

Natura Pura: Two Recent Works

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Aquinas's Notion of Pure Nature and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac by Bernard Mulcahy (*New York: Peter Lang, 2011*), 246 pages.

Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace by Steven A. Long (*New York: Fordham University Press, 2010*), 282 pages.

IN THESE TWO BOOKS Bernard Mulcahy and Steven Long defend the classical Thomistic understanding of pure nature. They contribute to the longstanding debate over Henri de Lubac's understanding of the relationship between nature and grace in Thomas Aquinas and the Thomistic tradition. Although Mulcahy and Long criticize de Lubac, they respect his intentions and do not use *ad hominem* arguments. In order to correctly situate these recent works, it is important to review some elements in the history of the twentieth-century debate over *natura pura*.

The debate began with Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel* (1946).¹ In this work, de Lubac claimed that the notion of pure human nature (*natura pura*) considered apart from grace is a modern novelty that is incorrectly attributed to Thomas.² He argued that the notion was developed in the context of a theological response to Baianism and especially Jansenism. De Lubac was in particular sympathetic to Jansenism's call for a return to a more primitive patristic theology. Nevertheless, both Baianism and Jansenism included assorted unorthodox views, among which were views about the relationship between nature and grace. Some Catholic theologians once thought that among the condemned positions of Baianism and Jansenism was their denial that there could have been a state of pure

¹ Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études Historiques*, Theologie, 8 (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

² *Ibid.*, 101–27.

nature. According to de Lubac, although the Catholic Church condemned the two heresies of Jansenism and Baianism, it did not condemn the Jansenist position about the impossibility of a purely natural state. De Lubac wished to preserve their rejection of *natura pura* while distancing himself from their explicitly condemned views.

Although de Lubac was hostile toward Thomists, he was sympathetic to Thomas Aquinas. De Lubac claimed that, by developing a notion of *natura pura*, Thomists such as Thomas de Vio Cajetan corrupted Thomas's understanding of nature and grace and opened the way to the even greater errors that arose with the reactions to Baianism and Jansenism. In particular, he said, Thomists incorrectly attribute to Thomas the positions that (1) there is a purely natural happiness proportionate to human nature;³ (2) the natural desire to see God is elicited and merely conditional;⁴ and (3) human nature has a kind of passive potency to be raised to the supernatural level, which is an "obediential potency."⁵ According to de Lubac, humans have a natural desire for the supernatural vision of God, which is the only possible perfect kind of human happiness. However, this vision is still gratuitous, especially since God freely provides the means for attainment of this desired happiness, which is grace. De Lubac's identification of this view with that of Thomas, if not of Thomists, led him to some unusual readings of Thomas's texts. For instance, Thomists attribute to Thomas the belief that the natural love of God, in one sense of "natural," is an elective love. This love is distinguished from charity by its object, since this natural love of God has as its object God as the source of natural goods, and charity has as its object God as the source of supernatural goods.⁶ De Lubac thought that any elective love of God is charity, and that the love of God can be natural only in the sense of "natural" that is the same as "non-rational." In addition, Thomas held that the angels' sin must have consisted in the rejection of God's offer of supernatural beatitude. Thomists think that this view is based on the fact that the angels could not have rejected that natural happiness which they possessed as a result of their knowledge and love at their creation. De Lubac rejected this assumption.⁷

At the time of its publication, de Lubac's *Surnaturel* received many criticisms for its interpretation of Thomas and the Thomistic tradition. By 1950, Thomas Deman thought that his review of *Surnaturel* needed justi-

³ Ibid., 459–65, 293–94.

⁴ Ibid., 431–38, 467–71, 475–80.

⁵ Ibid., 137–38.

⁶ Ibid., 253–55.

⁷ Ibid., 256–59.

fication, since the book had been already reviewed so many times, and the criticism had provoked further articles by de Lubac as well as further controversies.⁸ Most of the scholarly criticism had settled into certain standard and predictable lines. Thomists argued that de Lubac misinterpreted Thomas on at least five points. First, according to Thomas, natural happiness is proportionate to human nature, whereas supernatural happiness exceeds it.⁹ Thomas himself states that grace is necessary not only for the means to attain supernatural happiness, but even to be ordered to it. Thomas's positions on the infused virtues and the souls of unbaptized infants entail this distinction between the two kinds of happiness. The distinction between infused and acquired virtue corresponds to the distinction between supernatural happiness and that natural happiness which is proportionate to human nature.¹⁰ Furthermore, Thomas's view that unbaptized children after death enjoy a happiness which is proportionate to their nature entails that there is such a purely natural happiness. Second, Thomas holds that we are not naturally ordered to the beatific vision, and we cannot know about it through natural reason. Consequently we cannot desire it in a pre-elective and absolute way. Although Deman is, in my view, unfairly critical of the traditional Thomistic interpretation of Thomas's relevant texts, he notes that de Lubac's interpretation is far more seriously erroneous.¹¹ Third, according to Thomas, even though human nature is not naturally ordered to the supernatural end, it has an ability to be raised to such an ordering.¹² The description of this ability as an "obediential potency" was not invented by Cajetan but has medieval roots.¹³ Fourth, Thomas distinguishes explicitly between two kinds of natural love: one is non-elective and the other is elective.¹⁴ De Lubac's identification of all elective love with charity is an eccentric view that was inherited from Jean Mouroux.¹⁵ Fifth, de Lubac's view that

⁸ Thomas Deman, review of *Surnaturel: Études Historiques*, by Henri de Lubac, *Bulletin Thomiste* 7 (1943–46, pub. 1950), 422–46.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 434–41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 432–33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 441–44.

¹² *Ibid.*, 427–30.

¹³ L.-B. Gillon, "Aux origines de la 'Puissance Obedientielle'," *Revue Thomiste* 47 (1947): 304–10.

¹⁴ M.-R. Gagnebet, "L'amour naturel de Dieu chez saint Thomas et ses contemporains," *Revue Thomiste* 48 (1948): 394–446; 49 (1949): 31–102. See my *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 70–86.

¹⁵ Gregory Stevens, "The Disinterested Love of God According to St. Thomas and Some of His Modern Interpreters," *The Thomist* 16 (1953): 326–28.

the angels would be able to reject purely natural happiness commits him to a view that contradicts that of Thomas, which is that someone cannot directly will against happiness.¹⁶

De Lubac modified some of his particular claims in works such as his *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, but he never retracted the central claims of *Surnaturel*.¹⁷ Thomists have since repeated many of the same criticisms. For instance, J.-H. Nicolas's masterly *Les profondeurs de la grace* (1969) contains a chapter that more or less develops and reiterates the previous criticisms of de Lubac and his followers.¹⁸ The debate subsided during the 1970s and 1980s, on account of a shift in theological fashion. In 2001, a whole issue of the *Revue Thomiste* (101) was devoted to the controversy over *Surnaturel*. This issue has been more recently translated into English.¹⁹ During the last ten years, Anglophone criticisms of de Lubac have multiplied. For instance, Ralph McInerny, in his *Preambula Fidei* (2006), includes de Lubac among those twentieth-century thinkers who helped to obscure the Thomistic understanding of nature and natural theology.²⁰ McInerny recounts in particular Florent Gaboriau's defense of Thomas de Vio Cajetan in a Francophone context.²¹ Even more recently (2010), Sapientia Press published a revision of Lawrence Feingold's 2001 dissertation, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters*.²² This dissertation had already attracted much attention, since it seemed to thoroughly vindicate at length and in a more scholarly fashion the Thomistic tradition's reading of Thomas on the impossibility of a natural absolute and pre-elective desire for the supernatural vision of God.

Despite these criticisms, in many theological circles, and especially among Catholic theologians associated with "Communio," it is still assumed that opposition to de Lubac is based on the reactionary tempera-

¹⁶ Gagnebet, "L'amour naturel," 72–86. Deman, review of *Surnaturel*, 422, mentions an additional debate over this issue.

¹⁷ Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967). The original appeared as *Le mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1965).

¹⁸ J.-H. Nicolas, *Les profondeurs de la grace* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969), 331–97.

¹⁹ Serge-Thomas Bonino, ed., *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, trans. Robert Williams (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009).

²⁰ Ralph McInerny, *Preambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 69–90.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63–82.

²² Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010).

ments of his critics rather than on argument.²³ Moreover, the influence of de Lubac's understanding of the supernatural may even be growing in postmodern Protestant circles. For instance, the most prominent member of the theological movement "Radical Orthodoxy," John Milbank, has used de Lubac's ideas to argue for a post-secular "integralism," in which the distinction between nature and grace seems to be set aside.²⁴

Although the two books of Long and Mulcahy are part of this continuing and sometimes repetitious discussion, each makes a distinctive and important contribution to the literature. Mulcahy puts de Lubac's *Surnaturel* in its historical context. Moreover, he traces the development and presence of its themes in de Lubac's other works, as well as its reception by Radical Orthodoxy. Mulcahy's approach is theological but also historical. He attentively evaluates the arguments and historical claims made by the different parties. Long's book is a more purely philosophical and theological defense of the notion of "*natura pura*," and it is an attempt to show how a variety of contemporary theological and philosophical errors have a connection with, if not roots in, a lack of appreciation for nature, especially as it is understood in traditional Thomistic natural philosophy and even metaphysics.

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Mulcahy's book is arranged more or less around the chronological development of thought concerning "*natura pura*." Chapter One provides the theoretical background. Chapters Two through Four discuss the roots of the notion in Scripture and in the Fathers, and its flowering in the works of Thomas Aquinas. Chapters Five through Seven consider in detail, respectively, de Lubac's interpretation of reactions to Baianism and Jansenism, twentieth-century disputes over *natura pura*, and the more recent effect of de Lubac on Radical Orthodoxy. Chapter Eight is a summary and resolution.

Chapter One begins with Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange's description of a state of pure nature as indicating precisely "nature with its intrinsic constituent principles and such as follow from them or are due to them" (1–3). Discussions of the state of pure nature became increasingly sophisticated in the sixteenth century. Mulcahy carefully and explicitly follows Martin Stone's description of the idea's roots in debates over God's absolute and ordained powers, the theology of Limbo, and the description of a natural end of human beings. Whether or not Stone's

²³ See Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20–21.

²⁴ For an explicit appreciation of de Lubac, see John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

description is correct, it appears that Stone straightforwardly plagiarized this article from several sources.²⁵ Mulcahy adds a few other possible historical influences. Then he outlines de Lubac's characterization of the state of pure nature as fictional, foreign to the Christian tradition, dualistic, and responsible for contemporary secularism and atheism. According to de Lubac, Catholic theology could be renewed by passing over the late scholastics, and especially their use of *natura pura*, and returning directly to the Fathers. Milbank develops de Lubac's position by making an argument for an epistemological and even political approach in which the natural and supernatural orders are not so sharply distinguished. At first it seems counterintuitive that Milbank uses the word "integralism" for this outlook. His use of the word becomes clear when Mulcahy notes how Milbank distinguishes between "integrism" and "integralism." In French, "*intégrisme*" and "*intégralisme*" both indicate a political and religious reactionary outlook that is not clearly present in Anglophone culture. For Milbank, "integrism" denotes something of this reactionary outlook, whereas "integralism" denotes a rejection of secularism and its roots in earlier theological attempts to separate nature and grace. Although the language comes from Milbank, the ideological source is de Lubac.

Chapter Two outlines the remote background to the notion of *natura pura*. Mulcahy gives an especially strong account of how the notion is in some sense present in Hellenistic philosophy and in Sacred Scripture. Philosophical thought requires that there be regularity and definitions, which presuppose some notion of nature. Similarly, both the Septuagint and the New Testament frequently use the Greek word for nature, *physis*. More importantly, the Jewish and Christian outlook presupposes a distinction between creation and election, which is a gratuitous addition to nature. Mulcahy argues that this Jewish notion of nature is also present in the Fathers, and especially in Augustine's distinction between the two cities. The author highlights this last distinction, probably because of Milbank's failure to separate the secular from the religious. Nevertheless, Mulcahy does not convincingly show that Augustine's distinction between the two cities is the same as a distinction between *natura pura* and grace. More importantly, the discussion skips the clarification of this latter

²⁵ M. W. F. Stone, "Michael Baius (1513–89) and the Debate on 'Pure Nature': Grace and Moral Agency in Sixteenth-Century Scholasticism," in *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity* (Synthese Historical Library 57), ed. Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 51–90. M. V. Dougherty, P. Harsting, and R. L. Friedman, "40 Cases of Plagiarism," *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 51 (2009): 375–76. According to this 2009 article, Stone has plagiarized from—ironically—de Lubac and Feingold, among others.

distinction by jumping from Augustine to Thomas. Mulcahy is only the latest to neglect the development of the notion of the supernatural during this intermediate period. It is unclear to me why the debate over de Lubac's work has passed over Artur Michael Landgraf's important 1929 article on the development of the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, which was largely reprinted in his 1952 *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik*.²⁶ It seems to me that some of de Lubac's historical claims are incompatible with Landgraf's findings.

Chapters Three and Four argue that Thomas Aquinas himself uses a notion of *natura pura*. Each of these two chapters discusses three topics in which Thomas seems to mention or presuppose *natura pura*. Chapter Five analyzes Thomas's texts on (1) natural mortality; (2) the distinction between the infused and acquired virtues, and (3) the Limbo of unbaptized departed infants. Chapter Six takes up (4) the identification of the political with the natural in the *De regno*; (5) the understanding of *natura pura* in Thomas's doctrine of natural law, and (6) the distinction between philosophy and theology. Although there is not much distinctive in Mulcahy's discussion of topics 2, 3, and perhaps 6, he gives an excellent summary of the familiar arguments. His overall case seems solid. Topic 5 covers two familiar issues. The first is about the way in which natural law presupposes a notion of nature apart from grace. The second concerns a particular command of the natural law, namely, to love God more than oneself. Mulcahy's overall treatment here is convincing, although it seems to me that it should be tied more closely to the distinction between the natural and supernatural ends, which he discusses in the context of topic 2, concerning the distinction between kinds of virtue.

Mulcahy introduces somewhat original considerations in his discussions of topic 1, which is on death, and topic 5, which is on politics. The first consideration is unexpected. In the context of the desire for God, discussion of the natural desire to avoid death is usually invoked to explain the meaning of "conditional desire." In particular, this desire to avoid death is an instance of a natural desire that will not be fulfilled.²⁷ Moreover, Thomists often compare Thomas's arguments for identifying

²⁶ Artur Michael Landgraf, "Studien zur Erkenntnis des Übernatürlichen in der Frühscholastik," *Scholastik* 4 (1929): 1–37, 189–220, 352–89; repr. and rev. in idem, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik*, vol. 1.1 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1952), 141–201.

²⁷ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 261–69; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione per ecclesiam catholicam proposita* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1926), 207–8; Dominic Banez, *In I*, q. 12, art. 1. dub. 2, in *Scholastica Commentaria in Primam Partem Summae Theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, ed. Luis Urbano (Madrid: F.E.D.A., 1934; repr. Dubuque, IA, 1964), 249–50.

perfect happiness with the beatific vision with his arguments for the resurrection.²⁸ Arguments for the suitability of the body's resurrection, which are based on the soul's inclination for the body, do not demonstrate the resurrection. Similarly, arguments for the suitability of the beatific vision are not demonstrations that the beatific vision is the ultimate end. Mulcahy takes a different and unusual tack. According to Mulcahy, mortality is relevant because of Thomas's belief that bodily death is natural for humans with respect to the body's nature, but contrary to nature with respect to the connection with the soul. This point is connected to the one about the desire to live forever, but it is, I think, a different kind of argument. Before the Fall, immortality would have been gratuitous. The relevant texts of Thomas do seem to presuppose ultimately an understanding of nature that is incompatible with de Lubac's interpretation. Mulcahy, though, should have stressed more strongly the difference between the gift of immortality and the properly supernatural sanctifying grace possessed before the Fall.

In his discussion of topic 5, Mulcahy argues that in the *De regno* Thomas distinguishes sharply between the supernatural end and that natural end with which the political ruler is concerned. If Mulcahy's interpretation of *De regno* is correct, it conflicts not only with de Lubac's view but even more strongly with Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac for political thought. However, it seems to me that Mulcahy ignores some difficult features of the text, and especially the conflicting scholarship about the relationship between the *De regno* and Thomas's other discussions on the connection between political life and the supernatural end.²⁹ Nevertheless, he could still make his central point about the importance of a natural end, but he might need to take into account the effects of original sin and the political implications of a higher supernatural end.

In general, Mulcahy summarizes well the important points in the debate over de Lubac's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. But there are several minor infelicities. For instance, Mulcahy does not clearly delineate between *natura pura* (which excludes grace), integral nature (which excludes injury to the intellect and will by original sin), and corrupt

²⁸ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 269–76; Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione*, 210–11; Banez, *In I*, q. 12, art. 1, dub. 1 et 2 (ed. Urbano, 248, 250).

²⁹ I. T. Eschmann, "Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Two Powers," *Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1958): 177–205; Leonard E. Boyle, "The De Regno and the Two Powers," in *Essays in Honour of Anton Charles Pegis*, ed. J. Reginald O'Donnell (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 237–47; L. P. Fitzgerald, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Two Powers," *Angelicum* 56 (1979): 515–56; Benjamin Smith, "Political Theology and Thomas Aquinas," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 84 (2010): 99–112.

nature (which includes such injury) (69–70, 93–94). The distinction between integral and corrupt nature is not primarily about grace but about natural abilities. For instance, someone with integral nature will reason well and be able to love God more than himself out of his natural powers. In contrast, someone with a corrupted nature will have concupiscence, a weakened reason, and be unable, without healing grace, to love God more than himself naturally. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve had integral natures, although, at least according to Thomas, they were never in a state of pure nature. A less important example is his use of the word “supernatural” to describe the view that true knowledge requires “divine illumination” (107). The position that a special divine illumination is necessary for scientific knowledge does not entail that this illumination is gratuitous.

Chapter Five discusses de Lubac’s view of how the notion of the supernatural developed in the modern period. This chapter is especially helpful, as most criticisms of de Lubac do not consider thoroughly his description of Baianism and Jansenism. Although Feingold discusses much of the same material, sometimes in a more theologically sophisticated way, Mulcahy provides a more complete historical context.³⁰ Everyone seems to agree that Baius and the Jansenists rejected the notion of *natura pura*, and that these movements were at least partially condemned by the Holy See. De Lubac defended the unusual view that the condemnation of Baianism and Jansenism did not include a condemnation of their denial of *natura pura*. In general, de Lubac was sympathetic not only to this denial, but also to the Jansenist rejection of scholasticism and of its attempt to return to the Fathers, especially Augustine. He thought that mainstream Catholic theology reacted too strongly against Baius and the Jansenists, and it consequently developed a notion of *natura pura* that would ultimately lead to the demise of Catholicism in France and the rise of secularism. Mulcahy traces the development of these opinions throughout de Lubac’s work.

De Lubac’s claims about the invention of *natura pura* in the modern period are adequately refuted by Mulcahy’s earlier discussion of Thomas Aquinas, although Mulcahy could have strengthened his case by mentioning medieval traditions other than Thomism. In this chapter, Mulcahy discusses in more detail the claim that the doctrine of *natura pura* leads to secularism. He mentions many historians who attribute it to other factors. Although Mulcahy’s discussion of these historians is brief, it may be deservedly so, since it is *prima facie* implausible that the history of France and even the world was so influenced by the theological understanding of

³⁰ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 295–315.

natura pura. Mulcahy notes that de Lubac passes over the Jesuit rejection of the Thomist and Augustinian tradition on grace. The Jesuit tradition was most distinctively expressed by Luis de Molina and his followers (131–35). The different Dominican and Jesuit reactions to Jansenism were conditioned by their previous disagreement. It is paradoxical that, according to the Dominican Mulcahy, the Jesuit de Lubac represents the negative aspects of both Jesuit scholasticism and the Jansenists, who were the enemies of the Jesuits. Mulcahy thinks plausibly that the Thomists were much better theologians than either the Jansenists or the Jesuits, and that de Lubac passes over this important historical and theological point. This chapter is most helpful for its reference to the diverse texts in which de Lubac attributes errors of modernity to the scholastic understanding of *natura pura*.

In Chapter Six, Mulcahy covers the immediate Catholic reception of de Lubac's work. He gives a sympathetic account of de Lubac's formation, according to which de Lubac's rejection of traditional scholasticism was in part a rejection of a conservative Suarezian philosophy. Mulcahy's attempt to connect de Lubac's rejection of *natura pura* with Suarez's account of individuation is unconvincing. The chapter's high point is a delightful account of the reception of the encyclical *Humani Generis*. Whereas many thought that it condemned the views expressed in *Surnaturel*, de Lubac and his allies eventually described it as an endorsement. He concludes this chapter with an appreciation of de Lubac's life and work. He praises de Lubac's emphasis on communal life and the Fathers, and applauds his rejection of anti-Semitism and Marxism. According to Mulcahy, de Lubac raised interesting questions about the supernatural, even if he gave unconvincing answers. Unfortunately, Mulcahy does not discuss in detail most of de Lubac's chief critics and de Lubac's responses.

Chapter Seven is about John Milbank's use of de Lubac for developing his own political theology. Mulcahy gives a basic outline of Milbank's approach and notes its socialist and anti-Thatcherite origins. He attempts to tie these origins to the thrust of Milbank's position, which is that reason and even politics must not be separated from revelation. Milbank finds support for his view in de Lubac's work on the supernatural. Mulcahy convincingly notes that Milbank is even more in conflict with Thomas and Augustine than de Lubac is. As an additional point, Mulcahy notes that Milbank rejects Christian notions of the sacraments and sexual ethics (186). This comment may be a rare instance of *ad hominem* argumentation. The relevance of these comments was at least unclear to me. They are perhaps helpful for those readers who are unfamiliar with "Radical Orthodoxy." Chapter Eight summarizes the argument and repeats the conclusion that

the concept of *natura pura* is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and is important for theology.

Although Mulcahy's overall argument is convincing, the book has some scholarly and stylistic weaknesses. At times there is too much of an effort to make de Lubac's rejection of scholasticism sympathetic. For instance, Mulcahy says without providing much support that scholasticism was "too often allied to politically reactionary and anti-Semitic tendencies" (208). Although he correctly diagnoses de Lubac's "obvious impatience with criticism" (213), he does not in detail discuss de Lubac's failure to engage with his early critics, or his dismissive and hostile reaction to them. Mulcahy's tone concerning de Lubac is generally uneven. For instance, in the Index under "Lubac, Henri de," one entry is "flawed scholarship and intellectual dishonesty" (242). But this entry refers to a page (148) that mentions flaws but only delicately suggests dishonesty. However, the book is a balanced and informative account of the debate over *natura pura* in the twentieth century. It should be read by anyone who is interested in this topic. In particular, Chapters Three and Four should be recommended, alongside Feingold's *Natural Desire*, to anyone who wants to understand how de Lubac's position conflicts with that of Thomas Aquinas.

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Steven Long's book is an attempt to address the various errors that result from the neglect or ignorance of a Thomistic account of nature. Each chapter focuses on a different target, but all the targets more or less agree in their denial of *natura pura*. Chapter One focuses on Henri de Lubac's understanding of obediential potency and the natural desire to see God. Chapter Two considers the influence of de Lubac on the early Hans Urs von Balthasar. Chapter Three is on analytic philosophy. Chapter Four discusses the importance of *natura pura* for political philosophy. Throughout, Long emphasizes that grace builds upon a natural order, and consequently that this natural order is important for theology and faith.

The purpose of Long's first chapter is to discuss the natural desire for God, obediential potency, and the connected notion of natural order. Long repeats the standard arguments against de Lubac's view that there is a natural desire for the supernatural vision of God, even though the means to that end are gratuitous. He may at times overstate his case. For instance, he writes, ". . . to desire God as cause of the world is strictly speaking not truly to desire *God*, who is infinitely more than cause of the world" (20). This statement is confusing. It seems that Long is focusing on Cajetan's distinction between the way in which God (a) is desired as the first cause by those who are unaware of revelation, and (b) is desired

according to his substance in himself (*secundum substantiam suam in se*).³¹ Long's position is unclear, because, unlike Cajetan, Long asserts that he is concerned with an elicited, conditional, and inefficacious desire. Thomists after Cajetan hold that such a desire is conditional because we cannot know by natural reason that the beatific vision is even possible.³² We can reason to God's existence from his effects, and we can then only conditionally desire to know the First Cause's essence. Cajetan does not consider such a conditional desire to know God's essence, but merely asserts that the desire to know God as the source of natural goods is not a desire to know God in himself. There are many problems with Cajetan's interpretation, not the least being that we could know that God is but be unable to elicit even a conditional desire to know what he is.³³ What would stand in the way of such a desire?

Additionally, Long's description of natural desire uneasily combines aspects of Cajetan's eccentric theory with the mainstream Thomistic view. Long writes, "Where revelation makes the real possibility of beatific vision known, this renders the otherwise conditional desire to know God to become unconditional" (21). The whole reason why the desire must first be conditional is because otherwise there would be a natural desire for an end unattainable through natural powers, namely the vision of God's essence. Apart from revelation, we could think about such knowledge, but we could not know even if it is possible. But Long, on the previous page, argues that if there is no revelation, the desire to know God is not really a desire to know God's essence. If Long agrees with Cajetan's apparent position that the desire to know God without revelation is never a desire to know God's essence, then, like Cajetan, he has no need to say that such a desire is merely conditional. Why would there be only a conditional desire for what can in fact be obtained?

The distinction between God as the author of nature and God as known by revelation does not seem to be relevant to the question of whether there is a natural desire for God. The desire to know God in his essence as the cause of natural effects is most probably formally distinct from the desire to know God in his essence as the source of supernatural gifts, and even the Trinity.³⁴ But both are a true desire for God.

In his discussion of obediential potency, Long mentions the connection between de Lubac's interpretation and that of the Franciscan school, which

³¹ Thomas de Vio Cajetan, *In ST*, I, q. 12, art. 1, nn. 9–10, in *Thomas Aquinas, Opera Omnia* (Rome: Leonine, 1888–), vol. 4, 116).

³² Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione*, 207–10; Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 261–76.

³³ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 167–75.

³⁴ Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione*, 209–10.

was a “susceptibility to miracle” (22). It seems to me that not only de Lubac but also his critics generally neglect the importance of Thomas’s distinctive understanding of the human ability to be elevated to the vision of God’s essence, and its connection to the Thomistic distinction between essence and existence.³⁵ Long is especially helpful in his description of the natural order to a natural end, which is subordinated to a distinct supernatural end. Obediential potency is the ability to be raised and ordered to this supernatural end by grace. He argues that de Lubac rejected obediential potency because he did not understand the way in which grace raises and perfects an already existing natural order. At this point, Long departs from the earlier criticisms of de Lubac by connecting the rejection of obediential potency with the mistakes of Kant, Hume, Comte, Hegel, and even the Jesuit Luis de Molina (37–41). The last is especially interesting, since Mulcahy also mentions the controversy over Molinism. Long’s argument is that Molina’s understanding of human freedom leads ultimately to the view that human action is outside of Providence, and consequently to the further view that humans do not have a natural proportionate end. It seems to me that Long’s historical and philosophical arguments need to be distinguished from each other and developed.

In Chapter Two, Long addresses the understanding of *natura pura* in von Balthasar’s *The Theology of Karl Barth*.³⁶ Von Balthasar seems to be influenced by de Lubac when he writes that Thomas Aquinas did not have the conceptual resources to distinguish between *natura pura* and grace. Long points out two meanings of *natura pura* (81). First, it can be an original state without grace. Second, it can be nature considered in precision from grace. Thomists are primarily concerned with the second, but von Balthasar seems aware of only the first. Since von Balthasar agrees with Thomists that there was no original state of pure nature, his identification of a natural end with an actual state of pure nature leads him to deny that there is a natural end. Long points out that in rejecting *natura pura*, de Lubac and von Balthasar deprive theology of considerations involving natural reason and a natural end, and they make apologetics impossible.

Chapter Three is concerned with the importance of pure nature for philosophy. In particular, Long criticizes analytic philosophy for being an

³⁵ Norbert del Prado, *De veritate fundamentalis philosophiae Christianae* (Freiburg: Consociatio Sancti Pauli, 1911), 590–626. For a different contrast with Suarez’s understanding of an active obediential potency, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. Patrick Cummins (St. Louis: Herder, 1950), 55–56, 308–9.

³⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Drury (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

empty method without content. Long seems to think that analytic philosophy is incompatible with Thomistic natural philosophy. His target is not those who prefer analytic to continental philosophy, but those who would substitute formation in analytic philosophy for formation in Thomistic physics and metaphysics. If someone agrees with Long that the Thomistic understanding of nature is correct, then it would seem almost obvious that such formation is indispensable. Why does Long make this point? He makes several criticisms of analytic thought. He is clearly correct that almost none of those whom we might describe as analytic philosophers understand Thomistic natural philosophy or would be likely to accept its main theses. He seems to make the stronger point that there is something incompatible with all forms of analytic philosophy and Thomistic natural philosophy, or perhaps at least with formation in them. A problem for Long is that it is difficult to say what analytic philosophy is. His description of analytic philosophy sometimes seems outdated, and the choice of issues idiosyncratic. It is hard to account for a hundred years of Anglophone philosophy in one chapter. Moreover, many trained in some of analytic philosophy's many varieties would agree with Long's assertion that "there is no analytic philosophy" (121). Why is he arguing against it then, rather than against one of its more prominent varieties?

Long seems to think that Thomists have little or nothing to learn from the more prominent contemporary philosophers. According to Long, for Thomists "the concern for dialogue with analytic logicism, or with analytic thinkers generally, is an apologetic and secondary aim." (156) He tends to think of the relationship between different academic traditions as one of criticism and defense. But interaction often increases understanding and precision. For instance, later Thomists became more precise as they interacted with Scotists, Nominalists, and even Suarezians. I would not argue that any analytic philosophers are on the level of Scotus or Suarez, or that interaction with them would be more fruitful. But Long seems to neglect the development that might occur if enough Thomists, already formed in natural philosophy and theology, took into account twentieth-century philosophy. He ends the chapter with a biographical discussion of I. M. Bochenski (1902–95), who devoted himself to logic and abandoned Thomism. It seems to me correct that Bochenski should not have abandoned Thomism, but it is not obvious that his story has contemporary relevance. I would love to read Long's comments on philosophers such as Peter Geach and John Haldane, since they claim to be both Thomists and analytic philosophers.

In Chapter Four, Long considers the relevance of *natura pura* to politics. In particular, he considers the work of Jacques Maritain, Jean Porter, and

David Schindler. Maritain arguably neglected the Thomistic understanding of prudence and perhaps even of natural law in favor of a merely practical consensus on a list of “rights.” Persons with different ideologies, religions, and outlooks would be able to agree at least on a basic list. Long sides more with Jean Porter, who thinks that an agreement on rights is insufficient, and that there must be an underlying agreement about the natural law. Nevertheless, he thinks that Porter, like Maritain, unnecessarily limits the number and kinds of truths that need to be recognized in order to support rights and a just social order. Schindler is equally skeptical about the success of natural law reasoning, but for a different reason. Like Milbank, he seems to deny that natural reason can function independently of theology in the speculative or the practical order. All three are skeptical about the ability of natural law reasoning to obtain any rich practical consensus. Long argues that a theoretical account of human nature and natural law can provide a broad basis for human law and rights. Nevertheless, Long recognizes that the effects of original and actual sin impede the natural order. Some explicit recourse to revelation is necessary. If Mulcahy had recognized these points, he might have given a more sympathetic reading of Milbank’s political philosophy. Chapter Five summarizes and ties together the book’s main conclusions. In an Appendix, Long connects his emphases on the *preambula fidei* and the rationality of the natural law with Pope Benedict XVI’s work, including the controversial Regensburg Lecture.

The variety of Long’s important arguments, distinctions, and observations is stimulating. Often the points need more development and clarity. To some extent the book lacks unity. In particular, the chapter on analytic philosophy seems out of place. I should perhaps mention that Long’s style can be awkward. For instance, he concludes a long sentence about de Lubac’s views with “. . . and these seminal errors should be corrected rather than for apologetic reasons permitted to define the essential contours of theology; and that the price of escaping their force without disavowing them is a strategic disequilibrium of the Christian synthesis” (4). Long states that he will conclude the first chapter “by observing the protean implications of these issues for the effort to understand, and to transcend, an invertebrate postmodern theological pluralism that itself presupposes the loss of natural order as a theonomic principle” (11) The style might deter some readers from considering Long’s important contributions.

Both books are welcome additions to the literature on the controversy over *natura pura*, and consequently over the relationship between nature and grace. Mulcahy provides a historical and theological account of the debates origins, and more clearly explains the weakness of de Lubac’s work. Long explains why *natura pura* is important today.

