

THE
AMERICAN JOURNAL
OF
JURISPRUDENCE

AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM

FOR

LEGAL PHILOSOPHY

Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment

Germain Grisez

2001

VOLUME 46

NOTRE DAME LAW SCHOOL
NATURAL LAW INSTITUTE

NATURAL LAW, GOD, RELIGION, AND HUMAN FULFILLMENT

GERMAIN GRISEZ

This paper deals with matters that deserve book-length treatment. Since I do not expect to write that book, the paper is only a sketch for a work I hope others will undertake.¹

Part one deals with the basic precepts of natural law, which are the primary principles of practical reason.² Part two explains how those principles manifest God and give rise to religion. Part three treats the relationship between religion and moral life. Part four considers relevant aspects of the biblical worldview, and criticizes St. Thomas Aquinas's account of ultimate human fulfillment.

I. THE BASIC PRECEPTS OF NATURAL LAW

In thinking we can act or not, or do this or that, it seems to be up to us which option we shall choose: I must opt for one of the available possibilities, but only my choice will determine *which*. In choosing, we have the experience of doing so freely.

Determinists regard this experience as misleading or illusory, but since it is not obviously so, the burden rests on them to show that we should accept their view. In trying to do that, they must do more than call our attention to facts and present us with purely logical analyses, for neither facts nor logical analyses by themselves, nor both together, can establish the truth of determinism. Thus, determinists regularly try to show that their view offers the most reasonable account of all the relevant facts and therefore should be accepted. That *should* appeals to our reasonableness and challenges us to pursue truth

1. Some of the matters on which I offer new thoughts in this paper are treated more fully in other respects in Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987) 99. Except for the treatment at the beginning of III, below (ending at note 28), clarifying the overarching religious commitment that can organize one's entire life, nothing in the present paper is meant to amend that previous treatment.

2. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 94, a. 2. For brevity's sake, I do not deal here with the first principle of practical reason—"Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided"—though one must understand that principle to understand fully the prescriptivity of the practical principles I do deal with here. On the first principle, see Germain Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965) 168. Except for its final two paragraphs, which are corrected by intervening works and the present paper, that article still seems to me sound.

disinterestedly. But since we can rise to the challenge or not, it prescribes one of two alternatives really open to us. They are open to us, however, only because we understand the good of knowing truth and can choose for its sake or not. Inevitably, therefore, attempts by determinists to show that we should accept their view are self-defeating.³

Even animals and small children act, in the sense that they engage in goal-directed behavior. Such actions depend on patterning by instinct and/or experience, as well as on the prerational motivating factors commonly called "emotions." Those motivating factors follow from an animal's or a person's perceptions, including memories and imagination, of inner and/or outer conditions, and they constantly trigger behavior that usually is an appropriate response to those conditions. Emotions usually remain subconscious; they are experienced only when unusually intense and/or when the behavior they tend to trigger is impeded.⁴

Little children's actions manifest intelligence. Before the age of three, most children regularly use language to pursue goals, mainly by expressing their emotions verbally. Soon they are creatively solving practical problems. Intelligence plays only a subordinate role at first, for the child's behavior is directed toward goals that are merely imaginable states of affairs and is determined by the emotions that happen to prevail. Under those conditions, the only intelligible goods in play are instrumental. Reason serves the emotions; freedom remains quiescent.

Many intelligible goods are only instrumental: One diets to reduce cholesterol, looks both ways to avoid getting hit, brushes one's teeth to remove plaque. Lowering cholesterol, not getting hit, and removing plaque are indeed reasons for acting, but are intelligibly good only because they contribute to staying alive, intact, and healthy. Thus, free choices to diet, look both ways,

3. For a full articulation of this line of argument against determinism, including answers to many objections likely to be provoked by my summary, see Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., Germain Grisez, and Olaf Tollefsen, *Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).

4. Thomistic authors call prerational motivating factors "passions of the soul" or "acts of the sensory appetites." I think *emotions* is the most apt English word, provided one does not limit it, as people often do, to the instances of which one is conscious. Emotional motivations can be divided into four general sorts: (1) to engage positively with something perceived; (2) to engage destructively with something perceived; (3) to avoid engagement with something perceived; and (4) to avoid stimulation in general. As experienced, these tendencies are: (1) desire, enjoyment; (2) hatred, anger; (3) disgust, fear; and (4) languor, quiescence. The fourth sort of tendency generally is overlooked because it leads to withdrawal from situations that might arouse the other tendencies; yet the behavior involved in letting down and preparing to rest or sleep is a distinctive sort of purposeful movement requiring motivation no less than its alternatives.

and brush presuppose insight into the truth that life, including bodily integrity and health, is a good to be protected and promoted. That truth is a principle of practical reason, and the human good to which it directs action is basic. In other words, the prospect of benefits in respect to survival, bodily integrity, or health can be one's ultimate reason for choosing. Of course, one also can regard basic goods as means to other goods. For example, people may wish to stay alive and healthy so as to care for their loved ones and fulfill other commitments.

Children do not deliberate until they begin to understand such intelligible, basic goods. That is because prospective instances of those goods (and of evils opposed to them) ground the reasons for (or against) choosing each alternative that is considered in deliberation. In comparing those reasons, it often becomes clear that the prospective benefits and disadvantages, considered by themselves and precisely as such, are not intelligibly commensurable.⁵ In such cases, there is both room and need for choice. Freedom awakens, and children begin choosing.

Some critics have argued that persons, rather than basic human goods, are the real principles of practical reasoning. The argument is unsound. True, both persons and the practical truths that direct action toward basic human goods are principles. But they are so in different ways: Persons are principles insofar as every choice is made for the benefit, real or apparent, of some person or group of persons; but basic human goods are principles insofar as they provide

5. Prospective benefits and disadvantages that are not intelligibly commensurable when considered by themselves and precisely as such become commensurable when compared with moral norms, one's emotions, or other standards that one nevertheless can set aside, reasonably or not, in making one's choice. If, having begun to deliberate, one identifies some possible course of action that seems to offer all that any other (including doing nothing) offers and more, one loses interest in the other or others. As a result, choice is unnecessary, and one acts, without choosing, to realize that uniquely promising possibility. But when no possibility under consideration is found to offer unqualifiedly more or most good (or unqualifiedly less or least evil)—that is, none is found to offer all that any other offers *and then some*—the incommensurability of prospective benefits and disadvantages, considered by themselves and precisely as such, becomes obvious. This incommensurability both falsifies psychological determinism and makes clear the unworkability of alleged methods—utilitarian, consequentialist, proportionalist—of making a moral judgment by identifying the alternative that offers the greater (or greatest) net good, or lesser (or least) net harm. See Germain Grisez, "Against Consequentialism," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 23 (1978) 21; John Finnis, Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., and Germain Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 249-67. Note that the incommensurability of prospective benefits and disadvantages at issue here obtains among various instances of each basic good as well as among instances of diverse basic goods; so, the incommensurability at issue here is different from the incommensurability of the basic goods of diverse categories, which will be discussed at the beginning of part III, below, and the two should not be confused.

the ultimate reasons for choosing a certain action with a certain prospective benefit for a certain person or group.⁶

Someone might object that general principles cannot direct action to benefit particular persons. I grant that the primary principles of practical reason direct action toward goods whose beneficiaries are specified only as human. But every individual's capacities to act are potentialities for self-realization, which includes sincere self-giving in unselfish love of others. Moreover, basic human goods are not the only necessary motives for specifically human action. Emotional motives also are necessary as a condition for possibilities to emerge as options for deliberation and choice. And those motives naturally focus on the prospective effects of action on oneself, one's loved ones, and other individuals and groups. So, practical reason always *presupposes* particular persons to be benefited and for that very reason *focuses on* the human goods to be protected or promoted.⁷

6. Some who focus on persons wish to replace moral absolutes with a method (proportionalist, consequentialist, utilitarian) of specifying what is supposedly a "greater good" or "lesser evil" than an instance of a basic human good. For example, proponents of so-called abortion rights focus on pregnant women ("real persons" or "concrete persons") in an effort to make killing unborn babies seem a lesser evil than various disadvantages women would suffer if denied abortions. Others who focus on persons seem to have been influenced by Kant; see, e.g., Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 63-66. Such a view is criticized by Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., "Aquinas, Kant, and Donagan on Moral Principles," *The New Scholasticism* 58 (1984) 391, esp. at 403-4. Though neither an opponent of moral absolutes nor a Kantian, Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), thinks (29) the "Grisez-Finnis position" shifts the "focus from persons to goods" and says (77) there is something "curiously, if not ironically, Platonic in this focus upon a general form of a good rather than the concrete good of the person in question." Hittinger could have found my answer in many places in my works, for example: Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 121: "These goods are aspects of persons, not realities apart from persons." The point is explained more fully on a page (which Hittinger elsewhere cites) of *Contraception and the Natural Law* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1964), 78, concerning the relationship between the good of procreation and the person of the child: "The good which is an object of the parent's effort is strictly speaking only what the parent can attain—not the child in his totality as a person but rather the child only insofar as his being and perfection depend upon the action of his parents. We easily become confused about this point because we assume that the relevant value is *what* is loved, and obviously the child as a whole is loved. However, persons are not among human goods as if they were values to be desired. Instead, they actualize and receive the human goods into personal existence." In an appended note (104, n. 5), I explain that the distinction I make is the same one Aquinas makes between love of "concupiscence" and love of "friendship"; goods are loved with the former and persons with the latter, and both are involved in every act of love.

7. Of course, one may be unreasonable in presupposing that certain persons rather than others are to benefit. Such bias cannot be corrected solely by appealing to the principles of practical reason. One must rectify one's emotions by the moral exercise mandated by the

How can reflection identify the basic human goods? The most direct way is by asking about actions that would, or do, carry out free choices: “Why should we do that?”, “Why did you do that?”, and the like. Persisting with such questions eventually uncovers a small group of ultimate reasons for choosing. These reasons instantiate the basic human goods, toward each of which a primary principle of practical reason directs action.

As we have seen, such inquiry makes it clear that life, including bodily integrity and health, is one sort of basic human good. Knowledge of truth and esthetic experience are another sort, skilled performance in work and play still another. The preceding sorts of basic goods I call “substantive.” While they provide reasons for choosing, their instantiations do not themselves include choices. For example, a patient’s health provides a reason for a physician’s choices, but nobody’s health includes those choices.

People also can strive, without any ulterior reason, to avoid or overcome various forms of personal and interpersonal conflict—or, to put the matter positively, to foster various forms of harmony within themselves and between themselves and others. So, among the basic goods are certain forms of harmony, whose instantiations necessarily include the choices by which one participates in them. I call such goods “reflexive.”

Most obvious among the reflexive goods are various forms of harmony between and among individuals and groups of persons: living at peace with others, neighborliness, friendship.⁸ But similar goods—forms of inner peace—also can be realized within individuals and their personal lives. Emotions can be at odds with one’s judgments and choices: the harmony to which such disturbance is opposed is inner equilibrium or composure. One’s choices can conflict with one’s judgments, and one’s behavior can fail to

Golden Rule. Having done that, one’s emotions play their proper part by picking out the appropriate beneficiaries of prospective actions. On the Golden Rule, see Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 3, *Difficult Moral Questions* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1997), 863-67.

8. Labeling the reflexive goods is not easy. Morally neutral expressions are needed, but most words that refer to them connote moral goodness. That is understandable. The reflexive goods do pertain to the moral *order*—that is, to the realm whose fundamental categories are moral good and evil. Moreover, when instantiations of the reflexive goods involve only morally good choices, the harmonies realized are moral goods, such as true friendship, authentic virtue, and real peace with God. Therefore, upright people tend to overlook the distinction between the reflexive goods considered as principles of practical reason and their morally good instantiations. However, even wicked people grasp the value of the various forms of harmony and try to protect and promote them. For example, seeking peace of conscience, sinners often rationalize and deceive themselves. Similarly, seeking the harmony of “a more perfect union” and “domestic tranquillity,” people institute political structures that embody injustices such as slavery.

express one's inner self: the corresponding good is inner consistency. Most people also experience tension with, or even alienation from, what they recognize as a more-than-human source of meaning and value: so, another reflexive good is the harmony with a more-than-human reality that people seek by religious activities.⁹

Finally, marriage is a basic human good. People can freely choose to marry, seeking precisely the benefits of marital communion itself and the parenthood that typically fulfills it. Since marriage involves both an indissoluble covenant and the fulfillment of the sexual capacity, it is unique among basic goods by being simultaneously reflexive and substantive.¹⁰

Some hold that the principles of practical reason must somehow be derived from theoretical knowledge about human nature.¹¹ That view confuses priority in reality with priority in knowledge.¹² Human nature is prior in reality to the

9. People sometimes choose to do what is morally good even when they are aware of no reason for so choosing other than that it is morally good. So, someone might argue that moral goodness is another category of basic human good, with the corresponding primary principle of practical reason that moral good is to be done and moral evil to be avoided. However, people in general do not manifest any inclination to choose moral goodness for its own sake; only virtuous people manifest that inclination. And it is easy to see why this is so. Everyone understands the goods of inner composure and inner consistency and is naturally inclined to them; but virtuous people overlook the distinction between those goods considered as principles and their morally good instantiations, which pertain to moral virtues; so, they always are inclined to choose what is morally good, even when unaware of any ulterior reason for their choice. If, however, there were a self-evident principle of practical reason directing that moral good be done and moral evil be avoided, that principle would presuppose a natural inclination of some human capacity toward moral goodness; and, since an inclination toward moral goodness would not be toward the object of any single human capacity, it would have to be in the person as a whole. If there is an inclination toward moral goodness in a person as a whole, however, that person is virtuous. Thus, if people had a natural inclination toward moral goodness, they would be virtuous by nature. But in fact they are not; they become virtuous only by consistently making and perseveringly carrying out morally good free choices.

10. For that reason, a marriage is fully constituted only by *free choices*—the couple's mutual consent—followed by marital intercourse in which they become *one flesh*; see Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1993), 567-68, 573-74, 585-87.

11. See, e.g., Hittinger, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Ralph McInerny, "The Principles of Natural Law," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 25 (1980) 1; *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 35-62. For a reply to the criticisms in McInerny's article, see John Finnis and Germain Grisez, "The Basic Principles of Natural Law: A Reply to Ralph McInerny," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 26 (1981) 21; McInerny's book fails to take that reply into account. For a more general reply to criticisms offered by Hittinger, McInerny, and others holding similar views, see Robert P. George, *In Defense of Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59-75, 83-91.

12. It also overlooks the metaphysical irreducibility of (1) the *existential order of human*

basic human goods that fulfill it.¹³ However, because nothing is known except insofar as it is in act, we can come to know human nature only by knowing the whole set of human capacities, and those capacities are manifested only by their functions and the proper objects of those functions.¹⁴ So, relevant aspects of human nature can become known only by reflecting upon the principles of practical reason and the basic goods to which the principles direct human action, and those principles and goods can be known reflectively only by considering human acts.

Still, with human acts as data, people know the basic goods in two ways.

One is theoretical reflection, such as the present discussion. Though the primary principles of practical reason cannot be derived from antecedent knowledge, they can be identified, as I have explained, by asking questions about the aims of specifically human acts. The basic goods also can be defended dialectically, not least by refuting unsound accounts of human nature. For example, the theoretical argument showing that determinism is self-defeating undermines many unsound accounts of the reflexive goods, to which free choices are essential.¹⁵

acts, which make up personal and interpersonal life, to (2) *the natural order*, including human beings. That metaphysical irreducibility grounds the logical irreducibility of the practical (including moral) truths that shape (1), when and insofar as people freely conform to those truths, to any set of theoretical truths that conform to (2). And that logical irreducibility explains the epistemic priority—that is, the priority in knowledge—of practical principles with which the sentence to which this note is attached is mainly concerned. The metaphysical irreducibility of (1) to (2) and the logical irreducibility of practical truths to theoretical truths may seem puzzling and mysterious. But they are no more so than the metaphysical irreducibility of the logical order to the natural order and of logical truths to theoretical truths about extralogical entities. On such irreducibilities, see chap. 14, “Limits of Reductionism,” in Germain Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 230-40.

13. Although I have not called attention to this point, neither I nor any of my collaborators has ever denied it, and John Finnis has asserted it repeatedly and forcefully; see, e.g.: *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1983), 20-23; “Natural Inclinations and Natural Rights: Deriving ‘Ought’ from ‘Is’ According to Aquinas,” in L. J. Elders and K. Hedwig, eds., *Lex et Libertas: Freedom and Law According to St. Thomas Aquinas*, Studi Tomistici, 30 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), 43-55; *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 90-94.

14. Aristotle articulated this truth about the order of knowing, and Aquinas often restated it; see, e.g., *S.t.*, 1, q. 87, a. 3, c.; *In De anima*, lib. 2, lect. 6; also see Finnis, *Aquinas*, 29-31.

15. Similarly, a theoretical argument showing dualism false undermines theories that try to justify contralife acts and nonmarital sexual acts by treating the goods they destroy, damage, or impede as merely instrumental. See Germain Grisez, “Dualism and the New Morality,” *Atti del Congresso Internazionale Tommaso d’Aquino nel suo Settimo Centenario*, vol. 5, *L’Agire Morale* (Naples: Edizioni Domenicane Italiane, 1977), 323-30; for a refutation of dualism, see Patrick Lee, “Human Beings Are Animals,” in Robert P. George, ed., *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez* (Washington, D.C.:

The other way of knowing the basic human goods is how everyone first comes to know them: by insights that grasp the self-evident truth of the practical principles directing specifically human actions to them.¹⁶ Those insights are neither groundless intuitions nor the product of analyzing the meanings of words. They are insights into data. Of course, like theoretical insights, these insights transcend their data by universalizing. But they also do that in another way. Unlike a theoretical insight that transcends its data by grasping what *is* (that is, a reality that does not depend on the insight), a practical insight transcends its data by projecting what *is to be* (that is, the prospective realization of a human possibility through choice and action shaped by the insight itself).

In some cases, the data for these practical insights are actions that occur without free choice, together with the fulfillment that comes about in and through them. An agent exercising a capacity in that way, without engaging in theoretical reflection concomitantly knows not only the action but the capacity, its inherent inclination toward its fulfillment, and that fulfillment. For instance, a child's spontaneous questioning and resultant knowledge are data. As children engage in such action, they become aware of what they are doing, of being able to do that sort of thing, of being inclined to do it, and of the sort of thing they achieve in doing it. Such immediate intellectual awareness can lead to theoretical reflection. But it also provides the intelligible elements for the practical insight: Knowledge of truth is a good to be pursued.¹⁷

Reflexive goods, however, essentially include free choices. So, only actions that carry out free choices can be data for an insight by which one comes to know a reflexive good. Actions carrying out choices for substantive goods can provide the necessary data; but those data are, I think, initially actions in which harmony is lacking—for example, when one's choice to pursue some

Georgetown University Press, 1998), 135-51.

16. Moral norms and sound moral judgments presuppose much more than knowledge of the principles of practical reason. So, insight into self-evident practical principles by no means precludes the need for grace, the help of other people, and one's own persistent effort if one is to become prudent. See Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 245-304, esp. 246-49.

17. Unlike theoretical principles, which generally function without being known by us and come to be known only when we investigate their consequences, practical principles function only by being known by us and giving us reasons for adopting proposals to pursue benefits by instantiating basic goods. Therefore, although children exercise their capacities to play and seek knowledge before they understand the relevant basic goods, until they understand those goods as reasons for acting, they cannot deliberate about diverse possible ways of instantiating such goods, choose to pursue some of those possibilities, and carry out those choices. No doubt, both children's practical insights into basic goods and their ability to articulate such insights develop through their personal experience, socialization, and formal education. Still, at each stage of that development human acts are shaped, and thus limited, by the goods as then understood.

substantive good conflicts with someone else's choice regarding it. I recall how, as a small child, I first came to understand one of the reflexive goods. My father, whom I loved dearly, caught me playing, contrary to his instructions, with samples of a product he was selling. A quiet and patient man, he gently reclaimed them without scolding me. But I realized he was saddened. At that moment, I also understood that harmony with others—and especially with him—was to be safeguarded, and that my disobedience was at odds with that good.

II. GOD AND RELIGION

A sound argument for the existence of God begins by noticing that the existence of anything else we know or can imagine is contingent on the fulfillment of conditions outside the thing itself. The fact *that* a contingent thing exists is not included in *what* it is. Finding oneself in a universe of things that do not exist of themselves and seeking to account for these contingent things, one posits an ultimate cause that, being ultimate, depends on nothing else. It exists of itself: *what* it is includes *that* it is. But nothing can possibly lack anything included in what it is. So, the ultimate cause of contingent things necessarily is.

Reflecting on such an argument can make it clear that God, considered as the creator, is utterly mysterious.

The argument shows that the creator's actual existence is included in what the creator is. By contrast, the actual existence of a creature neither is included in nor flows from what it is or from any characteristic it has. It follows that what the creator is cannot be anything any creature is. And whatever any creature is, the creator is not. So, whenever one uses a word in the same sense one uses it to say something true about a creature, what one says about the creature must be denied of God as creator.

Thus, God is not a body, matter, or energy; is not spatial or temporal; does not evolve or change in any way. But God's changelessness does not imply fixity, inertia, or rigidity, for those also are intelligible characteristics of creatures. If God is not a body, neither is God a mind or conscious subject—using *mind* and *conscious subject* in the same sense we use them about ourselves. By experiencing ourselves and one another, we learn what it is to know, to choose, to be a person. But using words with exactly the same sense they have when we talk about ourselves, we must say: God does not know, does not choose, is not a person. Indeed, using words in exactly the same sense

they have when we talk about creatures, we must say that God neither is a substance nor has a nature.¹⁸

Can we even say God causes? Not in any of the senses in which we say a creature causes. However, while we cannot know what God is, we can know something about him by considering how creatures are related to him. As Aquinas said: "We cannot grasp what God is, but what he is not, and how other things are related to him."¹⁹

The question about contingent realities that initiates the argument leading to the existence of the creator poses a problem unlike any other: Why do such things exist? That *why* leads to a unique *because*—to the creator as the ultimate source of the being of everything else.

Now, various sorts of things within our experience are called "causes" in diverse senses. For instance, the fact that words are on a printed page is caused in diverse ways by the author's choice of those words, the typesetter's work, and the physical-chemical properties of paper and ink. Though accounting in diverse ways for the words' being on the page, all those causes are called "causes" because they answer *why* questions. So, when we ask, "Why do contingent things exist?" whatever answers that *why* question also is called their cause, but using *cause* in a unique sense.

Where did that unique sense of *cause* come from? It developed in the argument and emerged from it, along with a unique sense of *is*, when one concluded that there is a cause of contingent things. That emergence of fresh meaning is like others that occurred when people asked other *why* questions and answered them by discovering other sorts of causes.

In sum, our knowledge about the relationship of created things to the creator enables us to say, with a definite sense, that the creator causes. So, without understanding *what* God is, we know that God has what it takes to account for the actual being of the universe.²⁰

The heavens declare the glory of God and, in general, creation manifests the creator's power and divinity, but not all creatures clearly manifest God's providence and benevolence. They are best manifested by the law of the Lord—by revealed law fully and unmistakably, but, even without revelation, by the law written on every human heart.

Like much else pertaining to human nature, deliberation, using the principles of practical reason, begins only at a certain stage of a person's

18. Created natures are such that each individual has one and cannot have more than one. So, if God had a nature in the same sense that creatures do, nobody could be both human and divine.

19. *S.c.g.*, I, 30.

20. The matters dealt with in the present part up to this point are treated more fully in Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism*, 36-91 and 230-72.

development. Still, those self-evident principles direct all human choices, and in that sense, among others, are precepts of *natural law*.

Natural law manifests providence and benevolence because nothing else can account for its guidance toward the intelligible goods of every individual and community. Even if we evolved from lower forms, subhuman nature cannot account for practical principles that guide us toward intelligible goods; even though we experience and understand many naturally given goods, experience and theoretical knowledge cannot account for principles that direct us toward goods still to be realized; and even though many moral requirements follow from our previous actions and the actions of others, no human action can account for principles that guide every human action.

So, as people become aware of being guided toward intelligible goods by the principles of practical reason, they also become at least dimly aware of the more-than-human source of that guidance—a source about which the guidance itself provides indications. A guide toward intelligible goods must be thought of as intelligent; a guiding intelligence must be thought of as provident, that is, as acting on a plan; and an intelligence guiding all human beings and communities toward their good must be thought of as benevolent.²¹

One who follows others' guidance cooperates with them. So, awareness that the prescriptivity—which is signified by *is to be*—of the principles of practical reason is guidance by a more-than-human source tends to give anyone acting in accord with that guidance a sense of cooperating with that source. By the same token, following emotion against reason means failing to cooperate and disobeying the guidance received. And so, whenever one thinks that a norm depends upon the principles of practical reason, one implicitly knows not only practical reason's *is to be* but obligation—that is, that one is bound by that prescriptivity's source.²²

Because one reasonably posits only as many causes as necessary to account for the facts and because the natural law comes with being human, it is reasonable to identify the more-than-human source of natural law with the creator. For people who draw that conclusion, identifying the two illuminates both.

21. Proceeding theologically, Aquinas explains (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 91, a. 2) that all creatures are subject to God's providence, but rational creatures are subject to it in a special way: by sharing in it in providing for themselves and others. He concludes: "Thus rational creatures share in the very eternal plan by which they have a natural inclination to their appropriate action and end, and that participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called 'natural law.'"

22. Thus, one first knows prescriptivity, then becomes aware of its source, and only then realizes that one is bound by that source. So, the prescriptivity of practical reason cannot be reduced to a combination of theoretical truth about goods that will fulfill human nature and a divine command to act for such goods.

On the one hand, aware that the source of natural law's guidance is a necessary being and the source of the very existence of everything else, we realize that the guidance's source is mysterious. Since it must have what it takes to direct us to our own goods, we must think of it as intelligent and benevolent. Still, knowing and willing like ours cannot be attributed to the necessary being. So, even though the more-than-human source of guidance is quasi-personal, it is both utterly incomprehensible and beyond human control.

On the other hand, necessarily thinking of the creator as intelligent, benevolent, and provident, we recognize our own reality and the reality of everything on which we depend as a gift. We also realize that the natural law's source guides us to act within and upon a world whose very reality depends on that source itself.

Thus, by identifying the source of contingent things' existence with the source of the natural law's guidance, one better understands how human beings are related to the more-than-human source of meaning and value. One is aware of depending both for existence itself and for guidance and help in securing well-being and human flourishing not only upon one's community but with it upon that unseen, quasi-personal other. In this way, awareness of our complex relationship to God enhances understanding of the terms of the principle of practical reason that directs us toward the good of religion: *Harmony with God is to be preserved and promoted.*²³

III. RELIGION AND THE MORAL LIFE

There is a hierarchy of values: Every basic human good is superior to any instrumental good and to anything considered good precisely as the object of emotional desire. Yet, considered precisely as the ultimate reasons for acting, the whole set of basic goods does not constitute a hierarchy.²⁴ Rather, as

23. Even without awareness of the creator, awareness of the natural law no doubt leads to the insight that harmony with the source of its directiveness is a good to be realized and safeguarded. Grasping that principle, even initially, presupposes data that become available only by reflection both upon actions directed by other principles of the natural law and upon those principles' prescriptivity. But given the necessary data, the principle about harmony with God, like other principles of practical reason, is self-evident. Like them, too, it is part of the data necessary for a sound theory of human nature, not a conclusion drawn from such a theory. Still, as I have explained, identifying the source of the natural law's directiveness with the creator develops insight into the good of religion. Development of insight is not peculiar to the good of religion; see Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 182; "A Critique of Russell Hittinger's Book, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*," *The New Scholasticism* 62 (1988) 456-58.

24. Moral truth rather than nature establishes the right priorities among the basic goods. As will be explained, while that right order is in one respect the same for every person, it is not so in other respects. Thus, some people rightly forgo marriage and parenthood, and others rightly

ultimate reasons for acting, they are incommensurable: neither equally good nor more or less good than one another. For, as reasons for which there are no further reasons, the basic human goods are irreducible; and as pertaining to diverse categories, they are good in diverse ways.²⁵

Does it follow that, in making commitments involving diverse sorts of basic goods, one is morally free to set whatever priorities one likes? No. One's moral obligations sometimes limit the priorities one sets in making commitments involving diverse sorts of basic goods. One may judge that even though an option promises genuine benefit in terms of some basic good, it ought to be excluded on moral grounds; in that case, one plainly should choose a morally acceptable alternative.²⁶

Still, that priority by itself does not provide a basis for organizing a person's entire life. If there is no hierarchy among the basic goods of diverse categories, is such an integration even possible? The answer is yes.

The incommensurability of the basic goods of diverse categories does imply that one cannot organize one's entire life in view of some prospective realization of a substantive good, such as life or knowledge of truth. No commitment to such a purpose can be relevant to every other choice one might make.²⁷ Moreover, no upright person supposes that any instantiation or set of instantiations of any substantive good deserves to be given the priority required to organize the whole of life. On the contrary, just as an upright

dedicate themselves so completely to their spouses and children that they must forgo most opportunities to pursue theoretical knowledge, appreciation of beauty, and play, and may find it reasonable to sacrifice their health and even life itself.

25. Note that this incommensurability among the basic goods of diverse categories is one thing; an entirely different thing is the incommensurability, already mentioned in part I, among the prospective benefits and disadvantages of choosing and carrying out the different options about which one deliberates. Only the latter incommensurability, not that of the basic goods of diverse categories, is a necessary condition for free choice and incompatible with utilitarianism, consequentialism, and proportionalism. The distinction between the two incommensurabilities has been overlooked by some critics—e.g., Hittinger, *op. cit.*, 65-79, though he cites (74, n. 59) a page (Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 156) on which the distinction is stated. Hittinger's overlooking the distinction, his assuming (*op. cit.*, 139-46) that no moral norms order one's plan of life unless there is a hierarchy among the basic human goods, and other mistakes vitiate his attempt to criticize what he calls "the new natural law theory."

26. Though basic goods of diverse categories are incommensurable, truths that distinguish moral good from moral evil follow from and specify the *integral* directiveness of the primary principles of practical reason: see Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," 121-31.

27. Some will object that one's ultimate end is relevant to every other choice one makes, and that every human being's true ultimate end is the prospective supernatural realization of the substantive good of knowing the first truth: the beatific vision of God. That objection will be dealt with in part IV, below.

person will freely give up his or her life rather than violate conscience, so such a person will forgo any other instance of a substantive good whenever promoting or protecting it would require an immoral action.

Of course, morally upright people always can find a way to avoid immorality while carrying out a general commitment involving one of the reflexive goods. Whenever a reflexive good to which they are committed is at stake, they always can do something morally acceptable to further that good. But harmony with other people is not at stake in every choice one makes, and harmony within oneself is at stake only when one or more appealing options is morally unacceptable; so, only the good of religion could be at stake in every choice. Therefore, only some prospective realization of that good could provide an overarching purpose to unify one's entire life.

What might that overarching purpose be? To maintain and promote harmony with God in an ongoing cooperative relationship. For that purpose, one might commit oneself to act always in accord with all the guidance God provides.

But why make that commitment? First, because harmony with God is self-evidently good, and always following his guidance in an ongoing cooperative relationship will maintain and promote that harmony. Second, because God guides human individuals and communities toward their own good. So, consistently following his guidance is likely to safeguard and promote not only harmony with him but every other aspect of one's well-being and flourishing. In choosing, it is not entirely within one's power to achieve the benefits one intends; other conditions must concur, and the reality both of those conditions and of one's own power depends on God. So, one depends on him for everything and always must hope for his cooperation. Mutuality requires that one consistently cooperate with him.

Of course, like an upright commitment to maintain harmony within oneself, the commitment to act always in accord with all God's guidance would exclude choosing any option one judges morally unacceptable—that is, any option one judges to be at odds with the integral guidance of the principles of practical reason, the law God has written on human hearts. But God not only guides all human beings by the principles of practical reason. He also guides each person by his or her unique gifts and situation. One's gifts and situation indicate *which* morally acceptable options to choose.

Each person has unique abilities, which make certain morally acceptable options more and less practicable. And, because people in particular situations have diverse concrete needs and possibilities of flourishing, diverse morally acceptable options offer them more or fewer prospective benefits. Those facts, having their reality from the creator, are reasonably accepted as providential signs. If one chooses to follow them, one often discerns which morally

acceptable option best answers to one's unique capacities and one's own and others' actual needs and possibilities of flourishing. And one is inclined to take that option, hoping that carrying it out will achieve the purpose one must suppose God intended one to act for in providing these unique capacities and placing one in this unique situation.

A person's life would be an integrated whole if he or she consistently acted in accord with all the guidance God provides. Harmony with God would be the single ultimate end intended in every choice such a person made. Because God guides everyone toward fulfillment in human goods, that ultimate end would lead everyone committed to it to authentic self-fulfillment, including good interpersonal relationships. And because God guides different individuals to use their diverse gifts in diverse ways to meet their own and others' diverse needs, that single ultimate end would lead different persons to organize their lives in somewhat different ways. Major elements in the structure of most people's lives would be settled by their commitments to participate in certain enduring relationships and communities, and to make a living in a particular way. Those major commitments, in turn, would serve as the criterion for discerning among the remaining morally acceptable options in respect to the less central elements of one's life.²⁸ If an entire community made and carried out such an overarching religious commitment, its members would thank God for the diverse gifts each person had received and would cooperate in using their diverse gifts to protect and promote the common good.

Not many people seem to have made and lived by such an overarching religious commitment. Although most have manifested some awareness of depending upon a more-than-human power, few seem to have known everything necessary in order to consider making an overarching commitment to cooperate consistently with that power.

Rationalization impedes many people's grasp of relevant truths. Dimly aware of being guided by an unseen power and yet unwilling to cooperate consistently with it, one tries to overcome guilt feelings. There is some consolation in supposing that the unseen power's guidance is self-interested; and, thinking God self-interested, people try to manipulate him, as they do one another. God's incomprehensibility blocks that effort, but anthropomorphizing seemingly overcomes the obstacle. In this way, rationalization eventually leads to polytheism, human sacrifice, and much else at odds with metaphysical truth, sound morality, or both. Wanting to know what to do, people practice

28. This explanation of *personal* divine guidance—by the concrete signs of one's unique capacities and one's own and others' needs and possibilities of flourishing—amends and complements the account provided in Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," 141-46. But see that earlier account for a richer sketch of the interplay between sin and distorted religious practices and views of God.

divination rather than attending to available, God-given guidance. With groups of sinful people divided from and conflicting with one another, each group tends to fashion its own god, elaborate its own religion, and develop its own moral code.

Even apart from rationalization, theoretical mistakes prevent many people from grasping relevant truths. It is easy to arrive at some knowledge about God, but it is very difficult to achieve clear and certain knowledge of all the truths presupposed by a sound religious commitment.

One view involving theoretical mistakes that distort both religion and the moral life is that ultimate reality is an absolute One, while human selves are fragments whose salvation lies in merging back into that One. Because that view misses the truth about the creator, creatures, and their possible cooperation, it has no place for harmony with God and precludes authentic religion. Offering nothing to hope for except eventual absorption into the One, it also negates personal dignity and devalues fulfillment in human goods. So far as personal identity, community, and flourishing in human goods are concerned, merging into the One is annihilation.

Key aspects of Aristotle's philosophy are equally disastrous for religion and moral life. Aristotle never so much as mentions the good of harmony with God, the guidance he provides for us, the possibility of promoting and maintaining that harmony by consistently following that guidance, or the need to reflect upon one's gifts and situation in order to discern which morally acceptable options to choose.

It is easy to see why those things did not attract Aristotle's attention.

According to his view, there are many self-existent substances. The supreme substance, Aristotle's highest god, is self-thinking thought. Being fully actual and changeless, it need not and cannot do or make anything. Some other substances, not fully actual, can try to become like this god by acting to realize themselves. Human beings are among those substances—although with them, as with other sublunary things, individuals come to be and pass away, so that only the concrete species is self-existent. Human beings naturally tend to actualize themselves and can do so fully only in an ordered set of functions culminating in the exercise of reason, which itself culminates in contemplating higher realities.

This view simply has no place for God, the creator and more-than-human guide to human fulfillment.²⁹ Aristotle's highest god is not utterly mysterious;

29. Richard Sorabji, "Infinite Power Impressed: The Transformation of Aristotle's Physics and Theology," in Richard Sorabji, ed., *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 181-98, explains how medieval Christian theologians, including Aquinas, were led—partly by works mistakenly attributed to Aristotle and partly by a line of commentary going back to the Neoplatonist Ammonius—to

we can understand it well enough to know that we can have no personal relationship with it. It provides no guidance; we cannot cooperate with it. The very idea of harmony with it is meaningless.

Aristotle's views of human nature and its fulfillment also are incompatible with someone's making an overarching religious commitment for the sake of ongoing cooperation with God, and carrying out that commitment by organizing his or her unique life in accord with all the guidance God gives.

For Aristotle, human goods are intelligibly commensurable and ordered hierarchically. With one's priorities determined by nature, nurture, and good fortune, one cannot organize one's life by free commitments. Indeed, Aristotle does not recognize *freedom* of choice.³⁰ Paradigmatically, reason determines human beings' actions.³¹ On that view, human goodness is not personal but

suppose that Aristotle's god creates and sustains the universe. Rendered docile to Aristotle by that supposition, Aquinas and other Christian theologians appropriated his thought for their theology, remedying only those defects in it that were clear to them in light of their faith. I would argue that those theologians, overlooking obstacles to a personal relationship with Aristotle's god, were led by his thought to develop an ambitious theology of God's attributes vulnerable to many of the objections of process theology—objections to which Christian faith's teachings about God are not themselves vulnerable. Of course, the god fashioned by process theologians has its own fatal flaws.

30. Aristotle talks about choice but not free choice. Significantly, Aquinas, who regularly uses *liberum arbitrium* to refer to free choice (the expression appears about 1900 times in his works), in all of his commentaries on Aristotle uses that expression only once (see *In Phys.*, lib. 2, lect. 10), and then to interpret the Latin translation Aquinas was using. Still, it might seem that Aristotle does recognize free choice: He holds that not everything happens necessarily in the sublunar world (and thus maintains indeterminism in nature generally), recognizes the role even animals have in the genesis of their own behavior, and insists upon the deliberation characteristic of voluntary human action. Thus, Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause, and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), viii, defines *determinism* as "the view that whatever happens has all along been necessary, that is, fixed or inevitable," and cogently argues (233-56) that Aristotle denies determinism *thus defined*. But Sorabji argues with equal cogency (227-33) that Aristotle holds people's deliberations and actions to be caused by an unbroken chain of antecedents. In explaining and defending that complex view, however, Sorabji never even considers choice, and thus overlooks the fact that an unbroken causal chain is incompatible with the self-determination of choice required for its freedom (see Boyle, Grisez, and Tollefsen, *op. cit.*, 8-25). Thus, if Sorabji's interpretation is sound, Aristotle not only fails to recognize free choice but implicitly rejects it. Also see the authors Sorabji cites (243, n. 1) who interpret Aristotle's account of actions as deterministic. Because Aristotle overlooks free choice, his ethics has no place for radical conversion; becoming good is possible only if its necessary preconditions are given; see M. F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1980), 69-92.

31. Of course, other factors quite often determine human actions, just as the species-specific instincts of animals paradigmatically determine their behavior, even though other factors sometimes determine the behavior of defective or diseased animals, and regularly determine that of domesticated ones. Aristotle's view so exalts the exercise of reason that other

species-specific, though its more or less adequate realizations in particular instances exhibit the same wonderful variety found in the qualities of more or less perfect individuals of other natural kinds: snowflakes, oak trees, horses.

According to Aristotle, the paradigmatic functioning of practical reason presupposes moral virtue, but his so-called virtues are mere dispositions of a human individual's natural capacities to function well. Thus, Aristotle has no conception of genuine moral virtues: aspects of a person whose feelings, spontaneous mental functions, thoughts, and skills are integrated with a set of freely chosen and faithfully fulfilled upright commitments that organize his or her life.³²

On Aristotle's view, not every person possesses dignity. Only the fortunate can benefit from philosophical reflection and practice, gradually perfect their capacities, come to follow reason consistently, and so realize their specifically human potential. Heredity and environment make many people poor specimens, unable to function well as human beings. Such people are natural slaves.

IV. THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW AND ULTIMATE HUMAN FULFILLMENT

The writers of the books that Jews and Christians alike accept as biblical affirm and develop what can be known by rational inquiry about God and humankind. God is both the incomprehensible creator, beyond human manipulation, and the provident Lord, guiding people toward what is good for them. He creates freely, makes human beings in his own image and likeness, and invites them to cooperate by tending subhuman creation and populating the earth. Disregard of God's guidance and failure to maintain harmony with him cause people to lose harmony with one another and within themselves. Life itself is forfeited. Pain and frustration accompany procreative and life-sustaining labor.

Yet God begins redeeming humankind by calling together a people to be his own, making a covenant with them, and including in its stipulations norms protecting every member of the covenantal community. Not only does the covenant order every aspect of life, but God provides supplemental guidance,

aspects of human well-being and flourishing might seem to be, not intrinsic goods, but only conditions for reason's exercise or material for it to shape. However, Aristotle argues that the supreme good for human beings is *eudaimonia* (happiness), and many scholars maintain that diverse intrinsic goods contribute to *eudaimonia*; for one carefully argued articulation of this view with references to others' similar views, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 3-121.

32. On this understanding of virtues, see Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 50-59; Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," 129-31.

as needed, to individuals. He promises his chosen people that, if they live up to their commitment, they will find fulfillment in a homeland blessed with freedom, wise laws, justice, peace, and prosperity. Their nation will be a beacon for all others.

That worldview makes clear both the primacy of harmony with God and the intrinsic and irreducible goodness of other basic human goods. Persons possess equal dignity. Their choices are free and self-determining, and fundamental among them is the choice to accept or reject the covenant. Those who make that commitment and faithfully keep it truly love God. That love is all important. Wisdom, a divine gift rather than a human achievement, both fosters that love and is sustained by it.

The errors and manipulative practices of religions corrupted by self-deception are strictly excluded. Instead of sacrifices and oblations, God wants contrite and obedient hearts. He asks his people simply “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”³³ Virtue, as philosophers understood it, is hardly mentioned.³⁴ Human well-being and flourishing depend far more on God’s help and his people’s fidelity than on any perfection of their capacities for nonreligious activities.

That monotheistic worldview is further developed in the Gospels and other books of the Christian New Testament. Jesus is the divine Word become man, sent by the Father to gather together his chosen people. He invites that people to become the nucleus of a new and universal human community, united in friendship with God by a new and unbreakable covenant. Harmony with God and neighbor are to be instantiated by fulfilling the new covenant’s primary stipulations: to love God with one’s whole heart, soul, and strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself.³⁵

33. Mi 6.8. On this verse, see Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, 24E (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 502-39, esp. 527-30.

34. See H.-G. Link and A. Ringwald, “Virtue,” in Colin Brown, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978), 926.

35. In receiving God’s commandments, the Israelites were exhorted to be faithful to the Lord: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Dt 6.4-5). Jesus endorses the primacy of this commandment’s call to faithful love (see Mt 22.36-38, Mk 12.28-30, Lk 10.25-28) and further specifies what constitutes perfect love. Christians are to *abide in* the divine love with which God loves Jesus: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love” (Jn 15.9). That charity is not itself a human act, but human acts are related to it: see Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 132-33. The specifically Christian overarching religious commitment is the act of faith in Jesus and his teaching. Though faith is a divine gift, in no way merited by human persons, the commitment of faith is a free choice by which one shares in a covenantal relationship with God mediated by Jesus’ humanity (see *ibid.*, 3-8). Hope

All are called to be incorporated into Christ in a way that not only preserves but perfects their individuality. Following Jesus, all of his members without exception are to fulfill themselves by using their gifts in serving others and building up this one body. The perfection of human capacities by rational reflection and practice is hardly mentioned.³⁶ The focus is on love and the Holy Spirit's other gifts, gifts that enable each and every Christian to live the life of good deeds that God providentially prepared for him or her. Taking up one's cross and following Jesus by living one's unique personal vocation involves inevitable sacrifice and suffering. But those who come to know Jesus and make the commitment of faith are promised a share in the kingdom, provided they accept their vocation and faithfully fulfill it.

That kingdom is not of this world. It will come when God renews creation as a whole. Jesus compares the heavenly kingdom to a wedding feast. Everyone who shares in it will be fulfilled, yet some will be greater and others less. Each participant's fulfillment will be appropriate to him or her, not species-specific. No longer will there be want or sorrow, death or sin in the kingdom; human well-being and flourishing will be fully realized and secured. Thus, one is to pray and work unceasingly for the kingdom's coming and one's entry into it. Indeed, the kingdom is to be sought first, for it is the principal object of Christian hope.³⁷

is the intending of the kingdom for whose sake one makes the commitment of faith and every choice implementing that commitment (see *ibid.*, 78-87).

36. The Stoic philosophers, who shaped the more noble secular moral standards of the culture in which St. Paul preached, had articulated a moral ideal in terms of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance, and fortitude. By contrast, Paul presents God's grace and Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection, which struck the "wise" as foolish, as the principles of the kingdom's far superior culture. Thus, rather than instructing Christians about the wisdom, justice, temperance, and fortitude they might strive for, Paul tells them that God "is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1.30).

37. In accord with God's promise, Christians "wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home" (2 Pt 3.13). This new world is God's kingdom; it already exists insofar as God's saving work in Jesus reconciles fallen humankind (see Mt 12.28; Lk 11.20, 17.20-21; Rom 6.5-14; Eph 2.4-7; Col 2.12-13, 3.1-4). However, one looks forward to the completion of God's plan and to the full experience of one's own share in his kingdom (see Mt 25.31-34, Rom 8.12-25). This will come about when Jesus returns. So, Christian hope focuses on this future event: Jesus' coming in glory (see Mt 24.29-31, Mk 13.24-27, Lk 21.27-28, 1 Thes 4.13-17). On that day, he will radically transform the world by excluding all sin and all other evil, and by establishing unbreakable communion with God (see 1 Cor 15.23-27, 2 Pt 3.10-12, Rv 21.1-4). One hopes for the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Cor 15.12-24), because only those who share in the life of the risen Jesus will share fully in his kingdom. All who die in Christ will live again in the kingdom by sharing in the life that Jesus himself has enjoyed since God raised him from the dead (see 1 Cor 15.19-23, 1 Thes 4.13-14). Hope also extends to what is necessary to enter into the kingdom. One hopes for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who

Many New Testament passages make it clear that the blessed will see and intimately know God and/or Christ.³⁸ Plainly, that seeing and knowing will be a great blessing for those who enter into the kingdom. Yet the New Testament does not focus exclusively on it. Indeed, bodily resurrection is so often stressed that it might seem the chief blessing. More important, the vision of God is not described as the fulfillment of human nature.

Seeing God presupposes likeness to him, for that seeing is God's own "knowing," shared by his children.³⁹ Thus, the beatific vision will be a sharing in the intimacy that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit naturally enjoy with one another. Sharing in that intimacy will fulfill human persons insofar as, having become "participants in the divine nature,"⁴⁰ they are truly divine. That share in the divine nature is really distinct from their human nature; through God's grace, Jesus' followers really "become children of God," "born from above" "of water and Spirit."⁴¹

enables one to fulfill one's covenantal responsibilities and guarantees one's share in the kingdom (see Jn 14.15-17, 16.7-14; Rom 8.1-17; Gal 5.22-25). One hopes for the pardon of one's sins (see 1 Jn 1.9), because unforgiven grave sin renders a person incapable of entering the heavenly kingdom (see 1 Cor 6.9-11; Gal 5.19-21; Eph 2.1-6; Rv 21.8, 22.15).

38. One now lives "in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Tit 1.2); "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17.3). One looks forward to knowing God and Jesus so intimately that one will become a mature member of God's family (see 1 Cor 13.11-12, 1 Jn 3.2), and so by the gift of the Holy Spirit share, like Jesus, in divine glory (see 2 Cor 3.18; cf. Rom 5.2).

39. "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when it is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is" (1 Jn 3.2; cf. 1 Cor 13.11-12). Some exegetes take "we will be like him, for we will see him as he is" to mean that our seeing God will make us like him, but others take it (as I do) to mean that the expectation of seeing God as he is makes it clear that God's little children will become like him. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible, 30 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), treats this verse (392-97), and reports (396) that Schnackenburg takes the passage to mean: "we shall still be like Him at the revelation; *and therefore* we shall be able to see Him as He is" (italics added), and Brown himself remarks of that reading: "Grammatically this is quite defensible," but personally does not take a firm position. In my judgment, the reading I prefer is required inasmuch as a being's nature (what it is) simply is the real ground of its capacities and functions, so that nothing any being does can make it be what it is. Moreover, the logic of the verse as a whole supports that reading: the first sentence raises a question about *what* we will be, not a question about *how* we will come to be that; therefore, the second sentence must be answering that question by telling us *what* we will be (and giving us a reason for accepting what it tells us), not telling *how* we will be transformed so as to become like God.

40. 2 Pt 1.4.

41. Jn 1.12, 3.3-8; cf. 1 Jn 2.29-3.10.

Now, if the New Testament's teaching about sharing in the divine nature and seeing God is literally true, that seeing can no more be a human act that fulfills human persons precisely insofar as they are human than Jesus' human acts and sufferings can pertain to the Word of God precisely insofar as he is divine. But despite the New Testament's consistency and clarity, its teaching that Christians become children of God and share in his intimate life is of course not usually taken so literally.

Christian theologians agree that the child of God, born of water and the Spirit, enjoys the gift of the Spirit. That gift is called "uncreated grace" by Catholic theologians. But the indwelling Spirit is distinct from those in whom he dwells. So, something must transform those who become God's children: Grace and charity, poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, *inheres in them*, as the Council of Trent definitively teaches.⁴² Following a line of thought already clearly articulated by Aquinas, Catholic theologians since Trent have assumed that the transforming and inhering grace and charity, being distinct from the three divine persons, must be a *created* quality or qualities inhering in the soul.⁴³ However, I do not see how having a created quality or qualities in one's soul can constitute sharing in the divine nature. Therefore, it seems to me that the transforming and inhering principle by which a human person shares in the divine nature is neither anything created nor the very creator himself, but is a reality other than both.⁴⁴

42. See *Decree on Justification*, canon 11 (DS 1561).

43. In treating grace, Aquinas deals with the participation in the divine nature mentioned in 2 Pt 1.4. He holds that grace of the relevant sort is a created quality (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 110, a. 2) that quasi-formally brings about in human beings a participation in the divine nature (a. 3) according to a certain likeness, by inhering in the essence of the soul (a. 4). The significance of "according to a certain likeness" becomes clear if one considers the following: If anyone said that the Word of God did not assume human nature itself but only participated in it according to a certain likeness, that person would be denying the Incarnation.

44. Some theologians of the Eastern Church see the problem much as I do and take a somewhat similar position. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: Hames Clarke, 1957), 172, articulates the notion of *uncreated* grace distinct from the Holy Spirit: "In the theology of the Eastern Church, as we have already remarked, the Person of the Holy Spirit, the giver of grace, is always distinguished from the uncreated grace which He confers. It is the energy or procession of the one nature: the divinity . . . in so far as it is ineffably distinct from the essence and communicates itself to created beings, deifying them." On the uncreated energies, see 67-90. Also, see John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, trans. George Lawrence (London: Faith Press, 1964), 217-18. For a compact statement of this Eastern view, together with many indications that might be followed up by historical research: M. Edmund Hussey, "The Persons-Energy Structure in the Theology of St. Gregory Palamas," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 18 (1974) 22, esp. the summary, 26. For helpful indications of the consistency of this Eastern theology with Catholic faith: Louis Bouyer, *Le Consolateur: Esprit-Saint et vie de Grâce* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 421-49.

I realize this position sounds self-contradictory, but so did the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation to those to whom they were first proposed: Jesus is not the heavenly Father, yet is really God, as is the Holy Spirit (Trinity); Jesus is not a human person, yet is true man (Incarnation). I am suggesting that, similarly, the transforming grace and charity that inheres in those reborn as God's children is neither the creator (the Trinity) nor a creature (something other than the divine nature). It is uncreated (a true sharing in divinity) and yet is really given by the Trinity's free choice to persons who, as human, remain creatures (and so is a sharing by divine adoption, not a transformation of human nature that fulfills it).⁴⁵

Moreover, rational reflection supports the thesis that the blessed can enjoy the beatific vision only insofar as they share in divine nature and that the beatific vision cannot *per se* fulfill them insofar as they are human. A created thing's nature is the potency fulfilled by its complete actualization, and the divine nature is its own complete actuality. The enjoyment of divine goodness naturally pertains to divine persons as divine. But beings that share the same complete reality must be of the same nature, and beings different in nature cannot share the same complete reality. Thus, human persons can enjoy divine goodness *only* by sharing in the divine nature and the intimate life proper to that nature; and that sharing cannot be a human act fulfilling a person as human. Therefore, the blessed are not fulfilled in divine goodness and do not enjoy the beatific vision insofar as they are human.⁴⁶

If the beatific vision is not a human act that fulfills human nature, how can grace build upon nature?⁴⁷ The possibility of its doing so is grounded in the

45. For a fuller statement and defense of this position, see Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 580-90 and 592-94. I think that my view articulates an understanding of truths of faith rooted in Scripture and compatible with the Catholic Church's teachings. But I could be mistaken and stand ready to accept the Church's judgment.

46. Aquinas replies (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 3, a. 8, ad 2) to a somewhat similar argument by distinguishing between *what* is desired as the ultimate end and *how* it is attained. On the one hand, *what* constitutes the perfection of God, created persons, and, indeed, all beings is the same, namely, divine goodness. For, as he has explained earlier, all things tend somehow toward divine goodness, even if only by tending toward their own limited goodness, since the goodness of creatures is a participation in divine goodness. On the other hand, God and created persons differ in *how* they attain divine goodness. God's happiness is in comprehending his essence, while the happiness of created persons is in seeing God's essence without comprehending it. But this reply of Aquinas misses the point, at least of my objection. This concerns neither the sameness of all creatures in tending toward divine goodness nor the difference between God and the blessed in how they know the divine essence. Rather, it concerns Aquinas's claim that created persons, by an act (albeit a supernatural act) of a capacity pertaining to their own *created nature*, can attain to *divine goodness itself* and thereby be absolutely fulfilled by it.

47. As will become clear, I do not entirely agree with what Aquinas means by "grace

Incarnation. In Christ, God comes to us as a fellow human. By God's grace, Jesus' faithful disciples will be humanly fulfilled by their cooperation and intimacy with him. As Jesus explains, by virtue of the intimacy with him that the gift of faith gives, even in this life his disciples see and know the Father through their human acts of seeing Jesus and knowing him to be who he really is: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"⁴⁸ That seeing and knowing plainly is not the beatific vision but a human act, which, though possible only because of God's grace, fulfills Jesus' disciples as human. Their human relationship with him also includes the intimacy of eucharistic communion, which is to be perfected by their sharing forever in his glorified humanity. Then too, human persons, risen and living gloriously in Christ, will be forever immune from both sin and death.

But how can we even be interested in the beatific vision? The answer lies in the fact that Jesus not only shares his own human fulfillment with believers by uniting their humanity with his, but also gives them "power to become children of God."⁴⁹ He offers them a share in his divine nature and holds out to them the prospect of sharing the intimacy he enjoys with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Though that gift itself cannot fulfill human nature, human persons committed to cooperating with God in all things have good reason to accept it, since they not only receive the offer from Jesus, their human Lord, but can recognize it as a gift God wishes them to accept. If someone committed to cooperating with God in all things believes Jesus' offer of divine filiation and his promise of intimacy with the Father, he or she has reason to welcome that gift, thank God for it, and cherish it.

In sum, though the beatific vision cannot *per se* fulfill the blessed as human, they are so fulfilled by their friendship with God, and that friendship, perfected by their union with Jesus, involves all the gifts God gives through Jesus. Among them are the blessed's share in God's very nature and their joy as his children in seeing him as he is. Thus, though the blessed *per se* enjoy the beatific vision only insofar as they are divine, they are as human *indirectly*

presupposes nature." His accounts of both human nature and the beatific vision include and/or presuppose propositions, drawn from Aristotle and other non-Christian philosophers, that I believe to be false. Still, just as human nature allows for the Incarnation of the Word, it also must allow for human persons to play their part, precisely as human, in receiving God's gifts, including both a share in his nature and their fulfillment as his children in the intimate life proper to that nature. In this respect, human nature does have what has been called an "obediential potency," and grace does perfect nature inasmuch as God enables human persons as human to be and to do that for which they have no *active* potentiality without grace.

48. Jn 14.9-10.

49. Jn 1.12.

fulfilled by it. Therefore, hoping to join the blessed, one can perform human acts bearing upon the beatific vision, such as praying for it.

Even so, since no human act can attain divine goodness in itself, divine goodness attained in the beatific vision cannot be a *reason* for making any choice. What, then, can be a reason for making a choice bearing on the beatific vision? Jesus explicitly taught that everyone should seek the kingdom, and that entering it would mean ultimate joy while missing out on it would be ultimate loss. So, enjoying one's share in the kingdom and helping others attain it can be the ultimate end for doing everything a Christian does. The kingdom can be one's overarching reason for choices because, as Jesus described it, the kingdom clearly includes *human* fulfillment: harmony with God unmarred by even the slightest sin, resurrection life, intimate friendship with Jesus, and the joy of living together in a perfect human community.

But I disagree with Aquinas. He held that human persons, precisely as human, can be fulfilled in divine goodness. He maintained that the blessed attain divine goodness in the beatific vision, which he regarded as a human intellectual act of knowing what God is.⁵⁰ He argued that the created intellect can see God, because a natural desire cannot be vain and "every intellect naturally desires vision of the divine substance."⁵¹ Of course, Aquinas did not suppose any creature to have an innate or naturally developed ability to arrive at or engage in the beatific vision. Rather, he held that vision to be an act of a kind entirely different from the intellectual acts attainable by a creature's native capacities and their development. Aquinas explained that a created intellect needs to be enabled by God to transcend its natural limits and receive the beatific vision as his gift. In that sense, the act is not natural but supernatural, a divine gift rather than a creaturely attainment.⁵² But while regarding the beatific vision as supernatural in that respect, Aquinas held that the natural

50. See *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 3, aa. 4 and 8.

51. *S.c.g.*, III, 57; cf. 50-56; *S.t.*, 1, q. 12, a. 1, c.; *Compendium theologiae*, I, 104. For a careful and thorough study of relevant texts, see Jorge Laporta, *La Destinée de la Nature Humaine selon Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1965), 23-72. For Aquinas, Laporta shows, natural "desire" of created intellects for the beatific vision is simply the inclination of their nature to its fulfillment, not a conscious desire. Still, a conscious desire to know what God is naturally arises in the mind of anyone who knows that he exists, and Aquinas thinks the beatific vision alone will satisfy that conscious desire.

52. In *S.t.*, 1, q. 12, a. 5, Aquinas, having argued that the beatific vision is an act of the created intellect, posits a special, God-given, created light (*lumen gloriae*) which, he says, makes the intellect like God (deiform), and thus enables it to be actuated by the divine essence itself. The claim that a created light can enable a creature to attain divine goodness in itself (and not just a created participation in that goodness) seems to me problematic in the same way as the claim that created qualities in the soul can give a creature a real share in the divine nature.

tendencies of the human mind and heart are fulfilled by that human act of knowing God and can find ultimate fulfillment in nothing else.⁵³

I have argued that the New Testament and rational reflection support the view that the beatific vision cannot fulfill human persons insofar as they are human. But Aquinas's view no doubt seemed to him a neat synthesis of the best philosophy and the theological tradition, especially of the views of Aristotle and St. Augustine. To explain and defend his synthetic view, Aquinas, as usual, articulated plausible arguments, which nevertheless seem to me vulnerable in several respects. But I shall criticize one proposition, which appears repeatedly, namely, that an ultimate end must be so absolutely fulfilling that it entirely satisfies desire and leaves nothing to be desired. (Hereafter, I refer to that proposition by using a shorter expression: *the proposition that the ultimate end must be absolutely fulfilling.*)

Aquinas invokes that proposition as a crucial premise in settling two central issues. In arguing that the human person's happiness (*beatitudo*; ultimate and perfect fulfillment) is to be found in God's goodness alone, he asserts: "For happiness is perfect good, which quiets desire (*appetitus*) entirely: it would not be the ultimate end if something still remained to be desired."⁵⁴ And in arguing that the human person attains divine goodness and finds happiness only in the vision of the divine essence, Aquinas asserts: "The human person is not perfectly happy as long as something remains for him or her to desire and seek."⁵⁵

The proposition that an ultimate end must absolutely fulfill the human person seems to me false. On my view, human persons as human do have a natural "desire" for rich fulfillment: As I explained in part I, above, their capacities are naturally inclined toward the basic human goods—friendship with God, knowledge of truth and aesthetic experience, and so on. But no single instantiation of any of those goods—not even friendship with God—can utterly fulfill anyone. Everyone has far more desires and wishes than he or she can ever satisfy. Thus, everyone must choose among morally acceptable possibilities—for example, marrying or committing oneself to a state of life

53. It is clear from Aquinas's arguments that he thinks the blessed are fulfilled insofar as they are human. In *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 2, a. 8, he argues that human happiness can be found only in God, and uses as a premise: "The object of the will, which is the human appetite, is the good universally, just as the object of the intellect is the true universally." In *ibid.*, q. 3, a. 8, he argues that the blessed attain God's goodness, which constitutes their human happiness, by seeing the divine essence, and uses as a premise: "The object of the intellect is what a thing is, that is, the essence of a thing." Thus, Aquinas's arguments attempt to show that the beatific vision and it alone can perfectly fulfill the *human* heart and mind—fulfill human persons as human.

54. *Ibid.*, q. 2, a. 8, c.

55. *Ibid.*, q. 3, a. 8, c.

that precludes marriage, studying this or that, cultivating various gifts and pursuing various interests rather than others, and so forth. The richest possible fulfillment for a human person therefore is not something definite; it is opened and indeterminate. But while natural desire never can be fully satisfied, still it is not vain, since it leads to whatever genuine fulfillment a person enjoys.

To defend my position that the beatific vision cannot fulfill human persons insofar as they are human, I must refute the proposition that the ultimate end must be absolutely fulfilling. I shall try to do so by showing the falsity of a thesis that Aquinas tries to establish by using that proposition as a premise.

The thesis at issue is more basic than those already discussed. Aquinas begins his treatise on beatitude by laying out his general understanding of the ultimate end. He shows first that every agent, including every acting human being, always acts for an end—meaning by *end* some definite good which is the action's "cause," in the sense that it is that for the sake of which the agent acts.⁵⁶ Then he shows that, since a causal series cannot go on forever, there must be some ultimate end of human life.⁵⁷ He next tries to prove the thesis I will try to refute, namely, that at any given time a person's will cannot be directed to more than one thing as an ultimate end.

Aquinas begins by using as a premise the proposition that the ultimate end must be absolutely fulfilling: "Since everything desires its own perfection, one desires as an ultimate end that which one desires as a good that is perfect and will fulfill one." From that he infers: "It is therefore necessary that the ultimate end so fulfill the human person's desire that nothing apart from it is left to be desired." With that as a premise, Aquinas easily concludes that having one ultimate end precludes having another: A person can have only one at a time.⁵⁸

Three things in the same article show beyond doubt that the single ultimate end Aquinas has in mind is some definite good in which an individual expects to find complete satisfaction.

First, in the *sed contra* of the article, Aquinas quotes St. Paul concerning those whose god is their belly, and explains that gluttons put their ultimate end in its pleasures. So, that definite apparent good is one instance of the sort of ultimate end the article is concerned with. Second, to the first objection, based on Augustine's report that some put the ultimate end in four things (pleasure, repose, the gifts of nature, and virtue), Aquinas says that those who put the ultimate end in those many things considered them together as *one* perfect good. So, that definite set of goods is another instance of the relevant sort of

56. See *ibid.*, q. 1, aa. 1-2.

57. See *ibid.*, a. 4.

58. See *ibid.*, a. 5, c.

ultimate end. Third, in the final sentences of the article's body, Aquinas's argument shows that the question is not about the common ultimate end of human beings in general, but about the particular ultimate end of this or that particular human being: "Just as the ultimate end of the human person as such is to the whole human race, so the ultimate end of this person is to this person. It necessarily follows that, just as there naturally is one ultimate end of all human beings, so the will of this person is fixed upon one ultimate end." Clearly, then, Aquinas is trying to prove in this article that at any given time one cannot intend more than *one definite good* (or set of goods) as ultimate end. And, in the next article, he goes on to try to show that one must desire whatever one desires for the sake of that single ultimate end.⁵⁹

In fact, however, people's wills *can* simultaneously have two or more ultimate ends, since sometimes they *do*. That becomes clear when one considers together four kinds of cases.⁶⁰

First, most Christians have some interests unintegrated with their faith and their hope for heaven. Consider Joe, an eleven-year-old who lives in God's love and hopes to go to heaven. He also plays baseball with his friends simply "for fun," as he puts it, though when he chooses to play baseball rather than watch television, he grasps a good that he cannot articulate in the former that is absent from the latter, even though watching television also can be fun. If Joe were catechized about personal vocation, he would have some idea about how to relate the good involved in playing baseball to the good of heaven. But never having thought about the two ends together, he never has chosen to play baseball with the ultimate intention of friendship with God and living forever in his kingdom. Since he has never done that, heaven, though habitually intended by Joe, is in no way that for whose sake he chooses to play ball. So, when he is at play, Joe has at least two ultimate ends: heaven habitually and play actually.⁶¹

59. See *ibid.*, a. 6.

60. For a much fuller treatment of these four kinds of cases, see Peter F. Ryan, S.J., "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" *Gregorianum* 82 (2001) 327.

61. In trying to prove the thesis that one desires whatever one desires for the sake of one's single ultimate end (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 6), Aquinas answers the objections that playful acts are done for their own sake rather than ordered to any ulterior end, and that speculative sciences are pursued for their own sake though each of them cannot be the ultimate end. His reply to the first is that playful actions are ordered, not to some extrinsic end, but to the good (pleasure or recreation) of the one who engages in them, whose consummate good is his or her ultimate end. He similarly answers the second by saying that speculative science is desired as a particular good of the person speculating, which is embraced under the complete and perfect good—i.e., the ultimate end. Those answers might be satisfactory if Aquinas held, as Aristotle perhaps did, that human beings' true ultimate end is comprised of many goods realized in the whole of a well-organized life; in that case, the goods of playful acts and speculative sciences could be

Second, many wicked people have multiple ends that they have not integrated with one another. Consider a politician who cares in the end about nothing but the pleasure of lechery and the power of high office. Realizing that he is risking power when he pursues pleasure, he tries to conceal his adulterous affairs. Still, when his secret is exposed, he reluctantly sacrifices illicit pleasure to remain in power. Up to then, pleasure and power plainly were two ends that the man willed, each for its own sake.

Third, Christians plainly have two ultimate ends when they commit themselves by a single choice to obduracy in mortal sin and to holding fast to their faith with the hope of eventual repentance. Consider Susan, a devout young woman who falls in love with a man and agrees to marry him before she finds out he is not free to marry. She realizes that adultery is a mortal sin and that living with him would mean regularly committing sins of adultery and not repenting them. She initially considers giving up the man or abandoning the practice of her faith and trying to forget it. But then Susan thinks of a third possibility: marry the man civilly and cling to her faith, hoping for eventual repentance and salvation. Rejecting the first two possibilities, she chooses the third: by a single choice she commits herself to both living in adultery and practicing her faith as fully as her honestly acknowledged state of mortal sin allows.⁶²

Fourth, faithful Christians sometimes commit deliberate venial sins. Aquinas holds that God can remain such a venial sinner's habitual ultimate

related to the ultimate end as parts of the composite whole. However, Aquinas holds that the true ultimate end for human beings is attaining divine goodness and that a child described as I have described Joe is oriented habitually to that true ultimate end (see *ibid.*, q. 89, a. 6). So, his answer to the objection is unsatisfactory: it does not show how the causality of the ultimate end (which consists in its being a reason for choice that proposes the benefit that is intended in choosing) can affect Joe's choice to play; for Joe never has thought about how the good for whose sake he chooses to play baseball rather than watch television is related to his hope for heaven. Nor will it help to interpret Aquinas as meaning that Joe plays and does other things simply for himself as end but habitually orders himself to God, and thereby orders everything he does (except his sins) to God as his ultimate end. For Joe has no end in view in acting unless he regards something as a good that can *fulfill* him (either in doing that action or by means of it); but Joe does not regard himself as a good that can fulfill him; so he cannot be the end for whose sake he plays or does anything else.

62. Susan plans to implement her hope by following the guidance offered to people living in illicit unions by John Paul II: *Familiaris consortio*, 84, AAS 74 (1982) 185, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.) 21-28 Dec. 1981, 17. The Pope teaches that such people should not consider themselves separated from the Church, but should listen to the word of God, persevere in prayer, attend Mass, contribute to works of charity, help in efforts to promote justice, and do penitential works. However, they must not participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving Holy Communion, for "their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist."

end. He seems to suppose such a person simply does not think beyond the proximate end so as to direct it to some ultimate end other than God.⁶³ But that will not do. An ultimate end causes only by providing a reason for choosing to act for a proximate end, and God cannot provide any reason for choosing to act sinfully for any end. So, in sinning, deliberate venial sinners either have some ultimate end other than God or no ultimate end at all. But nobody can will anything except on account of some ultimate end.⁶⁴ Thus, deliberate venial sinners have some ultimate end other than God, and those in grace who commit deliberate venial sins simultaneously have at least two ultimate ends.

In sum, it is not true that at any one time a person's will must have a single ultimate end in willing whatever it wills. Yet that thesis does follow from Aquinas's premise that only what one regards as a perfect good, leaving nothing to be desired, can be taken as one's ultimate end. And that, in turn, follows from the proposition that the ultimate end must be absolutely fulfilling. So that proposition also is false, and its falsity, in turn, renders unsound the two central arguments in which Aquinas uses it as a premise. Therefore, those two arguments do not show that the true ultimate end and fulfillment of human persons is in divine goodness attained in the human intellectual act of knowing what God is.⁶⁵ And, unsupported by such arguments, that theological position loses its plausibility as an interpretation of the New Testament's teaching about human fulfillment.

Someone might object that I must be misinterpreting Aquinas's thesis: How could he have overlooked such obvious data falsifying what he was trying to prove? That objection deserves a careful reply. There are at least four reasons why Aquinas overlooked the obvious.

First, Aquinas held that, on reaching the use of reason, every child in his or her very first morally significant act either turns toward God as ultimate end

63. See *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 88, a. 1.

64. See *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 4.

65. That view of the true ultimate end for human persons also is inconsistent with other positions Aquinas holds: that human beings have a natural ultimate end (see, e.g., *S.t.*, 1, q. 62, a. 1) and that infants who die unbaptized enjoy without sadness—which implies without any frustration of unsatisfied desire—goods proportionate to natural human abilities even though they do not attain divine goodness by the beatific vision (see *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3). Various problems about the relationship between nature and grace in Aquinas's teachings about human persons' last end have been debated from the time of Aquinas's first commentators until today. See Germain Grisez, "Man, Natural End of," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 9:134-35. When I wrote that article, I thought the controversies generated by Aquinas's views on human persons' natural and supernatural ends were due solely to the complexity and incompleteness of his synthesis. I now also think that in some respects his attempts to express his views on these matters are logically inconsistent.

or commits a mortal sin.⁶⁶ Surely he would not have said that unless he thought it true, and he would not have thought it true had it been at odds with his own experience. Now, before Thomas was six years old, he was placed as an oblate at Monte Cassino Abbey. No doubt he was thoroughly catechized, and very likely he was confronted with Augustine's stark alternatives: love of God to contempt of self or love of self to contempt of God. Thus, it is reasonable to suppose that, unlike Joe of my example, Aquinas tightly organized his life from his earliest choices. And, mistakenly generalizing from his own unusual experience, he overlooked the obvious disarray of most people's lives.

Second, the culture in which Aquinas lived and worked was far more homogeneous than ours, so that the options for organizing one's life very likely seemed much sharper and clearer to him than they do to us. Moreover, he brought up no children and probably did little or no pastoral work, such as hearing confessions and preparing young people for the sacraments. Instead, his life of prayer, study, teaching, writing, consulting, and participating in deliberation about the affairs of his order almost entirely cut him off from experiences that would have forced him to pay attention to the lack of complete integration in most people's lives.

Third, anyone developing an argument under extreme pressure, especially a new argument for a position long assumed to be true, easily overlooks obvious data that would falsify that position.⁶⁷ Aquinas wrote the treatise containing the thesis I am challenging late in his life, and his production during those last years was immense, so that it is hardly likely he had time to review and polish what he wrote. Thus, it is reasonable to suppose that he failed to advert to the relevant data while dictating the article and never again had occasion to focus on it.

Finally, Aquinas was carrying out a large project of synthesis between Aristotle's thought and previous Christian theology, especially that of St. Augustine. The points on which the two more or less agreed led Aquinas to a view of beatitude that he felt certain was right: beatitude was the true ultimate good to be intended by a human agent in every choice (Aristotle) which would completely satisfy the human person's restless heart (Augustine). On that view

66. See *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 89, a. 6.

67. Aquinas often assumed that nobody can have two ultimate ends at once; see, e.g., *In Sent.*, 2, d. 24, q. 3, a. 6, c.; *De ver.*, q. 28, a. 5, obj. 5; *De malo*, q. 14, a. 2, c. But I find no attempt before *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 5, to prove the proposition that at any given time a person's will must have a single ultimate end in willing whatever it wills. In later questions, Aquinas sometimes refers back to that article; see, e.g., *ibid.*, q. 12, a. 3, obj. 1 and ad 1 (where Aquinas also mentions St. Augustine); and *ibid.*, 2-2, q. 55, a. 2, c. But in those places, he neither restates nor adds anything to the argument.

of the true ultimate end, nobody simultaneously could intend both it and some other ultimate end. Aquinas was certain about the conclusion his argument needed to reach, and such certainty can distract even the best mind from obvious data that would falsify it.

Aquinas's Christian ethics is seriously impaired in at least two ways by his view that the beatific vision fulfills the blessed precisely as human.

First, that view downgrades most of the specifically human goods for which Christians hope.⁶⁸ According to Aquinas's view, the true ultimate end is an instantiation after death of one substantive good, namely, the human good of knowledge. But if that were so, Christians could not rightly make the commitment of faith and organize their entire lives by it in hope of heavenly fulfillment not only with respect to knowing God but also with respect to other human goods.⁶⁹ Of course, Aquinas never drew that conclusion; but his view of the beatific vision as a human good impoverished his account of the heavenly kingdom with respect to other human goods, leading him to hold, for example, that bodily resurrection and friends are not essential to heavenly beatitude but only contribute to its well-being.⁷⁰

68. Vatican Council II has taught that in heaven the blessed will find *all* the human goods: "For after we have promoted on earth, in the Spirit of the Lord and in accord with his command, the goods of human dignity, familial communion, and freedom—that is to say, all the good fruits of our nature and effort—then we shall find them once more, but cleansed of all dirt, lit up, and transformed, when Christ gives back to the Father an eternal and universal kingdom: 'a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace'" (*Gaudium et spes*, 39; the internal quotation is from the *Roman Missal*, Preface of the Feast of Christ the King). By contrast, even though Aquinas teaches (*S.c.g.*, III, 53) that the beatific vision satisfies the *desire* for all the human goods insofar as they are included, in sublimated form, in the enjoyment of divine goodness, he also makes it clear, as I shall show, that none of them in itself (except the human act of seeing God) is essential to human fulfillment.

69. In part III, above, I explained how one could organize one's entire life by committing oneself to act always in accord with all the guidance God provides in order to maintain and promote harmony with him in an ongoing cooperative relationship. If someone who has made such a commitment subsequently makes the commitment of Christian faith, the latter commitment does not displace the former but subsumes it by further specifying it. Still, people can make a genuine act of faith without considering—and so without committing themselves to—acting always in accord with all the guidance God provides. For, though the act of faith presupposes repentance and includes renunciation of sin, it does not of itself require one to discern and follow the guidance God gives each person by his or her unique gifts and situation. So, discerning, accepting, and committing oneself to one's personal vocation is a duty within Christian life rather than a necessary condition for becoming a Christian.

70. See *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 4, a. 5 (bodily resurrection) and a. 8 (friends). Aquinas does not explain how something of itself absolutely fulfilling can receive well-being from anything not essential to it.

Moreover, in allowing even that subordinate value to bodily resurrection and friends, Aquinas implicitly contradicts his position that the true ultimate end will so completely fulfill human nature that it will leave the blessed nothing else to desire. If those who enjoy the beatific vision had nothing else to desire, their intellects and wills could tend to nothing else. And if their human capacities could *tend to* nothing else, the blessed as human could *do* nothing else. Even though they might, perhaps, in a sublimated way know and love one another in knowing and loving God, they would be wrapt in isolated ecstasy and would be forever unable to engage in any direct interaction, such as communication with one another (any such action distinct from the beatific vision would be something else toward which the blessed tended). This inconsistency is avoided if one accepts my view that salvation (participation in the heavenly kingdom) includes both the mature life of the blessed as divine (the beatific vision) and their fulfillment as human (rich participation in all the human goods, including human friendship with God, human communion with Jesus and his saints, resurrection life, human knowledge, and so on).⁷¹

Second, thinking that the beatific vision fulfills the blessed as human, Aquinas supposed that Christians living in God's love cannot simultaneously intend other human goods as ultimate ends. As a result, he failed to see that even Christians in grace must *deliberately* organize their lives so that every other choice will implement their fundamental commitment of faith. Failing to see that, he failed to provide an adequate *practical* treatment of the requirements of Christian life: to know Jesus well, to undertake to follow him, and to organize one's entire life as cooperation with him and thereby with God.⁷²

71. Aquinas himself (*Super I ad Corinthios*, xv, lect. 2, on v. 19) seems to regard bodily resurrection as *essential* to one's salvation: "A person naturally desires the salvation of himself or herself; but, since the soul is part of the human body, it is not the entire human being, and my soul is not I; so, even if the [disembodied] soul reached salvation in another life, neither I nor any human being would thereby do so"; also see *De pot. Dei*, q. 5, a. 10, c.; *Compendium theologiae*, I, 151; *Quod*. VII, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3. However, the Church teaches definitively that, even before those who have died in Christ are raised from the dead, their souls, having been purified if necessary, enjoy the beatific vision, and are "truly blessed and have eternal life and rest" (Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* [29 Jan. 1336], DS 1000). That solemn teaching shows that either Aquinas' position on the beatific vision or his position on the necessity of resurrection for salvation is mistaken. I think he is right about bodily resurrection and mistaken in holding that the beatific vision fulfills the human person as human. I agree with him that, as human, a disembodied human soul is only a spiritual remnant of the person, not a person. So, I conclude that the disembodied soul that is truly blessed by enjoying the beatific vision must be doing so, not as human, but solely in virtue of its share in the *divine* nature. Since Aquinas's view cannot account for Benedict XII's teaching while mine can, that teaching tends to support my view.

72. Knowing Jesus well includes knowing the truth he taught and other truths about him. But that is not all: It also includes becoming *acquainted* with him by knowing his friends and

St. Thomas plainly understood and fulfilled those requirements in his personal life. But Aquinas the theologian never focused upon them. Instead, influenced by Aristotle, he focused on the virtues. Of course, having and exercising virtues is important in Christian life. But for Christian ethics, theoretical reflection on the virtues is far less helpful than practical reflection about how sinners, cooperating with grace, can find God's plan for their lives, accept that plan, live according to it, and thus become the unique saints God wishes them to be.

While I think my arguments show that Aquinas was mistaken about the ultimate end, I also believe his Christian ethics was enriched by numerous truths—those he drew from divine revelation, those he personally discovered, and those he gathered from Aristotle and other sources. Authentic renewal of Christian ethics must build on those truths while setting aside Aquinas's errors. Only that way of proceeding, not following him uncritically, truly is *ad mentem divi Thomae*. For St. Thomas valued truth more than his own opinion. And he was interested in serving God and the people of God, not in the empty honor of having his opinions regarded as tantamount to the truths of faith.⁷³

hearing and/or reading his story (the Bible, particularly the New Testament, and especially the Gospels). For those who cooperate with Jesus, that acquaintance, once begun, grows into a human friendship with him. That cooperation takes many forms: seeking and enjoying Jesus' help in overcoming all deliberate sin, participating in his actions in the liturgy, and playing one's part in the Church's apostolate, which continues to carry out his mission. One's part in the apostolate is not limited to specifically religious practices. Secular activities—that is, all those done to instantiate basic human goods other than religion—must be integrated with living faith and hope. That integration is not brought about by one's commitment to the true ultimate end. It depends on discerning, accepting, and faithfully fulfilling one's personal vocation, while shaping all of one's activities by conscious and active participation in the sacraments. See Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 459-830. Vatican II mentioned personal vocation in many places and explicitly taught (in *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 6) that priests are to see to it that *each* of the faithful is led by the Spirit to work out his or her *proper* vocation in accord with the Gospel; the Council's teaching on that subject has been richly developed by John Paul II. For references to the Pope's teachings and a treatment of the various responsibilities pertaining to one's personal vocation, see Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 113-29.

73. In their Editorial Introduction, the Editors have explained the circumstances in which the eight commentaries on my article were prepared, and which I regret prevented Dr. John Jenkins, C.S.C., from revising for publication his valuable draft commentary on the first version of the article. I thank all the participants in the Symposium, including Jenkins, for their stimulating contributions, which helped me develop and refine my arguments for publication here.