

# AQUINAS LECTURE 1985

## Practical Reasoning, Human Goods and the End of Man

John Finnis

*Given at Blackfriars, Oxford, on 29 January, 1985.\**

Our practical reasoning goes well and attains its truth when we identify ways of adequately getting or realising really desirable objectives. And our objectives are really desirable (good) when they either are really desirable in themselves, or are steps on the way to getting or realising some such intrinsically desirable objective or objectives. If there is but one such intrinsically desirable objective, our practical reasoning cannot go well unless we know what it is. If, as seems much more plausible, there are a number of intrinsically desirable objectives, our practical reasoning cannot go well unless we know whether there is some further objective to be attained or realised by or in the pursuit of some or all of these intrinsically desirable objectives, i.e. whether there is some *further* point to pursuing them; and if so, what that further point or objective ('last end') actually is.

Some say that the true last end is some one of the intrinsically desirable human goods, say, the highest instantiation of the highest good attainable in this life, thus *contemplation of God* to the extent that God is knowable through His creatures. Others agree that it is some one human good, but place it beyond this life, and beyond merely human capacities, in the *beatific vision* and contemplation of God. Others again deny that it is any one of these goods, and say that it is *integral human fulfilment*, a manifold of goods; and that, given human capacities as we know them, such fulfilment can now be for practical reasoning no more than an inadequately attainable value, an ideal of practical reason, but could in a divinely completed realm and household of God be shared and enjoyed, by each member of that realm and household, as an attained and realised goal.

The last is the position I wish to defend.

A word about method. As St. Thomas very plainly says, the task of philosophically 'considering and determining the ultimate end of

life and human affairs' belongs to the principal *practical* science<sup>1</sup>; Aristotle called it ethics and Thomas moral philosophy<sup>2</sup>, but both agreed that it is practical, from beginning to end<sup>3</sup>. This, then, is philosophising to be done (if done intelligently) for the sake of realising or getting intrinsically desirable human good(s)<sup>4</sup>. Such philosophising is thus (if one can only get one's act together) all of a piece with the rest of one's practical reasonings.

## I

In *Nicomachean Ethics* I,2, Aristotle launches an argument that many have understood as the following mere fallacy: If any chain of choices must end somewhere, there must be a single place where all chains of choice stop. Aristotle's text<sup>5</sup>, however, is not so simple-minded:

*If...*

(1) We do not choose everything for some further thing (for that would be to begin an infinite regress, in which case desire would be empty and pointless),

*and*

(2) there is some one end of acts, which we want for its own sake while we want the others for it,

*then* it is clear that

(3) that one end will be the good and indeed the highest good.

Now this is no fallacy. Step (1) does not assert that there must, if choice is not to be vain, be one place in which all chains of choice end. It simply asserts that every chain of choice does have a point, its own point or end or final good (not necessarily the same point as other chains of choice). One chain of practical reasoning ends, Aristotle will suggest<sup>6</sup>, in a good such as honour, another in a good such as pleasure, another in the good of understanding, and others in one or other of the excellences or virtues.

And now step (2) comes in to say that if even these "other" final goods or ends-for-their-own-sake<sup>7</sup> are chosen not only for their own sake but also for the sake of some one end, then (3) that one end will be the highest good or indeed, as Aristotle puts it (elliptically and at considerable risk of misleading), *the good simpliciter*.

In NE I, 7 Aristotle is going to explain both this conclusion (step (3)) and his reason for affirming what is supposed in step (2), i.e. for affirming that there is indeed 'some one end of acts, which we want for its own sake while we want the others for it'. Take the conclusion first.

To understand something possible or actual as good is to understand it as having or giving point, as a 'that for the sake of which...', as end. And the good without qualification will be, he says,

whatever is most an end. *The good* will be most final by making one's life (A) lacking in nothing, i.e. 'self-sufficient' (*autarches*) and (B) thoroughly desirable (choiceworthy, *aireton*, *eligibilis*).

Now self-sufficiency and unqualified desirability are both definitive of *eudaimonia*, a concept more ordinarily familiar to Aristotle's hearers than the technical concept of *the good*. So '*the good*' is *eudaimonia*, provided we understand by *eudaimonia* a state (whatever it may turn out to be) which (A) makes one's life self-sufficient, i.e. lacking in nothing, i.e. satisfying all desires<sup>8</sup>, and (B) is unrestrictedly final in that it is the point of all choices, even of choices for goods which are themselves final in that they are chosen for their own sake, as ends in themselves.

Troels Engberg-Pedersen has recently argued forcefully that in Book I of the NE, *eudaimonia* is, in fact, a purely formal concept, the concept of a satisfactory life: an indeterminate state which (A) involves the satisfaction of all desires and (B) is the point of all choice. Aristotle here makes no decision amongst the competing conceptions of this concept; the state is left wholly undetermined. Even when the argument leads Aristotle to affirm that the state is one of activity, 'it is left absolutely open whether just one thing or activity or more things or activities than one should in the end be said to fill in *eudaimonia*'.<sup>9</sup>

Now the formal property of *eudaimonia* in NE I, 7 (1095b5) is this: when we stop our chains of choice (practical reasoning) at other ends or goods which *are* final, we do so not only because of the goodness of such ends-for-their-own-sake but also because we believe that through these goods we will secure *eudaimonia*.

So here, at last, we find ground for asserting what was hypothesised in step (2). Precisely because the concept of *eudaimonia* simply is the concept of the fully satisfactory life—i.e. a state (whatever it may be) which is the point of all choices and the satisfaction of all desires—it can be said that final goods such as (Aristotle supposes) honour, pleasure, understanding and virtue are chosen not only for their own sakes but also for the sake of *eudaimonia*. Thus *eudaimonia* is the 'one end' Aristotle was envisaging.

But one may wish to test the matter. Are the various final goods in fact chosen for the sake of *eudaimonia*? Aristotle says so, but offers no argument to prove it. The missing argument must, I think, be that suggested by St. Thomas<sup>10</sup>. For Thomas, this fact is not a mere happenstance, which sometimes is the case and sometimes not; it is a necessity, a natural necessity and (since *will* simply is the power of intelligent and rational choosing) a rational necessity. Why? Surely because about every specific human good, however thoroughly and independently and non-derivatively good (and thus capable of terminating a chain of practical reasoning and rendering otiose the

question ‘What for?’), there can nonetheless be raised the further question: ‘Is the state of affairs in which this good, or this set of goods, is realized by my choice a *fully satisfactory* state of affairs?’

The question is meaningful, and successful in relativising even our most successful attainments of basic human goods; the question remains meaningful, and forceful, even though we remain quite unable to identify a practicable ‘fully satisfactory life’, or an attainable ‘perfect good’, a ‘practicable state of affairs lacking nothing’, ‘*perfectum et sufficiens*’<sup>11</sup>.

Specific basic goods, i.e. goods which are underived and chain-of-choice-ending, have both a critique and a support in this category, this inescapable further question. They have a critique because no one of them can plausibly pose as itself the fully satisfactory object of choice. They have a support because each of them has its attraction not merely as ‘a good in itself’ but also as a component in, contribution to, *the fully satisfactory*, whatever that may be.

## II

But how are the basic human goods in fact related to a ‘fully satisfactory’? The ‘fully satisfactory’ that Aristotle and Aquinas have in mind is ‘practicable’. But, Aquinas quite reasonably points out, it is simply impossible to attain the fully satisfactory (‘excluding all evil and fulfilling every desire’) in this life<sup>12</sup>. Only an ‘imperfect’ beatitude, he says, is within our powers<sup>13</sup>.

But is ‘imperfect beatitude’ a coherent concept? After all, the ‘perfect’, the ‘fully satisfactory’, is what the concept of *eudaimonia/beatitudo* is about; an ‘imperfect beatitude’ is, by definition, a state that is *not* ‘adequate to the aspirations of human nature’. The notion certainly seems paradoxical.

To see whether it is a worthwhile paradox, we can first inquire what Aquinas thought his *beatitudo imperfecta* consists in. I begin with the most illuminating of his various answers: ‘beatitudo imperfecta consistit in operatione virtutis’, imperfect beatitude consists in the workings of virtue (virtue in action)<sup>14</sup>.

Now virtue is whatever renders *good* its possessor and his acts. Take the moral virtues, for example. They have, says Aquinas, a point: *bonum humanum*, human good<sup>15</sup>; and recognition and love of this good is necessary for virtue<sup>16</sup>.

And here we come to a matter decisive for my whole argument. This *bonum humanum*, the point or good of virtue, is a manifold; for there are, says St. Thomas, a plurality of *fines moralium virtutum*, ends of the moral virtues<sup>17</sup>. These ends are identified by practical understanding working according to the natural disposition which he calls *synderesis*<sup>18</sup>. The understanding of these final or basic goods is

formulated in the *prima principia* of practical reasoning, principles which Aquinas calls the *prima principia* of natural law or natural right<sup>19</sup>. The goods identified in these principles are naturally wanted; they are the appropriate objects of the inclinations which pertain to each of the human capacities and a human being's natural integrity<sup>20</sup>. As such they are included under the will's natural object, complete or universal good<sup>21</sup>; but each is final, good-for-its-own sake, as Aquinas most plainly affirms by describing the manifold of corresponding practical principles as *per se nota* and *prima*. Yet none of these basic goods is absolutely or simply or (as Aristotle would say) 'most' final.

Let me here interpose three summary remarks:

(i) Aquinas has arrived at a rather better list of final or basic goods than that off-hand itemisation in *Nic. Eth.* I,7 ('honour, pleasure, intelligence and the various virtues').

(ii) Aquinas's list includes knowing truth about God. But it is clear that no item in the list is highest in the sense that the others are merely means to it, or are more dispensable than it, or can rightly be directly attacked for the sake of securing it<sup>22</sup>.

(iii) We began with a proposition about the moral virtues and looked for their point; but there are also the intellectual virtues or excellences, all of which (leaving aside *prudentia*) can exist without moral virtue<sup>23</sup>. St. Thomas, intellectualist though he may be, will point out that one can make bad use of an intellectual, but not of a moral, virtue<sup>24</sup>; indeed, he will say that, if we are considering their relationship to human activity, the intellectual virtues are *less noble than the moral*<sup>25</sup>. There is, we may say, no single, privileged perspective from which such a human good as theoretical knowledge grasped and enjoyed contemplatively is simply and in all respects highest, particularly if by 'highest' we mean most choice-worthy.

To return now to Aquinas's 'imperfect beatitude'; we can now see why one might think it consists in the workings of virtue. For we can envisage a life in which each of the basic goods is somehow in place; none is suppressed; none is arbitrarily emphasised or contemned; reasonableness regulates their interrelations as it regulates the emotions and inclinations of the individual and the relations between individuals in friendship and other forms of community. These 'virtue-in-action' aspects of this person's flourishing do not add to the value of the basic components in that flourishing, the basic goods<sup>26</sup>. But they do constitute a further intelligible and worthwhile good which is simply an intelligible and worthwhile aspect of the realization of the other goods (derivative and non-final or underived and final/basic), a good in relation to which every other good takes its place, or under which each of them falls.

That is surely why St. Thomas could helpfully speak of imperfect beatitude, even at the cost of some paradox: imperfect beatitude is

worthy of the name just because, in some respect, it plays the same role in practical thinking and choosing as the natural and inescapable notion of (perfect) beatitude or *eudaimonia*, the notion of the *fully* (not imperfectly) satisfactory (whatever that may be)... Being imperfect, imperfect beatitude is neither the fully adequate point of all choices nor a state lacking nothing that we could desire. But specific goods-for-their-own-sake and ends-for-their-own-sake can and should be 'placed' (both critically and supportively) under some wider good, 'imperfect beatitude', a good somehow constituted by the realization, in some appropriate way, of basic human goods<sup>27</sup>.

### III

But there is also a rather different story, perhaps more prominent in St. Thomas's account, and certainly more well-known. In its starkest form, this tells us that 'the imperfect human felicity which is attainable in this life consists in knowledge of the separated substances by the *habitus* of wisdom'<sup>28</sup>. With more formality:

'as is stated in (Aristotle's) *Ethics*, the imperfect beatitude which we can have in this life first and principally consists in contemplation, and secondarily in the activity of practical understanding governing our actions and emotions'<sup>29</sup>.

The question, therefore, is this: Why does St. Thomas say that in the imperfect beatitude available in this life, contemplation has 'first place'? (Whatever that may in practice amount to...). Various reasons are offered<sup>30</sup>, but the decisive one seems to be that in contemplation, and in the intellectual virtues, 'we have a kind of beginning of that (true) happiness which consists in the knowledge of truth'<sup>31</sup>.

To test the adequacy of this characterisation of true beatitude and thus, by anticipation, of 'imperfect beatitude', we need to enquire whether our true and unrestricted fulfilment or flourishing would indeed consist *only* in contemplation, even contemplation of God's essence in the beatific vision.

Aquinas's statements to the effect that human beatitude is to be found '*only* in the vision of God'<sup>32</sup> are to be understood in the same sense as his statement that '*Deus est totum hominis bonum*'<sup>33</sup>. Each is highly elliptical; they run the same risk of being taken literally (and thus being misunderstood) as Aristotle ran when he said that *eudaimonia* is 'the good' (a statement conjoined by Aristotle, however, with the statement that there are many human ends-in-themselves). '*Deus est totum hominis bonum*' is compatible with Aquinas's statement that to love God alone<sup>34</sup> is an 'inadequate and imperfect love of God', and actually inferior to love of neighbour for God's sake. God's goodness is our 'whole good' just in the sense that

it is (a) the self-sufficiently adequate object of our love and (b) the cause of all other goods (including persons and including, too, the good constituted by our love of goods including persons). But God's goodness is also 'not our whole good', for God, by unecessitated choice, has created a universe of other goods distinct from Himself, including goods available to and worthy of our love-of-friendship (*amor amicitiae*) among human persons.

It is necessary, says St. Thomas, that there be but one ultimate end of man in so far as he is man, because human nature is a unity<sup>35</sup>. Very well. But must we not acknowledge that the unity of human nature is a unity in complexity? For a start, 'Anima mea non est ego'<sup>36</sup>. For another thing, human nature is known through its capacities, and they are known through their acts, and these are known through their objects<sup>37</sup>, and those objects are, for the most part, precisely the basic goods identified in the *prima principia* of practical understanding<sup>38</sup>. And as these are plural, so the human nature they disclose is complex. So: the last end, if it has the unity of human nature, must have the complexity which is unified in that nature.

Let me dwell on just one aspect of this complexity. Among the capacities (*potentiae animae*) intrinsic to human nature is our capacity for love-of-friendship<sup>39</sup>, the richest of the human objects of the basic inclination towards living *in societate*<sup>40</sup>. No-one understands human nature who does not understand that a human being is deprived and stunted in his own being if he has no participation in the love-of-friendship. No-one understands love-of-friendship who does not understand that it involves a mutual and reciprocal will that the other person flourish more fully, i.e. share more fully in goods, among which goods must therefore (precisely because the other has the same desire that one be more fully flourishing oneself) be, now for the sake of that other, the fuller flourishing of oneself. Self-love, in due measure, is intrinsic to the fullest, most generous love-of-friendship; love-of friendship, seeking true goods for another even at the hazard of one's own well-being, is intrinsic to one's own well-being. So: no-one can understand the unity of human nature who does not understand this complexity of union-without-absorption, this irreducible duality (indeed, multiplicity) of the goods which must be realized if that nature is to be most fully actualized.

Hence we find Aquinas concluding that the *societas amicorum* is of the 'bene esse of (perfect) beatitude'<sup>41</sup>. But why 'of the bene esse'? Because, he says, it is not *absolutely* necessary to beatitude, since it is possible to envisage a universe in which there were but one soul in communion with God, and that one would have beatitude; but the actual universe is one in which we each have neighbours....

Still we should press our question about Aquinas's references to

the 'complete' perfection, or '*bene esse*', of perfect beatitude. For we find him using such expressions not only in relation to friendship but also in relation to bodily life: "beatitude which is perfect *in all respects* (*beatitudo omnibus modis perfecta*) requires the well-being of one's own body"<sup>42</sup>. Such expressions are as paradoxical as 'imperfect beatitude' and are tantamount to conceding what in other places seemed to be denied: that the goods attained and realized in full beatitude are not one but *many*, in due order<sup>43</sup> This requirement of loving the goods in beatitude in due measure does not differ in its intelligible structure from the measure of practical reasonableness that we discern and use in this life.

St. Thomas himself draws the necessary conclusion: in the state of perfect beatitude, when faith and hope will have ceased to be virtues, practical reasonableness (*prudentia*) and justice will still, therefore, be needed virtues—along with that charity which includes with love of God a love of self (including one's body) and of neighbours *in patria*<sup>44</sup>.

At the outset of this lecture, I said that man's true last end is *integral human fulfilment*<sup>45</sup>. In this life, that is not a practicable *goal* at all; its place in practical reasoning is rather as the ideal that provides the content of the first principle of morality<sup>46</sup>. It is faith, not philosophy, that proposes that that ideal may be realised, by divine power and grace. Its realisation would be, I suggest, a state of affairs that would not be, formally, a human act, nor, formally, a human possession, though it would involve both activity and enjoyment. St. Thomas himself from time to time overcomes the limitations of the Aristotelian categories in which he usually conceives the last end of human life: the categories of act and perfection, and the vocabulary which draws no distinction between ideal and goal, or between 'means' which are merely instrumental and means which are actually constitutive of a good. Often he says that the point (object) of our beatitude is divine good<sup>47</sup>, and sometimes he will add that that good, precisely as object of our beatitude, must be understood *not as something to be had or possessed* but rather as the *common good of a whole society*, that heavenly city whose citizens are the saints<sup>48</sup>.

To bring the whole matter to a head: we can now assess Aquinas's argument that 'imperfect beatitude' consists 'first and principally' in contemplation *because* perfect beatitude 'consists in' contemplation. Even on the rather relentlessly 'intellectualist' account in Aquinas's later writings, perfect beatitude consists not only in the contemplative vision which illuminates the being and worth of all else<sup>49</sup>, but also in an exercise of the virtues of practical understanding and reasonableness, and of justice; and in love-of-friendship; and in enjoyment of one's own bodily personal life in its fullness. Hence, even when one accepts the primacy within perfect beatitude of the



vision of God, the argument from anticipation provides one with weak ground for according primacy to contemplation within imperfect beatitude; for the virtues of the active life, too, are, on St. Thomas's own account, anticipations.

#### IV

Under the ever-present influence of empiricist images of knowing, we tend to think of the vision of God as if it were a gazing at a scene, a *much* more beautiful and satisfying scene than one we've ever seen<sup>50</sup>. And under the ever-present influence of empiricist models of experience, we tend to think of the satisfying of desires as the bringing about of effects in a subject which is passive but for the excitement of its own sensations under the influence of the cause.

The critique of the empiricist model of experience is accomplished in ethics. 'Ethics' is the name given by Aristotle and St. Thomas to a pursuit which I have mentioned more than once in this lecture. In and by this pursuit one comes to understand human nature more adequately. How? By understanding the goods which are the objects of human acts, acts which one comes to understand as realizing human capacities, capacities which one comes to understand as constituting that nature<sup>51</sup>. So one rejects the option of living as a contented cow (Aristotle's example) or as a brain plugged into an experience machine (Grisez's and then Nozick's more vivid and adequate thought-experiment), and one rejects it precisely as unworthy, an inadequate and unsatisfactory (even though in itself wholly 'satisfying') form of life for oneself or any person<sup>52</sup>.

Similarly, the empiricist model of the *visio Dei* is overcome by a reflection on practical understanding. To see God in His essence would be to see Him not merely as cause but also as Person(s), and not merely as Person(s) but as personally causing all the goods (including persons) of the universe. And, knowing our own action practically, we know that personal causing is not like the billiard-ball-colliding push-pull causing of empiricism. In personal causing, the achieved effect which comes last is the good envisaged from the first in the intelligent process of practical understanding and reasoning, choosing and acting. To see God would be to really understand, and for the first time, the point (the good) of all created goods, including created persons and the love-of-friendship between them. To love oneself and others like one, in full measure, would thereby become not less possible, not less appropriate, but more possible and more appropriate than in this life.

And we can go further. Speculative questioning and understanding in contemplation disclose to us, already in this life, the existence of a God who is not Aristotle's purely contemplative *noesis*

*noeseos* but rather the *dominus suorum actuum* and free creator and activator and governor of the universe. To attain the beatitude of a perfected human knowledge and love of God would be to attain the fullness of the image of God<sup>53</sup>. So the imaging of God in this life (a life in which a very imperfect but real knowledge and love of God is possible) would be an imitation not of the Aristotelian divine contemplative, but of the fully practical (as well as contemplative) intelligence and will of the true God, creator of irreducibly many forms of good.

One *understands* that truth is a good, and one's *intelligence* leads one on by questions that call for (and thus dimly envisage) answers but cannot be answered, and thus by the incomparably desirable prospect of a fuller truth that is no mirage but remains simply unattainable in this human life. To be aware of these questions, and of the unattained good of answering them, is to have a notion of transcendence and our openness to it<sup>54</sup>. But intelligence also grasps that friendship, or practical reasonableness, or human life itself, are goods, and this understanding lures us on to the intelligent realisation of those goods as best we can, as well as to the incomparably desirable prospect and ambition of ever yet more fully understanding their goodness and its source and of ever more adequately realising and enjoying them.

Empiricism tempts us to think of our inclinations as blind urges, pushing or pulling us from within. But, for us, things are in fact desired because they seem desirable, i.e. because they appear and appeal to our intelligence as good<sup>55</sup>. The grasp of basic goods, and the intelligent assessment of their implications, and the immediate direction of their realisation in choice and execution, are *all* the work of one's single intelligence. If one's intelligence opens one towards transcendence, it does so not just by the pursuit of speculative truth but also and equally by the pursuit of the truth of human goods and human actions (the truth which Thomas relentlessly calls practical). If our hearts are restless, it is not only for speculative truth but also for the practical truth that consists in (satisfaction of intelligent desire for) the realization, the making actual, of goods such as life, play, friendship.... It cannot be doubted that neither the full understanding of those goods nor their sufficiently satisfactory realization is possible otherwise than by a participation in God's creative understanding and personal life far fuller than any participation we can envisage or accomplish.

## V

A simplistic catechesis taught (or was fragmentarily remembered as teaching) that man has one end, the vision of God, and treated that vision simply as the reward for forms of virtue which have no

apparent tendency to fit a person for a life of exclusive contemplation<sup>56</sup>.

Such a presentation has never been adequate to Christian faith. That faith is conveyed more amply by Vatican II, when (following the scriptures and the liturgy) it identifies the ultimate end of mankind, not simply as a vision of truth, nor even simply as a participation in holiness and grace, but as a participation by a plurality of persons in a plurality of goods, the goods of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom and thus all the good fruits of our nature and our choices: 'a kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace'<sup>57</sup>.

Thus the relationship between moral virtue in this life and the integral human fulfilment of beatitude is affirmed to be, not of instrumental means to extrinsic end, nor mere merit to sheer extrinsic reward, but rather a striking form of participation: the good works and virtues go to building up *here and now* the supernatural kingdom. And 'afterwards', in the fulfilled kingdom, those good works and virtues 'will be found again' as intrinsic to its heavenly life and constitution<sup>58</sup>. This underlines that the reward so insistently proposed by Scripture is *intrinsically* connected to the rightful pursuit of the goods: it is not like the prospect of a beach holiday rewarding long hours of work, but more like (*mutatis multis mutandis*) an orchestra's prospect of performing, *really* satisfactorily, a symphony after years of self-discipline, study, work<sup>59</sup>.

## VI

In the theory of practical reason advanced by Grisez and Boyle and myself and others, a number of goods are identified as basic. Against this, it has been objected that 'the pluralism implied in ... eight basic goods ... is diametrically opposed to St. Thomas's teaching that there is but one ultimate good for all humans'<sup>60</sup>. But, as we have seen, one should be slow to speak of diametrical opposition to a theory which is as complex as Aquinas's on the one ultimate good for all human persons. St. Thomas can best be understood as holding to a conclusion often obscured in his discourse. This conclusion, defended by Grisez and myself as valid apart from the authority of St. Thomas, is: Any state which could count as the 'one ultimate good for all humans' must involve a plurality of goods, such is the irreducible complexity of integral human fulfilment.

Philosophical argument alone cannot conclude to the faith and hope re-expressed by the Council. But consider a philosophically elaborated treatment: (i) of the basic aspects of human flourishing, the basic human goods; (ii) of practical reasonableness as the architectonic good which, transparent for the master ideal and

principle of integral fulfilment, provides the standards for good realization of those basic human goods; (iii) of human self-constitution by free choices which last indefinitely unless repented and which thus might conceivably go, intrinsically, to fit or unfit a person for full and eternal participation in the not merely contemplative life of God in the not merely speculative-truth-centred Kingdom; and (iv) of the possibility that practical reasonableness has a point beyond itself as a participation in God's free play, the play of creating and bringing-to-fulfilment, a fulfilment of Creation which would include the actual realization of integral human fulfilment. Can it reasonably be said, as some claim<sup>61</sup>, that all this amounts to 'a conscious rejection of the finality of man's nature'? To me it seems rather to be, from beginning to end, precisely an exploration and explication of that human finality (if you like, that metaphysical finality), in its irreducible complexity.

\* A similar version of this Aquinas Lecture appears in the Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association (The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064).

- 1 *in Eth.* I, lect. 2, (ed. Spiazzi) n. 31; see also VI, lect. 8, n. 1233, with note 3 below.
- 2 See Gauthier and Jolif, *L'Ethique à Nicomaque* (Louvain and Paris, 2nd. ed: 1970), vol. II, pp. 1–2; St. Thomas, *in Eth.*, I, lect. 1, nn. 2, 3, 7.
- 3 For Aristotle, see *Eth. Nic.* I, 3: 1095a5–6; II, 2: 1103b 27–9; VI, 8: 1141b23; and the arguments of Teichmüller amply summarised and defended in T. Ando, *Aristotle's Theory of Practical Cognition* (3rd. ed., Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague: 1971), pp. 121, 168–74. For St. Thomas, see *in Pol.*, proem., (ed. Spiazzi) nn. 5–8; *in Eth.* II, lect. 2, n.256; lect. 9, n. 351; *in Lib. Boet. de Trin.*, q. 5, a.1c & ad 4. It is clear that Aquinas has no interest in drawing a significant distinction between 'moral philosophy' and 'prudentia'; he will introduce the treatise on moral philosophy with the words '*sapientis est ordinare*' (*in Eth.* I, lect. 1, n. 1), and the *sapientia* in question, as the development of the whole commentary makes clear, is that *sapientia in rebus humanis* which is *prudentia* and 'pertains solely to practical reason' (S.T. II-II, q. 47, a.2).
- 4 See Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Georgetown U.P., Washington, DC; Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1983), ch.1.
- 5 *Nic. Eth.* I, 2:1094a18–22, re-arranging the sentence-order.
- 6 *Nic. Eth.* I, 7:1097b2.
- 7 For this interpretation of the term 'the others', see St. Thomas, *in Eth.* I, lect. 2, n. 19. The recognition that basic goods can be desired and valued both for their own sake and as components in a completely final good (*eudaimonia*) is reached by Plato in his critique of Socrates: see Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory* (O.U.P.: 1977), p. 167.
- 8 It goes without saying that 'desires', throughout, is to be taken in the Aristotelian, not the Humean sense: see Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, p. 44; also pp. 30–7, 44–5; 'Natural Law and the "Is"-"Ought" Question: an Invitation to Professor Veatch' (1981) 26 *Catholic Lawyer* 266 at pp. 266–70.
- 9 Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (O.U.P.: 1983), p. 31; see also pp. 12, 17–18, 20, 31–2.
- 10 See S.T. I–II, q. 5, a.8c; see also q. 5, a.8 ad 2; q. 5, a.4 ad 2; q. 13, a. 6c; I, q. 19, a. 3c & a. 10c; q.60, a. 2c; 82, a. 1c & a. 2c; q. 94, a. 1c; *de Malo*, 3, 3c; *in Eth.* III, lect. 2, n. 403.
- 11 S.T. I-II, 5, 3c, 4c, quoting *Nic. Eth.* I, 7: 1097b8.

- 12 S.T. I-II, 5, 3c; also in *Eth.* nn. 129, 202, 2103, 2136, 2110.  
 13 S.T. I-II, q. 3, a. 2 ad 4; a. 5c and a. 6c; q. 5, a. 3 ad 2; a. 5c.  
 14 I-II, 5, 5c.  
 15 II-II, 47, 6c.  
 16 *Q.D. de Caritate*, a. 2c.  
 17 S.T. II-II, 47, 6c.  
 18 II-II, q. 47, a.6 ad 1 & ad 3; I-II, q. 58, a. 4c; I, q. 79, a. 12c.  
 19 S.T. I-II, q. 94, aa. 2c, 4c; a. 3c = q. 63, a. 1c = II-II, q. 47, a. 6c = I-II, q. 58, a. 4c; *de Malo*, 3, 12 ad 13.  
 20 S.T. I-II, q. 10, a. 1; q. 9, a. 1; q. 18, a. 7c; q. 94, a. 2c.  
 21 I-II, q. 8, a. 2c & ad 1; q. 9, a. 1; q. 19, a. 1c & ad 3.  
 22 I-II, q. 94, a. 2c (the main list); II-II, q. 64, a. 5 ad 3; a. 6 ad 2; III, q. 68, a. 11 ad 3.  
 23 I-II, 58, 5c.  
 24 I-II, 57, 1c.  
 25 I-II, 66, 3c. See also Joseph Buckley, *Man's Last End* (Herder, St. Louis & London: 1949), pp. 208—10.  
 26 See *Nic. Eth.* I, 7: 1097b17-19.  
 27 Notice that there is no reason at all to suppose that this as yet indeterminate 'aspect' of the realization of basic goods is instantiated by only one 'appropriate way' of so realizing them; there may be many such ways that have in some measure the relevant intelligibility and worth, and there is no reason to suppose that the measure must be capable of commensuration and measurement. See Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford U.P.: 1980), ch. 5.  
 28 *in Lib. Boet. de Trin.* q. 6, a. 4 ad 3.  
 29 S.T. I-II, 3, 5c.  
 30 St. Thomas will appeal (II-II, 182, 1c) to the seven reasons set forth by Aristotle in *Nic. Eth.* X, 7: 1177a11-b13. The weakness of these reasons, and their incompatibility with so much of the *Ethics*, is well exposed by Jon Moline, 'Contemplation and the Human Good' (1983) 17 *Nous* 37 at 40—5 (though Moline's own thesis about Aristotle's ironical intent fails to convince).  
 31 S.T. I-II, q. 66, a. 4 ad 1; q. 3, a. 6c; q. 57, a. 1 ad 2.  
 32 *sola visio Dei*; cf also 'in solo Deo beatitudo hominis consistit': I-II, q. 2, a. 8c; q. 3, a. 8c.  
 33 II-II, 26, 13 ad 3. Beatitudo, the fully satisfactory, must surely include such a vision, since without it our concern to understand would be unsatisfied. Indeed, that vision could be said to be central to integral human fulfilment, because the goodness that would be revealed in it must be such that all other goods will then be understood ('seen') and appreciated as having their goodness as participations (likenesses and effects) of that primary and original goodness. See further section IV.  
 34 II-II, 27, 8c: 'dilectio Dei accip(i)tur secundum quod solus diligitur'.  
 35 'propter unitatem humanae naturae': see in *Eth.* I, lect. 9, n. 106.  
 36 St. Thomas, in *I Cor.*, c. 15, lect. 2.  
 37 S.T. I, q. 26, a. 2 ad 2; q. 87, a. 3c; etc; see Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, pp. 21—2, 25.  
 38 *Supra* n. 19; for the order of thought in St. Thomas on this key issue, read *S.T.* I-II, q. 94, a. 2c with I, q. 80, a. 1 ad 1; q. 82, a. 4c and I-II, q. 10, a. 1c.  
 39 I-II, q. 26, a. 4; II-II, q. 25, a. 2c.  
 40 I-II, 94, 2.  
 41 I-II, 4, 8c and ad 3.  
 42 I-II, q. 4, a. 6c; also a. 5c.  
 43 II-II, 26, 13. This concession appears in other ways, too. In the state of perfect beatitudo, says Aquinas, the order of priorities in love, the *ordo caritatis*, will remain the same ranked order as it is in this life. And in that state of beatitudo, all "the proper grounds of love" (*honestae causae dilectionis*) will remain as in this life: a. 13c. But what is a *causa dilectionis*, a ground of love? It is a good, which affords a *ratio diligendi*: II-II, 26, 2 ad 1. So yet again we find Aquinas formally recognising the multiplicity of goods involved in beatitudo, and the

- necessity of loving and respecting each of those goods in due measure.
- 44 I-II, q. 67; II-II, q. 26, a. 13; q. 52, a. 3; *de Virt. Card.* 4; *de Car.* a. 2c.
- 45 See also Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, pp. 70—4, 120—1, 151—2.
- 46 For the contrast between ‘goal’, as attainable objective, and ‘ideal’, see Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, p. 61 and pp. 75—6. On ‘integral human fulfilment’ as the first principle of morality, see n. 45 above.
- 47 *S.T.*, I-II, q. 2, aa. 7c, 8c; I, q. 65, a. 2; I-II, q. 1, a. 8.
- 48 *de Car.*, a. 2c.
- 49 *S.T.* II-II, 25, 1.
- 50 Neo-Platonism such as Augustine’s can be regarded as employing this inadequate model of knowing ‘in its sublimest form’: Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (Longmans, London: 1958) p. 412.
- 51 See notes 1, 3, and 37 above. Similar conclusions about the relative epistemological priority of ethics in our knowledge of human nature are reached by close students of St. Thomas such as Theo G. Belmans O. Praem., *Le sens objectif de l’agir humain* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: 1980), pp. 142—3, 428; J. de Finance SJ, ‘Sur la notion de loi naturelle’ (1969) 22 *Doctor Communis* 201 at 209—210. For an important and neglected treatment of the way in which sciences can be interdependent without any vicious circle—precisely because each science (even one subalternated to another) can call upon principles which are *per se nota* and thus not derived from the other science—see St. Thomas, in *Lib. Boet. de Trin.*, q. 5, a. 1 ad 9.
- 52 Eud. Eth. I, 5: 1216a; Grisez and Shaw, *Beyond the New Morality* (U. Notre Dame P.: 1974), p. 26; Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford: 1974), pp. 42—5; Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, pp. 37—42, 46, 48, 89.
- 53 *S.T.* I, 93, 4c.
- 54 Here is St. Thomas principal argument for his famous assertion that every intelligent being ‘naturally desires the vision of the divine substance’: *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 57.
- 55 See note 8 above; *Fundamentals of Ethics*, ch. 2.
- 56 A deficient style of homily went further, reducing Christian moral life to a search for ‘happiness’. Ethics books could be found to follow suit. For example, Vernon Bourke’s *Ethics* began: ‘(The) basic and natural urge for happiness is deep-rooted in the being of every man.... Each man’s moral problem ... is to select and do the kind of actions which are conducive to true happiness.... Ethics may be defined as the systematic study of human actions from the point of view of their rightness and wrongness as means for the achievement of ultimate happiness.... For the present, we can take right action to be that which should be done ... in order to achieve happiness’ (1966 ed., pp. 3, 4). And happiness was located in an ‘intellectual contemplation of the perfect good’ (*ibid.*, p. vi). A more adequate exposition of Christian faith sets aside these emaciated conceptions of the moral life. The search for one’s own happiness is displaced as the moral norm; in its place we find, in the words of Vatican II: ‘the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine mind (*consilium*) and will, human activity should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and allow men as individuals and members of society to pursue and fulfil their integral vocation’: *Gaudium et Spes*, 35.
- 57 *Gaudium et spes*, 39.
- 58 *Id.*
- 59 cf. Eric D’Arcy, ‘The Withering-Away of Disbelief’ (1983) 18 *Atheism and dialogue* (Secretariat for Non-Believers, Vatican) 158 at p. 163.
- 60 Vernon Bourke, ‘Justice as Equitable Reciprocity: Aquinas Updated’ (1982) 27 *Am. J. Jurisp.* 17 at 25.
- 61 *Ibid.*, at p. 24. Bourke added: ‘Finnis does not tie in this list of proximate human goods with any consideration of an ultimate good’. But see *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, pp. 49, 405--10.