

Henri de Lubac, *Humani Generis*, and the Natural Desire for a Supernatural End

JACOB W. WOOD

Franciscan University of Steubenville
Steubenville, OH

ALTHOUGH IT MET WITH an initial flurry of resistance,¹ Henri de Lubac's theological thesis that man has a "natural desire for a supernatural end," together with his historical thesis that the denial of such a desire lies at the heart of modern secularism, became the generally accepted Thomist consensus until the close of the twentieth century.² Recently, however, the consensus has begun to wane. Few disagree that de Lubac's thought on the natural desire for God remains significant for contemporary theology. After all, it bears an important relationship to the thought of Joseph Ratzinger as found throughout curial documents published under Ratzinger's tenure as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as well as his pontifical documents as Pope Benedict XVI.³ However, beginning with the completion of

¹ For an account of de Lubac's troubles both with the Roman Curia and within the Jesuit Order, see Joseph A. Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 579–602.

² For a summary of this consensus, see Edward Oakes, "The Supernatural Controversy: A Survey and a Response," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 9 (2011): 627–34.

³ See Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* (2007), §12. I am also grateful to Matthew Gonzalez, who made me aware of an important discrepancy between the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and its *Compendium*. While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published under John Paul II, describes only a "desire for God" (CCC, §27) and, thus, prescind from debates in the schools over whether the formal *terminus* of this desire is the natural knowledge of God, the vision of God as first cause, or the beatific vision, the *Compendium of the*

Lawrence Feingold's dissertation in 2001 and its subsequent publication in 2010, a number of scholars have begun to question the historical, metaphysical, and theological consistency of de Lubac's thought.⁴ There are three criticisms common to these recent critiques. Historically, it is alleged that the natural desire for a supernatural end introduces a novel interpretation of Aquinas into the Thomistic tradition. Metaphysically, it is alleged that de Lubac's theological *novum* compromises the natural knowability of human nature's *telos*, and consequently our ability to know the natural law. Theologically, it is alleged that the natural desire for a supernatural end compromises the gratuity of grace.

The purpose of the present article is neither to prove nor to disprove de Lubac's understanding of the natural desire for a supernatural end. It is, rather, to suggest a more comprehensive historical-theological context for de Lubac's theological anthropology, and so to indicate where a proof or disproof might be found. It would not be found in the historical argument. De Lubac's idea of a natural desire for a supernatural end is not an historical *novum*; it was a foundational commitment of the Thomism of the Aegidian tradition, which was established by Giles of Rome, OESA (*Aegidius Romanus*), one of Aquinas's students at the University of Paris. Nor would it be found in the metaphysical argument. The Aegidian tradition affords more than one way to balance the anthropology of a natural desire for a supernatural end with an account of the natural law, relying upon a clear distinction between nature and grace. If anything, it would be found in the theological question of the gratuity of grace. But, even here, de Lubac's Aegidian context makes the question more subtle than is generally realized. For, while all the members of the Aegidian tradition agreed that there is a natural desire for a supernatural end, they disagreed quite divergently as to how a theological account of

Catechism of the Catholic Church, published under Benedict XVI, speaks of a "desire to see God" (CCCC, §§ 2 and 533; emphasis added).

⁴ The dissertation is Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001); the published edition is *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010). See also: Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); Steven Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Christopher Malloy, "De Lubac on Natural Desire: Difficulties and Antitheses," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 9 (2011): 567–624; Bernard Mulcahy, *Aquinas's Notion of Pure Nature and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac: Not Everything is Grace* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

that desire should be articulated. Their opinions, highly developed but little examined, can infuse contemporary debates on this question with an additional level of subtlety.

The article will be divided into five sections. The first will explain the natural desire for a supernatural end as bequeathed to the Aegidian tradition by Giles of Rome, while the second will examine four figures who developed Giles's understanding within the tradition that followed him: Michael Paludanus, Giovanni Berti, Fulgence Lafosse, and Michelangelo Marcelli.

The third section will explain how de Lubac utilized these Aegidian figures to articulate the natural desire for a supernatural end in his works on nature and grace from the beginning of his career until just before *Humani Generis*. In de Lubac's first articles on nature and grace, he relies on Berti: human nature necessarily has a natural desire for the vision of God; *de potentia absoluta*, God could withhold the grace necessary for that vision, but *de potentia ordinata*, we could hardly imagine him doing so. In *Surnaturel* (1946) de Lubac relies on Marcelli, although there remains some question as to whether de Lubac embraced Marcelli's more extreme conclusion: there is a distinction between the human species as such and the human species made in the image of God; the human species made in the image of God necessarily has a natural desire for the vision of God and must be given grace; and in order to create the human species without a natural desire for the vision of God, *de potentia absoluta*, God would have to create the human species not in the image of God—that is, without intellect and will. In “Le mystère du surnaturel” (1949), he relies on Lafosse: spiritual natures, including human nature, have no definite end (whether natural or supernatural) until God assigns them one; when God creates a spiritual creature and assigns an end to its nature, that spiritual creature has a natural desire for the end that God has assigned to it; in this order of Providence, God has assigned human nature a supernatural end, the vision of God; and, *de potentia absoluta*, God could withhold the grace necessary for that vision, but *de potentia ordinata*, we could hardly imagine him doing so.

The fourth section will argue that, while *Humani Generis* condemned Marcelli's position, it did not condemn the other Aegidian positions. Consequently there is a significant ambiguity about whether de Lubac's natural desire for a supernatural end falls under the condemnation. His early works and “Le mystère du surnaturel” do not; *Surnaturel* might, if interpreted as embracing Marcelli completely.

Be that as it may, having already moved on from Marcelli before *Humani Generis*, de Lubac denied that he fell under the condemnation and continued his support for Lafosse in greater detail in *L'Augustinisme et théologie moderne* and *Le mystère du surnaturel* (both in 1965).

The fifth section will argue that, although de Lubac's previous move toward Lafosse enabled de Lubac to avoid the condemnation of *Humani Generis* in the moment (whatever may be said about his previous work in *Surnaturel*), it created a "teleological vacuum" that compromised his ability to give an adequate account of the natural law. Nevertheless, there are other resources in de Lubac's thought bearing affinities to that of Paludanus and Berti that could help de Lubac's thought overcome that challenge. What would remain would be to complement an Aegidian account of the natural law with a suitable defense of the gratuity of grace. Paludanus most readily supplies such a defense, but de Lubac was wary of him because he does so by conceding the existence of a natural end for man. Berti more tenaciously holds to the idea that man's sole end is the vision of God, but his defense of the gratuity of grace with the *potentia absoluta/ordinata* distinction is proportionately more tenuous.

Giles of Rome (*Aegidius Romanus*)

A fact well known to theologians in the early twentieth century but now largely forgotten is that the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine (OESA) developed and maintained its own theological tradition throughout the middle ages and early modern period alongside the more well-known Dominican, Franciscan, and Jesuit theological traditions.⁵ The "founder" of the tradition, so to speak, was Giles of Rome, OESA (1246–1318). Giles was a student of Thomas Aquinas from 1269 to 1272, during Aquinas's second Paris regency.⁶ In 1287, the Augustinian Order adopted Giles as its official doctor, together with Thomas

⁵ An excellent introduction to the tradition and its major thinkers can still be found in E. Portalié, "Augustinianisme," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. Alfred Vacant, E. Mangenot, and Emile Amann, vol. 1, no. 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1903), cols. 2485–501. See also Adolar Zumkeller, *Theology and History of the Augustinian School in the Middle Ages*, trans. John Rotelle (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1996). The order is today known simply as the Order of St. Augustine (OSA).

⁶ David Gutiérrez, *The Augustinians in the Middle Ages, 1256–1356: History of the Order of St. Augustine*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1984), 139.

Aquinas where the thought of Giles was unclear.⁷ Giles thus stands at the fount of a theological tradition that might reasonably be called “Thomist” by intent, even if it gave rise to a somewhat different sort of Thomism than the Dominicans or the Jesuits would develop.

A summary of Giles’s thought on the natural desire for God can be found in his *Treatise on God’s Influence upon the Blessed*⁸ and in the *Ordinatio* of his Commentary on the Sentences.⁹ In the former, Giles offers *quinque viae* from natural reason why only the beatific vision can satisfy an intellectual creature’s desire for God. While space will not permit us to reproduce all the arguments here, the first gives the general sense of the others:

Now, we can enumerate five ways by which it can be shown unassailably that our beatitude is God in himself, and that nothing below God, and nothing other than God, can beatify not only us but also the angels. . . . The first way proceeds in this manner: It is self-evident [*per se notum*] that if some vessel can hold so much wine, less wine than that cannot fill that vessel. For example, if some vessel can hold a bottle’s worth of wine, or a couple of gallons, or however much wine, less wine than that cannot fill that vessel. Since, therefore, a soul and an angel can hold as much good as God himself is, less good than God himself can fill neither a soul, nor an angel (and according to Augustine in Confessions 10, “we are not happy until we say ‘we have had enough,’” i.e. until we are filled with joy and the goodness of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Giles of Rome, *Tractatus de divina influentia in beatos*, in *Tractatus* (Rome: Antonius Bladus, 1555).

⁹ Giles’s Sentences commentary has come down to us in two forms. There is a *reportatio*, known only in a few manuscripts, that gives a shorter list of questions. This has recently been edited by Concetta Luna in Aegidius Romanus, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Florence: Edizioni del Galuzzo, 2003). The other is an *ordinatio* of which Giles completed only books I and II (book III, published in the seventeenth century, is reputed by contemporary scholars to be a forgery) and which expresses a much more complete account of his thought. The best editions are *Commentarius in Primum Sententiarum*, ed. Augustino Montifalconio (Venice, 1521), and *Commentarius in Secundum Sententiarum*, 2 vols. (Venice, 1581). Since I do not cite the *reportatio* in this article, I will refer to the volumes of the *ordinatio* simply as *In I Sent.* and *In II Sent.* (the latter actually consisting of two volumes, as noted). Unless otherwise cited as from an English translation edition, all English translations are my own work, whether from such Latin editions as these or from de Lubac’s French, etc.

God). Therefore, seeing as we can hold as much good as God is, less good than God cannot beatify and fulfill us.¹⁰

Giles's argument had important ramifications for the doctrine of his order on the natural desire for God. By arguing that the satisfaction of our natural desire requires the fulfillment of *all* our capacity for goodness, he excludes the possibility of any naturally achievable beatitude for human nature, which leaves some of our potential for God unfulfilled.

Giles adds to his reasons against the possibility of natural beatitude in his *Ordinatio*. There he explicitly imagines man "if he were created in pure nature" (. . . *si fuisset creatus in puris naturalibus*).¹¹ Such a condition would be unthinkable for two reasons. First, man would not be able to attain his end *a priori*, because "the end of a rational creature is the vision of God, which is above nature [*supra naturam*]."¹² Second, it would be unthinkable *a posteriori* because man, without even the gift of original justice, subject to the natural antipathy of the flesh and the spirit, would not be able to persevere in moral goodness. Man would be "not only avertible, but averse from God."¹³

¹⁰ Giles of Rome, *De divina influentia in beatos*, ch. 1. "Possumus autem enumerare quinque vias, per quas irrefragabiliter ostendi poterit, quod Beatitudo nostra est ipse Deus per seipsum, et quod nihil infra Deum, et nihil aliud a Deo potest beatificare non solum nos sed etiam angelos. . . prima via sic patet: est enim per se notum, quod si aliquod vas potest capere tantum vinum, minus vinum quam illud, non potest illud vas replere: ut si potest capere vas aliquod quintam vini, vel modium, vel quantumcunque vinum, minus vinum quam illud non potest vas illud replere. Cum ergo anima et angelus possit capere tantum bonum quantum est ipse Deus, minus bonum quam ipse Deus non potest nec animam nec angelum replere: et secundum Augustinum 10 Confessionum non sumus beati donec dicamus satis est, idest donec sumus gaudio et bonitate Dei impleti: ideo potentes capere tantum bonum quantum est Deus, minus bonum quam Deus nos beatificare et replere non potest. Quod autem nos possimus tantum bonum capere quantum est Deus, patet ex hoc quod sumus ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei. Nam secundum Augustinum anima est imago Dei ex eo quod eius capax et particeps esse potest" (*Tractatus* fol. 21rb).

¹¹ Giles of Rome, *In II Sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1, corp. (2:fol. 443A).

¹² Ibid.: "Finis creaturae rationalis est divina visio, quae est supra naturam" (2:fol. 442B). Cf. *In II sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, corp: "Nec dicimus, quod in visione divina sit principaliter beatitudo nostra, sed dicimus, quod sine visione divina non potest esse beatitudo nostra" ("Nor do we say that our beatitude consists principally in the vision of God; rather, we say that our beatitude cannot take place without the vision of God") (2:fol. 490A).

¹³ Giles, *In II Sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1, corp.: "Si fuisset creatus in puris naturalibus,

Since, in a state of pure nature, humanity would be able neither to persevere in moral goodness nor to reach beatitude, Giles argues that the gift of original justice can be said to be “due” to human nature, lest human nature be deprived of the possibility of reaching its only end. “Original justice was due to human nature at its institution, even if not absolutely and simply yet according to a certain fittingness of God’s goodness and justice, lest man were made averse from God without fault.”¹⁴ In applying the word *debitum* in such a strong sense to any gratuitous gift of God, even the preternatural gift of original justice, Giles clearly supersedes the thought of his *magister*. Thomas was very cautious to avoid the word *debitum* in any discussion of the gratuity of God’s gifts.¹⁵ Even so, we should call to mind that Giles’s *debitum* is relative, not absolute. Absolutely and simply speaking, God could withhold original justice; it is only in view of fittingness that we imagine that God could not withhold it. It is a delicate distinction, yet such was the balance that Giles had to strike in the light of his commitment to the unicity of man’s final end and his rejection of any possible resting place for our natural desire short of the beatific vision.

quia haberet necessitatem se avertendi, deberet dici creatus non solum avertibilis, sed aversus” (“If [man] had been created in pure nature, then since he would of necessity turn himself away [from God], he would be said to have been created not only avertible, but averse [from God]) (2:fol. 443A).

¹⁴ Ibid.: “Debebatur enim naturae humanae in sui institutione originalis iustitia, etsi non absolute et simpliciter, tamen secundum quandam decentiam divinae bonitatis, et iustitiae, ne homo sine culpa produceretur a Deo aversus” (2:fol. 444B).

¹⁵ When Aquinas uses the word *debitum* in relation to original justice, he is discussing a *debitum ex parte subiecti*—the debt on our part of keeping our souls in order—not any debt on God’s part of giving us that right ordering. While examples of this usage abound, we may note in particular: *In II Sent.*, d. 20, q. 2, a. 3, corp.; *De malo*, q. 5, a. 4, ad 7; *ST I-II*, q. 89, a. 5, ad 3. In one text, *Quodlibet IV*, q. 11, a. 2, ad 2, Aquinas does use the substantive, *debitum*, apposite to “*iustitia originalis*,” but his language is rather more reserved than that of Giles. The question to which Aquinas is responding is whether the first motion of the soul in unbelievers is a mortal sin. In the *corpus* of the article, Aquinas argues emphatically in the negative. If the first motion of souls wounded by sin is not a sin, how much more so the first motion of a soul in a state of integral nature or pure nature that has never been wounded by sin.

The “Aegidian” Tradition

The scholastic tradition arising from within the Augustinian Order was known as “Aegidian,” after Giles (“Aegidius” in Latin).¹⁶ This tradition had a difficult history. It suffered severe academic decline in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁷ Following the excommunication of Martin Luther, who was himself a member of the order, it was yet more severely wounded when entire provinces of the order were lost at the Protestant Reformation.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in spite of difficulties in numbers and in influence, the Aegidian tradition continued to exist in the post-Tridentine period as a theological alternative to the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits.

The chief difficulty facing the Aegidian tradition in the post-Reformation period was the advent of two extreme Augustinianisms: those of Michel de Bay (“Baius”; 1513–1589)¹⁹ and of Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638).²⁰ Both of these Augustinianisms shared important commitments with the Aegidian tradition: first, the beatific vision is the only possible end for human nature;²¹ and second, human nature is subject to a certain natural rebellion of the body against the soul, such that the human person is not able to persevere in the good on his/her own, even if created in a hypothetical state of pure nature.²² But there were also two significant differences: first, Baius and Jansen absolutized Giles’s notion of *debitum*; and second, they applied it to the gifts of supernatural grace and glory instead of preternatural justice. For Baius, God would be constrained to grant

¹⁶ It was at times also known as “Augustinian.” But, given the variety of “Augustinianisms” in the medieval and early modern periods, I will refer to it exclusively as “Aegidian.”

¹⁷ Gutiérrez, *The Augustinians in the Middle Ages*, 1/2:123–26.

¹⁸ David Gutiérrez, *The Augustinians from the Protestant Reformation to the Peace of Westphalia, 1518–1648, History of the Order of St. Augustine*, vol. 2 (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1979), 19–42.

¹⁹ The works of Baius relevant to this controversy are collected in Michael Baius, *Opuscula theologica* (Louvain, BE: Joannes Bogard, 1566). The propositions censured by Pius V can be found in Denzinger, 43rd ed., English ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), nos. 1901–80.

²⁰ The main work of Jansen relevant to this controversy is the posthumously published Cornelius Jansenius, *Augustinus*, 3 vols. (Louvain, BE: Jacques Zegers, 1640).

²¹ For Baius, see *De meritis operum*, bk. 1, chs. 2–3 (*Opuscula theologica*, 3–7). For Jansen, see *De statu purae naturae*, bk. 2, chs. 2–3 (*Augustinus*, 2:cols. 681–92).

²² For Baius, see *De prima hominis iustitia*, bk. 1, ch. 4 (*Opuscula theologica*, 52). For Jansen, see *De statu purae naturae*, bk. 2, chs. 20–21 (*Augustinus*, 2:cols. 867–76).

us not only original justice in a state of pure nature but also the beatific vision as our reward for keeping the natural law.²³ For Jansen, God would at least not be constrained to grant the beatific vision to purely natural acts, but God would be constrained in strict justice to create us in original grace in order for us to have the opportunity of reaching our final end.²⁴ In either case, what were for Giles and the other scholastics God's gifts become his strict debts: glory for Baius²⁵ and grace for Jansen.²⁶

Opinions diverged within the Aegidian tradition over how best to continue to defend the natural desire for a supernatural end in this period:

One approach was to deny the application of Giles's *debitum* to supernatural grace by conceding the idea that humanity has a natural end alongside its supernatural end. This approach is found in the work of Michael Paludanus, OESA (1593–1653). In his *Treatise on our End and on Beatitude*,²⁷ Paludanus borrows from the sixteenth-century Jesuit Francisco Suárez and teaches that man has an innate, natural desire that terminates in naturally achievable knowledge of God.²⁸ Paludanus adds that this naturally achievable end cannot be called our “final end,” nor can it be called a “different” end from our supernatural end. It is an imperfect participation of our final end, which, though it does not satisfy all of our capacity for God, is still satisfying in a certain respect.²⁹ Paludanus's position had the advantage of

²³ Baius, *De meritis operum*, bk. 1, ch. 2 (*Opuscula theologica*, 5–7).

²⁴ Jansen, *De statu purae naturae*, bk. 1, ch. 2 (*Augustinus*, 2:col. 685).

²⁵ Baius, *De prima hominis iustitia*, bk. 1, chs. 9–11 (*Opuscula theologica*, 61–66).

²⁶ Jansen, *De statu purae naturae*, bk. 1, ch. 15 (*Augustinus*, 2:cols. 745–52).

²⁷ Michael Paludanus, *Tractatus de fine et beatitudine* (Louvain, BE: Andrea Bouvetius, 1664).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, disp. 13, pt. 2 (Louvain, 254B–55A). On Suárez, see Francisco Suárez, *De ultimo fine hominis ac beatitudo*, disp. 16, sect. ult., no. 2, in *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 4 (Paris: Vivès, 1856), 154. As for the nature of that beatitude, see disp. 15, sect. 1, no. 3: “Dicendum est consequenter, hanc beatitudinem [naturalem] consistere in perfectissima naturali conjunctione cum Deo per intellectum et voluntatem, quantum ex creaturis naturali lumine intellectus cognosci potest” (“Consequently, we should say that this [natural] beatitude consists in a most perfection natural union with God through our intellect and will, insofar as he can be known by the natural light of the intellect from creatures”) (*ibid.*, 4:145).

²⁹ Paludanus, *Tractatus de fine et beatitudine*, disp. 13, pt. 3: “Respondeo, in beatitudine naturali Deum se non habere sicut formam aut actum beatificantem, qui immediate sic nobis coniungatur ut eum possideamus. Nosque se ipso perficiat (quo modo se habet in beatitudine supernaturali). Nullum enim donum

avoiding any difficulty with the gratuity of the vision of God. Yet his conciliatory approach hardly won over fellow Aegidians, who sought a more faithful preservation of their Aegidian patrimony.

A second approach was to concede the application of Giles's *debitum* from praeternatural justice to supernatural grace but to reintroduce Giles's distinction between an absolute debt and a debt of fittingness. This approach can be found in the works of Enrico Noris, OESA (1631–1704), Fulgenzio Bellelli, OESA (1675–1742), and Giovanni Lorenzo Berti, OESA (1696–1766). Berti gave the most complete systematic presentation of their thought.³⁰ As Berti reasons, man cannot be said to have a right to grace and glory under any circumstances because those gifts lay outside our natural faculties; we have no right and title to what we cannot achieve of our own accord.³¹ However, even if there is no need to postulate a natural beatitude for man, a state of pure nature is not altogether unthinkable. God could *de potentia absoluta* create man in a state in which his only final end, the beatific vision, was outside his reach.³² Such persons would

ordinis naturalis eo modo Deum homini potest coniungere; sed habet se solummodo tamquam obiectum alicuius nostri actus, illius scilicet cognitionis abstractivae, quae ad naturalem beatitudinem requiritur” (“I respond that in natural beatitude God is not related to us as a form or beatifying act, which is united to us in such a way that we possess him and he perfects us with himself, as he does in supernatural beatitude. For there is no gift in the natural order that can unite God to man in that way; rather, he is related to us only as the object of an act of our own, namely, the abstractive cognition that is required for natural beatitude”) (fols. 256B–57A).

³⁰ Giovanni Berti, *De theologicis disciplinis*, 10 vols. (Naples, IT: Gaetano Migliaccio, 1776–1784). This work is a careful, deliberate, and sustained explication of this branch of the Aegidian tradition. The main works of Noris and Bellelli, while still of intellectual value, were composed more as defenses amidst polemics. For Noris, see Enrico Noris, *Vindiciae Augustinianae* (Brussels, BE: Lambert Marchant, 1675). For Bellelli, see Fulgenzio Bellelli, *Mens Augustini de creaturae rationalis ante peccatum* (Lucerne, CH: Anna Felicitas Hauttin, 1711) and *Mens Augustini de modo reparationis humanae naturae post lapsum adversus Baium et Jansenium*, 2 vols. (Rome: Bernabo, 1737). For a more thorough bibliography of primary sources for this period, including unpublished works, see Winfried Bocxe, OESA, *Introduction to the Teaching of the Italian Augustinians of the 18th Century on the Nature of Actual Grace* (Louvain, BE: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1958), 6–10. Bocxe also contains transcriptions of extracts from a number of manuscripts on 55–99.

³¹ Berti's response to this principle begins at *Additamentum*, bk. 12, ch. 2 (*De theologicis disciplinis*, 3:fol. 79B).

³² For a helpful history of the term *potentia absoluta*, see William J. Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power*

be called by desire to see God but not ordered by grace to do so.³³ Nevertheless, we can hardly imagine a state in which God would do so if we consider *de potentia ordinata* the Providence by which God arranges all things for the good.³⁴

A third approach was to concede the application of Giles's *debitum* to supernatural grace but to relativize human nature's end. This approach can be found in the works of Fulgence Lafosse, OESA (ca. 1640–*post*-1684).³⁵ On the surface of things, Lafosse and Berti seem to agree: God could create man and not order him to the beatific vision; and this would not be contrary to God's justice absolutely, even if it would be contrary to his Providence.³⁶ But where, for Berti, being called to the vision of God by desire is a necessary feature of human nature, even if being ordered to it by grace is not, Lafosse argues that even our call to the beatific vision is contingent. In every state, man desires that end that God had assigned to him; but, since God has called man *in this state* to the beatific vision, human nature has a natural desire for its supernatural end.³⁷ The contingency of this desire's end opens up for Lafosse, as for Paludanus, the possibility of a natural beatitude for man in a state in which man has been neither called by desire nor ordered by grace to the beatific vision. But, where Paludanus thinks that human nature as we presently experience it could be satisfied by a natural beatitude, Lafosse thinks that human nature as we presently experience it has been so altered by its call to the beatific vision that it cannot. This does not mean that the beatific vision is in any way due to human nature once humanity has been called to it. Similarly to Berti, Lafosse argues that having a natural desire for the vision of God does not make the vision due human nature, since the fulfillment of that desire lays outside our nature's reach.³⁸

(Bergamo, IT: Pierluigi Lubrina, 1990). A similar position to that of Berti was already foreseen by Suárez, who, though he thought it unlikely, at least affirmed it as possible; see Suárez, *De ultimo fine hominis ac beatitudo*, disp. 4, sect. 2, no. 7 (*Opera Omnia*, 4:43).

³³ Berti, *Additamentum*, bk. 12, ch. 3 (*De theologicis disciplinis*, 3:fol. 83A).

³⁴ Ibid. (*De theologicis disciplinis*, 3:fols. 83B–84B).

³⁵ Jean-Robert Armogathe, "Histoire des idées religieuses et scientifiques dans l'Europe moderne," *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses* 117 (2008–2009): 330. Lafosse's main contribution to the Aegidian tradition is Fulgence Lafosse, *Augustinus theologus*, 3 vols. (Toulouse, FR: Guillaume Bosc, 1676–1683).

³⁶ Lafosse, *Augustinus theologus*, 3:52.

³⁷ Ibid., 3:169.

³⁸ Ibid., 3:174, 182–83.

A fourth approach was to concede the application of Giles's *debitum* to supernatural grace, even in an absolute sense, but to relativize human nature itself. This approach can be found in the *Institutiones Theologicae* of Michelangelo Marcelli, OESA († 1804).³⁹ Like Berti and unlike Lafosse, Marcelli sees a necessary connection between God's creating human nature and his calling it to himself with a natural desire for the vision of God,⁴⁰ and like Jansen, Marcelli even goes so far as to say that, when God made intellectual creatures with such a desire, "he was bound" (*tenebatur*) to order them to order them to himself by grace.⁴¹ To preserve the gratuity of grace, Marcelli

³⁹ Michelangelo Marcelli, *Institutiones theologicae*, 7 vols. (Foligno, IT: Francesco Xavier Tomassino, 1847–1851).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3:345–46.

⁴¹ Marcelli preserves Berti's distinction between an absolute debt and a relative debt in name only; the logic of his thought cannot be held together without completely denying it. See Ibid., 3:344–45: "Quod antequam argumentis confirmare incipiamus, animadvertimus non loqui nos de potentia Dei absoluta. Si namque Deus alterius ordinis hominem produceret, non dubitamus quin posset illi suae gratiae donum denegare. Sed loquimur de potentia, ut inquit, ordinaria. Supposito nempe quod hominem ad imaginem ac similitudinem suam condiderit, quum ratio imaginis ordinationem importet ad Deum ipsum intuitive videndum tamquam ad ultimum finem, quem absque gratiae auxilio assequi non valet, tenebatur Deus aliquo titulo supernaturalis gratiae ornameto illum fulcire. Dixi, *aliquo titulo*: hoc est, *non propter exigentiam rei creatae, sed propter decentiam Creatoris*, ut verbis utar Eminentissimi Norisii" ("Before I begin to confirm this with arguments, let me point out that I am not speaking about the absolute power of God. For if God were to produce man in another order, I have no doubt that he could deny him the gift of his grace. Rather, I am speaking about what people call God's "ordinary" power. Indeed, supposing that he made man in his image and likeness, then, since the nature of an image implies an ordering toward seeing God himself intuitively as our ultimate end, which cannot be achieved without the assistance of grace, God was bound by some claim to support him with the adornment of supernatural grace. When I said 'by some claim,' I meant *not because of any exigence belonging to a created thing, but because of the Creator's decency*, to use the words of Cardinal Noris"; emphasis original). While, on the one hand, Marcelli preserves the distinction between God's *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* in the sense that he states it, he is unable to sustain it conceptually. His logic breaks down in two ways. First, Marcelli uses stronger language to describe what God must do for a human nature with a natural desire for God. Upon deciding to make such creatures, God was—quite literally—"bound" (*tenebatur*) to give them grace. Contrast that with Berti, who says the opposite: God "was not bound by any claim" (*nullo titulo teneretur*) to give us grace at all (*Additamentum* bk. 12, ch. 3 [*De theologicis disciplinis*, 3:fol. 83A]). It is the logic of Marcelli's absolute *debitum* that leads him to say that a state of pure nature is not, as it was for Berti, a state

therefore suggests that, while God can *de potentia absoluta* create man and not call him to the vision of God, this would entail having to create man not in the *imago dei*.⁴² Since, however, being made in the *imago dei* is synonymous with having a reason and free will,⁴³ the unstated conclusion—which was understood by others to have been implied by Marcelli’s argument—is that for God to make man in a state of pure nature would require that God *de potentia absoluta* perform the impossible by an extraordinary act of divine power: make an irrational-rational creature.⁴⁴ Theologically, at least, God is not constrained to grant us the beatific vision. But the metaphysical means of avoiding that constraint require a voluntarist extremism that the rest of the Aegidian tradition had carefully avoided.

De Lubac’s Work Prior to *Humani Generis*: From Berti to Marcelli to Lafosse

De Lubac was aware of the Aegidian tradition and relied upon it throughout his career to articulate his doctrine of a natural desire for a supernatural end. In the first article de Lubac wrote on nature and grace (1931),⁴⁵ he explicitly references Berti’s branch of the Aegidian tradition as a helpful means of upholding the natural desire for a supernatural end without lapsing into Baius’s and Jansen’s “strict debt” of grace.⁴⁶ The topic addressed in that article concerned the possibility of

in which humanity is called by desire but not ordered by grace to the vision of God. Since Marcelli cannot envision a rational creature that is not called to the vision of God by desire, and since he cannot envision a creature who is called to the vision of God without being ordered to it by grace, he has to envision a state of pure nature as one in which human nature is not rational.

⁴² Marcelli, *Institutiones theologicae*, 3:345–46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3:345.

⁴⁴ See Gioacchino Sestili, *In Summam theologicam S. Thomae Aquinatis Ia. Pe., Q. XII, A. I.: De naturali intelligentis animae capacitate atque appetitu intuendi divinam essentiam: theologica disquisitio* (Rome: A. et Salvatore Festa, 1896), 150.

⁴⁵ Henri de Lubac, “Deux Augustiniens fourvoyés: Baius et Jansénius,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 2 (1931): 422–33, 513–40.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 400, especially note 38. This text was included in Henri de Lubac, *Supernatural: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 33–34. De Lubac is describing the historical circumstances of challenges to the Aegidian tradition. Bellelli, de Lubac observes, was criticized for denying the possibility of pure nature, as though his doctrine were no different from that of Baius. In fact, Berti rightly defended Bellelli, because, while both denied the possibility of pure nature in order to preserve the supernatural character of nature’s destiny, Baius (and later Jansen) denied it in order to form an anthropology in which all of human existence is effectively carried out in a state of pure nature.

a state of pure nature, defined as a state in which man is neither called by desire nor ordered by grace to the beatific vision. By maintaining the call but denying the ordering, Berti's branch of the Aegidian tradition protected the supernaturality and gratuity of the vision. The reverse was true of Baius and Jansen. Baius denied the possibility of a state of pure nature because he denied that the call has a properly supernatural end, and Jansen denied the possibility of a state of pure nature because he denied that the ordering to our final end is properly gratuitous.

De Lubac returned to the Aegidian tradition in his second article on nature and grace (1934) in order to defend the tradition from criticism by Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange.⁴⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange had effectively accused Berti's branch of the Aegidian tradition of Baianism of failing to distinguish between a natural order with a naturally achievable end and a supernatural order with a supernaturally achievable end: anyone who postulates a natural desire for a supernatural end naturalizes the vision of God.⁴⁸ In response, de Lubac added to his previous support for Berti's Aegidianism an argument from authority: not only had Berti's branch of the Aegidian tradition denied a strict debt of grace on God's part, but in combining the affirmation of a natural desire for a supernatural end with the denial of a strict debt of grace, it gave the authentic interpretation of Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁹ Quoting a text of Robert Bellarmine that de Lubac takes as a summary of the entire scholastic tradition, including Aquinas, de Lubac notes that the vision of God "is natural with respect to desire, but not with respect to achievement."⁵⁰ The implication is that it was Garrigou-Lagrange who naturalized the end of man, not Berti.

When, in 1946, de Lubac republished these two articles on nature and grace in part I of *Surnaturel*,⁵¹ he bolstered his previous support

⁴⁷ Henri de Lubac, "Remarques sur l'histoire du mot 'Surnaturel'," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 61 (1934): 225–49, 350–70.

⁴⁸ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "La possibilité de la vision béatifique peut-elle se démontrer?" *Revue Thomiste* 38 (1933): 669–88. Cf. de Lubac, "Deux Augustiniens fourvoyés," 400. In *Surnaturel*, the reference to the Aegidian tradition was moved to the discussion of pure nature (101n1) and has been separated from the reference to Garrigou-Lagrange.

⁴⁹ De Lubac, "Remarques sur l'histoire du mot 'Surnaturel'," 248n2.

⁵⁰ Robert Bellarmine, *De gratia primi hominis* 1.4, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 5, ed. Justin Fèvre (Paris: Vivès, 1873), 191: "Respondeo beatitudinem finem hominis naturalem esse quoad appetitum, non quoad consecutionem" (quoted in De Lubac, "Remarques sur l'histoire du mot 'Surnaturel'," 248n2).

⁵¹ For a helpful chart that indicates how and where de Lubac's early work on nature and grace was included in his later work, see Michel Sales, "Introduc-

of the Aegidian tradition with a more detailed defense against the criticism of Garrigou-Lagrange. Calling the Aegidian tradition “the Augustinian School par excellence,”⁵² de Lubac claimed that

tion,” in the 2010 edition of de Lubac’s *Surnaturel* published by Lethielleux (Paris), p. xiv.

- ⁵² De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 164–65: “L’école augustinienne par excellence, ou du moins par dénomination propre—celle que forment les ermites de saint Augustin—est plus formelle encore. Illustrée successivement par Frédéric Gavardi, par Henri Noris, par Fulgence Belleli [*sic*] et par [Jean] Laurent Berti, elle maintient au milieu des contradictions sa doctrine inchangée. C’est par erreur qu’on lui prête communément, dans l’intention de la distinguer de l’école janséniste, l’idée d’une possibilité métaphysique de la ‘pure nature’ et d’une nécessité seulement ‘morale’, du surnaturel, en raison de la sagesse et de la bonté du Créateur. Du moins cette nécessité morale – *attenta Dei providentia* – concerne-t-elle chez eux non pas la fin, mais le moyen; le secours de grâce et la lumière de gloire, non la destinée elle-même; ou, si l’on préfère, le don effectif de la béatitude à l’individu, non l’ordination de la nature à cette béatitude. La créature raisonnable, dit par exemple Gavardi, ne peut avoir d’autre fin dernière que la possession de Dieu; tel est son principal point de départ pour établir que Dieu doit la créer ‘dans la grâce’. Selon Noris, il serait moralement impossible que, dans l’état d’innocence, l’appétit sensible ne fût point soumis à la raison. Selon Belleli [*sic*] et Berti, Dieu doit pareillement à sa sagesse et à sa bonté d’accorder à l’homme la grâce, c’est-à-dire le moyen qui seul lui permettra d’atteindre sa fin; car, étant donné que l’homme est fait à l’image de Dieu, c’est-à-dire doué de raison, il est ordonné à voir Dieu. Aucun d’eux ne met en doute que la fin de l’être spirituel ne soit en toute hypothèse la béatitude, telle que la définissait saint Thomas, c’est-à-dire ce que nous appelons et ce qu’ils appellent eux-mêmes la fin surnaturelle.” (“The Augustinian School par excellence, or at least by proper title—that which the Hermits of St. Augustine formed—is still more formal. Achieving distinction successively through Frédéric Gavardi, Enrico Noris, Fulgence Bellelli, and Giovanni Lorenzo Berti, it maintained its doctrine unchanged amidst opposition. Wrongly do people commonly attribute to them the idea of a metaphysical possibility of pure nature and a merely ‘moral’ necessity of the supernatural, in virtue of the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator, intending to distinguish them from the Jansenist School. At the least, according to them, this moral necessity—in view of God’s providence—concerns not the end, but the means; the help of grace and the light of glory, not the destiny itself; or, if one prefers, the effective gift of beatitude to the individual, not the ordering of nature to this beatitude. For example, rational creatures, says Gavardi, cannot have a final end other than the possession of God; such is his principle point of departure for establishing that God must create them ‘in grace.’ According to Noris, it would be morally impossible that in a state of innocence the sensible appetite not be at all submitted to reason. According to Bellelli and Berti, God owes it equally to his wisdom and to his goodness to afford man grace, the means that alone permit him to attain his end; for,

Garrigou-Lagrange's criticism confuses two distinct questions: the supernaturality of man's end and the gratuity of the means of obtaining it. The Aegidian tradition had never called into question the supernaturality of man's final end, nor had they ever suggested that God has any "debt" of offering glory to humanity (that was Baius's position). The whole question of a "debt" (albeit a debt of fittingness) concerned the means (grace), not the end (glory).⁵³

If all de Lubac did in *Surnaturel* was continue his support of Berti, there would have been significantly less controversy in the years that followed. However, where, in his previous articles, de Lubac relied on Berti's branch of the Aegidian tradition exclusively, de Lubac includes in *Surnaturel* several positive references to Marcelli. With Marcelli, de Lubac acknowledges a distinction between man considered "as a species" and man considered "in the image of God."⁵⁴ As a species, man can be considered apart from a supernatural end, but insofar as human nature is created in the image of God, it must (a) be endowed with reason,⁵⁵ and (b) be called to the vision of God.⁵⁶ De Lubac does not explicitly attribute this position to Marcelli, but based upon this Marcellian distinction, de Lubac goes on to summarize Marcelli thus: "From the fact that God ordered man to the vision of himself as to his ultimate end, by establishing [man] in his image, it follows that a state of pure nature is impossible."⁵⁷ Following this application of the species-image distinction to Marcelli's understanding of human nature, de Lubac proceeds to deploy the *de potentia absoluta*–*de potentia ordinata* distinction in support of the gratuity of grace:

granted that man is made in the image of God, endowed with reason, he is ordered towards seeing God. None of them calls into question the fact that the end of spiritual being in every hypothesis is beatitude such as St. Thomas defined it, what we call and what they themselves call a supernatural end.")

⁵³ Ibid., 168–70.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 168.

⁵⁵ Also see De Lubac, "Remarques sur l'histoire du mot 'Surnaturel'," 248n2: "Étant donné que l'homme est fait à l'image de Dieu, c'est-à-dire doué de raison, il est ordonné à voir Dieu" ("Granted that man is made in the image of God, that is to say, that he is endowed with reason, he is ordered towards seeing God.").

⁵⁶ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 168.

⁵⁷ Marcelli, *Institutiones Theologicae*, 3:146: "... ex quo Deus, ad imaginem suam condendo illum, ad suipsius ordinaverit visionem, tanquam ad ultimum finem, sequitur impossibilem esse statum purae naturae" (quoted in de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 166).

We could not dream of contesting, [Marcelli] says in the name of his entire school, that God could, by his absolute power, designate such an other end for man as pleases him; that is enough for man not to have any right to require anything [from God], since if the introduction of the concept of “ordered power” renders hypotheses objectively realizable, it does not confer any new title at all upon a creature of which it could boast.⁵⁸

With the deployment of the *absoluta–ordinata* distinction in consort with the species–image distinction, de Lubac thus sets up the first two steps of Marcelli’s argument. He does not, however, draw the conclusion explicitly.

De Lubac’s use of Marcelli leaves de Lubac’s thought subject to a certain ambiguity at this point in his career. Does he intend for us to draw a conclusion that he is unwilling to state—namely, that a man who was not called to the vision of God would be a man who was not made in the image of God? Or has he not read Marcelli thoroughly enough, such that (a) he confuses Marcelli’s position with that of Berti or (b) he does not realize the full extent of the consequences of Marcelli’s position? De Lubac does not answer these questions in *Surnaturel*. In fact, the difficulty in answering them is compounded by the fact that his earlier defenses of Berti also appear in *Surnaturel*. Intellectual charity suggests that we not accuse de Lubac of embracing an extreme position without sufficient evidence to do so. But his use of Marcelli does at least raise an important question as to his precise understanding of the natural desire for a supernatural end.

At first glance, de Lubac seems to resolve the ambiguity of *Surnaturel* by solidifying his support for Marcelli in the subsequent article, “Le mystère du surnaturel” (1949).⁵⁹ As in *Surnaturel*, de Lubac continues to see the context for his discussion of a natural desire for a supernatural end in sixteenth-century responses to the errant Augustinianisms of

⁵⁸ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 169. “Nous ne songeons pas à contester, dit-il au nom de toute son école, que par sa puissance absolue Dieu puisse désigner à l’homme telle autre fin qu’il lui plaît; cela suffit pour que l’homme ne soit en droit de rien exiger, car, si l’introduction du concept de ‘puissance ordonnée’ réduit les hypothèses objectivement réalisables, elle ne confère pour autant à la créature aucun titre nouveau dont celle-ci pourrait se prévaloir.”

⁵⁹ Henri de Lubac, “Le mystère du surnaturel,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 36 (1949): 80–121.

Baius and Jansen,⁶⁰ he continues to employ a distinction between man considered “in his species” and man considered as made in the image of God,⁶¹ and he alludes to the distinction between God’s *potentia absoluta* and God’s *potentia ordinata* to describe God’s ability to make man in a state of pure nature.⁶² As in *Surnaturel*, therefore, this chain of thought would seem to bring de Lubac to the doorstep of Marcelli’s impossible-possibility. De Lubac even goes beyond *Surnaturel* and rejects out of hand Berti’s idea that human nature’s calling to the vision of God is necessary; he affirms unequivocally with Marcelli the idea that human nature’s calling to the vision of God is contingent.⁶³ It would seem, therefore, as if “Le mystère du surnaturel” should be read as a clarification in which de Lubac solidified his commitment to Marcelli.

However, there is reason to take caution before suggesting that de Lubac’s articulation of the natural desire for a supernatural end in “Le mystère du surnaturel” should be aligned with Marcelli. If we look beneath the surface of words that appear to align with Marcelli, we find very quickly that the conceptual framework undergirding those words is no longer that of Marcelli; it is that of Lafosse.

Spiritual nature, de Lubac now explains, radically differs from lower natures. Other natures have a fixed end that they achieve by their natural powers, while spiritual nature lacks a determined end in itself.⁶⁴ When God chooses to create a spiritual creature, he therefore has to do two things: (1) decree an end for that spiritual nature,⁶⁵ and (2) create concrete individuals (that is, persons) who share in that nature and desire its end.⁶⁶ This process results in a certain tension between nature and the persons who possess it. The nature, considered in itself, lacks an end and so is a mystery.⁶⁷ The persons with the nature, on the other hand, have a single, determined end that gives definition to their nature insofar as it has been received

⁶⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁶¹ Ibid., 105–06.

⁶² On God’s *potentia absoluta*, see the reference to God’s “souveraine liberté” on *ibid.*, 104; on his *potentia ordinata*, see *ibid.*, 92: “Et par conséquent, semble-t-il, le Dieu juste et bon ne saurait m’en frustrer, si ce n’est pas moi qui par ma propre faute me détourne librement de Lui” (“And consequently, it seems, the good and just God would have no way of depriving me of it unless I, by my own fault, freely turn myself away from him”).

⁶³ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 101.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 113.

by them in history.⁶⁸ To consider humanity “in its species” is not to consider human nature apart from its intellectuality; it is to consider human nature apart from the decree of God establishing an end for human nature and so to consider human nature apart from any natural or supernatural call.⁶⁹ To consider human nature “in the image of God” is not, as it was for Marcelli, to consider human nature with the addition of intellectual powers; it is to consider the consequences arising from creating individual members of an intellectual species who possess the powers inherent in that species: they have intellect and will, as they would in any hypothesis, but they also possess an element of mystery arising from the primal indetermination of the nature that they have received.⁷⁰

Two consequences follow from this Lafossian view of human nature. The first is that, even though de Lubac now clearly acknowledges the possibility of a state of pure nature in which humanity is neither called nor ordered to the vision of God, reflection by natural reason on that *hypothetical* state is rendered practically useless for the purpose of expositing the natural law in this *historical* state:⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 92. It is in this sense that de Lubac can say: “Le désir de Le voir est en nous, il est nous-mêmes [The desire to see him is in us; it constitutes our very selves]” (111).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 105: “Considérée en elle-même, statiquement pour ainsi dire, ou encore ‘dans son espèce,’ ma nature n’est que ce qu’elle est: il n’y a pas en elle, répétons-le, le moindre élément surnaturel. Mais pas plus qu’on n’avait le droit d’envisager sinon par manière de dire un sujet réel avant sa position dans l’être par l’acte créateur, pas davantage on ne pourrait réellement envisager cette nature avant d’y voir inscrite sa finalité surnaturelle” (“Considered in itself, statically, so to speak, or even ‘in its species,’ my nature is what it is: there does not exist in it, let’s say it again, the least supernatural element. But just as one would have no right to imagine, in a manner of speaking, a real subject situated differently in being by the Creator’s action, so neither would one be able to imagine this nature in a real sense prior to seeing its supernatural finality inscribed upon it”).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 118: “Une doctrine chère aux Pères de l’Église est que l’homme est à l’image de Dieu non seulement par son intelligence, sa liberté, son immortalité, sa domination sur la nature, mais encore et surtout, en fin de compte, par ce qu’il y a d’incompréhensible en lui” (“A teaching dear to the Fathers of the Church is that man is in the image of God not only on account of his intellect, his freedom, his immortality, [and] his dominion over nature, but also and especially, at the end of the day, because he has something of the incomprehensible in himself”).

⁷¹ Ibid., 99: “Donc l’idée d’une ‘pure nature’ . . . apparaîtrait inapte au service qu’on en attendait” (“Thus, the idea of a ‘pure nature’ . . . would appear inapt for the service that it was expected to render”).

When you postulate another order of things, then whether you like it or not, you postulate at the same time another humanity, another human being and, if I may so speak, another me. . . . Between this man who, according to the hypothesis, is not destined to see God and the man who I am in reality, between this *futurible* [man] and this *existing* [man], there is nothing more than an entirely ideal, an entirely abstract identity. Then again, perhaps I've conceded too much by saying that. For the difference between these two does not just concern individuality; it concerns nature itself.⁷²

In that other state, man technically possesses the same nature as we do in this state, provided that we abstract our consideration of human nature from the question of nature's end and view the nature itself as a mystery. But, since any rational reflection on the nature has to be based upon the end that God has decreed for it, and since God has decreed a different end for nature in that state, there is next to nothing that nature in that state can tell us about nature in this state.

Although de Lubac's Lafossian anthropology therefore makes it impossible to derive an account of the natural law by reflection on pure nature, it would be open to the possibility of deriving an account of the natural law by reflection on nature as we presently experience it, were it not for the second consequence. The second consequence is that, even in this historical state, it is not possible to demonstrate by natural reason that the end of human nature is the vision of God. Since the end of human nature depends upon a voluntary decree of God, Revelation is a necessary precondition

⁷² Ibid., 93: "En posant un autre ordre de choses, on pose du même coup, qu'on le veuille ou non, une autre humanité, un autre être humain et, si l'on peut dire, un autre moi... Entre cet homme qui, par hypothèse, n'est pas destiné à voir Dieu, et l'homme que je suis en réalité, entre ce *futurible* et cet *existant*, il n'y a encore qu'une identité tout idéale, tout abstraite. Peut-être même est-ce là déjà trop concéder. Car la différence entre l'un et l'autre n'affecte pas seulement l'individualité, mais la nature même." See also *ibid.*, 95: "Si l'on me parle d'une autre nature hypothétiquement réalisable avec une autre finalité dans un autre univers, je ne me sens plus avec elle qu'un lien purement abstrait, quoi qu'il en soit des traits de ressemblance qu'on lui confère, peut-être d'ailleurs arbitrairement, avec la nôtre" ("If one were to speak to me of another, hypothetically realisable nature, with another finality, in another universe, I would only perceive a purely abstract connection with it, even though such a one were to confer upon it (perhaps, for that matter, arbitrarily) strands of resemble with our nature"). See also *ibid.*, 88–89.

in order for us to give a teleological account of human nature with any certainty.⁷³ To unaided human reason, human nature possesses an irreducible air of mystery.⁷⁴ Any attempt to reduce this mystery to a “system,” such as had been the case in the great systems of the Dominican and Jesuit Thomists,⁷⁵ necessarily compromises some essential aspect of it.⁷⁶

This second consequence is a curious development. It seems to ignore the fact that the Aegidian doctrine of a natural desire for a supernatural end was founded upon arguments that Giles of Rome thought were metaphysically demonstrable and, in his words, “unasailable.” It similarly seems to ignore the fact that two of the principal representatives of the Aegidian tradition referenced in the course of de Lubac’s career drew up systems that were every bit as elaborate as those of the Dominicans and Jesuits: Berti (in ten volumes) and Marcelli (in seven volumes). But, as we shall see with reference to de Lubac’s future work, it was an essential—if peculiar—feature of Lafosse’s understanding of human nature’s indeterminacy, and one that de Lubac, in his embrace of Lafosse, came to accept.

***Humani Generis* and “The Twins”**

In 1950, the year after “Le mystère du surnaturel,” Pope Pius XII weighed in on the controverted question about the natural desire for a supernatural end by censuring those who “corrupt the true gratuity of the supernatural order, since they affirm that God cannot establish beings endowed with intellect, without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision.”⁷⁷ Although de Lubac was widely interpreted as the intended object of this condemnation, he himself denied that

⁷³ Ibid., 105. This is what is meant when de Lubac says: “ce n’est pas le surnaturel qui s’explique par la nature, au moins comme postulé par elle: c’est la nature qui s’explique, aux yeux de la foi, par le surnaturel, comme voulue pour lui.” (“You do not explain the supernatural by nature, that is, as postulated by it; you explain nature, in eyes of faith, by the supernatural, as willed for it”).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁵ On the prevalence of these systems, see *ibid.*, 81. On the limits thereof, see *ibid.*, 109, and throughout.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 114–16.

⁷⁷ Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, §26: “Alii veram ‘gratuitatem’ ordinis supernaturalis corrumpunt, cum autem Deum entia intellectu praedita condere non posse, quin eadem ad beatificam visionem ordinet et vocet” (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 [1950]: 570).

his thought fell under it.⁷⁸ Apart from the question of the personal intention of Pius XII, which is difficult if not impossible to ascertain,⁷⁹ part of the difficulty in assessing de Lubac's place with respect to this condemnation concerns the nuanced tradition upon which he was relying and the manner in which his thought had already undergone three stages of development with respect to this tradition. As we have seen, the entire Aegidian tradition affirmed the existence of a natural

⁷⁸ For a list of quotations and passages in which de Lubac made this denial, see Susan Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church in Henri de Lubac* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 15. Cf. Sales, "Introduction," xi.

⁷⁹ De Lubac recounts that Pius XII spoke positively of his teaching when he met the Pontiff in 1946 (*At the Service of the Church*, 61, cited in Andrew Swafford, *Nature and Grace: A New Approach to Thomistic Ressourcement* [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014], 59). The Pontiff's words were ambiguous: "Ah! I know your doctrine very well." De Lubac says they were spoken in a "friendly tone" and that the newly elected superior general assured him, after meeting with the Holy Office and the pontiff, that his work was not in question. In his address to the entire delegation of the Society, the pontiff counseled the members of the Society to "accommodate" themselves to the character of the people of their day but exhorted them not to change what is immutable. While he spoke of a "new theology" as something that primarily mitigates against the immutability of dogma, he never named any theologian in particular. According to the Pontiff, the members of the Society should take care that "In proponendis et proferendis quaestionibus, in argumentationibus ducendis, in dicendi quoque genere deligendo, oporteat sui saeculi ingenio et propensione sapienter orationem suam accommodent. At quod immutabile est, nemo turbet et moveat. Plura dicta sunt, at non satis explorata ratione, 'de nova theologia' quae cum universis semper volventibus rebus, una volvatur, semper itura, numquam perventura. Si talis opinio amplectenda esse videatur, quid fiet de numquam immutandis catholicis dogmatibus, quid de fidei unitate et stabilitate?" ("In proposing and stating questions, in formulating arguments, and in choosing the manner of their speech, it is necessary for them to accommodate their language wisely to the temperament and inclination of the age. But let no one disturb or change what is immutable. Many things have been said (but without a good enough reason) 'about a new theology' that revolves with all the things that always revolve, always progressing yet never reaching a destination. If people want to embrace this opinion, what will become of unchanging Catholic dogmas, or the unity and stability of the faith?"). See Pius XII, "Allocutio ad Patres Societatis Iesu In XXIX Congregatione Generali Electores," September 17, 1946 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 [1946]: 384–85). Balanced though it may have been, Pius XII's words were taken as a warning, and this "warning" was published on the front page *L'Osservatore Romano* the following day. See Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits, Oeuvres complètes* 23 (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 62.

desire for a supernatural end, but that tradition did not universally agree as to how such a desire should be articulated. To review:

- In his early articles, de Lubac voiced support for Berti. Berti relativizes the *debitum*. Humanity would be endowed with intellect and *called* by desire to the beatific vision in any hypothesis, but would not necessarily be *ordered* to it by grace; *de potentia absoluta*, God might create humanity for the beatific vision without giving it the means of attaining that end.
- In *Surnaturel*, de Lubac voiced an ambiguous support for Marcelli. Marcelli relativizes nature itself. In any hypothesis in which humanity is endowed with intellect, it must be *called* by desire and *ordered* by grace to the beatific vision; *de potentia absoluta*, God might create humanity without calling or ordering it to the beatific vision, but that would require making humanity without intellect.
- In “Le mystère du surnaturel,” de Lubac followed Lafosse. Lafosse relativizes the *debitum*, as well as nature’s end. Humanity would be endowed with intellect in any hypothesis but, in every hypothesis, would of necessity be neither *called* by desire nor *ordered* by grace to the beatific vision. Even if God created human nature and called it to the vision of himself, *de potentia absoluta*, God might create humanity for the beatific vision without giving it the means of attaining that end.

Carefully read, *Humani Generis* condemns the view that humanity, in any hypothesis in which it is endowed with intellect, must be both *ordered* and *called* to the beatific vision. This view was not universally shared among the theologians of the Aegidian tradition. Only Marcelli falls under the condemnation in a strict sense. Berti allows for a state in which humanity is not *ordered* to the beatific vision by grace, even if it is *called* there by desire.⁸⁰ Lafosse allows for a state in which humanity is neither *called* by desire nor *ordered* by grace. Marcelli, however, requires that, in every hypothesis in which humanity is endowed with intellect, God must call and order it to the

⁸⁰ It is upon this distinction that Agostino Trapè, OESA (1915–1987), one of the last great theologians of the Aegidian tradition, sought to defend the tradition after the promulgation of *Humani Generis*. See Agostino Trapè, “De gratuitate ordinis supernaturalis apud theologos augustinenses litteris encyclicis ‘Humani Generis’ praelucentibus,” *Analecta Augustiniana* 21, no. 3 (1950): 217–65.

beatific vision—and that is precisely what *Humani Generis* condemns.

Was de Lubac's natural desire for a supernatural end condemned by *Humani Generis*? As expressed in his nearest publication to its promulgation, "Le mystère du surnaturel," certainly not. With Lafosse, de Lubac acknowledged the possibility of a state in which man, endowed with intellect, is neither called nor ordered to the vision of God. As the desire was expressed previously in *Surnaturel*, perhaps it was condemned. If de Lubac intended fully to support Marcelli's idea that, in any state in which human nature is endowed with intellect, it must be called and ordered to the beatific vision, then, yes, it was condemned; if de Lubac did not realize the consequences of Marcelli's position (as we may suspect from his failure to state the conclusion at that time or to reject Berti), then it was not. A more careful interpretation would be to say that *Humani Generis* condemned what, in actual fact, is Marcelli's position, that there is a chance that de Lubac supported Marcelli in 1946, and that, whatever the case may be about de Lubac's support for Marcelli in 1946, he had moved on by 1950 and abandoned Marcelli for Lafosse.⁸¹

De Lubac's shift from Marcelli toward Lafosse is developed in his subsequent works on the natural desire for a supernatural end, "the Twins": *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*⁸² and *Le mystère du surnaturel*⁸³ (1965). Those works were originally intended to be elaborations of de Lubac's previous publications: *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* was supposed to be an expansion of part I of *Surnaturel*, in which de Lubac's ambiguous support for Marcelli appears, and *Le mystère du surnaturel* was supposed to be an expansion of the article by the same name, in which de Lubac makes a turn from Marcelli toward Lafosse. Looking back on these texts, de Lubac later reflected that, although he had expanded them, he had not changed "the least point

⁸¹ While the compositional history of *Humani Generis* is not known, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that a Roman theologian assisting in the drafting process after having read *Surnaturel* and hostile to the natural desire for a supernatural end might suggest censuring what he took to be the conclusion implied by *Surnaturel*. He would thereby, however, have missed his mark in two ways: first, because de Lubac never actually states the condemned conclusion; second, because, perhaps unbeknownst to the drafter (owing to the proximity of "Le mystère du surnaturel" and *Humani Generis*), if de Lubac had ever held the condemned conclusion, he had moved on from it by the time *Humani Generis* was promulgated.

⁸² Henri de Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1965).

⁸³ Henri de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1965).

of doctrine.⁸⁴ That may be true with respect to *Le mystère du surnaturel*, but it is certainly not the case with respect to *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*.

While large sections of *Surnaturel* are repeated verbatim in *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, de Lubac actually went back and substantially edited the section in which he praises the Aegidian tradition so as to soften his references to Marcelli.⁸⁵ His references to Marcelli remain intact materially: he still references the species–image distinction;⁸⁶ he still associates being made in the image of God with being called to the vision of God;⁸⁷ and he still deploys the *absoluta–ordinata* distinction with its unspoken conclusion.⁸⁸ Yet, if we read de Lubac’s “additions” carefully, we find that he uses them to empty Marcelli’s terms formally of any force they might have had by introducing into his treatment of Marcelli the Lafossian understanding of the species–image distinction he had developed in “Le mystère du surnaturel”:

For someone like Lafosse, like Bellelli, like Berti, the [image of God] is above all, as it was for St. Augustine and for all the Fathers, as well as for St. Thomas, the soul itself, considered in its superior part, with its natural powers of reason and free will. . . . If the consideration of “image” adds anything to the consideration of “species,” it is solely in the sense that it is a more complete and more concrete view of the same reality.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ De Lubac, *Mémoire sur l’occasion de mes écrits*, 124: “L’un, *le Mystère du surnaturel*, développe dans le même ordre, et sans y changer le moindre point de doctrine, l’article publié sous ce titre. . . en 1949 . . . Le second, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, reproduit de même fidèlement, en la grossissant de textes nouveaux, la première partie du vieux *Surnaturel*” (“The one, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, develops in the same order, and without changing the least point of doctrine in it, the article published under this title . . . in 1949. . . The second, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, likewise reproduces faithfully, while enriching it with new texts, the first part of the old *Surnaturel*”).

⁸⁵ De Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, 293–305.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 301–2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 302–3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 302: “Pour un Lafosse, pour un Bellelli [*sic*], pour un Berti, elle est avant tout, comme pour saint Augustin et pour tous les Pères, comme aussi bien pour saint Thomas, l’âme elle-même, considérée dans sa partie supérieure, avec ses puissances naturelles de raison et de libre vouloir. . . . Si la considération de l’‘image’ ajoute quelque chose à la considération de l’‘espèce’, c’est en ce sens seulement qu’elle est une vue plus complète et plus concrète de la même réalité.”

More tellingly, de Lubac also eliminates the necessary connection between possessing intellect and will and being called to the vision of God. Immediately after he refers to the Aegidians as Augustinians “par excellence,” we read, concerning their tradition:

Neither do they preoccupy themselves with drawing up an entire system of thought; like Giles of Rome long ago, they base themselves on Scripture and hardly seek to know what can or cannot be demonstrated by reason. When they discuss the point in question, they are voluntarily restrained: “Our opinion is this: the possibility of the beatific vision cannot be proven demonstrably by the light of natural reason.”⁹⁰

This observation develops the critique of metaphysical demonstrations and of systems that de Lubac first suggested in “Le mystère du surnaturel.” There, it was confined to a series of general critiques of the Dominicans and Jesuits. Here, he goes so far as to suggest that Giles of Rome himself was unconcerned for metaphysical arguments and that the Aegidian tradition as a whole was unconcerned for systematizing in theology.

At this point, de Lubac commits two historical errors. The first is with regard to Giles of Rome. As we saw above, Giles was intentional about engaging in the very kind of metaphysical demonstration from which de Lubac seeks to dissociate him. The second is with regard to the Aegidian tradition. Systematization was as much a concern of that tradition as of any other: Aegidians could boast such systematizers as Berti (whose main work encompassed no less than ten volumes) and Marcelli (who bequeathed to his order a more “modest” seven volumes). Where, then, does de Lubac get the idea that “the possibility of the beatific vision cannot be proven demonstrably by the light of natural reason”? If we follow up the reference for the quotation he uses to support the idea, we find that it is taken from Lafosse,⁹¹ and that, on the page preceding it, Lafosse had just committed the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 294: “Ils ne se préoccupent pas non plus d’un effort de pensée intégrale; comme jadis Gilles de Rome, ils se fondent sur l’Écriture et ne cherchent guère à savoir ce qui peut ou ne peut pas être démontré par la raison. Quand ils traitent de ce dernier point, ils sont volontier restrictifs: ‘Sententia nostra sit ista: possibilitas visionis beatificae non potest probari demonstrative solo lumine naturali.’”

⁹¹ Lafosse, *Augustinus theologus*, 3:139.

same error.⁹² Lafosse's opinion represents not the common opinion of the entire Aegidian tradition, but the particular thought of Lafosse as distinct from other significant members of the tradition. Lafosse is quoted in a footnote by de Lubac thus:

Since, therefore, this elevation cannot be known naturally, nor consequently can our innate appetite for the beatific vision be known naturally, it follows that the arguments, which we make to prove this sort of appetite, are not purely physical and natural arguments, but theological and radically supernatural arguments, insofar as they are based upon revelation and the faith by which we believe that man has been elevated by God to a supernatural order and to the level of grace and glory. They are nevertheless partly physical and natural: insofar as it is shown by probable argument that man should have been elevated to a supernatural end, and consequently that he desires it naturally.⁹³

⁹² Ibid., 3:138. Recounting three opinions about the demonstrability of the possibility of the vision of God, he concludes: "Tertia tandem sententia defendit possibilitatem visionis Beatificae nullatenus nec ex ulla suppositione probari posse naturaliter demonstrative: haec est mens omnium ferme Theologorum, maxime vero Thomistarum, ex nostris quoque eandem opinionem tutantur quamplurimi, Aegidius Rom[anus]; [Thomas de] Argentinas [*sic*], Aegidius Lusinatus, [Johannes] Puteanus, [Andreas] Landon, [Augustinus] Gibbon [de Burgo]" ("Only the third opinion does not in any way defend the possibility of the beatific vision, nor does it defend the idea that it can in any hypothesis be proved naturally and demonstratively. This is the mind of nearly all theologians, but especially the Thomists. Many of our confrères also hold the same opinion: Giles of Rome, [Thomas of] Strasbourg, Giles of Santo Ireno, [Jean] Dupuy, [Andreas] Landon, [Augustin] Gibbon [de Burgo]"). He acknowledges that others in the Aegidian tradition think that the possibility can be proven demonstratively, but says that they think that such a demonstration first requires an encounter with Revelation.

⁹³ Lafosse, *Augustinus theologus*, 3:184: "Cum igitur haec elevatio non possit naturaliter cognosci, nec consequenter appetitus innatus ad visionem beatificam. Quare argumenta, quae nos ad probandum hujusmodi appetitum, non sunt argumenta pure physica, et naturalia, sed theologica et radicaliter supernaturalia, in quantum fundantur supra revelationem et fidem, qua credimus hominem esse elevatum a Deo ad ordinem supernaturalem et gradum gratiae et gloriae. Sunt tamen ex parte physica et naturalia : quatenus probabili ratione ostenditur hominem debuisse elevari ad finem supernaturalem, et consequenter ipsum appetere naturaliter" (cited in de Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, 294n2.).

In short, Lafosse thinks that we cannot demonstrate by natural reason the concrete possibility that human nature has been called to beatific vision because there is nothing in human nature that necessitates its having been called to the beatific vision. Arguments seeking to demonstrate that we have in fact been so called, and based on our present experience of natural desire, can and will only ever be probable. Our elevation to the beatific is, Lafosse says, a supernatural mystery. As such, only faith can teach us about it with certainty.⁹⁴

A more systematic and overt presentation of de Lubac's Lafossian anthropology can be found in *Le mystère du surnaturel*. Here again, de Lubac makes it clear that he agrees with Lafosse that the calling of human nature to the beatific vision is contingent and that this calling creates in man a natural desire for the vision of God. This enables de Lubac to take up the question of *Humani Generis* explicitly.⁹⁵ Need humanity, in all hypotheses, be called to the beatific vision? De Lubac's response is negative. But all the same, does a natural desire for the vision of God, which results from an ontological call, constitute a positive ordering to the beatific vision? De Lubac's response is *emphatically* negative. There is an infinite distance between our *capacity* for the vision of God, with the desire that results from it, and the sanctifying grace that orders us to that end.⁹⁶ God remains free in every hypothesis in which he has called us to the beatific vision not to give us the means of fulfilling a call that has been contingently imprinted on our nature.

Since Lafosse admitted the possibility of a state in which man is not called to the vision of God, de Lubac also feels constrained to speculate as to what that end might look like. He suggests two possibilities, both of which he acknowledges to be inconclusive. In the first hypothesis, human life would culminate in the natural knowledge

⁹⁴ Ibid., 3:139. After the sentence quoted by de Lubac in the body of the text, Lafosse continues: "Visio Beatifica non potest probari etiam ut possibilis argumento demonstrativo naturali: consequentia valet, quia Apostolus eo textu [Rom. 6:23: "Gratia Dei vita aeterna"] probat visionem Beatificam, quae est vita aeterna esse mysterium fidei supernaturale, inquantum est mysterium gratiae" ("It cannot even be proven by a natural, demonstrative argument that the beatific vision is possible: the consequent is valid, because in that text [Rom. 6:23: 'the grace of God is eternal life'] the Apostle proves that the beatific vision, which is eternal life, is a supernatural mystery of faith insofar as it is a mystery of grace").

⁹⁵ De Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, 111.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 116–17.

of God. However, this knowledge cannot constitute a final *terminus* for human nature because abstractive knowledge in fact *increases* our desire for vision rather than quieting it.⁹⁷ Human nature would therefore terminate in a limitless search, spurred on by its unfulfilled desire. There could be “a certain joy” in this search, but then again, it would seem ultimately frustrating to search forever without growing closer to the object of our search.⁹⁸ In the second hypothesis, man would not be spurred on by his knowledge of God, but rather by his ignorance of God. We would wait in the darkness of our expectation in the hope that we might one day achieve the satisfaction of our soul’s capacity for the vision of God, not knowing whether such a satisfaction were possible.⁹⁹ This too is problematic because, if the goal of this natural hope is not reached, the result will be despair.¹⁰⁰ Human nature not called to the beatific vision must have as its *telos* some definite act,¹⁰¹ but de Lubac ultimately acknowledges that he is unable to come to a definite conclusion as to what that act is supposed to be.¹⁰² Lafosse had never said what he thought the end of human nature would be in a state in which it was not called to the beatific vision. De Lubac is unable to do so either.

Conclusion

De Lubac’s inability to ascertain a suitable response to the question of “What would the final act be for a man who was neither *called* nor *ordered* to the beatific vision?” arises from an insoluble ambiguity in Lafosse’s understanding of nature. Since Lafosse relativizes nature’s end, Lafosse’s understanding of pure nature entails a hypothetical man that experiences life so fundamentally differently from the way we do that reflection upon such a hypothetical man is of no usefulness for understanding humanity in our present state. It opens, one might say, a teleological vacuum.

Lafosse’s difficulty with regard to human nature’s natural end leads to a difficulty with regard to the natural law. To return to one of the questions with which we began this article, Lafosse could hardly assist de Lubac in overcoming contemporary objections in regard to

⁹⁷ Ibid., 247.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 247–49.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 252.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 253.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 254–55.

the natural law because Lafosse's understanding of the teleology of human nature is fluid. It is for that reason inaccessible to reflection by natural reason in a state of elevated nature, whether *directly*, because the end to which elevated nature is called is supernatural, or *indirectly*, because the teleology of pure nature would be different from the teleology of elevated nature.

In spite of this difficulty, I would like to suggest two ways in which the doctrine of a natural desire for a supernatural end might account for the natural law if situated in the context of the Aegidian tradition.

A Ressourcement of Paludanus

In the fifty years prior to *Surnaturel*, several theologians had proposed some sort of return to an Aegidianism inspired by Paludanus.¹⁰³ De Lubac was critical of this idea. He thought that the admission even of an imperfect, natural participation in the vision of God weakened the nature of the human person.¹⁰⁴ Yet de Lubac also acknowledged that, although the beatific vision is a supernatural act, it includes within itself super-eminently all the perfection of human nature as such. Included within this perfection is the knowledge of God attainable by natural reason. Such knowledge, de Lubac suggests, is contained within the beatifying act as a secondary, "accidental" beatitude.¹⁰⁵ The act that de Lubac describes as accidental beatitude is the same act as neo-Scholastic Thomists generally considered the end of man in a state of pure nature to be. In other words, while de Lubac considers the vision of God as the end of natural desire as such, he does acknowledge that *this very same desire* carries us toward the fulfillment of all that human nature can achieve of its own accord. Since such fulfillment is the very act that neo-Scholastic critics use to build an account of nature and the natural law, it would seem that the natural law objection to de Lubac's thought could be reconciled on this basis.

¹⁰³ The first of these was Sestili, *De naturali intelligentis animae capacitate atque appetitu intuendi divinam essentiam*. More well-known are Pierre Rousselot, *L'intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1924), and Guy de Broglie, "De la place du surnaturel dans la philosophie de saint Thomas," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 14 (1924): 193–246 and 481–96.

¹⁰⁴ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 450.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 462–63.

A Ressourcement of Berti

One might reasonably object that an accidental end is not sufficient to ground a teleological account of nature and the natural law; only an ultimate end will suffice. In that case, another way to respond to de Lubac's critics would be to propose a return to Berti. Berti has the benefit over Lafosse of asserting that there is a single end for man, and he has the benefit over Paludanus of saying that such an end is man's ultimate end. Shifting our attention to Berti can move the contemporary discussion about the natural desire for a supernatural end forward in three ways. Each of these ways concerns an objection that might be raised against Berti's understanding of nature.

First, one may object that the demonstrations offered by the Aegidian tradition seeking to show that the end of man's natural desire is the vision of God are not demonstrative. If the invalidity of those proofs were shown, then it might continue to be objected that the Aegidian tradition cannot provide a single, fixed, naturally knowable *telos* for human nature. At present, however, contemporary scholarship is not familiar enough with the Aegidian tradition to make that determination. Giles may have offered five ways, but his five arguments underwent seven hundred years of development. A defense or rejection of them should engage with that tradition the same way that a defense or rejection of any other aspect of Thomism engages with significant figures in the Thomistic tradition.

Second, one may object that the goal of identifying a single, fixed, naturally knowable *telos* for human nature is not so much theoretical as it is practical: we identify such an end so as to identify how human actions and human society ought to be ordered and to provide general principles that can be applied to particular situations by human law. On this objection, the Aegidian tradition's natural desire for a supernatural end is—literally speaking—"impractical," because human actions can only be ordered towards the vision of God by grace. Thus, the Aegidian tradition might make humanity's teleology knowable, but it makes the natural law practically useless.

There are two ways to respond to this objection. The first is to observe, as we did above with regard to a *ressourcement* of Paludanus, that man's supernatural end contains within it all of man's natural perfection. If human actions cannot be actively ordered toward the vision of God without grace, they can still be ordered towards that natural perfection. The natural desire for a supernatural end is therefore open to the exact same practical use as other accounts of the natural law.

But one might continue to object that only an ultimate end is a sufficient basis for human action. It is an important critique but not a fatal one, because the Aegidian tradition was aware of this impracticality. To put it colloquially, the Aegidian tradition saw the impracticality of the natural desire for a supernatural end as a feature, not a bug. It laid the groundwork for a powerful apologetic concerning the need of individuals to be perfected by grace and the need of society to be perfected by the Church.¹⁰⁶ Part of de Lubac's criticism of neo-Scholastic Thomism is that its reliance on pure nature destroyed that apologetic, leading to a disappearance of the sense of the sacred and to the advance of secularism.¹⁰⁷

Third, and finally, one may shift from the natural law objection to a theological objection about the gratuity of grace. Until now, de Lubac's critics and his followers have largely been locked in a battle of *gratis asseritur gratis negatur* on the question of whether natural desires must have naturally achievable ends: his critics assert that natural desires must have a naturally achievable end and so a state of pure nature must be possible; his supporters assert that they need not, and so a state of pure nature is not possible. If, however, the natural desire for a supernatural end is understood in the context of the Aegidian tradition's application of the *potentia absoluta–ordinata* distinction to an Aegidian *debitum* of grace, then a fruitful debate on the applicability of that distinction to the gratuity of grace would be a helpful way of moving discussions of the natural desire for a supernatural end forward. The difference between Dominican/Jesuit Thomists and Aegidian Thomists is not that the former admit the possibility of a state of pure nature and the latter do not; it is that the former define pure nature as a state in which humanity is neither called nor ordered

¹⁰⁶ Already in the thirteenth century, Giles emphasized the ecclesial apologetic inherent in the natural desire for the vision of God over and against the Dominican theologian John of Paris. See Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate*, in *Giles of Rome's On Ecclesiastical Power: A Medieval Theory of World Government*, ed. and trans. Robert Dyson (New York: Columbia, 2004). See also John of Paris, *De potestate regia et papali*, in Jean Leclercq, *Jean de Paris et l'écclésiologie du XIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1942), 173–260 (English translation in *On Royal and Papal Power*, trans. J. A. Watt (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971).

¹⁰⁷ This argument permeates de Lubac's thought. See especially Henri de Lubac, "Causes internes de l'atténuation et la disparition du sens du sacré," in *Théologie dans l'histoire* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1990), 2:13–30, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne*, 135–223 and 284–330, and *Le mystère du surnaturel*, 19–78.

to the vision of God, while the more prominent members of the latter, such as Berti, think of pure nature as a state in which humanity is called to the vision of God but not ordered to it. The question at stake is whether either or both of these hypotheses is consistent and realizable. Both possibilities are consistent with *Humani Generis*. But it has been a long time since the question was debated on those terms.

A *ressourcement* of Aegidian Thomism for the purpose of continuing discussions of the natural desire for God should not in any way lead to theological relativism or to historical reductivism. De Lubac was wrong to represent the Aegidian tradition as non-demonstrative and non-systematic. At least concerning the natural desire for God, Aegidian Thomists sought to be as demonstrative and systematic as their Dominican and Jesuit counterparts. Consequently, if a *ressourcement* of the Aegidian tradition is to inform contemporary debates about de Lubac, that *ressourcement* will have to respect the nuances, subtleties, and divergences within the Aegidian tradition. Doing so offers a fruitful way forward for contemporary Thomists by avoiding historical and metaphysical detours for which any of the great Scholastic traditions can render an account. Instead, it indicates where the true theological divergences among the traditions are located. The promise of such a *ressourcement* is that it offers the opportunity to continue that conversation in which the great figures of the Scholastic tradition were engaged. What spurred them on in their debates was that they agreed with Giles: whatever the truth about our natural desire for God, we should seek to demonstrate it “unassailably.” Such was the hope and the challenge that animated the Thomists of the Scholastic tradition; Thomists of the present age can and should be animated by nothing less comprehensive and nothing less worthy. N&V