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Falsely Identifying Original Sin and Pure Nature: Christological Implications

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Abstract

Robert Barry argues that man's condition in a state of pure nature and man's condition in the state of original sin are one and the same. This article aims to show that this thesis is false and is not the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Angelic Doctor teaches that man in pure nature would be more capable of doing the good proportionate to his nature and would be able to love God above all things with a natural love. Important here is the truth posited by many in the Thomist commentatorial tradition, namely, that on account of sin man is directly averted from his supernatural end and at least indirectly averted from his natural end. Furthermore, this thesis has undesirable consequences, albeit consequences unintended by Barry, for Christology and soteriology. We must understand what pertains to human nature as such if we are to understand the various states in which we find human nature, including in Christ. If a natural analogue to supernatural charity cannot even in principle obtain, charity will be something alien to human nature. Christ came not only to elevate us to supernatural life and divine friendship, but to heal human nature.

Keywords

Thomas Aquinas, Original Sin, Pure Nature, Grace, Christology

In two recent papers, Robert Barry argues for an identification of the condition of man in a hypothetical state of pure nature and the condition of man as he exists actually and historically after the fall of our first parents and before restoration in grace, namely, in a state of original sin. The author states explicitly in one work that the condition of man in pure nature and the condition of man in original sin are "one and the same."[1] In the other, while admitting that they "differ in the

[1] Robert Barry, "Original Sin and Pure Nature: What's the Difference, and What Difference Does It Make?" *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 25 (2018): 1-28, at 1.

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scope of the perfection for which man would be created," he says likewise that the condition of man "is identical."[2] Not only does he argue for the truth of this position, but additionally that it is the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. This position, as we will show, is false and is not the teaching of St. Thomas. The first aim of this paper, then, will be to show why this is the case. More than this, however, this teaching has consequences for our understanding of Christology and soteriology, for we cannot understand Christ aright unless we understand human nature aright, nor can we understand from what Christ came to save us unless we understand accurately the condition of man in a state of fallen nature. And thus this paper will also deal with the implications of this misunderstanding for Christology and soteriology.

In the first section, Barry's position will be explicated. It has a certain prima facie plausibility in light of select texts of the Angelic Doctor. In the final evaluation, however, it is too optimistic regarding man in a state of original sin. Or, to view it the other way, it grants too little to man in a state of pure nature, to human nature as such. In the second section, St. Thomas's true position will be explicated. We will see that St. Thomas judges man in a state of original sin to be less apt to do the good proportionate to his nature than man in a purely natural state. Finally, some of the Christological and soteriological implications of this question will be explicated.

Man in pure nature; Barry's position

We must first explicate two related but distinct senses of pure nature. Steven Long defines them in this way:

> (1) as a *state* or *condition* lacking divine assistance of supernatural grace, i.e., a condition in which it lacks either supernatural assistance or harm that befalls uniquely from the loss of supernatural assistance; (2) as nature *simplicter*, which is defined *in precision from* supernatural grace but is then affirmed in all the varying *states* in which it may be found: e.g., in the hypothesis of unaided nature; in its creation in sanctifying grace; in the state of original sin; in the Person of the Divine Word; in the status of persons who are baptized wayfarers, in the state of grace, ordered toward beatitude; in the persons of those in the eternal city of supernatural beatitude.[3]

One sense of pure nature, then, is a state or condition in which man would have been created without a further ordering in grace toward

[2] Robert Barry, "Why Pure Nature is Not Integral, and Why Integral Nature is Not Pure: The Possibility of Garrigou-Lagrange's Hypothesis of an Integral Nature," paper delivered at 2019 American Maritain Association annual meeting, 8.

[3] Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 81.

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the beatific vision. This state has never in fact existed; it is hypothetical. The other sense is of human nature *simplicter*, which is found in all who possess human nature, prescinding from consideration of additional blessings or impairments that may condition it; it functions as a mediating concept between the various states in which we find human nature, as we will see below.

Now, it is clear from the teaching of St. Thomas that man could have been created in a purely natural state. That is to say, God could have created man without ordering and calling him to the beatific vision.[4] The Angelic Doctor teaches in *ST* I, q. 75, a. 7, ad 1 that there is a proportionate natural end proper to man. The first objector argues that the human soul is of the same species as an angel, since both have eternal beatitude, the beatific vision, as their end.[5] St. Thomas clarifies, saying, "This argument proceeds from the proximate and natural end. Eternal happiness is the ultimate and supernatural end."[6] It is from the proportionate natural end that the species is derived. Ordination to supernatural beatitude is not included in the definition of man.[7] Indeed,

[4] This is the very proposition Pope Pius XII wished to affirm in *Humani generis* no. 26, the denial of which has grave consequences for the gratuity the supernatural order. The fiercest opponent of the doctrine of pure nature in the 20th century was undoubtedly Henri de Lubac, S.J. (1896-1991). It is true that Pius XII does not mention de Lubac by name in *Humani generis*, nor does he endorse outright the doctrine of pure nature. Nevertheless, as Bernard Mulcahy relates, "Although it did not explicitly refer to de Lubac or explicitly endorse the notion of pure nature, this papal document was sufficiently unfavorable to the critics of modern scholasticism as to leave de Lubac thunderstruck." Bernard Mulcahy, O.P., *Aquinas's Notion of Pure Nature and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac: Not Everything Is Grace* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 166. Some have denied the pertinence of *Humani generis* to the work of de Lubac and have pointed to de Lubac's own later testimony about the encyclical vindicating his position. Mulcahy says of this on the aforementioned page, "This interpretation…does not seem well founded" and goes on to explain why this is the case. For a nuanced take on how de Lubac's works do or do not fall under the condemnation of *Humani generis*, see Jacob Wood, *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Natural Desire for God* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 415-418.

[5] *ST* I, q. 75, a. 7, obj. 1 (trans. Laurence Shapcote, O.P. [Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012]). All texts and translations of St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae* are taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated. "Videtur quod anima et angelus sint unius speciei. Unumquodque enim ordinatur ad proprium finem per naturam suae speciei, per quam habet inclinationem ad finem. Sed idem est finis animae et angeli, scilicet beatitudo aeterna. Ergo sunt unius speciei."

[6] "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod ratio illa procedit de fine proximo et naturali. Beatitudo autem aeterna est finis ultimus et supernaturalis."

[7] Were it included, there would be a danger of making human beings naturally deific. Lawrence Feingold addresses this issue in the context of Henri de Lubac's thesis of an innate natural desire for supernatural beatitude: "No creature can have the finality of the vision of God 'inscribed in the depths of its nature' without also having a participation in the inner life of God imprinted 'in the depths of its nature,' which would be to divinize the nature of the creature, or make grace inscribed in its nature." *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters*, Second Edition (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010), 442.

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God did not have to call and order man to an end higher than his proportionate natural end. In his *De malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 15, St. Thomas speaks about man in a hypothetical state of pure nature. He argues that, while such a man, constituted with natural endowments alone, would die without the beatific vision, since God would never have deigned to order man to it, he would not deserve not to have the vision. For it is one thing not to deserve to have something, and another to deserve not to have it; the former indicates merely a lack, whereas the latter has the nature of punishment. Man would not have known what he was missing in the beatific vision (perfect ontological fulfillment as opposed to an imperfect, albeit real, natural fulfillment) and thus the absence of the vision would not have the *rationem poenae*. We might also quote a text we will employ later. St. Thomas is asking about natural love in man and says, "But since it was possible for God to create human beings in a state of pure nature, it is worth considering just how far natural love could extend."[8] Suffice it to say for now that St. Thomas affirms the possibility of a state of pure nature.

Further, this teaching of the Angelic Doctor is in accord with reason, for divine grace and the gifts of integrity and immortality are gratuitous gifts from God; these are not due to human nature and are not included in the definition of man, as stated above. On the part of human nature, then, it is not impossible that man be created in a state of pure nature. Nor would this constitute any detriment to the divine justice or wisdom or goodness, for God does not owe these gifts to human nature; they flow from the divine generosity. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange defines such a state in this way: "The state of pure nature means precisely nature with its intrinsic constituent principles and such as follow from them or are due to them; in other words, it implies all those notes which are included in the definition of man, a rational animal, and further the properties of man and the natural aids due to human nature that it may attain its final natural end."[9] Barry recognizes this definition from Garrgiou-Lagrange, though no doubt he would want to modify it according to his own thesis before accepting it wholesale. Thomist authors generally make it a point to note that a state of pure nature has never in fact existed; it is hypothetical, though in any order human beings have an end proportionate to their nature from which the species is derived.[10] On the contrary, Barry thinks that his thesis

[8] *Quod*. I, q. 4, a. 3, resp.: "Sed quia possible fuit Deo ut hominem faceret in puris naturalibus, utile est considerare ad quantum se dilectio naturalis extendere possit." English translation from *Thomas Aquinas's Quodlibetal Questions*, trans. Turner Nevitt and Brian Davies (Oxford University Press, 2020).

[9] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, Q. 109-114*, trans. The Dominican Nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), 21.

[10] See *ST* I, q. 75, a. 7, ad 1 and *Quaestiones de anima*, a. 7, ad 10.

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grants to Thomistic philosophy and theology a unique opportunity for reflection on pure nature, for a reconsideration of its role, since it essentially exists in this order and is thus the object of actual experience and reason.[11]

Notice that this is quite a different topic and approach than one typically finds in debates about the nature-grace relation, natural desire, and the like. As Barry says of his own purpose,

> [U]nlike most participants in the debate, I am not examining the possibility of whether man is naturally capable of being inclined toward and attaining a supernatural end; instead, my question is whether Thomas Aquinas holds that without sanctifying grace, man is naturally capable of being inclined toward and attaining a properly natural end.[12]

Attempting therefore to answer this question, the author presents the "problem" of human nature. Because man has both an immaterial and a material principle, because he is finite in his existence and powers, "there is inherent in man the potential for fundamental opposition at many different levels."[13] Barry mentions two kinds of opposition. The first arises due to the contrary elements out of which man's body is made and through which his sensitive powers operate. The second arises due to the goods and ends that are the proper objects of man's sensitive powers and of his rational powers respectively. It seems, consequently, that man is a problematic creature, unless perhaps some extrinsic principle of order saves the day. And on this score, there is something compelling about Barry's position, for St. Thomas is frank about the limitations of human nature due to man's body. Garrigou-Lagrange admits this as well, positing the following as a corollary to the state of pure nature: "Moreover, man, like any other animal, would be subject to pain, death, and so also to ignorance and concupiscence."[14] If God deigns to make such a creature, that is, a creature composed of body and soul, it will of natural necessity experience bodily corruption, grow weary, and experience other similar defects.[15]

[11] Barry, "Original Sin and Pure Nature," 24. See also Barry, "Why Pure Nature is Not Integral," 10: "What insight does this theological account of man provide for Thomistic philosophy? One is that speculation about the condition of Man in the State of Pure Nature need not remain purely speculative; one can empirically observe and verify what that state might be like just by looking around at the condition of Man in the State of Original Sin."

[12] Barry, "Original Sin and Pure Nature," 2. He says on the same page, "In this respect, the topic of this article pertains more to the prior debate among scholars that has been eclipsed by the *Surnaturel* controversy: namely the question of how sanctifying grace relates to original justice." For a helpful summary of the various positions, see Cyril Vollert, "Saint Thomas on Sanctifying Grace and Original Justice: A Comparative Study of a Recent Controversy," *Theological Studies* 2 (1941): 369-387.

[13] Barry, "Original Sin and Pure Nature," 10.

[14] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 22.

[15] See Aquinas, *Disp. Q. On the Soul*, q. 8, resp.

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But God willed to bestow on our first parents a preternatural integrity, freedom from suffering and death[16] and, beyond this, a supernatural inheritance.[17] God willed, in other words, to create man in a state of original justice. The gifts bestowed upon man's nature, whether having a natural term or a supernatural term, were wholly gratuitous, that is to say, not owed to human nature and bestowed freely by God. Nevertheless, there was a certain fittingness to this primordial state of man, for while death is natural to the body inasmuch as it is composed of matter susceptible of corruption, death is not natural to the soul in the same way.[18] As Barry remarks truly, "This remedy that God provides through the grace of original justice provides an incorruptibility in the bodily nature of man that makes it the fitting home for man's immortal soul."[19] Again, this is fair enough. But the next step in Barry's argument is to say that original sin is nothing other than the privation of original justice, the efficient and formal cause of which is sanctifying grace. And further, after man is deprived of grace, "what remains as the subject of this deprivation of original justice is nothing but man himself in his very nature…as the kind of creature composed of contrary elements and powers, living through a material body and his intellectual powers."[20] Because this is so, the human person will be severely limited with respect to his activity and his pursuit of the good; humanity will be left "naked."

But this "nakedness" is not other than the nakedness on account of which man would have suffered in pure nature, Barry thinks. The darkness of the intellect and the weakness of the will for man in original sin, the difficulty he has in seeking the truth, in choosing the good, in being ordered toward virtue, this for Barry is simply what follows when man is left to his own natural devices. For Barry, as he believes it to be for St. Thomas, sanctifying grace is the only principle of integration *possible* for the human soul.[21] This is quite the claim. Without this principle of integration, therefore, man will be subject to ignorance, malice,

[16] See *ST* I, q. 97, aa. 1 and 2.

[17] In this state, man's reason was subjected to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul. See *ST* I, q. 95, a. 1.

[18] St. Thomas explains that the soul is not entirely subject to matter because it has an immaterial operation of its own. Man is naturally corruptible as regards the nature of his matter left to itself, but not as regards the nature of his form. *ST* I-II, q. 85, a. 6, resp.: "Et quamvis omnis forma intendat perpetuum esse quantum potest, nulla tamen forma rei corruptibilis potest assequi perpetuitatem sui, praeter animam rationalem, eo quod ipsa non est subiecta omnino materiae corporali, sicut aliae formae; quinimmo habet propriam operationem immaterialem, ut in primo habitum est. Unde ex parte suae formae, naturalior est homini incorruptio quam aliis rebus corruptibilibus. Sed quia et ipsa habet materiam ex contrariis compositam, ex inclinatione materiae sequitur corruptibilitas in toto. Et secundum hoc, homo est naturaliter corruptibilis secundum naturam materiae sibi relictae, sed non secundum naturam formae."

[19] Barry, "Original Sin and Pure Nature," 14.

[20] Ibid., 15.

[21] Ibid., 23.

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concupiscence, suffering, and death, and will be unable to attain his natural end.

It is worthy of mention that this is not a wholly novel theory. The Jesuit Thomistic commentator Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) argued much the same. As Thomas Joseph White relates concerning Suárez, "In an attempt to respond to what he takes to be the excessive metaphysical pessimism of the Reformers, he seems to overcompensate by excess, minimizing the intrinsic wounds to human nature resultant from original sin."[22] And this likewise is what Barry is doing. There is an undue optimism with regard to man in a state of original sin. Or, to consider the matter from the other side, perhaps it is an undue pessimism with regard to human nature as such, with respect to man *in puris naturalibus*. But what does St. Thomas himself have to say about these two states, one hypothetical and one actual?

St. Thomas on human nature and original sin

Nowhere in the aforementioned articles does Barry seem to address the *principle* on account of which Garrigou-Lagrange and other Thomists[23] conclude that fallen man is directly averted from his supernatural end and at least indirectly averted from his proportionate natural end, namely, that the natural law prescribes that God is to be obeyed whatever He commands, whether in the natural or in a higher order.[24] Every sin against the supernatural law is indirectly against the natural law.[25] Or, to go about things in another manner, we might employ the

[22] Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord*: *A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 135-136, n. 30. He says further in note 32, "Reacting against the position of Suarez, the Dominican tradition tended to affirm that the essential intrinsic dignity of the human being remains after sin, but that because of the absence of an extrinsic principle (the grace of God, which is necessarily extrinsic at least insofar as it is not purely natural), an intrinsic wounding of human nature results, not from a defect in nature itself, but from the absence of grace, for which it was made."

[23] In the appendix that ends his work *Grace*, "Whether Aversion from the Supernatural End Cannot Exist Without Aversion from the Natural End," Garrigou-Lagrange mentions these figures as generally answering the question in the affirmative: Capreolus, Cajetan, Ferariensis, Bañez, Alvarez, Lemos, John of St. Thomas, Gonet, Godoy, the Salmanticenses, Billuart, Gotti, and Del Prado.

[24] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 504. He says that the conclusions he explicates "are rejected by many only because of insufficient grasp of the foregoing principle." This is an important principle, therefore, not only for Garrigou-Lagrange but for the Thomist tradition more generally.

[25] Ibid., 66. For an application of this principle to a particular question, see Raymond E. Marieb, "The Impeccability of the Angels Regarding Their Natural End," *The Thomist* 28 (1964): 409-474. Marieb argues that angels cannot sin directly and immediately against their natural end. They can, however, sin directly and immediately against their supernatural end and consequently indirectly and mediately against their natural end. He explains his reasoning in this way (pp. 410-411): "By definition, the supernatural order cannot be connatural to

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language of Steven Long and say that *natura* is a theonomic principle; and in this order, though certainly nature and grace are distinct, nature is causally ordered by grace. To quote Long, "The attempt to argue that, if nature and grace are distinct, no natural harm should therefore ensue upon the loss of grace, is an argument that implicitly fails to accept the causal efficacy of grace."[26] In order better to understand this, we might consider the different *rationes* or formalities under which God can be known and loved. Human beings are able by their natural powers to know and to love God as Creator and Sustainer of all things, as Author of nature. More than this, however, God revealed Himself to Adam and Eve, disclosed His heart to them, granted them a share in His own divine life. They possessed a supernatural knowledge and love of God; they were related to Him in grace as to a divine Spouse and Friend. To reject God under this infinitely higher formality is to reject also, even if indirectly, God under the inferior formality of "cause of these effects," the Author of nature. That the traditional Thomistic position, as expressed by Garrigou-Lagrange and Long, is true, is manifest when we consider the following points from St. Thomas himself.

As a result of original sin, man has malice in the will. Whereas from nature man has an inclination to virtue, this inclination is weakened because of original sin, as we see in places such as *ST* I-II, q. 85, aa. 1 and 3. St. Thomas argues in article one for a threefold good of human nature. The first good, the principles of which nature is constituted, is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. The third good, the gift of original justice, "conferred on the whole of human nature in the person of the first man," is entirely destroyed by the sin of Adam. The second good, however, the inclination man has to virtue, is not destroyed but is nevertheless diminished by sin.[27] St. Thomas explicates the four

any creature. It is this complete lack of proportion between the supernatural order and the creature's natural powers and exigencies that explains the radical peccability of all creatures with respect to that higher order. Obviously, then, any creature can sin *directly* against the supernatural good. In doing so, however, he necessarily sins against his natural end, but only *ex consequenti* and indirectly. This is true, as John of St. Thomas explains, because the objects of the natural and supernatural ends are so related that one cannot sin directly against one end without thereby sinning indirectly against the other. To desecrate the Blessed Sacrament is to sin directly against the supernatural order, but it is also contrary to the natural law which commands us to handle sacred things in a sacred manner." See John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theologicus*, ed. Solesmensium, vol. IV (Paris: Desclée and Co., 1953), diss. 43, a. 1.

[26] Long, *Natura Pura*, 24.

[27] "Respondeo dicendum quod bonum naturae humanae potest tripliciter dici. Primo, ipsa principia naturae, ex quibus natura constituitur, et proprietates ex his causatae, sicut potentiae animae et alia huiusmodi. Secundo, quia homo a natura habet inclinationem ad virtutem, ut supra habitum est, ipsa inclinatio ad virtutem est quoddam bonum naturae. Tertio modo potest dici bonum naturae donum originalis iustitiae, quod fuit in primo homine collatum toti humanae naturae. Primum igitur bonum naturae nec tollitur nec diminuitur per peccatum. Tertium vero bonum naturae totaliter est ablatum per peccatum primi parentis. Sed medium bonum naturae, scilicet ipsa naturalis inclinatio ad virtutem, diminuitur per peccatum. Per

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wounds (*quatuor vulnera*) consequent upon sin in article three. Man suffers from ignorance in the intellect, malice in the will, weakness in the irascible appetite, and the wound of concupiscence in the concupiscible appetite. White explains: "The natural faculties and powers of the human person are affected internally by the absence of grace: reason is no longer subject to God supernaturally *or naturally*, the body is longer subject to the soul (death is a punishment of sin), and the passions are no longer subject to reason."[28] These wounds obtain on account of the privation of original justice, because sin leaves the powers of the soul destitute of their proper order. But St. Thomas in *ST* I-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1 is careful to explain that original sin is not a pure privation (*privatio pura*), but the privation of original justice *and* something positive, namely, the inordinate disposition of the parts of the soul.[29] It is in light of this teaching that Garrigou-Lagrange posits that "In the state of fallen nature not yet restored, man has less strength to perform a moral good than he would have had in the state of pure nature."[30] And again, "Hence Thomists in general… hold that man, in his fallen state, is less able to keep the natural law than he would have been in the state of pure nature. In a purely natural state his will would not, initiatively, be turned away even indirectly from his natural end, but would be capable of choosing this end, or of turning away from it."[31] In pure nature, man could convert or avert himself; in original sin, man is averted and must be converted.

actus enim humanos fit quaedam inclinatio ad similes actus, ut supra habitum est. Oportet autem quod ex hoc quod aliquid inclinatur ad unum contrariorum, diminuatur inclinatio eius ad aliud. Unde cum peccatum sit contrarium virtuti, ex hoc ipso quod homo peccat, diminuitur bonum naturae quod est inclinatio ad virtutem."

[28] White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 141. Speaking of this very text (*ST* I-II, q. 85, a. 3), Garrigou-Lagrange explains: "[M]an in in the state of fallen nature is born as *habitually and directly averse to God, his ultimate and supernatural end*, and as *indirectly averse to God, his final and natural end*. For every sin that is posed directly against the supernatural law is posed indirectly against the natural law which teaches that one ought to be obedient to God. In pure nature, however, there would not be such an aversion, because there would be no sin, and man would be born as capable of a positive turning to God and a turning away from God. Therefore, he would be more apt to turning himself to God than if he were born turned away from God. This aversion thus pertains to the *wound of the will*, which, as St. Thomas says in I-II, q. 85, a. 3: 'is deprived of an ordering to the good.'" Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Deo Trino et Creatore*, 449-450, as cited in White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 141, note 42.

[29] St. Thomas draws an analogy with bodily sickness, which is a privation if we consider the destruction of the equilibrium of health, but something positive if we consider the humors that are inordinately disposed. "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, sicut aegritudo corporalis habet aliquid de privatione, inquantum tollitur aequalitas sanitatis; et aliquid habet positive, scilicet ipsos humores inordinate dispositos, ita etiam peccatum originale habet privationem originalis iustitiae, et cum hoc inordinatam dispositionem partium animae. Unde non est privatio pura, sed est quidam habitus corruptus."

[30] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 504.

[31] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. Patrick Cummins, O.S.B. (Ex Fontibus Co., 2015), 251.

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We see this wounding of human nature likewise in St. Thomas's discussion of natural love in fallen man in *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 3. Before the fall, that is, when man's nature was integral or perfect, St. Thomas posits that man could do the good natural to him without the addition of any gratuitous gift and, furthermore, that he could love God above all things with a natural love. This is because it is natural to all creatures to seek and love things according as they are naturally fit. The good proper to a creature is loved on account of the common good, and the common good of the whole universe is God. In a state of integral nature, consequently, man referred everything to God and loved Him above all things. "But," as Aquinas relates, "in the state of corrupt nature man falls short of this in the appetite of his rational will, which, unless it is cured by God's grace, follows its private good, on account of the corruption of nature."[32] Grace must heal man's nature even so that he may love God, the Author of nature, above all things. Now, one might think that St. Thomas here limits this kind of efficacious natural love to integral nature, despite the fact that St. Thomas says that loving God above all things is natural to man and to every creature. But to dispel any doubt, we can make reference to a text we mentioned above, *Quod.* I, q. 4, a. 3. St. Thomas is asking "Whether in the state of innocence man would have loved God more than all things and above himself?" Employing the Augustinian doctrine that God alone is to be enjoyed simply, and other things only on account of God, St. Thomas gives the same answer he does in the *Summa*, namely, that man would have loved God above all things and above himself, since to enjoy oneself in the sense employed by Augustine and the tradition, leads to the perversity of sin. This question does not even have a place, of course, if we consider man in grace before sin, for through charity certainly man loves God above himself.

After this St. Thomas says, "But since it was possible for God to create human beings in a state of pure nature, it is worth considering just how far natural love could extend." Notice that the discussion cannot be limited to man and his natural powers perfected before the fall. St. Thomas is speaking about man in a state of pure nature; he is considering human nature *simplicter*, prescinding from supernatural grace or any other gratuitous and extrinsic principle of order. Some grant that man or an angel, existing in pure nature, would have loved God more than himself with a natural love according to the love of concupiscence, but not with *amor amicitiae*, love of friendship. But St. Thomas rejects this position.

[32] *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 3, resp.: "Sed in statu naturae corruptae homo ab hoc deficit secundum appetitum voluntatis rationalis, quae propter corruptionem naturae sequitur bonum privatum, nisi sanetur per gratiam Dei."

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> For natural love is a natural inclination with which God naturally endows us, and God does not make anything perverse. Hence, it is impossible for any natural inclination or love to be perverse. But it is perverse for people to love themselves with the love of friendship more than they love God. Hence, such love cannot possibly be natural.[33]

Keep in mind the context: St. Thomas is considering man in a state of pure nature and the extent of natural human love as such. It is inconceivable that man be in the same condition in original sin for, as St. Thomas teaches clearly, fallen man cannot love God above all things according to a natural love without grace healing his nature, whereas man in a purely natural state would be so able.

Consequences for Christology and soteriology

In addition to the falsity of the position itself, there seem to be some unfortunate (and no doubt unintended) consequences of Barry's position for Christology and soteriology. We will mention only a few such consequences. First, a more general consequence arising from the importance of the doctrine of pure nature. With a distorted notion of pure nature, of human nature as such, we cannot understand the God-man aright. Thomas Joseph White makes this very point when explicating the goals of his article, "The 'Pure Nature' of Christology: Human Nature and *Gaudium et spes* 22":

> Without a properly understood concept of pure nature, it is impossible to claim (1) that moral evil (which is prevalent in human nature in its actual state) is in truth unnatural, and (2) that we can only become perfectly human (with a restored nature) by the grace of Christ. (3) What is true for human nature in general is the case in a unique way concerning Christ. To conceive of Christ as truly and perfectly human by contrast and comparison with ourselves requires a mediating concept of pure nature. Without such a concept we cannot rightly articulate why Christ is the fulfillment of what it means to be human.[34]

This is a powerful statement by Fr. White. For, if we harbor errors concerning human nature, if we do not understand pure nature properly, we cannot understand why sin is truly *contra naturam*; we cannot understand how the grace of Christ makes us more whole as human beings,

[33] "Dilectio enim naturalis est quaedam naturalis inclinatio indita naturae a Deo. Nihil autem naturale est perversum. Impossibile est ergo quod aliqua naturalis inclinatio vel dilectio sit perversa: perversa autem dilectio est ut aliquis dilectione amicitiae diligat plus se quam Deum. Non potest ergo talis dilectio esse naturalis."

[34] Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "The 'Pure Nature' of Christology: Human Nature and *Gaudium et Spes* 22," *Nova et Vetera* 8 (2010): 283-322. This article is reproduced (with minor additions) in chapter two of *The Incarnate Lord*, which has been employed elsewhere in this paper.

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makes us more ourselves; and finally, we cannot understand the human nature of Christ, utterly unique inasmuch as it is united in person to the Word, but true human nature nonetheless. Regarding this last point, perhaps the most germane to the present paper, how can we articulate the perfections proper to Christ's human nature if we misunderstand human nature and what operations and perfections pertain to human nature as such? This, then, is the first and more general point.

The second consequence relates to what we said above concerning the extent of natural love. St. Thomas's teaching compels us to hold that pure nature and original sin are simply different states, that man is not in the same condition in them. As evidence, we may point to the fact that man in pure nature would be able to love God above all things with a natural love, whereas man in original sin is unable to do so without the aid of grace. Under Barry's account, therefore, there is no natural analogue of supernatural charity. For, given human nature, its principles, powers, and limitations without grace, man cannot even in principle love God above all things. The love of Christ on the Cross, therefore, the charity out of which He handed Himself over to suffering and death for our salvation, would be unintelligible to us, something alien or foreign to human nature. St. Thomas says in question 60, article 5 of the *Prima pars* when considering the natural love of an angel and, by extension, man, "[I]f either of them loved self more than God, it would follow that natural love would be perverse, and that it would not be perfected but destroyed by charity."[35] Though he is speaking of human nature before the fall, White has this to say: "[C]reated, integral human nature was so constituted that human beings could love God above all things *naturally* by virtue of their intrinsic rational and voluntary powers. Were this not the case, then the higher, supernatural love of God given to man in grace would be something alien and purely extrinsic to natural human love."[36] While Aristotle was correct in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that, strictly speaking, there can be no friendship between God and man,[37] St. Thomas does use the term *amor amicitiae*

[35] *ST* I, q. 60, a. 5, resp.: "si naturaliter plus seipsum diligeret quam Deum, sequeretur quod naturalis dilectio esset perversa; et quod non perficeretur per caritatem, sed destrueretur." St. Thomas refers back to this text in *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 3, resp.

[36] White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 139-140.

[37] This is the case on account of the infinite ontological distance between them. The supernatural friendship we possess with God (charity) is founded on the *communicatio* between God and man, inasmuch as God communicates His happiness to us. See *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1, resp. While the term "friendship" has been used throughout the Christian tradition to speak about the relationship that obtains between God and human persons in a state of grace, according to Jean Pierre-Torrell, "Thomas was the first to formally define charity as friendship." Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas*, Thomistic Ressourcement Series, V. 2., trans. Bernhard Blankenhorn (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 45. He says in another place, "Of all the authors of his time, Thomas is alone in having the boldness to define charity as friendship, that, as a reciprocity of love between God and man founded on God's self-communication when, by grace, he makes man a

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of man's love for God in a state of pure nature, in order to indicate that this is not the kind of base love one might have for wine or some other finite created good, but a loftier *dilectio*. This natural love of God above all things is taken up in grace, elevated in divine charity. But again, if natural love of God above self cannot even in principle obtain, charity is something purely extrinsic to natural human love and foreign to human nature.

Finally, we can pose the following question: From what did Christ come to save us? From sin, yes, but sin that has not only averted us from our supernatural end, but from our natural end as well. Original sin does not simply return man to a state of pure nature, as though this were some curse. Instead, we are by nature, as St. Paul says in Ephesians 2:3, children of wrath. That is to say, due to original sin man is alienated from God, not ordered to virtue as he ought to be, for he is weak, ill, wounded. Commenting on this Pauline text, St. Thomas says, "Thus he says ***we were by nature***, that is, from the earliest beginning of nature—not of nature as nature since this is good and from God, but of nature as vitiated—***children of*** an avenging ***wrath***, aimed at punishment and hell."[38] It is not as though postlapsarian man is merely lacking grace, even if this be under the ratio of punishment. He is also sick, wounded, weakened in his ordination even to his proportionate natural end. This is why Charles Billuart argues that, when comparing man in fallen nature to man in pure nature, the comparison is not as a denuded man to a naked one, but as a wounded man to a healthy one.[39]

Conclusion

There are additional questions that could be posed. For instance, if sanctifying grace is the only *possible* principle of order for human nature, and if an ordered, integral human nature is requisite for attaining man's natural end, do we not forfeit the gratuity of grace by making

participant in his own happiness." Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa: Background, Structure, and Reception*, trans. Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 43.

[38] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians*, ch. 2, lect. 1, 83 (trans. F.R. Larcher, O.P. and M.L. Lamb, ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón [Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012]): "Et hoc est quod dicit ***eramus natura***, id est per originem naturae, non quidem naturae ut natura est, quia sic bona est et a Deo, sed naturae ut vitiata est, ***filii irae***, id est vindictae, poenae et Gehennae, et hoc ***sicut et caeteri***, id est gentiles."

[39] Charles Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 3 (Parisiis: apud Victorem Palmé, 1900), diss. 2, art. 3, p. 52: "Homo lapsus privatus fuit justitia originali et aliis donis gratuitis quibus erat vestitus et ornatus, et ideo quantum ad haec nudatus: haec non habuisset homo in natura pura, et ideo quantum ad haec nudus. At homo in statu naturae lapsae est insuper aversus voluntarie et culpabiliter a Deo ut auctore naturali, quails non fuisset in natura pura; unde ex hac parte debet homo lapsus comparari homini in natura pura, non ut nudatus nudo, sed ut vulneratus sano."

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it simply necessary for human nature, lest we posit an absurd creature that cannot even in principle attain its proportionate natural end? How is this not an affront to divine wisdom? How does this not negatively impact our understanding of the human nature assumed by Divine Wisdom Himself? For now, we have seen that St. Thomas differentiates man in pure nature and man in original sin. The latter is less able to do the good proportionate to his nature and incapable, without grace healing his nature, of loving God above all things; the former, however, would be able to love God above all things. We have seen the Christological consequences of this. If pure nature stands as a mediating concept between the various states in which we find human nature, we have to have the right concept. As true as it is to affirm with *Gaudium et spes* no. 22 that Christ reveals man to himself, positing Christ's true and perfect humanity requires the concept of pure nature. As White explains, "If nature is not *historically and existentially* separable from the mystery of God's gracious action in history, it is nevertheless distinguishable and can even be appealed to *precisely as a way toward understanding* the goodness of the mystery of life in Christ."[40] If there is no natural analogue for supernatural charity, the divine friendship manifested on the Cross and extended to mankind is unintelligible and alien to human nature. Finally, Christ came to heal, that is, not simply to restore to grace, but to restore human nature, since it had fallen beneath what would obtain and follow from human nature as such. Though this natural end is taken up and ordered further to the supernatural end, we need the grace of Christ in order to heal the aversion we have from our natural end. Even prescinding from consideration of grace as elevating, Christ makes us more human.

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[40] White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 130.

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