which the empiricists took from Descartes and the inadequacy of the accounts of causation developed on this basis.

Yet this is where the conception of two ends for man has fostered an application of St. Thomas's conception of natural law quite foreign to St. Thomas's thought.

For man's successes intellectually, materially, and emotionally, though localized to the West and the westernized, have given a selection of principles taken from what St. Thomas drew from Stoic, Aristotelian, and Christian sources a function in offering an attractive approach to the theory of law and the organization of a secular society—a function quite alien to St. Thomas's original purpose. For, as I noted earlier from Gilson, for St. Thomas man has only one ultimate end, although this is twofold in aspect, a *finis duplex*, by contrast with Dante's conception of man as having two ends (*fines duo*). The significance of this for Dante was that the temporal power had care over the natural good of society, whereas the spiritual power had care in respect of the spiritual good of its citizens. Dante's conception suggests the possibility of a self-contained moral and political account of man's rights and duties of a kind never intended by St. Thomas.

St. Thomas's conception of our knowledge of natural law as that participation in understanding of God's eternal law (his providence for the whole of nature) which is possible to us according to our natural powers is far from the conception of the erecting by reason of a system of law adequate for man to organize his life without respect to any supernatural providence of God for man. Yet approaches along these lines, in thinking about the theory of the state and community life, have been prominent amongst some North American Catholic and Jewish neo-conservatives.

Yet a more correct reading of St. Thomas and of Christian principles should make us realise that we have to guard ourselves against too close an identification of the Christian conceptions of human right and ideals of community with those now prevalent in secular society.⁹¹ Church and

⁹¹ Whereas it appears that Robert Schumann and some others involved in the foundation of what would become the European Union laid out the schema they did

State now appear to have largely returned to a situation of uneasy coexistence; even so, this has to bring the situation of the Christian in Western society in some respects into greater approximation to his situation under the conditions of former Soviet society and even of the Third Reich.

Fourthly, de Lubac seems to have got it right that, if we consider (1) the creation of a spiritual being, (2) the imprinting of a supernatural finality on this being, and (3) the free offer of grace, the first does not at all entail the second, nor does the second entail the third.

Feingold is worried about de Lubac's notion of man's supernatural finality, and in particular⁹² the relationship of (2) and (3), and argues that if (2) is a free gift it is difficult to see how (3) is a separate free gift, rather than something owed to man as a debt—or, as it might be better argued, something which belongs to God's wisdom to offer us as the means suited to the end for which he has created us. By contrast, von Balthasar seems to occupy the more embarrassing situation of suggesting that (1) and (2) are distinct only conceptually,⁹³ and in this, unlike de Lubac, von Balthasar does seem to come into direct conflict with *Humani generis*. In fact, the situation is that God can will (1) without willing (2), although that involves his creating a different world, a different world which would not include any of the same individuals as our actual world. (Obviously, he cannot will [2] without willing [1].)

for the general structure of the European Union, with its special emphasis on subsidiarity within the context of a greater loss of sovereignty to individual nation states, greater than mere cooperation would require, they did this only on the premise that it would be not just tolerant of, but a ground favourable to the freedom and development of faith. (I derive this insight from the 2007 doctoral thesis at the University of Aberdeen of Alan Fimister, "Neo-Scholastic Humanism and the Re-Unification of Europe, 1878–1958.") In a certain way, they aimed at something resembling a revival of Christendom in a democratic form, a conception whose lack of realism has become steadily more evident.

By contrast, in a more pragmatic spirit, Jacques Maritain, who had earlier thought of using the state as a tool to prop up Christian principles in *Action Française*, now later in *Integral Humanism* (1936) and *Man and the State* (1951) formed the same idea in respect of more extended society. But again the just principles declared in U.N. and Geneva declarations of 1948 can be seen to be beginning to be changed (e.g., with new conceptions of "reproductive health" and of gender, and a weakening of protection of the family) in such a way as to be subversive of things which in 1948 had seemed secure.

⁹² Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 608–17.

⁹³ Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 72–73, n. 36.

Feingold's worry as to how (3) can be genuinely gratuitous granted that (1) is given its ultimate context by (2) arises partly from the misconceptions generated by the way de Lubac speaks of "human nature."

De Lubac suggests that the supernatural is always gratuitous because we desire it as a free and personal gift. Feingold argues that this could only be true if this gift were in fact not owed to our nature. And he argues that "[o]ur nature does not require it, only if we could attain a proportionate final end without it."⁹⁴ And this, he argues, is something that de Lubac's position, whether expressed in terms of the imprinting of a supernatural finality on our nature or in terms of an innate and absolute desire for the vision of God, makes impossible. However, de Lubac would utterly reject the idea that our nature requires grace in Feingold's sense of the word "nature," and so there is no real disagreement here.

Furthermore, one may remark that Feingold's view that in the actual order of providence we could attain a proportionate final end without grace is not unproblematic. It presupposes that it is due to us that we should be assisted by preternatural gifts. For without such gifts our passions are not subject to reason, our education is not preserved from distortion, and our perception of what virtue requires in situations of apparent moral dilemma is deeply obscured. As to what might be the case in some other order of providence, de Lubac has sufficiently shown this to be irrelevant, since Feingold's counter-argument⁹⁵ depends on misconstruing de Lubac in ways I have already made clear.

Yet it may be asked how God's gift of grace can be gratuitous since it is known beforehand that his antecedent will is that all human beings should be saved (1 Tim 2:4). But this argument does not hold since the exercise of free will is concerned, in this case both the free choice of God and the free choice of man. A person does not lack beneficence if he shows more beneficence to one person than to another, and he cannot show maximum beneficence to all since there is no maximum in beneficence in all respects. Nor does he lack beneficence if he shows beneficence in one way to one person and in another way to another when the two gifts are not of comparable kinds. More generally, if in his wisdom God never exercises liberality arbitrarily, this does not make him less free in each exercise of liberality.

(As to the argument that, if there were a genuine possibility of a human being not being saved, this would be realized in an infinite time, as Cajetan might have argued, using an Aristotelian form of argument used by St. Thomas in his *tertia via*: even if this argument were valid, it

⁹⁴ Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 620.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 620–29.

would not hold since an infinite time is not available. In any case, it would not hold, because will is involved.)

However, it is said that the Niagara Falls wear away one foot of rock every year, and some people seem to think that human resistance to the love of God may be like this, so that even if human resistance is not worn away in a short time, it will be worn away in the end. Yet, besides the fact that human history will not last an infinite time, to think of human freedom in this physical way is effectively to deny to man or woman the possibility of ever saying "No." The suggestion that it requires an angelic will actually to make a choice which will be decisive like that of the devil seems mistaken. For, to think like this about human beings is to make a farce of the idea of human free will, and a farce of the idea of God's respecting man's free will. Therefore, true though it is that God offers us grace again and again, in one way or another, and comes back to us when our circumstances have changed for worse or for better, still seeking to give us the opportunity of turning to him, and, true as the poem *The Hound of Heaven* may be to God's mercy as we experience it, it must remain that God will not exercise his power to move the will in such a way as to make nonsense of the idea of human freedom.

For this reason, de Lubac always recognizes that man has it in him by sin to be able to frustrate God's will that he be saved. And there is no automatism in God's giving grace in such a way as to remove this freedom or make nonsense of it.

Therefore, de Lubac never opens himself to the charge that his position implies universalism, and never expresses universalist views, and so is not open to the accusations made against von Balthasar.

The Roots of Gilson's Antipathy to Suarez's Approach

Suarez considered St. Thomas's view of our actual human situation and of the gratuity of grace precisely to depend upon God's capacity to create intellectual beings with a natural end—that is, in a state of "pure nature." And to be charitable we should perhaps envisage the possibility that in regarding Cajetan, Conrad Koellin, Chrysostom Javelli, Bartholomew Medina, and Dominic Bañez as accepting the possibility of intellectual beings in a state of "pure nature" as having the same importance for them as it did for him, and reckoning such an approach as placing them amongst the *moderniores*, he was wrongly supposing them to have given the same importance to this idea as he did—and perhaps even also to have espoused the same metaphysics of being as he did.

For it is this metaphysics to which Gilson has such rooted opposition, and it is a metaphysics indeed foreign to St. Thomas, as it was also foreign

to Bañez. Thus, in considering the controversy with which we are concerned, we have to take into account the much broader concerns of Gilson which go far beyond the micro-exegesis of St. Thomas with which Feingold concerns himself.

The nature "human being," according to St. Thomas, has real existence in only two ways, the first as an idea in the mind of God, that is, as God's essence under the aspect according to which human beings are like God in an imperfect way, and the second as existing in actual human individuals, the way to which Aristotle refers. Otherwise the universal "human nature" has no real existence at all. And for Gilson it is of capital importance that "natures" should not be considered as having any kind of real existence in themselves. In this sense, he has been appropriately described as being "as close to nominalism in respect to beings as a Thomist could properly be,"⁹⁶ rejecting the idea of "being" as something of which we might have a univocal concept, let alone an intuition.

In *Being and Some Philosophers*, Gilson traces a strand in the history of philosophy from Avicenna onwards, through Scotus to Suarez and from him to Leibniz and Wolff, a strand distinguished by its tendency to treat essences and to treat possible things as each having some kind of existence which put actualized and non-actualized essences, and likewise actualized and non-actualized possibilities, in some kind of parity—a strand opposed to the one represented in Aristotle, Averroes, and Cajetan. The first of these strands, as he traces it from Scotus to Suarez, proceeds as if essences were "possibles" to which actuality may or may not be given, or as if one could treat possible things and actual things as in some respect "things" in the same sense to be generalised about together. In his sketch, Gilson portrays Scotus as conceiving of a multiplicity of possible beings, completely determinate in their properties, which, taken together with the "this-ness" required of anything in actual existence, require only to be caused to come to be in order to have real existence. At the juncture when knowledge of mediaeval philosophy in general and of St. Thomas in particular had to be passed on to theologians and philosophers after 1600, Suarez constituted the key channel through which this was done, thereby having a vital influence on the philosophers Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Wolff, and later even on Josef Kleutgen, who collaborated with Leo XIII in preparing the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* securing the revival of Thomistic studies, although fortunately Tommaso Maria Cardinal Zigliara probably played a larger role. In this way, Suarez had become the means by which a mistaken essentialism was passed on

⁹⁶ Cf. Murphy, *Art and Intellect*, 262.

to yet later philosophers,⁹⁷ along with a voluntarism equally foreign to St. Thomas. In effect, for all these thinkers from Avicenna to Suarez, existence comes to be envisaged as an accidental predicate of an essence.⁹⁸

The upshot of this whole development is seen in Molina's conception of *scientia media*, whereby God is conceived as having foreknowledge through having knowledge of all possible worlds, each complete in its own whole history. Within each such world all free decisions have already been made, with the result that the reality of time, the possession of active power by creaturely agents so that by their causal action they cause future effects, and therefore freedom of choice no longer have any necessary role; and we are within one of Leibniz's possible worlds. All that remains is for God to decide which of these possible worlds to make actual as if to make it true that the role of angels and men is just to act out the parts in a play which God has written for them, everything thereby foreknown by him.⁹⁹ (It is paradoxical that this should have been the context in which Molina was arguing for the conception that the free choices of human and higher intellectual beings are exceptions to the principle that every event falls under the causality of God, as it were, putting human beings as persons exercising will in parallel with God.)

According to this way of thinking, real existence is the property of actual things, the first amongst properties, pre-supposed by all others; and these properties are in each case predicated of some particularized essence which had possible existence, complete determinateness, and perhaps individuality or "this-ness" (*haecceitas*) as well. In this way of thinking, the same particular subject of existence might have the same identity, even if God had chosen to make it actual in some quite different possible world, giving this different possible world actuality, and not giving actuality to our world.

Now, the importance of this way of thinking for the present discussion is nicely shown by Reinhard Hütter's discussion in *Nova et Vëtera*. He says:

[A]ccording to Aquinas . . . humanity was originally created immediately in a state of grace. However, another order of providence seems

⁹⁷ Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 105–14.

⁹⁸ How Suarez came to this is something Gilson attempts to explain in *Being and Some Philosophers*, 96–105, and how St. Thomas had avoided this he explains with more difficulty in 169–79f.

⁹⁹ Such was the origin of the theodicy satirized by Voltaire whereby we are supposed to live in the best of all possible worlds. But without the reality of time and the reality of creaturely causal power, there can be no significant difference between what is intended (whether means or ends) and anticipated consequences, and no distinction between what God antecedently wills and what he permits, so that all explanation of the origin of evil becomes impossible.

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 the different orders of providence. Consequently, the state of graced nature presupposes an anterior created nature, the latter never *de facto* obtaining without the former, however, being an ontological principle with its own integrity, the two being related to each other by way of supreme fittingness, but without any intrinsic continuity between each other. For different orders of providence do not entail an ontological transformation of the human being, nor is the rational soul—while *capax Dei*—becoming something less in a hypothetical order in which the human being is ordered to a lesser felicity than the vision of God.¹⁰⁰

The ideas of a “continuity of the self-same human nature under the different orders of providence,” or of “an anterior, created nature” which is “an ontological principle with its own integrity,” or that “different orders of providence do not entail an ontological transformation of the human being” are very strange. They appear to involve two conceptions, both considered to be of real and actually existing entities, the one of a universal called “human nature” shared by different human beings, and the other of “a human nature” considered as particularized in a particular individual and imagined to be capable of persisting through changes in the order of providence within which it is exemplified. Here I am trying to explain what Hütter may be referring to as “an ontological principle with its own integrity.”

This whole way of thinking and whole argument seems to depend on treating “human nature” or particular “human natures” as things real and actually existing, one and the same, in each of many of “the different orders of providence,” each of which also, it seems, has some reality. This Suarezian way of thinking seems to be utterly alien to St. Thomas. The idea of “human nature” in the mind of God is conceived as God himself and, as such, is the cause of the being of each actual human being, but not an element in that human being’s constitution. Human nature exists in each human being, but only in the sense that each human being is human in nature. And in St. Thomas’s conception “human nature” has no other kind of reality or existence beyond these. The order of providence within which we ourselves exist and live is the only order of providence which exists, is

¹⁰⁰ Reinhard Hütter, “*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold’s and John Milbank’s Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God,” *Nova et Vetera* 5 (2007): 100–1.

actual, or has any kind of reality except as the object of God's thought. Other orders of providence have not been given actuality by God, and have no existence except as objects of God's thought. And human beings in such non-actual orders of providence do not exist, and human nature does not exist in them. There is no created human nature in existence anterior to particular actual human beings. The muddling together of the actual and the possible which one finds in such arguments as the one instanced above belongs to the tradition of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalism, and has no place in the interpretation of St. Thomas.

Conclusion

The chief lessons to be learnt from this study are theological.

Firstly, God creates according to some particular providence, plan, or eternal law. The universe which he has actually created was created according to a plan which provided for no other true ultimate fulfilment of intellectual creatures than their coming by grace and glory to the beatific vision; and the antecedent will of God in creating them, and in particular in creating man, was that all, and in particular all men, should be saved (in what de Lubac refers to as man's supernatural finality); and this constitutes the setting of every movement of the human will.

However, secondly, this same actual providence is such that the action of giving grace is never automatic. The absolute gratuitousness of the gifts of grace and the light of glory, and the absolute dependence of man on these gifts if he is to attain his true end of beatitude in the vision of God, and the reality of the freedom of each man and of the injury he can do both to himself and to others by sin remain. The working out of God's plan for each intellectual creature always lies within the freedom of God, and this provides also for freedom in the response and cooperation of the intellectual creature concerned, in a manner never arbitrary but nonetheless worked out in a manifold way for each individual. God's providence for each individual is, we must add, modulated according to the individual's situation within the unfolding of God's giving of Revelation within history as well as to the desire of man and its expression in prayer in the synergism between God's grace and man's willingness to respond.

As a separate matter, there is a further set of lessons to be learnt concerning the use of authority, and the proper response to exercises of authority. But to discuss these in a way relevant to the topic of this paper would take another paper—one which would have to give an interpretation of the whole history of twentieth-century Catholic theology, a history itself influenced by the course taken by theology in the preceding seven centuries.