New Blackfriars

DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12160

That Restless Immobility: Thomas Aquinas' Anthropological Paradox

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For Thomas Aquinas, human beings must naturally move toward an end we can never reach by nature. We can call this "Aquinas' anthropological paradox." Human nature itself gives rise to the paradox, for the natural end of human life is one for which human nature is ill-suited. For a teleological thinker like Thomas, everything in creation has an end or goal inherent to its nature and toward which its movements are oriented. Even a movement as simple as a stone falling to the ground is oriented toward some end. The stone will continue to fall until it comes to rest happily on the earth. This is because stones are made of the same stuff as earth. And this material stuff of which a stone is composed bestows upon the stone its *form*, which in turn determines the end of the stone's movements and becomes the weight that pulls it toward that end. But in ancient physics weight does not always pull things downward; fire burns upward, until it finds its home among the stars. So when in the *Confessions* Augustine says "my love is my weight,"[1] he means both that inordinate love for earthly things can drag us down like the heavy earthly elements, and that charity is like a fire that draws us upward until our restless hearts find rest in God. Whether we move toward our proper end or away from it, we do so by the weight of our own love.[2] Love's weight differentiates human motion from that of all other creatures. Humans do not always tend naturally toward our proper end, the way a stone falls toward the earth and fire burns upward toward the heavens. Our disordered love for other goods above our proper end grips us in that restless immobility, by which we cannot move toward what we desire. This, for Thomas, is the human predicament.

So what is this end of human life that we cannot seem to get to? For Thomas, a thing's end is that which fulfills and perfects the nature of that thing—or to use his language, what makes the thing

[1] Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1942), 13:9.

[2] Phillip Cary, "The Weight of Love: Augustinian Metaphors of Movement in Dante's Souls," in *Augustine and Literature* (Augustine in Conversation: Tradition and Innovation), ed. J. Doody, R.P. Kennedy and K. Paffenroth (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 15-36.

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happy.[3] The happiness of a caterpillar for instance, what fulfills and gives meaning to its existence, is to become a butterfly; of an acorn, to become an oak tree. Of course, what makes something happy will depend on what kind of thing it is, what makes it distinct from other kinds of things. What makes a happy dog will not necessarily make a happy human being. For Thomas, what distinguishes human beings from other kinds of things is that we are *rational* creatures. So the end toward which we are oriented is in contemplation and understanding.[4] That is what fulfills and perfects our distinctive human rationality—it makes us happy.

The Rational Problem

But this view presents a couple of problems for rational creatures. One has to do with our being *rational*, another with our being *creatures*. The first problem is that, as rational beings, we can think about what we want. Unlike sub-rational beings, who move toward their proper end instinctually,[5] human beings deliberate about the movements we make. And if we can think about what we want and what we do, we can think about it *badly*. That is, everyone agrees, Thomas insists, on what he calls "the aspect of last end . . . all desire the fulfilment of their perfection." But not everyone agrees on "the thing in which this aspect is realized."[6] Everyone wants to be happy, but no one is quite sure how. "Some desire riches," Thomas says, "some, pleasure; others, something else."[7] All of these can lead to a certain measure of happiness. But all can be used badly and lead away from ultimate happiness as well. The rational creature's path to ultimate happiness is thus paved by a succession of choices about and movements toward particular goods. And none of these acts is for Thomas morally neutral—every action moves one closer to happiness or farther from it.[8] What we need, then, on some most basic level, is to know what to do.

Give What Thou Dost Command: Aquinas on Law

Teaching people what to do, Thomas says, is the function of the law: that one may "discern what is good and what is evil,"[9] But discerning is not the same as doing. The law may, "by fear of punishment,"

[3] See *ST* I-II.5. All quotations of the Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* in this essay are translated by The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948).

[4] *ST* I-II.3.3.

[5] *ST* I-II.1.8.

[6] *ST* I-II.1.7.

[7] *ST* I-II.1.7.

[8] *ST* I-II.18.9.

[9] *ST* I-II.91.2.

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restrain evil,[10] and hopefully it will lead ultimately to habituation, "since law is given for the purpose of directing human acts; as far as human acts conduce to virtue, so far does law make men good."[11]

Thomas' theory of law is highly complex, with a four-tiered taxonomy: eternal, natural, human and Divine, the last having two subcategories: Old and New. The first category, *eternal law*, is the Rule—the Order, the Wisdom, the *Logos*—by which everything in creation is oriented toward and guided to its proper end.[12] It is the "Divine Wisdom" by which God orders the world.[13] And because God *is* everything God *has*, including God's Wisdom, "His law is not distinct from Himself [*sic*]."[14] So Thomas' discussion of Law begins with God, who orients all creation back to Godself as its ultimate end. Other would-be laws count as law only to the extent that they reflect and participate in God's eternal law.[15] Thus, the eternal law is the source of all other types of law.

Natural law names "the rational creature's participation of the eternal law."[16] Only rational creatures can be said to obey the natural law, since it delineates the distinctively rational form of participation in God's providential wisdom.[17] Non-rational creatures "partake in their own way of the Eternal Reason,"[18] but their way of partaking is to be passively acted upon by the eternal law, receiving it as their inner principle of motion. Since they "do not partake thereof in a rational manner,... there is no participation of the eternal law in them, except by way of similitude."[19] Thus a non-rational creature's movement toward its end does not constitute obedience to the natural law. The rational creature, by contrast, "has a natural inclination to its proper act and end."[20] We can will the good for ourselves, and formulate precepts concerning our movement toward it.[21] Through this power over our will and our actions, rational creatures reflect

[10] *ST* I-II.92.1.

[11] *ST* I-II.92.1.

[12] Rebecca DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey and Christina Van Dyke, *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), p. 153.

[13] *ST* I-II.93.1.

[14] *ST* I-II.91.1.

[15] *ST* I-II 93.3. To the extent that a law deviates from the Eternal Law, Thomas says, "it is called an unjust law, and has the nature, not of law but of violence."

[16] *ST* I-II.91.2.

[17] Jean Porter. "Right Reason and the Love of God: The Parameters of Aquinas' Moral Theology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds., R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 185.

[18] *ST* I-II.91.2.

[19] *ST* I-II.91.2.

[20] *ST* I-II.91.2.

[21] *ST* I-II.94.2.

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and participate in God's providential governance of the cosmos.[22] And this "participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is properly called [natural] law."[23]

So far I have emphasized that natural law is a *rational* participation in God's Eternal Wisdom, but we should also note that it is not a cold, sterile logic. When Thomas says that natural law is "self-evident to us,"[24] he means that it is, as it were, "written on our hearts" (Rom 2:15). By her obedience to the natural law, the rational creature tends toward her ultimate end, even if she does so "without ever having gained explicit knowledge of it."[25] DeYoung et al. put it simply: "when human beings are functioning as they were designed . . . these fundamental laws of human nature simply describe their actions."[26] Unfortunately, due to the corrupting effect of sin, human beings no longer function as we were designed. Natural human inclinations are no longer a reliable guide to our proper end. What we need is a gift that will make the law be and do for human nature what human nature cannot be and do on its own. We will say more about that later, but now we turn to a more familiar use of the term law.

When we talk about laws, we generally think of codes of conduct determined in and for particular human contexts. This is what Thomas calls *human laws*, which he says are "particular determination[s] of certain matters."[27] Nevertheless, human laws are "derived from the law of nature,"[28] and to that extent they participate in Divine Wisdom. But human laws are not simply a written form of the natural law—as if the natural law could be contained in human speech. And to the extent that it "deflects from the law of nature," any human law becomes "no longer a law but a perversion of law."[29]

We are coming now to increasingly particular concepts. While human laws are universal, in the sense that all human cultures employ them in the ordering of society, natural law applies universally to all rational creatures. Both in turn participate in the Eternal Law, God's providential governance of the cosmos. Aquinas' final category, *Divine Law,* is found only in the biblical narrative. Divine Law is divided into two subcategories. The first is the Torah, (what Thomas calls the *Old Law)*, which was "given to the Jewish people."[30] The Old Law solves two problems: Ever since our first parents rebelled

[22] DeYoung et al., *Aquinas's Ethics*, pp. 152-3.
[23] *ST* I-II.91.2.
[24] *ST* I-II 94.2.
[25] DeYoung et al., *Aquinas's Ethics*, p. 154.
[26] *Ibid.*, 155.
[27] *ST* I-II.91.3.
[28] *ST* I-II.95.2.
[29] *ST* I-II.95.2.
[30] *ST* I-II.98.5.

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against God and forfeited the original grace that oriented them toward God as their ultimate end,[31] we, their descendants have been apt to fail in applying the dictates of reason (natural law). So the Old Law helps the people of Israel heed the natural law, that they "might receive a prerogative of holiness, in reverence for Christ Who was to be born of that people."[32] Secondly, the Old Law dictates cultic practices for worshipping the God of Israel, which could not be deduced through reason (applying the dictates of natural law) alone.[33] This puts the Old Law in the strange class of being both a kind of human law—that is, a determination of culturally particular matters—and at the same time, fully a divine gift of revelation.

Even as a divine gift, however, the Old Law is an "imperfect good."[34] Like a medicine that "helps to cure" a patient, but cannot "bring him back to health," the Old Law can help one along the way to her final end, but it is "not sufficient for the realization thereof;"[35] for the Old Law can tell someone what to do, but it cannot give her the power to do it. That is precisely what the *New Law* promises to do.

The New Law helps advance the sojourner on his way toward righteousness, "not only by indicating to him what he should do, but also by helping him to accomplish it."[36] The New Law not only commands its followers to love God, it *creates* the love of God in them. So it recalls Augustine's prayer: "Grant what Thou dost command, and command what Thou wilt."[37] How is this possible? How can a law cause someone to obey it? The answer to that lies in the strange characteristics of Thomas' conception of the New Law.

We might expect Thomas to define the content of the New Law by expositing passages from the Gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount. He does some of this, but in the end he insists that "the New Law had nothing to add [to the Old Law] as regards external action."[38] Instead, for Thomas, the New Law refers fundamentally to a gift of God added to human nature[39] by the "grace of the Holy Ghost," which in one place Thomas says "is *given* through,"[40] and in another, "is *shown forth* by"[41] faith in Jesus Christ, and it "worketh

[31] See *ST* I.95.1.
[32] *ST* I-II.98.5.
[33] See *ST* I-II.98.5; 99.3.
[34] *ST* I-II.98.1.
[35] *ST* I-II.98.1.
[36] *ST* I-II.106.1.
[37] *Conf.* 10:29.
[38] *ST* I-II.108.2.
[39] *ST* I-II.106.1.
[40] *ST* I-II.106.1, *emphasis added.*
[41] *ST* I-II.108.1, *emphasis added.*

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through love."[42] In other words, for Thomas, the New Law is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given through faith, which becomes a source of righteousness in the soul. Servais Pinckaers has it this way: "the principle of the New Law . . . is not the Gospel viewed as a text or as an external word, comparable to a physical body, but rather a life principle, the breath of God which animates this body."[43]

We can imagine what Thomas is getting at here by comparing it with his theory of knowledge. To know something, for Thomas, is to receive its form immaterially in the soul.[44] The same logic is at play in Thomas' theory of law: To know the law is to receive its form in the soul, to have it "written on your heart" (Jer. 31:33), as it were. We have already seen that, for Thomas, God's Eternal Law "is not distinct from Himself [*sic*]."[45] To know and to obey the law, then, is to receive the form of the God in the soul. The New Law is none other than the Holy Spirit present in the adherent shaping her soul in conformity with God's Wisdom.

Entirely from Without: Aquinas on Virtue

Still, it is not enough to know what to do in any given situation, nor even to have the supernatural power to do it. No movement toward to away from happiness begins from a neutral position. Every deliberation one makes follows from her previous ones, like steps down an ever-steepening slope. With each step changing directions becomes increasingly difficult. The more one lies, the harder it is to find her way back to the truth. The more one speaks the truth, the more unpleasant it becomes for her to lie. Thomas calls this life-forming process *virtue*, which he defines as "the perfection of a capacity,"[46] and elsewhere as an "operative habit"[47]—that is, a habit ordered toward action. As DeYoung et al. summarize it, "virtues are the sorts of habits that both perfect human nature and in so doing also properly order their actions to their ultimate end."[48] It may be useful to think of virtue like a skill, which also is a kind of habit. Think of how the movements of a skilled violinist are well formed, not clumsy or leaden. This form is always there, and is expressed

[42] *ST* I-II.108.1.

[43] Servais Pinckaers is, however, quick to add that the body of the Gospel texts is hypostatically united with the breath of the Spirit, for the Spirit could not animate a body of doctrine that was not conformed to the gospel. See his *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans., M. Noble (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985, 1995), p. 176.

[44] Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 252.

[45] *ST* I-II.91.1.

[46] *ST* I-II.55.1-3.

[47] *ST* I-II.55.2.

[48] DeYoung et al., *Aquinas' Ethics*, p. 132.

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in outward perfection when she plays. A skilled violinist experiences the sound and feeling of a violin differently from a novice because of the skill that gives shape to her hand and ear and so forth. Likewise an honest person, because of the form of her soul, experiences lying and cheating differently from a dishonest person: an honest person is not attracted by getting away with a lie.

Of course, Thomas well aware of, and even affirmed, Augustine's teaching that all virtues "are infused together with charity"[49]—the love of God that God alone gives. So Bonnie Kent wonders what to make of Thomas' decision to define virtue as a habit: What good is there in all the studiousness and patient practice that Aristotle believed necessary for developing a remarkable life, when genuine virtue requires nothing less than a divine gift? Is Thomas merely giving Augustine a tactful nod while rejecting his teaching in favor of Aristotle's?[50] To the contrary, Thomas navigates the distance between these two traditions by distinguishing different kinds of virtue. The *natural* or *moral virtues*, Thomas believes, can be developed by way of habituation. But the habits that constitute ultimate human happiness—the love of God, for instance, or faith—one cannot hope to develop on her own. Thomas calls these habits *theological virtues* for two reasons: because "inasmuch as they direct us aright to God," their object is the love of God,[51] and secondly, because they are infused in us by God "entirely from without."[52] Thomas even goes so far as to call them *divine* virtues, "not as though God were virtuous by reason of them, but because of them God makes us virtuous, and directs us to Himself."[53]

So Thomas turns away from a straightforwardly Aristotelian framework, toward a more Augustinian definition of the virtues as that "which God works in us without us."[54] Even to the moral virtues, developed by habituation, Thomas gives an infused counterpart. For any virtue that orients one toward her ultimate good ("good as defined by the Divine Law"), he says, "cannot be caused by human

[49] *ST* I-II.65.3.

[50] Bonnie Kent. "Habits and Virtues (Ia IIae, qq. 49-70)" in *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Moral Traditions Series), ed., S. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), pp. 116-7.

[51] *ST* I-II.62.1; see also I-II.65.3.

[52] *ST* I-II.63.1.

[53] *ST* I-II.62.1. Angela McKay Knoble argues convincingly that the relation between the infused and acquired virtues is incredibly vague and amorphous in Thomas. See her "Relating Aquinas's Infused and Acquired Virtues: Some Problematic Text for a Common Interpretation," *Nova et Vetera* 9/2 (2011): pp. 411-31.

[54] *ST* I-II.63.2; Quoting Augustine Super Ps. 118, Serm. xxvi. Thomas nevertheless maintains that even though God will infuse virtues in us "without any action on our part," he will not do so "without our consent" (*ST* I-II.55.4).

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acts . . . but is produced in us by the Divine operation alone."[55] Moreover, those virtues acquired by habituation "are virtues in a restricted sense, but not simply: for they direct man well in respect of the last end in some particular genus of action, but not in respect of the last end simply," while the infused virtues are said to be "perfect," and "deserve to be called virtues simply: since they direct man well to the ultimate end."[56]

The Creature Problem

I said at the beginning of this essay that the rational creature faces two problems in attaining happiness. The first had to do with our being *rational* beings, our proclivity to misunderstand our end and how to reach it. We need a law to show us what to do; and we came to see also that the law must go further, giving us the power to obey it. We need to develop the skills and habits to make our progress toward happiness smooth and delightful; and we came to see also that, because of the kind of thing that fulfills rational beings, some of these virtues would need to be none other than divine gifts.

But we have a deeper problem still, one that has to do with our being creatures. We are not fit for the happiness we seek. Sure, with a bit of help we can lead a happy life in contemplation of the essence of things. But what fulfills a rational creature is not just the contemplation of the essence of *things*. Contemplation always points beyond itself to something higher, something that can never be attained by a mere mortal. Happiness for the rational creature is the perfection of her rational nature.[57] Because this is the highest part of the rational creature's soul, it must attain to the highest intelligible object. At least this is the Aristotelian line of reasoning that Thomas takes up. He saw in it an opportunity to argue that perfect human happiness consists in nothing less than the vision of God's essence.[58] Aristotle's intellectual quest for understanding as the end of human life opens the possibility of interpreting the traditional Christian promise of beatific vision in light of humanity's natural desire for truth. Thomas learned from Aristotle that the search for truth comes finally to rest in knowledge of the essence of the First Cause. Indeed, to know

[55] *ST* I-II.63.2.

[56] *ST* I-II.65.2. Unlike the moral and cardinal virtues, the theological virtues have only an infused form.

[57] *ST* I.12.1.

[58] Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Ashgate Studies in the History of Philosophical Theology) (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 158. For an excellent discussion of Thomas' penchant for "turning the water of philosophy into the wine of theology," see Mark Jordan, "Theology and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds., E. Stump and N. Kertzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

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the essence of a thing is primarily to know what caused it. Desire remains in the intellect, therefore, until it perfectly comprehends the essence of the First Cause. Only then will it achieve its ultimate happiness, in which there is no more desire, no more searching, only perfect rest and fulfillment.

This move does not come without its price. It puts Thomas in the somewhat awkward position of positing two separate but related ends of human life, "a twofold ultimate perfection of rational or of intellectual nature."[59] The first is an imperfect kind of happiness, proportioned to the rational creature's natural capacities, which the rational creature can therefore "procure of its own natural powers."[60] Thomas frequently identifies this first kind of happiness with the development of the cardinal virtues.[61] But humans are called to a happiness "above" this one: the vision of God's essence, which, of course, "is beyond the nature of every created intellect."[62]

The relation between these two ends functions as a kind of analogy (in Thomas' technical sense of that term).[63] Just as all things participate in God's being, so natural happiness, insofar as it is found in contemplation of the Divine Cause, can be said to participate in beatific vision.[64] Yet we should not conceive of the vision of God

[59] *ST* I-II.62.1.

[60] *ST* I-II.62.1. The question of natural happiness perhaps first came up because medieval theologians worried about the fate of children who died unbaptized. Many of these theologians were unwilling to afford beatific vision to the unbaptized. But they did not have the heart to damn innocent children to the same eternal torment as unrepentant sinners, either. So a hypothetical was proposed: What if Adam had died in his original state of innocence, before he sinned, but also before having been infused with sanctifying grace? Interestingly, unlike many of his contemporaries, Thomas did not think that there was an actual *temporal* gap between the creation of human beings in pure nature and the infusion of supernatural grace—Thomas' Adam did not exist, even for a second, in a state of pure nature. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas" in Surnaturel: *A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, ed., S. T. Bonino; trans., R. Williams and M. Levering (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009), pp. 156-63. What *would* have been Adam's fate had he died in this state of pure nature? And by extension, what would be the fate of those unbaptized children? It was generally accepted that they would be "without fault and without grace," and would therefore experience an afterlife "without punishment and without glory"—a sort of in-between state. Recent popes have questioned the legitimacy of this state of limbo, at least with regard to unbaptized children. See the 2007 document, commissioned by John Paul II, later authorized for publication by Benedict XVI and produced by the International Theological Commission, entitled "The Hope of Salvation for Infants who Die without Being Baptized," (available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en.html).

[61] See, for instance, *ST* I-II.4.7; 5.5.

[62] *ST* I-II.62.1; cf. *ST* I.12.1.

[63] See discussion of the analogical relation between the two ends of man in Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 65; and in te Velde, *Aquinas*, p. 160.

[64] *ST* I-II.3.6.

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simply as a more perfect happiness—it is of a different class all together. This is the way analogy always works in Thomas: a lower thing may bear a certain likeness to some higher thing, but the resemblance never goes in the opposite direction. For instance, God is not a super human, like us but greater to an infinite degree. God's Being is of a different order. God is Being Itself. Likewise, the vision of God is of a different order than natural human happiness. Beatific vision is seeing God as God is in Godself, not knowing God merely as the principle of one's created existence. It is seeing into the essence of God the way one peers into the soul of a friend. For Thomas, to see something in this way is to take the form of the thing seen immaterially in one's mind. To know a friend, for Thomas, is literally to have her in your heart. Or as Davies puts it, "to know what a thing is means having what it takes to be the thing, without actually being the thing itself."[65] Thus, what ultimately makes human beings happy, the vision of God, requires what is proper to God alone; namely, the divine form.[66]

The radical implication is that human beings are excluded from ultimate happiness unless God somehow makes us capable of performing the divine act of seeing God in God's essence. If beatific vision is "is natural to the divine intellect alone; and this is beyond the natural power of any created intellect," as Thomas says it is, then "the created intellect cannot see the essence of God, unless God by His grace unites Himself [*sic*] to the created intellect, as an object made intelligible to it."[67]

Clearly, there is no question whether, for Thomas, one attains to beatific vision by her own capacities. In fact, for Thomas, God's grace is necessary not only for one to attain her ultimate happiness in the vision of God; it is necessary to attain even natural happiness. In question 109 of the *Prima Secundae*, Aquinas explores this question "of the necessity of grace." He begins with a fairly straightforward formula: If we are talking about acts that are natural to human beings, then human capacities will suffice and grace will not be necessary. If we are talking about a supernatural act, like the vision of God, then grace is needed. But things quickly become more complicated.[68] For instance, in the second article of the question Aquinas asks "whether man can wish or do any good without grace." Following the formula, we might expect this task to fit well within the bounds of human capacity. But some well-wishing and well-doing, it seems, is beyond

[65] Davies, *Thought*, p. 252.
[66] te Velde, *Aquinas*, p. 161.
[67] *ST* I.12.4.
[68] See Joseph Wawrykow's discussion of *ST* I-II.109 in his, "Grace," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds., R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 193-4.

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natural human capacities. "In the state of integrity," as human nature was created "in our first parent before sin," Thomas says, "man by his natural endowments could wish and do the good proportionate to his nature." Thus "in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength for one reason, viz. in order to do and wish supernatural good." But sin disrupts the formula: "in the state of corrupt nature," such as we now have "after the sin of our first parent . . . man falls short of what he could do by his nature, so that he is unable to fulfill it by his own natural powers." Thus we need gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength "for two reasons, in the state of corrupt nature, viz. in order to be healed, and furthermore in order to carry out works of supernatural virtue."[69]

So Thomas believes that grace is needed for all kinds of happiness. Because of the corrupting effect of sin, grace is necessary to heal and restore nature in order that it may achieve even natural human happiness. But to attain ultimate happiness in the vision of God is beyond natural human capacities even in their pristine state. This problem is intrinsic to what it means to be human—what we called Aquinas' anthropological paradox—and is thus logically prior to the fall, which only exacerbates it.[70] Thus, for Thomas, grace must not only restore nature insofar as it is marred and corrupted by sin, it must also elevate nature to do what nature cannot do on its own.[71]

Conclusion: From Pagan Striving to Augustinian Grace and Back Again

Thus far, we have observed a shift in Thomas' soteriology from an Aristotelian understanding of human movement toward the good to a more Augustinian one. Now, by way of conclusion, we are in a position to trace this shift in Thomas' doctrines of virtue, law

[69] *ST* 109.2.

[70] For an excellent discussion of the role of Adam in Thomas' thought see Davies, *Thought*, pp. 264-6.

[71] In Christian theology grace preforms both of these functions. Joseph Wawrykow notices that theologians emphasize one function or the other depending on how they construe the problem of human nature. When the problem is seen primarily as the ontological gap between creature and Creator, the elevating function of grace will be emphasized. The goal will be "to bridge the gap . . . and so render possible the attainment of God as end." When instead the problem is construed in terms of "the moral gap cause by sin," the theologian will see the primary function of grace "to heal, to overcome sin, and thus make the attainment of God possible." Under the influence of Augustine the discussion in the Latin tradition has focused on the healing and restorative good of grace, while the Orthodox tradition has emphasized elevation and deification. But neither function of grace seems to take precedence for Thomas. Wawrykow says, "he views both with equal seriousness." Wawrykow, "Grace," p. 196.

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and grace.[72] We saw that initially Thomas considered virtue an interior principle of motion, and the law an external one.[73] However, "Aquinas's initial classification of interior and exterior principles of action quickly becomes complicated by his Christian additions to the Aristotelian elements with which his ethics begins."[74] As we saw, Thomas' recognition that the ultimate happiness of a rational creature lies in the vision of God, an act for which divine capacities are required, meant that he ultimately had to conceive of virtue as a divine God, which originates *outside* the human heart. Likewise, Thomas' understanding of law became, in the New Law, an *interior* principle of motion, the power of the Holy Spirit to do what the law commands. So Aquinas shifted his points of emphasis about virtue and law in opposite directions: virtue from interior to exterior, law from exterior to interior. But in both cases this was a move from Aristotelian striving to Augustinian grace, shifting the soteriological weight from human capacity to the work of God.

In Thomas' doctrine of grace, the change of location is different. Initially, he understood grace as an *external* principle of motion, whereby God moves people toward their proper end. Grace must be an external principle for Thomas, since rational creatures lack the capacity to move toward our natural end in beatific vision of God. How else could one arrive at divine vision besides being moved by God? This initial understanding would have worked for from an Augustinian perspective—it removes any reliance on one's own capacities. But it did not ultimately work for Thomas.

According to Thomas, God not only brings all things to an end appropriate to their nature; God does so *in a way* appropriate to their nature. God will help human beings move toward our end, for instance, in a way that maintains our nature as rational, moral agents.[75] For grace to be a wholly external force—God moving us like a chess pawns toward beatific vision—is for human nature to lose what makes it distinctively human. When something is moved in this way, solely by an external force, it is what Aquinas calls "violent motion." Since most things have by nature the capacity to move toward their proper end, it is no coincidence that violent motions generally move things away from their proper end (think of throwing a stone into the air, away from the earth that provides the stone with its form). As creatures who lack the capacity for divine vision, we *must* be moved to our proper end by an external principle; but as

[72] I owe the following observation to DeYoung et al. in *Aquinas's Ethics*, pp. 169-72.
[73] *ST* I-II.49.prol.; 90.prol.
[74] DeYong et al., *Aquinas' Ethics*, p. 169.
[75] See te Velde, *Aquinas*, p. 150; and Michael Root, "Aquinas, Merit, and Reformation Theology After the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,*" *Modern Theology* 20/1 (2004), pp. 11-2.

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rational, moral agents, we *cannot* be so moved. As rational beings, we *must* be self-moved to our proper end; but as creatures, we *cannot* move ourselves to that end. This paradoxical doctrine of grace is, of course, just another iteration of Aquinas' anthropological paradox, one that has been the source of as much heat as light in the history of theology in Thomist traditions.

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