

MAN, NATURAL END OF

End here means purpose or objective, not extinction or last state; thus *end of man means the general objective of human action or the final purpose of life.

Catholics believe that besides the natural reality God has given human beings through creation, He has offered them the further gift of a share of His own life. God gives this special gift within the soul by *grace. God is not only the source but also the end of the life of grace; its consummation is the soul's enjoyment of God's goodness in union with Him in heavenly beatitude, the *beatific vision. Hence the end that Catholic faith indicates is above human *nature. The achievement of this end transcends every ability naturally inherent in man, and the entire life of grace is *supernatural.

Because the end of Christian life is supernatural, Catholic thinkers have wondered about the natural end of man. The problem is important for two reasons: (1) If God had created man without giving him grace, would there have been any end for human life proportionate to man's abilities? (2) Since grace does not abridge what belongs to the natural reality of man, is there an end implicitly required by human nature that might help even Christians to direct their lives?

This article presents a historical introduction to the problem, a summary of the state of the question among contemporary Catholic thinkers, and some suggestions for its resolution.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Because the history of this problem is so extensive, only a few of the most important positions can be outlined in detail. Major consideration is therefore given to the thought of Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas, after which follows a summary treatment of the thought of modern philosophers on this subject.

Aristotle. *Aristotle begins his study of the end of man by observing that every activity implies a definite objective, since every effort presupposes a good at which it aims. Different spheres of activity have different ends, but each is unified and guided by its final objective. The basic question of *ethics, then, concerns the single, final objective of the inclusive sphere of action called "human life as a whole."

Everyone agrees that the end of man is *happiness—living or doing well—but people differ on what constitutes happiness. Some people think it is bodily *pleasure, or external goods such as wealth and status, or good *character. Aristotle maintains that happiness must be examined precisely as the end of action. So considered, whatever true happiness is, it must be the ultimate objective, sought always for itself and never for anything else. Moreover, in order to organize all of life, happiness must be complete in itself, requiring no addition to be an adequate principle of organization. Hence Aristotle rejects the popular ideas of happiness, for they indicate only what belongs to the lower part of man (bodily pleasure), or what is only a means (external goods), or what is not desirable apart from action (character).

Platonic Solution. Although Aristotle follows *Plato up to this point, he rejects Plato's answer to the main question. To eliminate *relativism, Plato posited as ultimate end a pure form of goodness—the Good itself— independent of everything else. But an ideal goodness that is not a good something seemed to Aristotle unintelligible. Moreover, if there were a Good itself, either it would remain irrelevant to the peculiar good for man, or it would conflict with the differences among goods appropriate to man and to other things.

Still Aristotle agreed with Plato that happiness must not be defined subjectively by the desires one happens to have; that approach would lead to relativism. Aristotle's solution is to define happiness objectively by what fulfills the capacities from which human action arises. He concludes that man's true happiness lies in his distinctive action, the use of reason, which best realizes specifically human capacities.

Reason, Virtue, and Contemplation. Yet many use reason without becoming happy because they do not use it fully. For maximum use reason must be cultivated until it reaches habitual excellence. The Greek word for habitual excellence is translated *virtue, and so we find Aristotle concluding that the happiness that is man's end consists in continuous activity of the soul according to its highest virtue.

For Aristotle, the highest excellence of reason is philosophical *wisdom, and so he considers the philosophical life best. The truest human happiness is in the *contemplation of the truths the philosopher can know about the highest realities. Such a life is godlike, since it belongs to man only because he has intelligence like that of immaterial beings. But it is not supernatural in the theological sense, for it belongs to the higher part of man himself and is attained by his own efforts.

Prudence and Active Life. All human feelings, actions, and social life should be organized as a preparation and foundation for the philosophical life. But in organizing the rest of life, reason also functions in a properly human way; in this practical capacity, reason has a special excellence distinct from philosophic wisdom. This virtue, practical wisdom or *prudence, is best exemplified in the great lawgivers and founders of cities. The practical life of affairs, then, also is a fulfillment of man's proper capacities, and it constitutes happiness secondarily.

The goods people mistakenly think are the end of man are not altogether excluded by Aristotle. Good fortune and external goods take a subordinate place. Friendship is important to happiness, but true friendship is a shared virtuous life. Moreover, the truly happy life is the pleasantest, for pleasure is merely the conscious aspect of the perfect functioning of any capacity. Since happiness is the perfect use of man's highest capacity, it includes the deepest and most human pleasure.

For Aristotle, then, man's end is not a quality or a state, and it is not found in any good above man himself. Rather, happiness is in life itself, in the fulfillment of human capacities, chiefly in philosophical contemplation, for there man's best capacity is used to its fullest extent, not for any practical result beyond itself but simply for its own sake.

St. Augustine. *Augustine did not ask whether man has a natural end or whether God could have created man without offering him grace. Augustine did not deny a natural end; he simply did not consider the possibility.

Nevertheless, he is of interest because he presented the Christian doctrine on heaven in contrast with the philosophers' teachings on happiness and the end of man.

In his youth Augustine read in Cicero's *Hortensius* the earliest, most Platonist version of Aristotle's ethics. The ideal of happiness in philosophical contemplation inflamed Augustine's heart, and he set out in quest of wisdom. But through many years he lived in error and immorality. Nothing ended his inner conflict and frustration until he received the grace of conversion to Christ.

From the vantage-point of faith, Augustine reflects that all along he has sought Christianity, and he sees heavenly beatitude, the hope of Christians, as the only fully satisfying end of his previously fruitless quest. Thus from personal experience Augustine knows that only God can satisfy man's yearning for happiness, and this psychological discovery dominates his thinking about the end of man. Man's heart is made for God and shall not rest except in Him.

Pagan Neoplatonism. Augustine ridicules the pagan philosophers who placed happiness in natural goods or in virtue, and who valued the social life of man in this world. The present life is full of miseries; true happiness will be found only in the peace of eternal life with God. Thus Augustine contrasts this life to the next as false happiness is contrasted to heavenly beatitude.

One sees better why Augustine took this step in noting that he greatly respected one pagan philosophy—*Neoplatonism. Itself indebted to Christianity as well as to *Greek philosophy, *Gnosticism, and perhaps also to Indian thought, to which it is similar, Neoplatonism teaches a natural mysticism. The basic notions are that man's mind comes from the divine by emanation, a kind of necessary creation, and that in this life the mind is unnaturally restrained (see EMANATIONISM). The practical conclusion follows: man should free himself from the world by an ascent to philosophical wisdom, and eventually he can redissolve into his divine source.

Augustine corrected Neoplatonism by insisting that God creates freely, that in heaven man is united to God by knowing Him rather than by dissolving into Him, and that man's return to God depends upon divine grace through Christ rather than upon a human effort of philosophical ascent. Augustine found Neoplatonism, so corrected, a useful framework for exploring Christian faith in a way that would satisfy his own experience and ideas.

End as Final State. Aristotle defined happiness in terms of the end of action and identified this end with the highest perfection of man himself. Augustine, on the other hand, defined happiness as the fulfillment of man's fundamental desire and identified this fulfillment with heavenly beatitude, in which man's mind attains the perfect goodness of God by knowing Him just as He is. Although the two approaches are quite different, they are not directly opposed. Indeed, Augustine was not concerned primarily with the end in relation to action, but with perfect happiness in the attainment of the supreme good. He does not use "end" precisely in Aristotle's sense—an objective of action sought as a fulfillment of the agent. Rather, Augustine thinks of the end as the absolute limit and the final state. Thus he contrasts the "end of good," heavenly beatitude, with the "end of evil," eternal separation from God; in both cases "end" means supreme instance, and the two absolute limits are

final states. Aristotle would not speak of an "end of evil," because no one acts for the sake of evil.

Effect on Boethius. *Boethius, a Christian philosopher who followed Augustine, also determined the end of man by examining man's desire for happiness. Man wants happiness and he does not find it in any particular good. Only complete happiness (beatitude), a state perfected by the conjunction of all goods, leaves nothing to be desired. Nowhere but in God, whose perfect goodness is the source of every created and partial good, are all goods present together. Hence man's desire for happiness cannot be satisfied unless he shares in the beatitude of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas. *Thomas Aquinas used Aristotle's doctrine to bring the theological theory of the end of man to a new stage of development. The resulting teaching is complex; several points in it are disputed among scholars.

Three points must be noticed: (1) Aquinas teaches that there is a twofold end or beatitude of man. One is proportioned to his natural abilities; the other is supernatural, and becomes proportionate to man only if he is given divine grace (*De ver.* 14.2, 10; 27.2; *In 2 sent.* 41.1.1; *ST* 1a, 62.1; 1a2ae, 62.1–2). (2) He presents only one end, heavenly beatitude, as the absolutely ultimate goal of human life (*C. gent.* 3.1–63). (3) Beatitude means the perfect and stable attainment of a perfect good; it is a happiness that leaves nothing to be desired. Only the supernatural end is perfect beatitude. The natural end is an imperfect beatitude, a happiness that is somewhat like perfect beatitude but lacks the perfection required for it (*ST* 1a2ae, 3).

To understand these points and the disputes that have arisen, it is necessary to notice how Thomas transformed Aristotle's notion of end and his theory of man.

Notion of End. The transcendent aspect of end that Aristotle excluded by rejecting Plato's ideal goodness is restored by Thomas. He identifies perfect goodness with the reality of God, and explains that God directs creatures to Himself by creating them as an expression of His own goodness, i.e., of Himself. Thus the ultimate end of all creatures is God. Creatures lacking intelligence attain divine goodness merely by reflecting it in their own perfection; intelligent creatures may attain it more directly by knowing God and loving Him (*C. gent.* 3.17–25; *In 2 sent.* 1.2.1–2). The end of every creature's action thus has two aspects. On the one hand, it is a perfection within the creature itself. On the other hand, it is the transcendent perfection of God.

Man and the Good. Aristotle held that man is complete in his own reality and that human desire is limited to human good. Thomas teaches that man's will is not oriented primarily toward himself but toward the good in general. Even by nature man should not seek his perfection because it is his, but because it is good and a reflection of divine goodness (*De ver.* 22.1–5). Because God is the end of all creation, He should be loved above all things, and but for original sin man would so love Him naturally (*ST* 1a, 60.5; *In 3 sent.* 29.3). Man necessarily desires happiness, which he understands generally as the good that would satisfy his will. In fact, man's will is indefinitely open toward good and is naturally oriented toward God. But men do not necessarily recognize and accept this fact (*ST* 1a, 82.1–2). Moreover, the greatest perfection man can receive, heavenly beatitude, would fulfill and surpass his capacities in a

way he can neither suspect nor wish for without faith and grace. Man's desire for happiness thus also has two aspects. On the one hand, it implicitly refers to the perfect goodness of God. On the other hand, it refers to man's capacity for perfection, which may be considered either according to the limits of attainment established by man's natural powers or according to what man can receive from God and achieve with supernatural aid (*In 3 sent.* 27.2.2).

Issues of Interpretation. The following five issues arise in the interpretation of Thomas's teaching:

1. Does Thomas consider Aristotle's doctrine an adequate account of the natural end of man? Thomas never describes the natural end of man in detail; rather, he constantly refers his readers for details to Aristotle or, more vaguely, to "the philosophers." In commenting on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Thomas seems to accept the teaching as correct within its limitations (*In 1 eth.* 9). At the same time, in his own works Thomas so transformed Aristotle's notions of end and of will that most Thomists have not considered Aristotle's teaching to be an adequate account of the natural end of man.
2. Does Thomas restrict the natural end to the present life? His references to Aristotle, whose treatment deals with this world exclusively, and his use of the contrast between earthly and heavenly beatitude suggest that he does. On the other hand, Thomas knows that some philosophers have put the end of man after death (*In 4 sent.* 49.1.1.4). He teaches that the separated soul naturally can attain a certain perfection (*De anim.* 17–20). And he holds that the souls of unbaptized infants enjoy goods proportionate to natural abilities, although they do not attain heavenly beatitude (*In 2 sent.* 33.2.2; *De malo* 5.3).
3. What is the meaning of Thomas's teaching that man "naturally" desires perfect happiness in a knowledge of God that in fact can be achieved only in supernatural beatitude? Thomas argues from natural desire that the beatific vision is not impossible and that the hope of Christians is not mistaken and perverse (*C. gent.* 3.50–57; *Comp. theol.* 1.104; *ST* 1a, 12.1; 1a2ae, 3.8). But he also teaches constantly that without grace man can neither know nor desire heavenly beatitude (*ST* 1a2ae, 114.2; *De ver.* 14.2). How could a natural end be a true objective of human action if the desire of nature itself goes beyond all that man can achieve by his own abilities? In what sense does man "naturally" desire that which is in fact his supernatural end? These questions have been debated from the time of Thomas's first commentators to the present day.
4. If man were created without grace, could he ever be truly happy? The explanation of the meaning of beatitude—the attainment of perfect goodness (God) by a perfect and permanent act—and the presentation of the supernatural end alone as absolutely ultimate suggest a negative answer (*ST* 1a2ae, 1–3). But Thomas explicitly considers the possibility that God could have created man without grace (*De malo* 4.1 ad 14; *Quodl.* 1.4.3). His teaching that man necessarily seeks happiness in something he knows and accepts as an ultimate

end (*In 4 sent.* 49.1.3.3) suggests that a man created without grace could achieve a true happiness that would be an imperfect likeness of beatitude. The account of the state of unbaptized infants—they exist without pain and frustration despite original sin—indicates the minimum of which human nature is capable.

5. Given grace, does man have a natural last end as well as a supernatural one? The negative answer is indicated because man cannot have two ultimate ends. But Thomas's derivation of a complete doctrine on natural virtues and natural law from a consideration of goods proportionate to human nature (ST 1a2ae, 61, 94) suggests that man's natural end is not removed by grace; therefore, the natural end must take a subordinate place within Christian life. This conclusion agrees also with Thomas's general teaching that grace presupposes and complements nature but does not abridge it.

Aquinas's teaching has given rise to many controversies because it is inherently complex and because the synthesis he presents is not wholly complete and explicit. The works of other great schoolmen have hardly been examined by scholars in relation to this problem. All the positions now current among Catholic thinkers plausibly claim some support from Thomas Aquinas.

Modern Philosophy. A few early modern philosophers continued to treat the problem of the end of man according to its classic formulation. *Spinoza is one example; his position is somewhat like that of Neoplatonism. Generally the old concept of end is unknown, and happiness is equated with the subjective feeling of satisfaction.

The main British thinkers from *Locke and *Hume through those holding *utilitarianism (Bentham and Mill) to *Russell and other recent empiricists have assumed that pleasure or the lessening of psychic tension is the sole effective motive of human action. Their chief problem in moral science is to show how selfishness can be limited by social restraint. Many other philosophers, following *Kant, renounce happiness as a principle of ethics precisely because they consider it merely subjective. For the guidance of an end they substitute moral law derived from some source independent of good and desire, e.g., from reason in Kant, from freedom itself in Sartre. Such theories recognize that man seeks ends, but they consider these ends to be in themselves morally indifferent.

It must be noted that evolutionary theories of human life do not necessarily exclude an end, although the doctrine of end implicit in such a theory can be uncovered only by interpretation. Every evolutionary theory of man assumes that development implies progress, and although evolutionists consider the possibilities of progress unlimited, the principle that measures progress serves in fact as an end, i.e., a guiding principle that gives human life a purpose. (*See EVOLUTIONISM.*)

*Hegel and his followers teach an evolutionary *pantheism that views the whole of things as a process developing toward an absolute reality. The end of man is simply his place in the system. In the last analysis, man takes his place willy-nilly, since human freedom is ultimately unreal.

Dialectical *materialism derived from Hegel, but by discarding the Absolute it radically transformed man's relationship to reality. Like American *pragmatism

(which adopted evolution from natural science but also owed much to Hegel), dialectical materialism teaches in effect that the end of man is within man himself and consists in the realization of the possibilities of human nature. This view is similar to Aristotle's position, but the contemplative ideal is omitted in favor of rationally guided activity and work, mankind's social solidarity is emphasized, and human capacities are believed to enlarge as evolution progresses.

During the past century work in psychology and the social sciences more and more obviously has needed a conception of the end of man as a standard for human health and well-being and as a guide for social reform and intercultural communication. Much recent psychology uses a concept of the mature, integrated, and effective personality—again an end somewhat like Aristotle's—and many social scientists assume that values such as health, technological efficiency, and political freedom are standards for human welfare. Contemporary philosophers have hardly noticed this aspect of psychology and social science, and have contributed little to it. Catholic moralists also, on the whole, have been unfortunately isolated from these developments in the sciences of man.

CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC POSITIONS

The state of the question concerning the natural end of man among Catholic thinkers can be indicated by summaries of five positions representative of the present spectrum of views.

Farrell and Adler's View. Walter *Farrell and Mortimer Adler, collaborating in a series of articles entitled "The Theory of Democracy," showed the superiority of democratic government on the ground that it best subserves the natural end of man. In so doing, they had to discuss this end. That there is a natural end, they argue from the naturalness of the state, of social virtues, and of natural law. They criticize those who identify the natural end with the social good, identifying it instead with the perfection of individual lives to which the good of society is merely a means.

Farrell and Adler consider the natural end only in respect to the happiness of this life. This happiness they consider to be a true conjunction of all the goods man naturally desires by active desire. They solve the Thomistic problem of natural desire by holding that Thomas's arguments refer to a passive desire. Happiness applies analogously to heavenly beatitude and to the natural end; natural happiness is true happiness proportionate to human abilities. The natural end is subordinate to supernatural beatitude but is not a means to it. The natural end is absolutely ultimate in its own order.

These authors explain the nature of happiness very much as did Aristotle. However, they reject interpretations of Aristotle that equate philosophical contemplation with happiness. Philosophical activity is only the best among many goods that constitute the perfect human life. Moreover, they deny that the good life is a stable act; instead they consider it a constant process. Hence they reject a distinction between contemplative and active in the life connatural to man. Moreover, although admitting that the attainment of God is man's supernatural beatitude, they deny that God is the good attained (the objective aspect) in man's natural end.

Ramirez's Traditional Position. Beginning in the 16th century, Catholic theologians, faced with heresies that

confused nature and grace, tended to sharpen the distinction between the two principles and to insist on the completeness of nature in its own order. This development included extensive use by post-Reformation theologians of the notion of a logically possible state of pure nature. To make this notion consistent and complete, the doctrine of the natural end of man, already present in Thomas, was greatly developed.

Although details vary in different authors, the teaching still most generally found in manuals of Catholic moral theology and philosophy is that there is a natural end of man that gives true happiness proportionate to human abilities. This end would naturally be attained by a natural knowledge and love of God after death. In this teaching the natural end approximates the supernatural end as closely as possible, for the natural end objectively consists in God. Moreover, its attainment is referred to the next life, often rather as a reward than as a result of man's life on earth.

Santiago Ramirez gives a careful and complete theological statement of this position. Even according to nature, God is the objective good man should seek as his end. The attainment of God is effected by an act of speculative knowledge that is man's highest perfection. The essential difference between heavenly beatitude and the natural end is the kind of knowledge by which God is attained—in heavenly beatitude by an intuitive vision that surpasses man's natural abilities, in the natural end by natural knowledge through creatures.

From a theological standpoint Ramirez carefully distinguishes the conditions under which the natural end of man could give perfect happiness. He maintains that if human nature is considered in itself rather than in comparison with the order of grace, under ideal conditions (integral nature) the natural end of man would give a perfect natural happiness. This perfect happiness would be attained fully, however, not in the present life but in an undisturbed knowledge of God after death.

Maritain's Thesis. Although in his earlier writings Jacques Maritain sometimes seemed to hold that the only natural end of man is the temporal *common good that is the objective of political action, in his *Neuf Leçons* he treats the problem more carefully.

He concludes first that God, as absolute and complete goodness, is the objective aspect of the end both of man and of the whole of creation. But in the natural order the goodness of God is reached only imperfectly and mediately, since the natural happiness of man is not found in sharing with God in His own life, but in man's fulfillment through action. Natural knowledge of God is only one aspect of this humanly perfective end.

The good that man can attain naturally does not constitute beatitude, because imperfect beatitude is not really beatitude at all. Natural happiness is imperfect, never finished, and always capable of increase. Hence the natural end of man is somewhat indeterminate; it would involve an endless progress even after death in the perfection of intelligence.

Man naturally desires to know what God is, but this desire is merely the thrust of human curiosity seeking to know the causes of things as fully as possible. This natural desire is not a desire for supernatural beatitude. Since natural happiness is never perfect in any case, the satisfaction of this particular natural desire, which is only one among many, is not necessary for the natural end of man.

Only the believer recognizes that man's natural desires are transformed by grace into the Christian's hope for perfect happiness in the beatific vision of God. But a philosopher may investigate religious teachings as a supplement to the other available sources of information. From Christianity he can learn that man in fact is called to perfect and supernatural beatitude. Thus the natural, indeterminate end has been replaced, but it is virtually contained in the supernatural end, for heavenly beatitude is the determinate attainment of perfect good. Hence Maritain rejects the parallelism between the natural and supernatural ends suggested by the common view of which Ramirez is representative.

Buckley's Proposal. Joseph Buckley's *Man's Last End* is the only book in English devoted exclusively to the problem of the natural end of man. His position is like Maritain's in its denial of a definite end of man in the natural order analogous to heavenly beatitude in the supernatural order.

Buckley sharply distinguishes the metaphysical view of ends, in which God is seen as the creator directing all things to the expression of His own goodness, and the moral or psychological view of ends, in which man directs his own action toward a good. Man's end, considered psychologically, is not the divine goodness itself, except supernaturally; naturally, man's will is ordered to the aspect of goodness in all things. God is included in the object of the will only as the primary and causal source of the entire realm of goods.

Buckley concludes that according to nature there is no concrete and determinate last end for man. If there were such an end, it would have to be a supreme good capable of fulfilling all desires and organizing the whole of life. But no single good, not even God as we naturally conceive Him, can meet these requirements. Thus the ultimate natural end of man is his indeterminate fulfillment in the indefinite realm of the whole of goods. Man naturally acts for ends that are concrete and determinate goods, but no such end is a last end, for none of these goods is adequate to the indefinite capacity of the will for whatever is good, and hence none of them can constitute perfect happiness or the fulfillment of all desires. Happiness considered indeterminately remains the only natural ultimate end of man from the psychological point of view.

Buckley is at pains to emphasize that although his view of the natural end reveals how fitting the supernatural perfection of man by divine grace is, this elevation is not necessary. God could have created man without calling him to a life of grace, but in that case human life would lack the definiteness of direction and pervasive unity of purpose that only a concrete and determinate end can give. Buckley assumes that moral standards are established apart from the consideration of the ultimate end.

De Lubac's Position. Unlike Buckley, who developed his position within the framework of Thomistic philosophy, Henri de Lubac considers the problem of the end of man from an Augustinian viewpoint and offers his *Surnaturel: Etudes historiques* as a contribution to the history of theology.

De Lubac tries to show that in man, an intelligent and free being created in the image of God, openness to God transcends the restrictive limits of determinate nature. De Lubac emphasizes the freedom with which God offers grace and the freedom with which man accepts it.

He thinks that passages in St. Thomas that seem to teach a natural end of man really only assert that there are some goods accessible to man in this life, not that there is or could be an ultimate end of man other than heavenly beatitude. De Lubac goes so far as to reject the entire notion of a possible purely natural order. His conclusion is that it is entirely impossible that there be a natural ultimate end of man.

Although De Lubac did not deny that heavenly beatitude is above man's nature and his own abilities of attainment, his position was widely regarded by theologians as a threat to the gratuity of the supernatural. His critics offered many arguments to show that De Lubac's position is incompatible with the teaching of faith that the life of grace is in no way required by or necessary to human nature. Much of this debate was quieted by the appearance in 1950 of the encyclical *Humani generis* in which certain unnamed theologians were criticized: "Others destroy the gratuitous character of the supernatural order by suggesting that it would be impossible for God to create rational beings without ordaining them for the beatific vision and calling them to it" [ActApS 42 (1950) 570].

TOWARD A SOLUTION

The present disagreement among Catholic thinkers concerning the natural end of man indicates that there is not yet a completely satisfactory resolution of this problem. However, Catholic theologians and philosophers who have studied the problem do generally agree that there is a natural end of man. All agree that the supernatural end, concerning which faith teaches, either replaces or subordinates the natural end. The present trend of thought is away from the position that had become common since the 16th century toward a view that accentuates the lack of parallelism between the natural and the supernatural ends.

Natural Desire and Happiness. No one approaching the problem of the natural end within the Christian tradition can avoid being influenced by St. Augustine. Thus Catholic thinkers have tended to focus upon happiness and man's desires rather than upon human action and the principles of its moral quality. Generally they have tried to determine what in fact would give man the greatest happiness of which his nature would be capable if he were not called to the supernatural life of grace. This emphasis has significant consequences. If attention is focused upon the restless heart and the real possibility of absolutely perfect happiness, the comparative imperfection of any natural end is clarified, but its positive character remains obscure.

Of course, even Aristotle considered happiness the ultimate end of man, and Aristotle did not identify this end with supernatural beatitude. This fact should be a reminder that an examination of the meaning of happiness is necessary if the problem of the end of man is to be formulated as an inquiry into what constitutes true happiness.

The universality of the human desire for happiness shows that man naturally and necessarily seeks *something* as an ultimate end in the enjoyment of which his will might rest. But the variety of goods that different men in fact accept as their ultimate ends proves that the human will is not determined to any definite good, even the highest. From this point of view Buckley's analysis of the natural end appears to be correct.

Perhaps, however, a different formulation of the problem of the natural end of man would lead to a more positive result.

Nature and Moral Obligation. From a psychological point of view, what each man seeks as a concrete last end is determined by himself; but from an ethical point of view, what last end every man should seek is predetermined by the nature of man and by his inescapable place in reality. This consideration suggests the following formulation that avoids the difficult notions of happiness and natural desire: Consider man strictly according to the requirements and possibilities of his nature. To what end *ought* he to direct his entire life? What good *should* man seek for its own sake, while rightly treating all other goods either as its constituent elements or as mere means to it?

Because Catholic philosophers generally accept Aristotle's thesis that choice is only of means, never of ends as such, some object to this formulation of the problem. But Aristotle lacked a clear notion of will and had only a limited understanding of freedom of choice. Moreover, one need not suppose that the last end is directly an object of choice, but only that man either chooses to consider and act for the good he should accept as his last end, or that he chooses to ignore the end to which he is obliged in favor of some other good that he prefers. A basic commitment to the morally required end is the first and most fundamental means for attaining it. Obligation with respect to the end need not be explained by any ulterior principle, for the last end is itself a first principle, the source of all obligations and primarily of the obligation to accept its own primacy.

Infinite and Finite Good. In attempting to describe the morally required natural last end, the first task is to determine whether the perfect goodness of God belongs to the objective aspect of man's natural end. As previously mentioned, there is disagreement among Catholic thinkers on this point. Some confusion seems to arise from a tacit assumption, most obvious in De Lubac, that if God is the end of man even according to nature, man's natural relationship to God would be the personal association that only grace can open to man.

But the orientation to God that belongs to man according to mere nature is other than the Christian's relationship to his Lord, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Even by nature, man should not love any finite good as if it were the perfect goodness of God, or commit himself to any particular good as if his will could rest content in the enjoyment of it alone. Human reason can discern the limitations of finite goods, and man is obligated by nature to act according to reason. It seems to follow that finite goods belonging to man's natural end may rightly be sought only so far as they are participations in the perfect goodness of God, although no act within man's natural ability can attain God as He is in Himself, since intimate sharing in divine life depends upon divine grace.

Specific Perfective Goods. However, even if it is agreed that finite goods directly attainable by man belong to his morally required natural last end only so far as they are participations in the perfect goodness of God, it still must be determined exactly what goods accessible to human abilities coalesce to form the organizing principle of a good human life. Aristotle thought that the highest perfection of man is some action desirable only for itself and perfect by itself alone. However,

human actions receive value from the goods attained in and by them, and no single natural mode of human action has the perfection that Aristotle required of the end. The fact that human nature can be elevated by grace indicates that man is less closed upon himself than Aristotle believed.

Hence, it seems that Farrell, Adler, and Maritain are correct in holding that all goods truly perfective of man have a place in his natural end. Most noble among these is the truth man can know about God and about his own place in reality, but most fundamental is man's physical and psychological health. Health truly perfects man; it deserves cultivation and demands respect even when no further perfection happens to be accessible. Truth, health, and other perfective goods underlie the fundamental precepts of natural law, for as constituents in the natural end, such goods first require that man act and first guide human action.

As already noted, especially in Maritain and Buckley, the present trend among Catholic thinkers is to admit a certain indeterminacy in the natural end. The ensemble of perfective goods has this characteristic, both because none of them is perfectly attained in any single act and because among them there is a twofold priority: that of nobility centering upon truth, and that of necessity centering upon health. Moreover, since each of these accessible goods must sometimes be subordinated to others and since none of them is self-sufficient, the dispositions of upright character, by which man avoids subservience to any particular good and maintains his openness toward God, are themselves desirable for their own sake. Thus the natural end of man includes complete moral virtue, a good in principle accessible to man's natural abilities although fallen man cannot attain it without healing grace. To determine the precise relationship within the ensemble of perfective goods between substantive goods such as truth and health and the peculiar good of moral virtue remains one of the most difficult tasks in the investigation of man's natural end.

See also END; FINAL CAUSALITY; FINALITY, PRINCIPLE OF; GOOD; COMMON GOOD; NATURAL LAW; DESIRE TO SEE GOD, NATURAL; BEATIFIC VISION; WILL; NATURE; GRACE, ARTICLES ON.

Bibliography: ARISTOTLE, *L'Éthique à Nicomaque*, tr. R. A. GAUTHIER and J. Y. JOLIF, 2 v. (Louvain 1958-59). L. ROBIN, *La Morale antique* (2d ed. rev. and corr. Paris 1947). G. DE BROGLIE, *De fine ultimo humanae vitae: Tractatus theologicus, pars prior, positiva* (Paris 1948). J. ROHMER, *La Finalité morale chez les théologiens de saint Augustin à Duns Scot* (Paris 1939). V. CAUCHY, *Désir naturel et béatitude chez saint Thomas* (Montreal 1958). W. R. O'CONNOR, *The Eternal Quest* (New York 1947). A. R. MOTTE, "Désir naturel et béatitude surnaturelle," *Bulletin Thomiste* 3 (1930-33) 651-676; "La Possibilité de la vision béatifique," *ibid.* 4 (1934-36) 573-590. M. J. ADLER and W. FARRELL, "The Theory of Democracy," *Thomist* 4 (1942) 121-181. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De hominis beatitudine tractatus theologicus ad primam secundae Summae theologiae*, ed. J. M. RAMIREZ, 3 v. (Madrid 1942-47). V. CATHREIN, "De naturali hominis beatitudine," *Gregorianum* 11 (1930) 398-409. J. MARITAIN, *Neuf Leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale* (Paris 1951) 89-117. J. BUCKLEY, *Man's Last End* (St. Louis 1949). H. DE LUBAC, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris 1946); "Duplex hominis beatitudo," *RechScRel* 35 (1948) 290-299. P. J. DONNELLY, "Discussions on the Supernatural Order," *ThSt* 9 (1948) 213-249; "A Recent Critique of P. de Lubac's 'Surnaturel,'" *ibid.* 554-560. T. DEMAN, "Surnaturel," *Bulletin Thomiste* 7 (1943-46) 461-472. P. M. DE CONTENSON, "Surnaturel," *ibid.* 8.2 (1947-53) 794-804.

[G. G. GRISEZ]