

DUPLEX HOMINIS BEATITUDO¹

• Henri de Lubac •

“Beatitudo is twofold: the first is ‘natural’
and the second is ‘supernatural.’”

By force of repetition, certain historical errors become so habitual that they are hard to redress. So it is in the case of the interpretation of certain texts of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Take for example this text from the *Summa theologiae*:

Man is perfected by virtue, for those actions whereby he is directed to happiness, as was stated above (I-II, q. 5, a. 7). Now man’s beatitudo or happiness is twofold (*duplex hominis beatitudo*), as was also stated above (I-II, q. 5, a. 5). One is proportionate to human nature, a happiness, to wit, which man can obtain by means of his natural principles. The other is a happiness surpassing man’s nature, and which man can obtain by the power of God alone, by a kind of participation of the Godhead.²

¹Henri de Lubac, “*Duplex Hominis Beatitudo* (Saint Thomas, I^a 2^{ae}, q. 62, a. 1),” *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948): 290–99. Translated and published by kind permission of *Recherches de science religieuse*.

²ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1, co. [*Per virtutem perficitur homo ad actus quibus in beatitudinem ordinatur, ut ex supra dictis patet. Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas, ut supra dictum est. Una quidem propositionata humanae naturae, ad quam scilicet homo pervenire potest per principia suae naturae. Alia autem est beatitudo naturam hominis excedens, ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest secundum quamdam divinitatis participationem.*] [In the footnotes we have provided the Latin citations exactly as de Lubac reproduced them in the original essay, although where references to Thomas Aquinas are concerned, there may be very minor variations from the standard critical edition.—*Trans.*]

When the idea of “pure nature” was fully formulated, this text was one of those invoked in order to authorize—supposedly in the name of St. Thomas Aquinas himself—this new doctrine (*la nouvelle doctrine*) of a “purely natural order.” Doesn’t the *duplex hominis beatitudo* of which the Universal Doctor here speaks sanction two possible ends of humanity: one natural and due as a matter of “right,” and the other supernatural, given in the form of a divinely decreed gift?

This was the interpretation of Francisco Suárez, which he articulated in the pages of both his *De Ultimo fine hominis*,³ as well as his *De Gratia*.⁴ The beatitude proportionate to human nature (*beatitudo proportionate humanae naturae*) of which St. Thomas speaks is, for Suárez, a natural beatitude that man would have been able to attain had he been created without being ordered to a supernatural end (*sine ordinatione ad finem supernaturalem*). For in this case, as Suárez explains, “It would be necessary for man created in this way to have some natural beatitude that, if he so desires, he is able to attain” (*homo sic conditus necessario habiturus esset aliquam beatitudinem naturalem, ad quam, si velit, possit pervenire*). Like many before him, Père Victor Cathrein has reiterated the Suárezian interpretation in a recent article published in the *Gregorianum*.⁵ And more recently, Père Réginald

³*Disputatio 4, de beatitudine in communi*, section 3, n. 2 (Vivès, v. 4, p. 44). [References to “Vivès” are to the edition of Suárez’s *Opera omnia* published in 26 volumes by Ludovico Vivès in Paris from 1856–1866.—*Trans.*] See p. 43 for his comments on ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1. On the other hand, in n. 5 (p. 44–45), Suárez interprets as I do the texts of questions 3 and 5: “Second, beatitude may be divided into the perfect blessedness of the future life, and the imperfect blessedness of this life.” [*Secundo, dividitur beatitudo in beatitudinem perfectam vitae futurae et imperfectam hujus vitae.*] Cf. *Disputatio 15*, n. 1 and 3 (pp. 144 and 145).

⁴*Prolegomenon 4*, c. 1, n. 10 (Vivès, v. 7, p. 182). On the natural end, Suárez adds: “Whatever this may be, and whether it exists in this life or can be achieved only in the future, is not something to be dealt with here, since it has its proper place in the material on beatitude.” [*Quis autem ille sit, et an in hac vita, vel solum in futura obtineri possit, non est tractandum hoc loco, cum in materia de beatitudine proprium habeat.*] Nevertheless his line of thought leaves no room for doubt.

⁵Victor Cathrein, S.J., “*De naturali hominis beatitudine*,” *Gregorianum* 11 (1930): 402. Thus Père Cathrein writes on ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1, *co.*: “It is therefore inadmissible to think that St. Thomas judged a perfect natural blessedness of the state of pure nature to be impossible. That blessedness which is the ultimate end of the state of pure nature must perfectly satisfy the natural appetite of man, otherwise it is not the ultimate end of nature; and although this blessedness is imperfect in

Garrigou-Lagrange has made the new doctrine his own in his latest work, *De Gratia*.⁶

It seems clear to us, however, that this interpretation is incorrect.

Taken in isolation, this text (ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1) is not explicit enough to settle the debate. At the very least, however, we can say that this text does not lend itself to expressing the doctrine of two “orders” in the sense that we understand it today—unless, that is, we have presupposed the doctrine before we have sat down to read the text.

But there is more. If the text does not tell us precisely in what the double beatitude consists, then we are compelled to return to earlier passages—*ut supra dictum est*—, passages which inform us with all the clarity we might desire.

Among such passages one must surely count the following:

But in men, according to their present state of life, the final perfection is in respect of an operation whereby man is united to God: but this operation neither can be continual, nor, consequently, is it one only, because an operation is multiplied by being interrupted. And for this reason in the present state of life, perfect happiness cannot be attained by man. Wherefore the Philosopher, in placing man’s happiness in this life (*Ethics* i, 10), says that it is imperfect, and after a long discussion, concludes: “We call men happy, but only as men.” But God has promised us perfect happiness, when we shall be “as the angels . . . in heaven” (Mt 22:30). Consequently in regard to this perfect

comparison with supernatural blessedness, it is nevertheless *perfect*, if the proportion is respected of human nature and the natural end to which man through the principle of his nature is able to attain.” [*Non ergo admitti potest S. Thomas putavisse beatitudinem perfectam naturalem in quolibet statu naturae esse impossibilem. Illa beatitudo, quae esset finis ultimus in statu naturae purae, deberet perfecte quietare appetitum naturalem hominis, secus non esset finis ultimus naturalis; et quamvis haec beatitudo esset imperfecta in comparatione cum beatitudine supernaturali, esset tamen perfecta, si respicitur proportio naturae humanae et finis naturalis ad quem homo per principia suae naturae pervenire posset . . .*] (403).

⁶Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *De Gratia: Commentarius in Summam Theologicam S. Thomae Iae IIae*, q. 109–114 (Turin: Casa Editrice Marietti, 1946), 327 [English translation: *Grace: Commentary on the Summa theologiae of St. Thomas, IaIIae*, q. 109–14, trans. The Dominican Nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery, Menlo Park, Calif. (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), where de Lubac’s reference can be found on pp. 410–12.—*Trans.*]

happiness, the objection fails: because in that state of happiness, man's mind will be united to God by one, continual, everlasting operation.⁷

And also:

Imperfect happiness that can be had in this life, can be acquired by man by his natural powers, in the same way as virtue, in whose operation it consists: on this point we shall speak further on (cf. q. 63). But man's perfect happiness, as stated above (q. 3, a. 8), consists in the vision of the divine essence Consequently neither man, nor any creature, can attain final happiness by his natural powers.⁸

⁷ST I-II, q. 3, a. 2 ad 4. [*In hominibus autem secundum statum praesentis vitae est ultima perfectio secundum operationem qua homo conjungitur Deo. Sed haec operatio nec sempiterna, nec continua potest esse, et per consequens nec unica est, quia operatio interscissione multiplicatur; et propter hoc in statu praesentis vitae perfecta beatitudo ab homine haberi non potest. Unde Philosophus, ponens beatitudinem in hac vita, dicit eam imperfectam Sed promittitur nobis a Deo beatitudo perfecta, quando erimus sicut angeli in caelo, sicut dicitur Matt., 22, 30. Quantum ergo ad illam beatitudinem perfectam cessat objectio, quia una et continua et sempiterna operatione in illo beatitudinis statu mens hominis Deo conjungetur.*]

Commenting on this passage, Fr. Sertillanges writes: "This elegant response contains some of the most important ideas internal to the metaphysics, morality, and mysticism of St. Thomas" (Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges, O.P., *Somme théologique: La fin dernière ou la béatitude, Ia-IIae, questions 1-5* [Éditions de la revue des jeunes] (Paris: Société Saint Jean l'Évangéliste, Desclée, 1936).

⁸ST I-II, q. 5, a. 5, co. [*Beatitudo imperfecta, quae in hac vita haberi potest, potest ab homine acquiri per sua naturalia, eo modo quo et virtus, in cujus operatione consistit, de quo infra dicitur. Sed beatitudo hominis perfecta, sicut supra dictum est, consistit in visione Dei essentiae Unde nec homo nec aliqua creatura potest consequi beatitudinem ultimam per sua naturalia.*]

In the commentary of Bernardo de Rubeis (1687-1775) one can see the intellectual contortions that a late commentator goes through in attempting to reconcile the doctrine of "pure nature" with this text: "Imperfect blessedness, which in this life is possible to be had ('or which, since it has been uniquely preordained for man by God, involves no contradiction') is possible for man to acquire ('whether you consider innate powers, or the necessity of a creator God aiding the natural gifts is to be counted among natural gifts') this way that ('is able by man to be acquired though his nature') and virtue, in which operation he remains ('blessedness of nature')." [*Beatitudo imperfecta, quae in hac vita haberi potest ("quaeve unica ut homini praestituta a Deo foret, nulla est repugnantia") potest ab homine acquiri per sua naturalia ("sive insitas vires consideres, sive necessarium Dei creatoris adiutorium inter dona naturalia computandum"), eo modo quo ("potest ab homine acquiri per sua naturalia") et virtus, in cujus operatione consistit ("beatitudo naturalis").*] (*De peccato*

It would be difficult to mistake Thomas's meaning here: the first of these two "beatitudes," which is "proportionate to our nature," is not a transcendent beatitude, a final or definitive end of the created spirit in a hypothetical world of "pure nature." Rather, it is an imperfect "beatitude," terrestrial and temporal, immanent to the world itself.

This conclusion is confirmed by the third article of the same question, in which St. Thomas asks "Whether one can be happy in this life?"

A certain participation in happiness can be had in this life: but perfect and true happiness cannot be had in this life. This may be seen from a twofold consideration. First, from the general notion of happiness. For happiness . . . excludes every evil, and fulfills every desire. But in this life every evil cannot be excluded . . . Likewise neither can the desire for good be satisfied in this life. For man naturally desires the good, which he has, to be abiding. But the goods of the present life pass away; since life itself passes away . . . Secondly, from a consideration of the specific nature of Happiness, viz. the vision of the Divine Essence, which man cannot obtain in this life.⁹

originali [Wirceburgi: Sumptibus Stahelianis, 1857], c. 37, pp. 193–94).

Already John of St. Thomas, commenting on this article and other analogous texts, concluded: "Therefore perfect beatitude can be had neither in pure nature nor in this life." [*Non ergo in pura natura, aut in hac vita potest perfecta beatitudo haberi.*] (*Cursus theologicus*, in *Primam Secundae*, q. 5 [Joannes a s. Thoma, *Cursus theologicus in Summam theologicam d. Thomæ*, 10 vol. (Ludovicus Vivès, Paris, 1886), v. 5, p. 168]). Or the Salamancans: "Thomas frequently concedes to man some form of natural happiness, as much in the status of union between the soul and the body as in the state of separation" [*Saepe concedit (S. Thomas) homini aliquam naturalem felicitatem, tam in statu conjunctionis animae ad corpus, quam in statu separationis*] (*Collegii Salmanticensis, Cursus theologicus*, tract. 9, *de beatitudine*, disput. 6, dubium I, 1 [Paris: Victor Palmé, 1878], vol. 5, p. 374]).

⁹ST I-II, q. 5, a. 3, *co.* [*Respondeo dicendum quod aliqualis beatitudinis participatio in hac vita haberi potest: perfecta autem et vera beatitudo non potest haberi in hac vita. Et hoc quidem considerari potest dupliciter. Primo quidem, ex ipsa communi beatitudinis ratione. Nam beatitudo [cum sit perfectum et sufficiens bonum,] omne malum excludit, et omne desiderium implet. In hac autem vita non potest omne malum excludi. [Multis enim malis praesens vita subiacet, quae vitari non possunt, et ignorantiae ex parte intellectus, et inordinatae affectioni ex parte appetitus, et multiplicibus poenalitibus ex parte corporis; ut Augustinus diligenter prosequitur XIX de Civ. Dei.] Similiter etiam desiderium boni in hac vita satiari non potest: naturaliter enim homo desiderat permanentiam ejus boni, quod habet; bona autem praesentis vitae transitoria sunt [cum et ipsa vita transeat, quam naturaliter desideramus, et eam perpetuo permanere vellemus, quia naturaliter homo refugit mortem.*

A further confirmation is found in another passage of the *Prima Secundae*, a central reference point for our article:

Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation. But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions, as stated in *Ethics* X. 7, 8.¹⁰

We could just as well refer back to our initial text, where we find the same distinction expressed in almost the same terms:

By the name of beatitude is understood the ultimate perfection of rational or of intellectual nature Now there is a twofold ultimate perfection of rational or of intellectual nature. The first is one which it can procure of its own natural power; and this is in some way called beatitude or happiness. Hence Aristotle (*Ethics* X) says that man's ultimate happiness consists in his most perfect contemplation, whereby in this life he can behold the best intelligible object; and that is God. Above this happiness there is still another, which we look forward to in the future, whereby we shall see God as he is (1 Jn 3:2).¹¹

Unde impossibile est quod in hac vita vera beatitudo habeatur.] Secundo, si consideretur id in quo specialiter beatitudo consistit, scilicet visio divinae essentiae, quae non potest homini provenire in hac vita.] [Although de Lubac cites only portions of this passage (which we have indicated above by brackets), we have provided the body of the article in full for the sake of context.—Trans.]

Cf. ST I-II, q. 5, a. 3 ad 3: "Men esteem that there is some kind of happiness to be had in this life, on account of a certain likeness to true Happiness." [*Homines reputant in hac vita esse aliquam beatitudinem, propter aliquam similitudinem beatitudinis.*] Incidentally, the commentaries of Cajetan on these passages in the *Prima Secundae* shed absolutely no light on our subject.

¹⁰ST I-II, q. 3, a. 5, co. [*Ultima et perfecta beatitudo, quae expectatur in futura vita, tota principaliter consistit in contemplatione. Beatitudo autem imperfecta, qualis hic haberi potest, primo quidem et principaliter consistit in contemplatione, secundo vero in operatione practici intellectus ordinantis actiones et passiones humanas, ut dicitur Ethic., I. 10, c. 7 et 8.*]

¹¹ST I, q. 62, a. 1, co. [*Nomine beatitudinis intelligitur, ultima perfectio rationalis seu intellectualis naturae, Ultima autem perfectio rationalis seu intellectualis naturae est duplex. Una quidem quam potest assequi virtute suae naturae; et haec quodammodo beatitudo felicitas dicitur. Unde et Aristoteles perfectissimam hominis contemplationem, qua optimum intelligibile, quod est Deus, contemplari potest in hac vita, dicit esse ultimam hominis felicitatem. Sed super hanc felicitatem est alia felicitas, quam in futuro expectamus, qua videbimus Deum sicuti est.*]

Or again, we may cite the disputed question *De Virtutibus in communi*:

We do not arrive at heavenly bliss by means of the acquired virtues, but only at a certain happiness that a man has been fashioned to achieve in this life by what is naturally proper to him according to the act of perfect virtue, of which Aristotle treats in *Metaphysics* 10.¹²

This passage is of particular interest because it speaks of a double beatitude for angels, as is natural in an article which asks “whether angels were created in beatitude.” The text continues: “So, then, it remains to be said, that, as regards this first beatitude, which the angel could procure by his natural power, he was created already blessed. Because the angel does not acquire such beatitude by any progressive action, as man does, but, as was observed above (I, q. 58, aa. 3 and 4), is straightway in possession thereof, owing to his natural dignity. But the angels did not have from the beginning of their creation that ultimate beatitude which is beyond the power of nature; because such beatitude is no part of their nature, but its end; and consequently they ought not to have it immediately from the beginning.” [*Sic igitur dicendum est quod quantum ad primam beatitudinem, quam angelus assequi virtute suae naturae potuit, fuit creatus beatus; quia perfectionem huiusmodi angelus non acquirit per aliquem motum discursivum, sicut homo; sed statim ei adest, propter suae naturae dignitatem, ut supra dictum est. Sed ultimam beatitudinem, quae facultatem naturae excedit, angeli non statim in principio suae creationis habuerunt; quia haec beatitudo non est aliquid naturae, sed naturae finis. Et ideo non statim eam a principio debuerunt habere.*] (Cf. ST I-II, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1.) Far from being a terminal state of an angelic nature not destined to see God (as it is for the modern commentators we have mentioned), this is an initial state of an angelic nature destined to come to see God. It is, in fact, the state in which the angels of our present universe were created. In this St. Thomas is inspired by Augustinian doctrine. Compare *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 4, q. 4.

See also ST I, q. 88, a. 1, *co.*, where the opinion of Averroes is discussed: “Hence Aristotle clearly places the ultimate felicity of man in the knowledge of separate substances, obtainable by speculative science; and not by being united to the active intellect as some imagined.” [*Unde patet quod Aristoteles posuit ultimam felicitatem hominis in cognitione substantiarum separatarum, qualis potest haberi per scientias speculativas, et non per continuationem intellectus agentis, a quibusdam confictam.*] It is always a question of happiness “according to the present state of life” [*secundum statum praesentis vitae*], an expression which is repeated twice in the body of the article, or again the phrase “in this life” [*in hac vita*].

¹²*De virtutibus in communi* q. 1, a. 9 ad 6. [*Per virtutes acquisitas non pervenitur ad felicitatem caelestem, sed ad quamdam felicitatem quam homo natus est acquirere per propria naturalia in hac vita secundum actum perfectae virtutis, de qua Aristoteles tractat in 10 Metaphysic.*] Cf. the body of the article: “Therefore man is a citizen not only of the earthly city, but is also a participant in the celestial city of Jerusalem To become a citizen of this city, his nature is not sufficient; he must be elevated to it by the grace of God The virtues of a man as a man, inasmuch as he is a participant in the earthly city, do not exceed the capacity of human nature; hence,

St. Thomas could have referred to his own earlier works—for example, in several passages from *Scriptum super Sententiis*, for example: lib. 2, d. 41, q. 1, a. 1;¹³ lib. 3, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2;¹⁴ and lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1.¹⁵ And also in *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 2,¹⁶ q. 14, a. 10,

a man can acquire them through his natural powers.” [*Homo autem non solum est civis terrena civitatis, sed est particeps civitatis caelestis Hierusalem Ad hoc autem quod homo hujus civitatis sit particeps, non sufficit sua natura, sed ad hoc elevatur per gratiam Dei Virtutes autem quae sunt hominis in eo quod est homo, vel in eo quod est terrena civitatis particeps, non excedunt facultatem humanae naturae; unde eas per sua naturalia homo potest acquirere.*] And article 5 ad 8: “. . . if we are speaking of celestial happiness, which is promised to the saints. If we are speaking of contemplative happiness, which the Philosophers discuss . . .” [*si loquamur de felicitate caelesti, quae sanctis repromittitur; si autem loquamur de felicitate contemplativa, de qua Philosophi tractaverunt*]. [For an English translation of *De virtutibus in communi*, see Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue: Quaestio Disputata de Virtutibus in Communi and Quaestio Disputata de Virtutibus Cardinalibus*, trans. Ralph McInerney (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999)—*Trans.*]

¹³“The end [of human acts can be understood in two ways: either proper (specifically willed) and proximate or] common and ultimate. [And this] is twofold. For, on one hand, it exceeds the ability of nature, as future happiness in heaven (*patria*), and faith shows the way to this end and charity inclines one to it And so faith and charity are said to direct intention (or finality) universally in everything. To the common end proportionate to human ability, on the other hand, reason shows the way when it has been perfected by the habit of acquired wisdom, which is contemplative happiness *in actu*, as Aristotle says in *Ethics* 10, and along with reason, the appetitive faculty, perfected by the habit of prudence, which is social (*civilis*) happiness *in actu*, inclines toward it insofar as it is perfected by the moral virtues.” [*Finis [autem] humanorum actuum potest accipi dupliciter: vel finis proprius et proximus; vel] communis et ultimus. [Et hic] est duplex. Quia, vel excedit facultatem naturae, sicut felicitas futura in patria In finem autem communem proportionatum humanae facultati dirigit ratio, ostendendo perfecta per habitum sapientiae acquisitae, cujus actus est felicitas contemplativa, ut in 10 Ethic. dicitur; vel perfecta per habitum prudentiae, cujus actus est felicitas civilis; inclinando autem virtus appetitiva, secundum quod est perfecta habitibus virtutum moralium.*] [Again, although de Lubac cites only portions of this passage, we have provided some context of the body of the article, inserted in square brackets.—*Trans.*]

¹⁴Sol. 4: “The happiness which man can achieve by his nature is according to human life, and this is what the Philosophers spoke of.” [*Felicitas ad quam homo per naturalia sua potest devenire est secundum vitam humanam; et de hac philosophi locuti sunt.*]

¹⁵Sol. 4: “True blessedness, however, cannot be realized in this life because of the various vicissitudes to which man is subject; whence it follows that the blessedness which is the end of human life is to be found after this life Nevertheless we do not deny that in fact some kind of blessedness by participation is possible in this life, according to which man is perfected first in the good of speculative reason, and

obj. 2;¹⁷ or q. 27, a. 2, co.¹⁸ He could have referred to the *Summa contra Gentiles*, whether lib. 1, cap. 5, n. 2;¹⁹ lib. 3, cap. 48; or lib. 3, cap. 63. This last passage is of crucial importance, for after speaking of the *visio divina*, St. Thomas adds:

secondarily in the good of practical reason. And this is the blessedness of which the Philosopher speaks in the *Ethics*, although he neither affirms nor denies whether it is to be located after this life.” [*Beatitudo autem vera non potest poni in hac vita propter mutabilitates varias quibus homo subjacet: unde necesse est beatitudinem quae est finis humanae vitae, esse post hanc vitam Non negamus tamen quin aliqua beatitudinis participatio in hac vita esse possit, secundum quod homo est perfectus in bonis rationis speculativae principaliter, et practicae secundario; et de hac felicitate Philosophus in lib. Ethic. determinat; aliam, quae est post hanc vitam, nec asserens nec negans.*]

¹⁶“Man, however, has a twofold final good, which first moves the will as a final end. The first of these is proportionate to human nature since natural powers are capable of attaining it. This is the happiness about which the philosophers speak, either as contemplative . . . or active The other is the good which is out of all proportion with man’s nature because his natural powers are not enough to attain to it either in thought or desire.” [*Est autem duplex hominis bonum ultimum, quod primo voluntatem movet quasi ultimus finis. Quorum unum est proportionatum naturae humanae, et hoc est felicitas de qua Philosophi locuti sunt: vel contemplativa . . . vel activa Aliud est bonum hominis naturae humanae proportionem excedens.*] Less explicit than other texts on the precise point that interests us here, this passage nonetheless treats the same two “ends,” “beatitudes,” or “felicities” as those texts that specifically define the first as earthly happiness. Notice the description: “happiness, either contemplative . . . or active,” as in I-II, q. 3, a. 5, or *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 41, q. 1, a. 1. See also *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 2. [For the English translation of *De Veritate*, cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, and Robert W. Schmidt, 3 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).—*Trans.*]

¹⁷Arg. 2: “By reason of the constitution of his nature man receives those things which are necessary to reach his natural end, such as the happiness of life of which the Philosophers speak, but does not receive the things needed to reach the supernatural end, which is everlasting happiness” [*Homini ex sua conditione naturali sunt provisiva illa quae sunt necessaria ad naturalem finem consequendum, cujusmodi est felicitas viae, quae ponitur a Philosophis; non autem ad consequendum finem supernaturalem, qui est beatitudo aeterna*]. See also the body of the article.

¹⁸“[That end is] a contemplation of divine things such as is possible to man according to the capabilities of his nature; and in this contemplation philosophers have placed man’s ultimate happiness.” [*Aliqua contemplatio divinarum, qualis est homini possibilis secundum facultatem naturae, in qua Philosophi ultimam hominis felicitatem posuerunt.*]

¹⁹“Men are ordained by the divine Providence towards a higher good than human fragility can experience in the present life [so that it would thus learn to desire] something that surpasses the whole state of the present life” [*Altius bonum quam experiri in praesenti vita possit humana fragilitas . . . aliquid quod totum statum praesentis vitae excedit.*]

Now, there is nothing in this life so like this ultimate and perfect felicity as the life of those who contemplate truth, to the extent that it is possible in this life. And so, the philosophers who were not able to have full knowledge of this ultimate happiness identified man's ultimate happiness with the contemplation which is possible in this life.²⁰

The equivalence is hereby formally established, as in many of the texts previously cited, between the happiness defined by the "Philosophers" and the happiness of "this life." And this holds true of a later text, *In Boetium de Trinitate*, which is no less clear:

Man's happiness is twofold. One is the imperfect happiness found in this life, of which the Philosopher speaks, and this consists in the knowledge of the separate substances through the habit of wisdom. But this knowledge is imperfect and such as is possible in our present life, not such that we can know their quiddity. The other is the perfect happiness of heaven, where we will see God himself through his essence and the other separate substances. But this happiness will not come through a speculative science; it will come through the light of glory.²¹

And finally, the *De regimine principum*:

Now if man were not ordained to another end outside himself, the above-mentioned cares would be sufficient for him. But as long as man's mortal life endures there is a good outside him, namely, final beatitude, which is looked for after death in the enjoyment of God, for as the Apostle says (2 Cor 5:6): "As long as we are in the body we are far from the Lord."²²

²⁰SCG, lib. 3, cap. 63, n. 7. [*Hujus autem perfectae et ultimae felicitatis in hac vita nihil est adeo simile sicut vita contemplantium veritatem, secundum quod est possibile in hac vita. Et ideo Philosophi, qui de illa felicitate ultima plenam notitiam habere non potuerunt, in contemplatione quae est possibilis in hac vita ultimam felicitatem hominis posuerunt.*]

²¹*Super de Trinitate*, pars. 3, q. 6, a. 4 ad 3. [*Duplex est felicitas hominis: una imperfecta, quae est in via, de qua dicit Philosophus, et haec consistit in cognitione substantiarum separatarum per habitum sapientiae; imperfecta tamen, et talis qualis in via est possibilis, non ut sciatur ipsa quidditas. Alia est perfecta in patria qua ipse Deus per essentiam videbitur et aliae substantias separatas; sed haec felicitas non erit per aliquam scientiam speculativam, sed per lumen gloriae.*]

²²*De regno*, lib. 1 cap. 15. [*Quod si homo non ordinaretur ad aliud exterius bonum, sufficerent homini curae praedictae. Sed est quoddam bonum extraneum homini, quamdiu mortaliter vivit, scilicet ultima beatitudo, quae in fruitione Dei expectatur post mortem; quia,*

Hence we discover a remarkable continuity of doctrine on our subject—a continuity that stretches from St. Thomas’s earliest work to his final writings. These texts reciprocally comment on one another. The more explicit details serve to illumine certain abbreviations. Each time we hear of a beatitude “formulated” by the Philosophers, or of a life that is both contemplative and active, we can conclude that the text refers to the condition of this world. This beatitude is consistently contrasted with that of the “future life” or of the “homeland,” or to what we await “after death.” At times, to emphasize its imperfection, St. Thomas insists that it is necessarily mixed, unstable, and transitory. But he can also identify a sort of continuity between the contemplation of the truth the wise man engages in here below and its consummation in the “beyond,” in contrast to the operations of the active life or civic life, which do not transcend the limits of time.²³ This does not keep him from maintaining that no beatitude, however great, that does not entail eternity and stability, can be called true; for him, only “eternal beatitude” is true beatitude (*beatitudo vera*), beatitude itself (*beatitudo per essentiam*), and beatitude *tout court*.²⁴

At times, drawing nearer to the heart of the matter, he points above all to the difference in nature between “contemplation of divine things” that results from a certain speculative science, and the vision of God himself, obtained through the “light of glory.” Or again, as we see in two texts of *De Veritate*,²⁵ he opposes to this

ut Apostolus ait 2 ad Cor., quamdiu sumus in corpore, peregrinamus a Domino.] And further on in the same chapter Aquinas writes: “If, therefore, the ultimate end of man were some good that existed in himself . . . Yet through virtuous living man is further ordained to a higher end, which consists in the enjoyment of God.” [*Si igitur finis hominis est bonum quodcumque in ipso existens . . . Sed quia homo vivendo secundum virtutem ad ulteriorem finem ordinatur, quae consistit in fruitione divina.*]

²³Cf. SCG, lib. 3, cap. 63: “In fact, the contemplation of truth begins in this life, but reaches its climax in the future; whereas the active and civic life does not transcend the limits of this life.” [*Incipit enim contemplatio veritatis in hac vita, sed in futura consummatur; activa vero et civilis vita hujus vitae terminos non transcendunt.*]

²⁴Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 24, a. 8, co.: “[If someone’s happiness is] not everlasting but is at some time to come to an end . . . [then] it follows that theirs is not true happiness, since changelessness and security are essential to happiness.” [*Non esset perpetua, sed aliquando esset finienda: ex quo sequitur eam non esse veram, cum immutabilitas et securitas sit de ratione beatitudinis.*]

²⁵*De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 2, co.: “Hence, it is said in *De Anima* that the soul is, ‘in

vision of God (which alone is authentic beatitude) a happiness that consists “in the delineation of the order of the universe in the soul of man” (*in anima hominis describatur ordo totius universi*). Since knowledge is a remedy for the finite essence, man, to escape his finitude, naturally seeks to rise to the measure of the universe through knowledge of all things. Does he not, then, desire all the more to see for himself the one who sees all things? This manner of articulating natural happiness in contrast to the happiness achieved in the “homeland” is doubtless the most profound. As the preceding, it was dictated to St. Thomas by the doctrine he discovers in the “Philosophers.”

The diversity of these expressions matters little. What is remarkable in our point of view is the fact that this imperfect beatitude, which is for St. Thomas that happiness of which the ancient Philosophers spoke, is always also a beatitude “such as is possible for wayfarers” (*talis qualis est in via possibilis*), a beatitude “in this life” (*in hac vita*), a beatitude “in the present state of life” (*in statu praesentis viae*), a beatitude “such as can be had here” (*qualis hic haberi potest*).²⁶

some manner, all things,’ since its nature is such that it can know all things. In this way it is possible for the perfection of the entire universe to exist in one thing. The ultimate perfection which the soul can attain, therefore, is, according to the philosophers, to have delineated in it the entire order and causes of the universe. This they held to be the ultimate end of man. We, however, hold that it consists in the vision of God; for, as Gregory says: ‘What is there that they do not see who see Him who sees all things?’” [*Et ideo in 3^o De Anima dicitur, animam esse quodammodo omnia, quia nata est omnia cognoscere. Et secundum hunc modum possibile est ut in una re totius universi perfectio existat. Unde haec est ultima perfectio ad quam anima potest pervenire, secundum Philosophos, ut in ea describatur totus ordo universi, et causarum ejus; in quo etiam finem hominis posuerunt, quod secundum nos erit in visione Dei, quia secundum Gregorium, quid est quod non videant qui videntem omnia vident?*] Cf. q. 20, a. 3: “some philosophers, looking at man’s natural perfection, have said that the ultimate happiness of man consists in the delineation of the order of the whole universe in the soul of man.” [*Et ideo quidam Philosophi attendentes naturalem perfectionem hominis, dixerunt ultimam felicitatem hominis in hoc consistere, quod in anima hominis describatur ordo totius universi.*]

²⁶In addition to the texts already cited, see *De Anima*, a. 16, co.: “Hence it follows, according to Aristotle, that the ultimate human happiness which can be had in this life, consists in such knowledge of separate substances as can be acquired through the principles of philosophy.” [*Ultima felicitas humana, quae potest haberi in hac vita, secundum intentionem Aristotelis, est cognitio de substantiis separatis, qualis potest haberi per principia Philosophiae.*] In this consists the “happiness of man, so far as it can

This beatitude by participation (*beatitudo per participationem*), this participation in blessedness (*aliqua beatitudinis participatio*),²⁷ is a happiness “proper to men,” according to the formulation of Aristotle, and therefore not proper to “separated souls.” Already in the Prologue to his Commentary on the first book of the Lombard’s *Sentences*, Aquinas describes this beatitude as essentially imperfect, because it is a happiness that is in essence “on the way” (*felicitas viae*),²⁸ while true beatitude is in essence eternal (*felicitas aeterna*).²⁹ In a word, the first is immanent, at once worldly or temporal and experienced acquired according to internal principles; the second is

be attained by his natural powers” (ad 1). [*felicitas hominis ad quam per naturalia pervenire potest.*]

²⁷ST I-II, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4.

²⁸*Super Sent., Prologus*, q. 1, a. 1, *co.*: “[A]ll right-thinking men make the contemplation of God the end of human life. But there are two kinds of contemplation. The one is through creatures and is imperfect, for the reason already given. Aristotle locates happiness in this kind of contemplation (*Ethics* 10)—it is a happiness ‘on the way’ of this life. To it is ordered the whole of philosophical knowledge which proceeds from concepts of creatures. The other is the contemplation of God whereby he is seen immediately in his essence. This is perfect and will be had in the homeland and is possible for man on the supposition of faith.” [*Omnes qui recte senserunt, posuerunt finem humanae vitae, Dei contemplationem. Contemplatio autem Dei est duplex. Una per creaturas, quae imperfecta est . . . in qua contemplatione Philosophus, 10 Ethic., c. 9, felicitatem contemplativam posuit, quae tamen est felicitas viae; et ad hanc ordinatur tota cognitio philosophica, quae ex rationibus creaturarum procedit. Est alia Dei contemplatio, qua videtur immediate per suam essentiam; et haec perfecta est, quae erit in patria et est homini possibilis secundum fidei suppositionem.*] It is precisely this Thomistic doctrine that we find echoed in a sermon of Robert Bellarmine on the errors of ancient philosophers according to which “beneath the moon, there is nothing that is not mortal and transient, except for souls, which were given as a gift by God to the human race that they might seek blessedness” [*infra lunam, ubi nihil est nisi mortale et caducum, praeter animas generi hominum Dei munere datos, beatitudinem quaesierunt*]. (*Conciones de quatuor novissimis, concio 4, de beatitudine caelesti, Opera*, IX, p. 447). [Bellarmine’s is a slightly modified reference to Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis* 6,18: *Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos, supra lunam sunt aeterna omnia*. “Above the moon there is nothing which is not eternal, but beneath that level everything is mortal and transient except only for the souls in human beings, which are a gift to mankind from the gods.” See Cicero, *Dream of Scipio* 6,18; English translation, *On the Good Life*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin, 1971), 347.—*Trans.*]

²⁹Cf. *bonum supernaturale aeternum* (ST I-II, q. 98, a. 1, *co.*); *bonum aeternum* (ST I-II, q. 110, a. 2, *co.*); *beatitudo aeterna* (*De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 10, *co.*).

transcendent—at once heavenly and received according to divine grace. Beatitude is twofold: the first is “natural” and the second is “supernatural.”³⁰

Some may judge my reading of Aquinas as somewhat short-sighted or too “material.” Such an exegesis will seem to them too slavishly bound to the details of particular contexts. And the same with my method: in a concerted effort to explicate St. Thomas from himself, isn’t it too simply historical?³¹ To which we would reply that it is there—Thomas himself—that, at the very least, it is fitting to start. Perhaps we might repeat what was once published in the *Bulletin thomiste*: ignorance of history is not enough to make one a Thomist, nor is a “material” understanding of the texts the exclusive preserve of historians.³² —*Translated by Aaron Riches and Peter M. Candler, Jr.* □

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³⁰Père de Broglie has rightly noted that “St. Thomas always understood the natural virtues as purely terrestrial.” See Guy de Broglie, “Sur la place du surnaturel dans la philosophie de saint Thomas: Lettre à M. l’abbé Blanche,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 15 (1925): 25.

³¹Many nuances or different uses of the same word are self-explanatory, provided that the reader is attentive; and if there are no errors of interpretation that need to be addressed, it would be a waste of time to linger over them. We note, nevertheless, that it would be helpful to distinguish several pairs of concepts which are not exactly convertible with one another: initial beatitude and final beatitude; knowledge *in via* by faith and *in patria* by vision; first perfection (*natura ipsa*) and final perfection (*felicitas in patria*); worldly beatitude and celestial beatitude; and finally, the *duplex finis* which is not always equivalent with *duplex beatitudo*. As creature, man participates in a certain common end with all created beings, and yet we do not strictly speak of beatitude except in the case of spiritual beings. Here it would be helpful, in order to be thorough, to consider fully what St. Thomas says about the knowledge of the “separated intelligences.”

³²*Bulletin thomiste* 4 (1936): 885. *Ibid.*, “The reading of a text is radically subject to the law of contexts, from the more modest contexts of grammar and vocabulary, to the more spiritual ones, like the ‘climate’ of the times in which the text was written.”

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