

DISCUSSIONS ON THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER

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Two years have now passed since the publication of P. de Lubac's *Surnaturel*. It has required long periods of study and reflection, before responsible theologians could feel competent to offer their evaluation of this truly extraordinary work. In addition to the penetrating study of P. Malevez, S. J.,¹ two outstanding critiques have been written during the past year.² Since, as far as the present writer is aware, these three articles are the only attempts at a detailed and comprehensive examination of P. de Lubac's position, and P. Malevez' views have already been exposed,³ we shall limit the present survey to a report on the views of PP. de Blic, S. J., and Charles Boyer, S. J., reserving the expression of personal opinion to the end.

CRITIQUE BY P. JACQUES DE BLIC

Perhaps the most scholarly and thorough critique of *Surnaturel* thus far published has been written by P. de Blic. His article begins with a rapid, but adequate, summary of P. de Lubac's theory and general outlook, as follows. In the last few centuries, has not the reliance of theologians on the hypothesis of "pure nature," crowded into the background the traditional Augustinian notion of the dignity of a spiritual being? Does not this hypothesis involve a contradiction of the numerous texts of the great Scholastics, of St. Thomas in particular, in which the beatific vision is described as an infrustrable object of natural desire, even though unattainable without grace; in the fervor of a necessary polemic against Baius, have we not lost sight of the

¹ L. Malevez, "L'esprit et désir de Dieu," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXIX (1947), 1-31.

² J. de Blic, S. J., "Bulletin de morale," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, IV (1947), 93-113; C. Boyer, S. J., "Nature pure et surnaturel," *Gregorianum*, XXVIII (1947), 379; other briefer reviews or comments have been written, notably by the following: M. Chavasse in *Revue du Moyen Age latin*, II (1946), 352-55; J. Huby, *Études*, CCLI (1946), 265-68; F. Cayré, *L'année théologique*, VII (1946), 463 f.; R. W. Meagher, *Clergy Review*, XXIX (1948), 12-18; G. D. Smith, *Clergy Review*, XXIX (1948), 115; A. Michel, *L'Ami du clergé*, LIV (1947), 797-804; J. Crehan, S. J., *The Month*, CLXXXIV (1947), 278-86; Dom S. Moore, *Downside Review*, LXV (1947), 246-59; Dom I. Trethowan, *Orate Fratres*, XXII (1947), 72 f.; L. B. Gillon, O. P., *Revue Thomiste*, XLVII (1947), 304-10.

³ Cf. "Current Theology," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*, VIII (1947), 486-88.

authentic Augustinian and Thomistic notion of the supernatural, which embraced only the objective transcendence of divinity and the modal transcendence of the miraculous? Is it to be considered an advance to have added to these two notions a third meaning which would have disconcerted our predecessors, namely, the theological transcendence of our destiny? Such is the complex and delicate problem involved in the historical studies of P. de Lubac.⁴

Before entering on his detailed critique, P. de Blic makes the following observation concerning the method employed in *Surnaturel*. Despite a display of historical erudition always impressive and truly imposing in the third part, we are confronted much less with a doctrinal history, than with a highly controversial essay, in which assuredly, history plays its role, but always in closest conjunction with a personal thought, controlling perfectly its dialectic and extremely tenacious of its insights; an essay, moreover, which is brilliant, and written with a conviction readily passed on to the reader, without ever wearying him by a prolonged discussion of opposing views; for this very reason, however, *Surnaturel* runs the risk of stirring up more than one query and doubt in the minds of professional theologians and historians.⁵

With this prelude, P. de Blic begins his critique, whose general tenor is stated candidly: despite the incontestable talent of the author and some important concessions which must be made to his views, it is, nevertheless, impossible to subscribe to the general thesis of this book. Far from appearing recent and without traditional roots before the sixteenth century, the current notion of the supernatural order is found sufficiently in the texts of St. Thomas and of his contemporaries, so that there is no real doubt as to its descent from the Middle Ages.⁶

⁴ J. de Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 94: "Sous un appareil d'érudition toujours considérable, et vraiment imposant dans la troisième partie, nous avons affaire cependant, moins à un exposé d'histoire doctrinale . . . qu'à un 'essai' de haute controverse, où l'histoire joue son rôle assurément, mais en étroite liaison avec une pensée personnelle parfaitement maîtresse de sa dialectique et très ferme dans ses intuitions. Essai, d'ailleurs, des plus brillants, et, pour le large public auquel il est accessible, d'une conviction éminemment communicative, sans jamais lasser par une discussion prolongée de l'opinion adverse; risquant toutefois, par là-même, de poser plus d'un point d'interrogation, de soulever plus d'un doute dans l'esprit du théologien ou de l'historien de métier."

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 95: "Pour nous, si la sincérité est la première loi de la critique, même la plus amicale, nous devons dire, qu'en dépit du talent incontestable déployé par l'auteur, et

Granted that in the Middle Ages the term "supernatural" denoted primarily the transcendental, i.e., realities totally unattainable by the forces of created nature; granted also that the term "superadditus," applied to the last end of angels or men, is foreign to medieval language, nevertheless, P. de Blic finds in St. Thomas, at least equivalently, the same notions of the supernatural order as those proposed by modern theologians to justify the necessity of admitting the possibility of a purely natural destiny. St. Thomas holds that the order of grace, including the beatific vision, is "aliquid naturae indebitum" or "a natura non requisitum";⁷ that it is not a logical complement demanded by nature.⁸ Furthermore St. Thomas teaches explicitly that the gift of original justice, whose whole *raison d'être* was to harmonize the entire man with his transcendental destiny,⁹ was totally unowed and gratuitously conferred.¹⁰

These ideas of St. Thomas, according to P. de Blic, throw considerable light on the condemned propositions of Baius, particularly 21, 23, 24 and 26.¹¹ The consultors of the Holy Office, who drew up these propositions, were thoroughly familiar with Scholastic terminology and understood the word *debita* in the same sense as St. Thomas, namely, as something required by nature. Therefore the precise error condemned by Pius V in Baius was the inseparability of the supernatural from nature, not indeed in the sense that the supernatural is caused by nature or emanates from it as a property, but in the sense that the supernatural is the logical complement of nature. And against this essential error of Baius, St. Thomas stood in total opposition.¹²

sous réserve d'importantes concessions que nous allons préciser, il est impossible, malgré tout, de souscrire à la thèse générale du livre."

⁷ St. Thomas: *In II Sent.*, d. 4, a. 1; d. 23, q. 2, a. 1; d. 32, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2m; d. 33, q. 2, a. 2; *De Ver.*, q. 6, a. 2, ad 6m; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 2, ad 2m; *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3m; *Comp. Theol.*, 222.

⁸ St. Thomas: *In II Sent.* d. 26, a. 1, ad 2m; *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 3; *In II ad Cor.* V, lect. 2; for the notion of divine liberality, cf. St. Thomas: *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 3; *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 2; q. 14, a. 10, ad 2m; q. 27, a. 3, ad 17m.

⁹ St. Thomas: *In II Sent.*, d. 30, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5m; d. 32, q. 2, a. 2; *De Ver.*, q. 25, a. 7; *Sum Theol.*, I, q. 95, a. 1; q. 100, a. 1; *Comp. Theol.*, 200.

¹⁰ Cf. preceding footnote.

¹¹ Pope St. Pius V, "Ex omnibus afflictionibus," *DB*, 1021, 1023, 1024, 1026.

¹² De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 96; cf. also Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, III, 259.

However, one's final conclusion as to whether St. Thomas' doctrine on the supernatural differs essentially from that of modern theologians, or, on the contrary, contains the seeds of later developments, will depend on one's interpretation of the famous Thomistic texts on the natural desire of God. Many of these texts make use of the natural desire to prove that we are effectively destined to the beatific vision, and the proof finds its middle term in the axiom that a natural desire cannot be in vain. It is precisely this doctrine which P. de Lubac seems to make the cardinal support of his thesis.¹³ Here, P. de Blic makes two important concessions to P. de Lubac's interpretation of these texts; (1) St. Thomas' reasoning concludes, not to the simple possibility of the beatific vision, as many have contended, but to its reality as postulated by the very nature of a spiritual being;¹⁴ (2) furthermore, P. de Lubac is right in his intuition that it would be impossible to advance St. Thomas' doctrine to its logical conclusions and still safeguard the gratuity of the supernatural, unless one were to make use of some compensatory factors.¹⁵

P. de Blic, however, differs completely from De Lubac as to the nature of the compensatory elements needed to interpret St. Thomas. P. de Lubac would find the corrective in reestablishing the notion of spirit in its dignity as the image of God tending to full likeness, and in not reducing the desire of a spirit for God to an appetite of its intellectual nature.¹⁶ P. de Blic feels that the initial task, before reaching any definite solution, is to determine exactly to what extent the doctrine of St. Thomas on the natural desire for God represents his profoundest thought;¹⁷ above all, one must not lose sight of the apologetic character of St. Thomas' reasoning when he appeals to the natural desire for the beatific vision. It is strikingly clear that these texts nearly always tend toward establishing, and defending from

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 97: "C'est du contenu de cette série de textes thomistes que le Père de Lubac semble faire le pivot ou le support de sa conception personnelle."

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*; cf. De Lubac, *Supernatural*, pp. 118, 433, 467-71. ¹⁵ *Loc. cit.* ¹⁶ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*: "Le problème est ainsi parfaitement posé. Mais, plutôt que d'en orienter la solution vers le correctif qui consisterait à 'rétablir l'esprit dans sa dignité soumise d'image de Dieu, à ne point réduire le désir de l'esprit à un appétit de la nature intellectuelle'—sur quoi l'auteur s'explique bien peu à notre gré—, ne conviendrait-il pas de rechercher, au préalable, dans quelle mesure exacte la doctrine dont il s'agit représente la pensée profonde de saint Thomas."; cf. W. O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest*, (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), pp. 135-86.

attack, the Christian doctrine of man's transcendent destiny. Recalling trenchantly the wide variety of contrary and even contradictory interpretations, not only by theologians outside the Thomist tradition, but also by those who are most familiar with the integral thought of St. Thomas, P. de Blic makes the very pertinent observation that these texts can hardly contain the foundation of St. Thomas' theology of the supernatural order.¹⁸

Furthermore, if these texts are not isolated, but are compared with the complete work of St. Thomas, it will be found that the doctrine of the natural desire fades completely in the light of other doctrines, for example, on merit, the theological virtues, the necessity of revelation, and limbo. When he no longer deals with human destiny apologetically, but considers it in the perspective of revealed truth and Catholic dogma, St. Thomas affirms without hesitation that the beatific vision transcends all natural desire, even as it transcends all knowledge, whether angelic or human.¹⁹ It cannot be overemphasized that the tenor of these latter passages is not merely to deny the power of human or angelic nature to desire God meritoriously, but rather to make any tendency whatsoever of a finite spirit toward the beatific vision completely dependent on the influx of infused inclinations.²⁰ The texts on limbo reduce the natural desire to a simple velleity in order to combat the idea that infants, dying without baptism, would suffer from the loss of the beatific vision;²¹ their desire for a closer union with God is compared, not with the loss of a due patrimony, but with the dream of attaining a royal dignity which is completely unowed.²² Moreover, St. Thomas teaches with precision that the object of human nature's spontaneous tendency toward its last end is happiness in general, and is not the precise form of happiness actually decreed by God; the specification of our happiness in the beatific vision is not only

¹⁸ *Loc. cit.* "... et la diversité même de ces explications serait déjà un indice, que... l'argumentation développée a peu de chances d'être vraiment une des assises de la théologie du saint Docteur."

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 98; cf. the following texts of St. Thomas: *In I Sent., Prol.*, a. 1; *In II Sent.*, d. 29, a. 1; *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, *sol.* 3 c. et ad 2m; d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5m; *De Ver.* q. 14, a. 2; q. 14, a. 3, ad 9m; *C. Gent.* I, 5; III, 153; *In II ad Cor.* V, *lect.* 2; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3; q. 114, a. 2.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

²¹ St. Thomas, *In II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2m.

²² St. Thomas, *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3m.

completely unknown by vast numbers of men in all ages, but can only be known by revelation.²³ Underlying all these perspectives of St. Thomas, P. de Blic maintains, is the idea of the absolute gratuity of the supernatural order, in the sense that it is in no way required by the nature of a finite spirit.

P. de Lubac affirms that Suarez first utilized, as a proof against the natural desire of God, the impossibility that any nature could have, of itself, an inclination surpassing its natural order.²⁴ But, P. de Blic points out, long before Suarez, St. Thomas had taught: "Natural desire cannot exist except for a thing which can be naturally possessed";²⁵ "To every natural passive potency, there corresponds another natural active potency";²⁶ "Nothing can be ordered to an end unless there preexists in it some proportion to the end, from which arises a desire of the end."²⁷ To these and similar texts, P. de Lubac will undoubtedly reply that St. Thomas seems to attribute to spiritual beings a certain connaturality or affinity with the God of their beatitude, and this contention will be based, P. de Blic anticipates, on the passages where St. Thomas teaches that men and angels are capable of the beatific vision, capable of grace, and even have a capacity for hypostatic union with divinity.²⁸ However, P. de Blic rejoins, let us not exaggerate this capacity for the supernatural, as the Augustinian school has done, by attributing to St. Thomas more than he intended; in these passages, he was not asserting an active potency, as is clear; he was not even maintaining a natural passive potency, since he consistently taught that, to every natural passive potency, there corresponds a natural principle of actuation.²⁹ Our capacity, then, for the supernatural can only be an obediential potency, as St. Thomas teaches

²³ *Loc. cit.*; cf. St. Thomas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, *sol.* 1, ad 2m, *sol.* 3; *De Ver.*, q. 22, a. 7; *C. Gent.* I, 2; *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1m; I-II, q. 1, a. 7; q. 5, a. 8 c, ad 2m; *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 3 c., ad 1m; *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 17, a. 2, ad 1m. Of these texts P. de Blic observes: "Particulièrement significatifs sont *C. Gent.* I, 2 (en contraste avec le livre III du même ouvrage) et les textes indiqués de la I-II, qui encadrent de manière topique le traité de la béatitude."

²⁴ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-18. ²⁵ St. Thomas, *In III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2.

²⁶ St. Thomas, *De Ver.*, q. 12, a. 3, ob. 18.

²⁷ St. Thomas, *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 2; cf. also *Quaest. disp. de Spe*, ad 8m; I-II, q. 62, a. 3.

²⁸ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-20, 135-38.

²⁹ St. Thomas: *De Ver.*, q. 8, a. 12, ad 4m; q. 12, a. 3, ob. 18; *De virt. in com.*, 10, ob. 13; *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 11, a. 1; *Comp. Theol.*, 104.

unequivocally with regard to the infused virtues, the hypostatic union, and the beatific vision.³⁰ But this is extremely pertinent to the present controversy, since St. Thomas asserts unmistakably that an obediencial capacity or potency need never be actuated by God, and this is true whether we speak of the capacity for the hypostatic union or for the beatific vision: "Ad bonitatem divinam pertinet . . . ut de perfectionibus quas unaquaeque res secundum suam naturam requirit, unicuique largiatur secundum quod est eius capax. Non autem requiritur de perfectionibus superadditis, inter quas sunt gratia et gloria."³¹ In connection with this text, it is interesting to note that P. de Lubac inveighs against the use of the term "superadditus" as applied to the destiny of spiritual beings; he feels that it is an innovation of modern theology, and would make no sense in the perspectives of thirteenth-century theologians, who applied the term to grace as the means, but never to the end itself. P. de Blic concedes that St. Thomas never uses "superadditus" to qualify "finis," but emphasizes that, in the passage just cited, celestial glory, which is actually man's last end, is called a "perfectio superaddita" in opposition to "perfectiones quas unaquaeque res secundum suam naturam requirit."³²

It seems then perfectly consistent with the thought of St. Thomas to maintain the possibility of an order of divine providence, in which the potentialities of human nature with regard to a hypostatic union, elevation to celestial glory or the infusion of supernatural habits, would not have been actuated—a concept certainly not hostile to the hypothesis of "pure nature." Hence the affirmation of P. de Lubac that the idea of "pure nature" was introduced into theology just before the beginning of the sixteenth century, because of philosophical speculations (deriving from nominalism) concerning the "potentia Dei absoluta" and without any particular concern or preoccupation with the supernatural, does not seem to be solidly established.³³

³⁰ St. Thomas: *De virt. in com.*, 10, ad 13; *In III Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4m; *Sum. Theol.*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3m; *Comp. Theol.*, 104.

³¹ St. Thomas: *De Ver.*, q. 6, a. 2, ad 6m.

³² De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 98; cf. De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 392 f.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 100; for further data on this aspect of the controversy between PP. de Blic and de Lubac; cf. De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 241–60; De Blic, "Saint Thomas et l'intellectualisme moral à propos de la peccabilité de l'ange," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, I (1944), 277 ff.; De Blic, "Peccabilité du pur esprit et surnaturel," *Mélanges de science religieuse*,

The truth of the matter rather seems to be that medieval theologians were not explicitly concerned with the question of "pure nature," because it did not then constitute a problem. This took place only when a rigid Augustinianism entered into conflict with humanism in the midst of theology itself, under some provocation, perhaps, from the excesses of the Renaissance. However, the mere fact that medieval theologians wrote no treatises *De statu naturae purae* or *De Deo elevato* does not justify the conclusion that they could not have done so, for want of a suitable vocabulary or for want of an appropriate ideological foundation; neither was lacking to the theologians of the thirteenth or of the two succeeding centuries.³⁴ In the case of St. Thomas, who is easily the master, this is sufficiently clear in the progress of his thought from the notions of *donum indebitum* and of *pura liberalitas* (whence he derived the idea of *elevatio* or *sublimatio*), to the concept of *potentia obedientialis*, understood as a capacity for *perfectiones superadditae inter quas sunt gratia et gloria*; likewise, from his interpretation of the natural desire to see God, as a simple velleity (in the case of infants dying without baptism), to the principle, repeated under different formulae, "Desiderium naturale nequit esse nisi rei quae naturaliter haberi potest."^{34 bis}

In what he considers of utmost importance in this discussion, P. de Blic now goes on to show the continuity between St. Thomas' doctrine on the supernatural and modern developments since the sixteenth century. This he wishes to accomplish by indicating the absolute contrast between St. Thomas and Baius.

The whole outlook of Baius was controlled by a radical and violent anti-humanism, which sought to establish in human nature a fundamental need for the supernatural, not because of any natural desire for God or any spiritual affinity with the divine, but because of man's essentially vitiated character; even in a state of innocence, man, left to himself, would be completely powerless in the moral order; he would

III (1946), 162; De Blic, "Quelques vieux textes sur la notion d'ordre surnaturel," *Ibid'* III (1946), 359-62; De Lubac and De Blic, "Échanges de vues à propos de la conception médiévale de l'ordre surnaturel," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, IV (1947), 364-79; cf. also L.-B. Gillon, O. P., "Aux origines de la 'puissance obédientielle,'" *Revue Thomiste*, XLVII (1947), 304-11.

³⁴ *Loc. cit.*; cf. De Lubac, *op. cit.* p. 422.

^{34 bis} *Ibid.*, p. 101.

be totally incapable of the slightest virtue without the infusion of charity; a purely natural love of God would be unthinkable. Therefore, according to Baius, grace is the logical complement of a nature essentially defective in its natural constitution.³⁵

St Thomas' position is the exact opposite. He maintained vigorously the consistency of a natural moral order. He taught that no human act is morally indifferent.³⁶ He affirmed the essential goodness of many acts, such as servile fear, which are in no wise motivated by charity.³⁷ He asserted the possibility of morally good acts which are not meritorious in the case of pagans or infidels.³⁸ From this consistent doctrine of a natural moral order, known by the light of reason and deriving, not from the free will of God as the supernaturally revealed order of grace must be, but from the necessary and eternal intellect of God reflected in human intelligence, St. Thomas easily makes the transition to a natural finality, from which the moral order receives its stability—a finality which he qualifies as “connatural” or “proportioned” in opposition to the transcendent and supernatural destiny, of whose splendor even faith gives only an imperfect glimpse.³⁹

But what of the numerous passages, cited by P. de Lubac,⁴⁰ in which St. Thomas calls the beatitude, spoken of by ancient philosophers, imperfect? P. de Blic feels that this question should first be confronted with the query: what may be legitimately concluded from these texts? That man is capable of a higher destiny, whose consideration, for a Christian theologian knowing its actual existence by faith, lessens the value of a natural ethical end? That true beatitude belongs to life after death—a truth too little realized by pagan philosophers? The answer to these last two questions must be affirmative.

On the other hand, it is hardly true to say that St. Thomas criticized

³⁵ *Loc. cit.* ³⁶ St. Thomas, *In II Sent.*, d. 40, a. 5 c, ad 2m; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 18, a. 9.

³⁷ Cf. J. de Blic, “Sur l’attrition suffisante,” *Mélanges de science religieuse*, II (1947), 359 ff.

³⁸ St. Thomas, *In II Sent.*, d. 28, a. 1, c. ad 1m; *In IV Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, sol. 2, ad 3m; *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 10, a. 4; *In Rom.* XIV, lect. 3; for the contrast with Baius, cf. *DB*, 1025.

³⁹ St. Thomas, *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 3; *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 10, ob. 1; *De virt. in com.*, a. 10, ob. 1; q. 12, ad 6m; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 62, aa. 1, 3; q. 91, a. 4 c, ad 1m; q. 109, a. 5, ad 3m.

⁴⁰ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 449–65.

the teleological views of Aristotle to the extent of judging them illusory, precisely because they were naturalistic. After all, did not St. Thomas himself, his contemporaries, and the vast majority of his successors see in the natural state of infants in limbo a true beatitude, in the sense of a happiness without regret?⁴¹ St. Thomas, who recognized degrees of happiness even in the blessed, did not hold that a beatitude, imperfect inasmuch as it is inferior to the beatific vision, should for that reason be resented and therefore represented as illusory. It is quite true that his arguments from natural desire seem to exclude any beatitude except the beatific vision,⁴² but, as already noted, these are *ad hominem* arguments against those who denied the transcendental beatitude of revelation, and must be taken in conjunction with his firm stand that, when all is said and done, natural desire does not aspire to anything beyond happiness in general, whatever it may be in the concrete.⁴³

Furthermore, the concept of man's ultimate end, as envisaged by moral philosophy, is in no wise exhausted by the notion of beatitude. Besides beatitude, human destiny implies (and it might be added, primarily) an ideal capable of guiding man in life and of regulating even the slightest details of his moral conduct. Therefore—and this is of momentous import—if there were no other end to regulate our lives by enforcing strict moral obligations except the supernatural end of whose existence we obtain knowledge from revelation, we would have to conclude that, before the Christian era, and even now, outside the pale of Christianity, man lived and still lives without any perceptible moral law; in this hypothesis, there would not be, strictly speaking, any natural law.⁴⁴

A^rBaius, and before him, a Gregory of Rimini could accept such consequences without flinching. Not so St. Thomas; underlying the transcendent finality which should guide us to the beatific vision, he recognized another finality, assuredly of a much inferior character, but sovereign, nevertheless, in its obligatory nature. Moreover, this natural finality is such that it is not destroyed by our supernatural orientation toward the beatific vision, but is rather consecrated by its

⁴¹ St. Thomas, *In II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2; *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 3.

⁴² St. Thomas, *C. Gent.*, III, 50-54; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

⁴³ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 103; cf. note 23, *supra*. ⁴⁴ *Loc. cit.*

subordination. Thus positive divine law confirms the natural law, as its prolongation in a supernatural order.⁴⁶

In these perspectives, St. Thomas could speak of an end proportioned and connatural to human nature, in contrast with the supernatural or transcendent end; a natural end, which consists in living virtuously, gives consistency to all the dictates of conscience, synthesizes all the *finis virtutum*, and is the key to true happiness, according to the philosophers. It is quite understandable that this sovereign human ideal should be called the *finis proximus* by theologians, in as much as it is surpassed so completely by the Christian ideal. Nevertheless, in its own order, it has the value of a *finis ultimus*, since it is truly the ultimate norm and principle of natural perfection.⁴⁶ This is why one finds recurring in St. Thomas such expressions as: "Finis communis et ultimus est duplex";⁴⁷ "Est duplex hominis ultimum bonum";⁴⁸ "Ultima perfectio rationalis naturae est duplex."⁴⁹ It is of small import that St. Thomas qualifies perfection according to the capacity of nature by the phrase *secundum quid*,⁵⁰ for this natural imperfection, like the imperfection of moral virtues, is only relative to the supernatural destiny and the supernatural virtues of men, and by no means diminishes the notion of the perfect consistency of a natural moral order. Obviously, in comparison with supernatural charity, natural love of God is eclipsed; nevertheless, this does not prevent St. Thomas from taking it seriously, even though it be only the love of God "of the philosophers." Here we see the complete contrast between the thought of St. Thomas and the doctrines of Baius or Jansen.⁵¹

M. Gilson, then, was absolutely right in stressing the admirable humanism of St. Thomas,⁵² who in assigning to nature its proper sphere, manifested the intuitions of a refined religious sense. The gift of grace would no longer be due to the pure liberality of God's goodness (*agapè*), if grace were to be conceived as the logical complement of the

⁴⁶ *Loc. cit.* ⁴⁶ Thomas, *In III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 4, sol. 3, ad 3m.

⁴⁷ St. Thomas, *loc. cit.* ⁴⁸ St. Thomas, *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 2, (cf. also a. 3).

⁴⁹ St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 62, a. 1. ⁵⁰ St. Thomas, *De virt. in com.*, q. 10, a. 1.

⁵¹ St. Thomas, *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 3, ad 1m; d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4m; *De Ver.*, q. 23, a. 7: *Quodl.* I, q. 8, ad 1m; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 3m; q. 109, a. 3, ad 1m; cf. also Baius, *DB*, 1025-1038; Jansen, *DB*, 1292, 1297-1305.

⁵² E. Gilson, *S. Thomas d'Avin* (Collection, "Les moralistes chrétiens") Paris, 1925, pp. 4-10.

creation of finite spirits. In every way, then, grace supposes nature;⁵³ independently of any vocation or invitation to a supernatural destiny, a natural end is already imposed on every finite intellectual nature and confers a meaning to spiritual existence. And this is precisely the ideology of our modern treatises, *De statibus naturae* or *De Deo elevante*; not only the ideology, but also the vocabulary, even to the term "pure nature," which, though not explicitly, occurs equivalently in St. Thomas. This statement will surprise only those who fail to grasp how inseparably the possibility of pure nature is bound up with the concept that a supernatural finality is not required (*impostulabile*) by human nature.⁵⁴ It is of course quite true that, whenever the terms "in puris naturalibus" or "ex puris naturalibus" occur in the writings of St. Thomas and of his contemporaries, they do not always mean "pure nature"; this is universally admitted in the discussions as to whether Adam was created with sanctifying grace or "in puris naturalibus." However, this fact does not prove that the question of a purely natural order never took shape in their minds.⁵⁵

Confining himself only to St. Thomas, P. de Blic appeals to three texts,⁵⁶ mentioned by P. de Lubac, who denies their bearing on a state of pure nature.⁵⁷ P. de Blic, on the other hand, maintains that they are extremely pertinent; for in these passages, St. Thomas raises the hypothesis of man *in solis naturalibus constitutus* (the last two), and *in conditione suae naturae relictus* (the first), in contexts which, far from insinuating that the hypotheses are impossible, tend rather to emphasize the contrary, even explicitly, in the first passage. Now of these three texts, the first two bring out clearly that there could be no question of the beatific vision for a man who would exist *in puris naturalibus*; in

⁵³ Cf. J. Beumer, S. J., "Gratia supponit naturam," *Gregorianum*, XX (1939), 381, 385.

⁵⁴ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 104; cf. Suarez, *De ultimo fine hominis*, Disp. XV, sect. 2, n. 1 (Vivès, IV, 146): "Constituamus hominem conditum in puris naturalibus, id est, neque ordinatum ad altioiorem finem . . . neque in se habentem virtutes (infusas). . . . Hoc fieri potuisse a Deo, mihi tam certum est quam est certum omnia haec supernaturalia bona esse mere gratuita et nullo modo nostrae naturae debita."

⁵⁵ Cf. J. de Blic, "Quelques vieux textes sur la notion d'ordre surnaturel," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, (1946), 359-62.

⁵⁶ St. Thomas, *In II Sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3m; *De Malo*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 14m; q. 5, a. 1, ad 15m.

⁵⁷ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 143, 455 ff.

the first text, the state of nature envisaged is one in which the gifts of original justice would be absent, but this does not justify a conclusion that there is no question here of a final destiny, because, according to St. Thomas, the gift of original justice had its whole *raison d'être* precisely in its function of aiding man to attain a supernatural destiny. Hence it follows that the hypothesis of man left to his own nature without the gratuitous gift of original justice is tantamount, in the last analysis, to the hypothesis of a finite spirit not engaged in a supernatural order. P. de Blic then cites another text which, he thinks, confirms his position beyond reasonable doubt: "Etiamsi nullus intellectus intellegeret divinam essentiam, nec per naturam, nec per gratiam, divina essentia non esset frustra intellegibilis; tum quia ipsa seipsam intellegit, tum quia non est propter aliud."⁵⁸

It cannot then be maintained that by welcoming the notion of "pure nature," "modern theology has broken company with the older theology" or "distorted it"; even less can it be said that modern theology has brought about "a sort of revolution."⁵⁹ Whatever grounds there may be for these judgments of P. de Lubac, P. de Blic feels that their only solid basis is quite extrinsic and consists in the fact that theologians of the sixteenth century, who confronted the errors of Baius with the theory of pure nature, at times give the impression of not knowing the doctrine of their predecessors; and this, in turn, is explained by the fact already noted that the older theologians did not have the same preoccupations in this entire matter. Accordingly, Suarez took the proper note when he wrote: "Assertio quod homo potuit condi a Deo in puris naturalibus, ut opinor, communis est theologorum, licet eam magis supponant quam disputent."⁶⁰ In reality, then, this notion occurs in theology three centuries before Baius, and, at least in the case of St. Thomas, it enters into theological consideration in the most normal fashion, not in any wise as a philosophical intrusion, but as a deduction from the noble dogmatic idea of a divine liberality, sovereignly free in its gifts.⁶¹

At this point the whole problem of Aristotle enters our discussion. According to P. de Blic, the importance of Aristotle consists in his

⁵⁸ St. Thomas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 6, ad 8m.

⁵⁹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 150, 394.

⁶⁰ Suarez, *De gratia, Proleg.* IV, c. 1, n. 16; Vivès, VII, 184. ⁶¹ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

having aided his disciple of the middle ages to take carefully into account the entire natural order—human, moral, and cosmic—and thereby, to disencumber himself in great part from the exaggerated Platonic tendencies of Augustinianism. It is by no means an accident that, with regard to human destiny, theologians of an Augustinian orientation have always insisted on the natural desire of a return to God in an intuitive vision, or that St. Augustine himself praised the *Platonici* for having recognized this desire, thereby tending toward placing the supernatural in continuity with the nature of a finite spirit. On the other hand, the Thomist school, afterwards greatly augmented by Suarezians, sought in Aristotle arguments against such a natural demand for perfect possession of the sovereign Good, because they considered it a compromise of the absolute gratuity of grace. By his opposition to the metaphysics of participation in the *Dialogues*, as well as by his extreme reserves concerning the mysticism of “eros,” Aristotle was almost predestined to serve one day as an ally of theologians who would maintain that the supernatural order is in no way required from the nature of spiritual beings. His influence on medieval Scholasticism was by no means so fortunate in other questions. However, by supplying St. Thomas with a solid foundation in his reaction against certain theoretical survivals of Neoplatonism, Aristotle indirectly contributed to the development of the Christian dogma of grace, especially in the matter of its absolute and transcendent gratuity.⁶²

Herein lies the central point of this entire controversy. P. de Lubac not only maintains that the beatific vision is the normal and only possible goal of a spiritual being, but also is convinced that this thesis expresses the constant thought of St. Thomas, and even constitutes an essential doctrine of Christian philosophy.⁶³ He holds, correspondingly, that it is impossible to admit any explanatory notion of the gratuity of this uniquely possible destiny that would diminish its character of normality and infrustrability. He thinks that the definition of gratuity need only take into consideration the *de facto* transcendence of the beatific vision, which renders it totally inaccessible to the powers of nature left to themselves.⁶⁴ He rejects, as false and without valid foundation in Christian sources, the idea added to tra-

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁶³ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–120, cf. also pp. 110, 165 ff, 173, 452.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 392 f.

ditional doctrine by modern theology that our "historical destiny" as adopted sons of God is a "super-normal" destiny, imposed by a free decree of God upon a natural end.⁶⁵ For this "dualistic system,"⁶⁶ in which the supernatural is no longer given prominence except as a superfluity (*superfétation*), there is no dogmatic foundation; if indeed this system owes its wide diffusion and acceptance to an interpretation of the condemned propositions of Baius, this interpretation is, nevertheless, based on a false comprehension of Baius' essential errors.^{66bis} Similarly no other document of the *magisterium* among those generally cited in favor of this system furnishes the desired proof.⁶⁷ Moreover, it has never acquired a prescriptive right against traditional doctrine; for, even though it has won the majority of theologians and has become almost the *doctrina communis*,⁶⁸ it has never won unanimous consent. The great Augustinians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were able to attack it without ever drawing a censure from Rome.⁶⁹ Finally, in our day, thanks to an intellectual movement initiated by Cardinal Dechamps (1810-1883), the new system is in the process of a retreat much swifter than the time necessary for its construction.⁷⁰

In the brief compass of an article, P. de Blic finds it impossible to discuss this barrage in detail. However, it can at least be said by way of rejoinder that it is most unlikely that a doctrine which has become almost the common teaching of theologians should be barely orthodox,⁷¹ or that it fostered a separatist philosophy to the extent of being in part responsible for the secularization of the modern world.⁷² In support of these extremely serious charges, beyond their simple assertion, no positive reason, which might be exposed to criticism, is set down; on the other hand, the theory proposed by P. de Lubac of a new interpretation of Baius and of his condemnation is quite explicit and raises very pointed objections.⁷³

According to P. de Lubac, the fundamental errors of Baius consisted in emancipating innocent man from dependence on God, in situating him as an absolute being confronting God, and in attributing to him rights of commutative justice in relation to his Creator with

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 394, 427.

^{66bis} *Ibid.*, pp. 103-5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-79.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 161, 174.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 180, 427; cf. also p. 175.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

⁷³ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 150, 175, 394.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

regard to his final destiny and the means thereto.⁷⁴ It was these errors which Rome wished to censure; and of the condemned propositions, there is not one whose contradictory affirms, or even supposes, the concrete possibility of an order in which man could claim only an inferior destiny.⁷⁵ The notion of *debitum*, rejected in Baius, is exclusively that of an obligation which God would have to pay to man in fulfillment of the strict right of the latter; it is, in other words, a strict exigency which man could assert before God, a claim which would weigh upon God as a duty.⁷⁶ In emphasizing, then, the gratuity of the gifts accorded to Adam, Pius V intended only to signalize the opposition of Christian thought to the unwarranted claim of human autonomy proposed by Baius; in short, the Pope wished to invoke, against Baius' denial, the essential dogma of God's absolute dominion over his creatures. In view of this interpretation, one can understand why, in his conclusion, P. de Lubac is so sedulously concerned to show that the position which he defends, far from implying the absurdity of any exigency such as Baius taught, tends rather to abolish it utterly. First of all, in P. de Lubac's view, the natural desire of God is in no wise the vindication of a right, from the very fact that it is a "natural" aspiration, i.e., something which rises from the profoundest reaches of our individual being; rather it manifests itself as a call, or if one insists on the notion of exigency, as an exigency imposing itself on us, a principle of obligation in us.⁷⁷ In the second place, if there is in our very nature a desire to see God, this can only be because God wills for us the supernatural destiny of seeing Him face-to-face; in so irrevocably willing, He Himself irrevocably and unceasingly places in our nature this desire, with the result that our desire is nothing else but His invitation.⁷⁸ To borrow a formula from St. Thomas, it may be said that this desire cannot be in vain, because God cannot be frustrated in His works.⁷⁹

Concerning this line of reasoning P. de Blic remarks that these considerations are, by themselves, captivating, and are rendered even more so by the atmosphere of ardent religious feeling in which they are immersed; but that one can question whether the solution which they offer really satisfies the problem.⁸⁰ It is extremely difficult for P. de

⁷⁴ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-37; cf. p. 488. ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30, 487. ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 488-91. ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 486, 487, 489.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

⁸⁰ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

Blic to see how the natural desire, as explained by P. de Lubac, could denote an effective exigency coming from God and a real principle of obligation in the creature, without being perceptible in the same way as the first principles of morality; moreover he does not believe that this desire is actually perceived as an obligation. In vain, then, does P. de Lubac tell us that, from the viewpoint of psychological observation, "when the desire for God is translated into conscious vital operations, it takes the form of a duty laid upon us before it expresses a need."⁸¹ P. de Blic fears that this assertion will convince only those who have been won over to the theory beforehand; the more so, because on the following page of *Surnaturel* there is no longer any question of psychological observation, but rather of a reflexive analysis, which seems to indicate that the desire, inherent to human nature, is something much more in the character of a postulate or an inference than an object of perception.⁸² At any rate, it is incontestable historically, that the theologians who have insisted most on a natural desire for God have generally exposed it as a sort of metaphysical *pondus naturae*, and always in the perspective of seeking beatitude, which is quite different psychologically from the injunctions of moral conscience.⁸³

P. de Lubac's argument from the infrustrability of the desire as a signal mark of honor to God, inasmuch as the desire itself is due to God, leaves P. de Blic candidly perplexed. How is this attribution of a human desire to God intelligible? Should we conceive that in the depths of our being a divine and universal *eros* wills itself through us, and that our desire is only an epiphenomenon of the divine desire? Precedents can be invoked for this suggestion, but they are too completely foreign to traditional Christian thought, to permit an informed theologian to yield to their false fascination. By so yielding, this desire of God, which would emanate from Him, could no longer be considered inefficacious and powerless of itself to attain its object; in truth there would no longer be any problem of the supernatural, because there would no longer be any nature.⁸⁴

⁸¹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 488.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 489; cf. p. 484, where there is question of a phenomenological analysis.

⁸³ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁸⁴ *Loc. cit.*; cf. also footnote 58: "Avouons qu'il n'est pas facile de bien saisir la position du P. de Lubac relativement à l'idée de la nature. Qu'il en veuille surtout à une conception émancipée et autonome (au sens fort) de notre nature, c'est tout à fait évident. Mais

Because of this insoluble difficulty, perhaps P. de Lubac's meaning is rather that God is the origin of our desire to see Him, not as the source, properly so-called, but as the Creator of man, this marvellous being of infinite desire? In such an hypothesis, there is no longer any obstacle to conceiving the desire as inefficacious, since its source is in a finite being. The difficulty now is how to conceive the desire as absolute, i.e., infrustrable; for, to assert that a finite and created spirit cannot be placed in existence by God unless, by a metaphysical necessity intimated in the natural desire itself, this contingent being is actually ordained to the vision of God, is to assert simultaneously that this sublime destiny, and the entire order of grace connected with it, are a logically necessary complement of the creation of spiritual beings, and do not constitute a privileged state elevating these creatures ineffably above their natural condition. In other words, by an intrinsic requirement of the nature created by Him, God is under compulsion to elevate it to a share in His own intimate divine life. But this seems to P. de Blic, as well as to the majority of modern theologians, to contain precisely the doctrine, censured by the Bull of Pius V against Baius, and, two centuries later, rejected again in the condemnation of the pseudo-synod of Pistoia.⁸⁵

P. de Blic regrets sincerely that, in his study of Baius, P. de Lubac refers almost exclusively to the *De meritis operum*. This work is undoubtedly of great importance, but one can question that it gives us the controlling thought of Baius, or again, that in mastering it, one has mastered Baius himself. If the *De meritis operum* betrays a tendency to grant man rights of commutative justice before God, nevertheless the notion of exigency implied in the whole system of Baius is nothing else than a demand or requirement of human nature, defined by the formulas in the preceding paragraph, and twice condemned by the Church. It must, however, be acknowledged that, in the doctrines of Baius and of the Jansenists at Pistoia, the necessity of the supernatural

dans la mesure où l'on tient à garder le plus possible de la vision augustinienne du monde, et du platonisme chrétien qu'elle comporte, ne tend-on pas à absorber l'idée de nature dans celle de participation?"

⁸⁵ Cf. Scheeben, *Dogmatik* III, n. 635, p. 259 (Freiburg im Br., 1878); Portalié, "Augustinianisme," *DTC*, 2490; Le Bachelet, "Baius," *DTC*, 74; G. de Broglie, "La place du surnaturel dans la philosophie de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XIV (1924), 201-3.

is founded on a special erroneous principle, i.e., the absolute impossibility of any moral rectitude which does not proceed from charity. Perhaps then, it was only in reference to this false principle that in 1567 and 1794 the error concerning the supernatural order was condemned; the case of the Augustinians, whose notions were sufficiently similar to those of Baius, though articulated differently and hence never condemned, might authorize such an interpretation. P. de Blic, however, would not dare to embrace this opinion; furthermore it seems to him that subsequent interventions of the *magisterium* have so clearly inculcated the doctrine of a supernatural order in no wise required by human nature, and have so unmistakably denounced in itself the theory of any natural exigency, that the question is no longer free.⁸⁶ Such a conviction is not merely a personal impression, but is the conclusion of Rousselot, Scheeben, De Broglie, M. Blondel, and many others. Thus there has been accomplished a stage of doctrinal development in whose course the notion of supernatural destiny, conceived at first as a term inaccessible to nature, has been dogmatically enriched by the idea of an end surpassing any legitimate expectation of man—an end so lofty that it can rightly be called “supra-normal.”⁸⁷

Finally, if he has indeed grasped the profound significance of P. de Lubac’s work, P. de Blic thinks it is contained in the idea of confronting a humanistic atheism which no longer understands the meaning of faith, with the antithesis of a Christian philosophy which points out how vain and illusory it is to pretend to dispense with faith. Thence arises a vision of the world and of man, in which the universe is seen to be, as it were, animated with a mute aspiration towards its Creator, and in which there appears imbedded in man’s immanent being an inquietude, never satisfied, which expresses his need of the infinite. Spirit, then, inasmuch as it is God’s image, is essentially a desire for God. Therefore, it is impossible for a spirit, without denying itself, not to wish to live by divine grace; it is made for grace as the bird is made to fly; under the penalty of being utterly incomprehensible to itself, it must tend towards grace. In P. de Blic’s judgment, the basic thought underlying such a religious philosophy is exceedingly important, and

⁸⁶ Cf. Vatican Council, *Const. de Fide*, DB, 1786; Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, DB, 2103.

⁸⁷ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

without doubt corresponds, in large part, to Christian experience; for, revelation and the outpouring of grace have actualized in the hearts of men a strong hope which turns their desires toward heaven. However, revelation itself does not tell us at all whether it is spirit as spirit, or our souls only inasmuch as they are under the influence of grace, which cause us to experience or to possess in germ the desire of God; the literal meaning of the Scriptures insinuates rather the latter, and thereby justifies beforehand the doctrinal directives of the Church.⁸⁸

Must we then relinquish the possibility of founding in our very nature the unexceptionable "interior fact" which divine truth needs in order to make itself known? Must we acknowledge that without a natural desire for God, which summons, as it were, and makes normal in every man the supernatural order proposed by Christianity, the human soul would no longer be open to faith? Must we say that if the supernatural order were to be presented as merely superimposed on a nature already self-sufficient, it would be impossible to point out convincingly how the passage to the new and higher order could be rendered obligatory?⁸⁹

Perhaps, because "modern theology" has been deficient in not adopting a sufficiently vital awareness of the seriousness of such questions, we should be grateful for books such as *Surnaturel*, which poses the problem so pointedly. Nevertheless, the solution of these questions is quite simple. We need only bear in mind the small, yet immense, interior fact of moral conscience, known to us by experience as well as by revelation as the *porte-parole* of God and immanent to our nature, in order to find a point of contact with the exigencies of faith. On the one hand, we need only reflect on conscience as a sense of moral values open to all the beauty of the divine redemptive plan whose good tidings are revealed to us in Christ; on the other hand, we need only reflect on the religious duty of tending toward the truth and of surrendering ourselves to it completely, once it has become manifest.⁹⁰

What untold resources the religious philosophy of a Newman—so reserved with regard to the desire for God—was able to extract from the notion of moral conscience! P. de Blic is of the opinion that, far better than any abstract or historical treatise, the great apologetic works of Newman, because of their simultaneous defense of natural

⁸⁸ *Loc. cit.*

⁸⁹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

⁹⁰ De Blic, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

religion and the rights of the supernatural order, of humanism and faith, make it readily comprehensible that these two groups of values, too often contrasted, are not irreconcilable.⁹¹

CRITIQUE BY P. CHARLES BOYER, S. J.

The first seven pages of P. Boyer's article contain a most careful and impartial summary of *Surnaturel*. However, it will be sufficient here to stress two points of this analysis. (1) P. Boyer sets forth the uniqueness of P. de Lubac's theory as follows. Some theologians hold that the natural desire for God is nothing more than a mere non-repugnance of the beatific vision; others, with P. Garrigou-Lagrange admit that the desire constitutes a probable argument in favor of the possibility of the beatific vision; still others, with P. Guy de Broglie, S. J., hold that it proves with certainty the possibility of the beatific vision; finally P. de Lubac affirms—and this may be called the principle thesis of his book—that the existence of the natural desire guarantees with certainty that we are actually elevated to the supernatural order and are destined to the beatific vision.⁹² (2) P. Boyer's analysis not only brings out the rich historical erudition of P. de Lubac, but also focuses attention, by abundant quotations, on the delicate complexity and subtlety of his major thesis, that the desire of God is in-frustrable and hence a state of pure nature is impossible.

Before beginning his detailed critique, P. Boyer states frankly that,

⁹¹ *Loc. cit.* The present writer thinks that P. de Blic's critique, well worth studying apart from its connection with P. de Lubac's theory, establishes solidly that a state of pure nature is entirely consistent with the perspectives of St. Thomas. It may be questioned, however, whether the controversial aspect of P. de Blic's work has not led him to over-estimate the explicitness of this concept in St. Thomas. Therefore one may read very profitably a truly remarkable article, written before P. de Lubac's book appeared, by H. Rondet, S. J., "Nature et surnaturel dans la théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXIII (1946), 56-91: "... mais, il faut l'avouer, saint Thomas ne soupçonne pas encore les graves problèmes qui se poseront plus tard à propos de la gratuité. Parti d'emblée de l'idée surnaturel absolu, il ne voyait guère le risque d'une confusion entre les deux ordres, et, à la différence de saint Augustin, qui insiste tant sur la gratuité de la grâce, il définit moins celle-ci comme un don que Dieu pourrait nous refuser sans être injuste que comme un don qui précède tout mérite et nous fait agréables à Dieu" (p. 64). "... il expose l'augustinisme au moyen d'analyses ou de formules empruntées à Aristote, il met la philosophie au service de la foi, mais il ne prévoit pas encore les difficultés qu'on pourra faire à l'augustinisme, à partir des interprétations tendancieuses de la pensée de l'évêque d'Hippone" (p. 81).

⁹² Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

after reading and rereading all the arguments in favor of the new theory, their evidence has not been communicated to his mind; on the contrary, serious difficulties prevent his acceptance.⁹³ The critique itself centers on two considerations: (1) the rejection of the theory of pure nature, and (2) the internal coherence of the new system.

The Notion of Pure Nature

The first definition given in *Surnaturel* is certainly inexact: "... a state in which man would be left to his own wisdom and reduced to his own powers; in which he would have to develop himself and achieve his perfection alone."⁹⁴ P. Boyer points out that the doctrine of theologians on "pure nature" differs entirely from this description; the state of pure nature is rather one in which man would have everything proper to his essential constitution, everything necessary for the exercise of his faculties, everything also that is required to live in accord with reason and to attain a goal proportioned to his nature; in this definition are included all divine aids, permanent or transitory, which such a state supposes. This concept of pure nature simply is not, as P. de Lubac maintains, less rational and less religious than his theory. Pure nature excludes only an excess, i.e., that which is not necessary in order that human nature be intelligible and worthy of its Creator. Modern theologians are practically unanimous in looking upon human destiny to a supernatural end as an excess; and this is precisely the point of controversy with P. de Lubac, since he maintains that human nature is neither intelligible nor worthy of God, unless it has as its unique destiny the intuitive vision of the divine essence. Ultimately, it is not pure nature which P. de Lubac rejects, because this concept cannot in reality be dispensed with; what he actually rejects is a nature not elevated, whereas for all other theologians, it is a contradiction to speak of a nature which, as nature, is naturally elevated.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 386; "Nous avons lu et relu ces déclarations et tout ce qui est dit pour les étayer. Mais nous devons avouer que l'évidence que suppose le P. de Lubac ne nous a pas été communiquée, et qu'au contraire de graves difficultés nous empêchent de lui donner raison."

⁹⁴ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁹⁵ Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 387: "Au fond, ce n'est pas la nature pure qu'il rejette, car on ne peut vraiment s'en passer; c'est une nature non élevée; tandis que pour le reste des théologiens, il est contradictoire de parler d'une nature qui, comme nature et par nature, soit élevée."

Next, P. Boyer denies the contention that the concept of pure nature is recent in theology. It is not only not recent, but existed long before the Middle Ages; if one keeps in mind that the same thought can take on quite different modes of expression, we find in the traditional thought of the Fathers of the Church the concept of a pure nature, which the supernatural surpasses and must surpass, if it is to be truly supernatural. When the Greek Fathers comment on the text of St. John concerning the power given to the faithful of becoming the children of God, or on the texts of St. Paul concerning divine adoption won for us through the merits of Christ, they manifestly and explicitly understand these passages of a state conferred by grace, to which by nature man was in no way destined.⁹⁶ These statements of the Fathers lose all meaning, unless they mean that human nature is defined as such without divine adoption and, for this very reason, adoption merits its name in reality. For example, when St. Augustine describes the divine union of the blessed as a colloquy with God "os ad os . . . quem dignum tali Deus colloquio fecit," who can think that without such an intimate union with God human nature would be inconceivable? Furthermore, it passes understanding that St. Augustine, in the light of this statement and of others like it, could have conceived the destiny of man in the beatific vision to be more inseparable from human nature than exemption from concupiscence.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 388: "C'est saint Athanase qui proclame que les enfants de Dieu d'aucune manière ne seraient devenus fils, puisque par nature on appartient au créé, s'ils n'avaient reçu l'Esprit de celui qui est le Fils naturel et véritable' (*Oratio 2, contra Arianos*, n. 59; *MG 26*). C'est saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie qui s'exprime avec une précision remarquable: 'Il est le véritable Fils, issu du Père, mais nous sommes adoptifs, de par sa bonté, recevant cela par grâce: J'ai dit: vous êtes tous dieux et les fils du Très-Haut. La nature créée est servante, c'est par le bon plaisir et le vouloir du Père qu'elle est appelée à ce qui est au-dessus de la nature (*πρὸς τὰ ἀπὲρ φύσιν*)' (*In Io.*, lib. 1, *MG 73*, 154). Les Pères latins expliquent de même les mêmes textes et quel autre sens pouvaient-ils découvrir? Saint Augustin, par exemple, déclare: 'Cette disposition par laquelle Dieu nous a engendrés pour que nous soyons ses fils, alors que nous n'étions pas nés de lui, mais par lui créés et constitués, c'est l'adoption (*Contra Faustum*, lib. 3, cap. 3)'."

⁹⁷ St. Augustine, *De genesi ad litteram*, l. 12, c. 26, n. 54 (*PL 34*, 476); cf. Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 389: "Or il [Augustin] admet de la façon la plus explicite que l'immunité de la concupiscence eût très bien pu n'être pas accordée à Adam, sans que cela dérogeât aux attributs divins. Il est vrai que le P. de Montcheuil rejette cette interprétation de la doctrine augustiniennne: celle-ci n'en est pas moins certaine, puisqu'elle est en toutes lettres à cet endroit, où Augustin déclare avoir montré que 'même si l'ignorance et la difficulté étaient la condition naturelle de l'homme, il n'y aurait pas à accuser Dieu, mais à le louer'";

According to P. Boyer, whose works on Augustine are so highly esteemed, P. de Lubac is quite right in his view that Baius and Jansen made a complete travesty of Augustine's thought; the reasons given, however, are not only unfounded, but are based on an inexact interpretation of the famous *auxilium quo* and *auxilium sine quo non*, which is excluded both by the letter and spirit of St. Augustine's *De correptione et gratia*.⁹⁸

In the texts of St. Thomas, P. de Lubac nowhere finds the idea of pure nature, but on the contrary the affirmation that our desire to see God proves our supernatural elevation;⁹⁹ on the other hand, he sets down that, according to St. Thomas, God could have created man subject to death and concupiscence. Here P. Boyer asks, how could it have escaped P. de Lubac that immunity from concupiscence according to the *Summa Theologica* derived from Adam's supernatural elevation, and that, consequently, to admit the possibility of concupiscence in the primitive state is to admit the absence of grace?¹⁰⁰ P. de Lubac also denies that in the *De malo* St. Thomas teaches the hypothesis of a man created for an end other than the beatific vision.¹⁰¹ But, P. Boyer answers, St. Thomas certainly envisaged the case of a man who, without sin of any kind, and left in his purely natural condition, would lack the beatific vision and would not have it as his destiny.¹⁰² One can recognize that in St. Thomas beatitude means the intuitive vision of God without concluding that apart from this vision human nature would be inconceivable.¹⁰³

Internal Coherence of the New System

Whatever may be the diversities of opinion among theologians, the supernatural must retain the character which its very name indicates

see also Boyer, *Essais sur la doctrine de saint Augustin*, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932), pp. 237-71.

⁹⁸ *Loc. cit.*; cf. De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-69 in comparison with Boyer, *Essais* etc., pp. 206-237.

⁹⁹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 449 ff.

¹⁰⁰ St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 95, a. 1; cf. also *De Malo*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3m.

¹⁰¹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

¹⁰² Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 390: "Mais saint Thomas y envisage certainement le cas d'un homme qui . . . manquerait de la vision divine: il ne l'aurait donc pas pour fin."

¹⁰³ *Loc. cit.*

and which the documents of the Church attribute to it: "perfectionem quae naturalem superet."¹⁰⁴ But an end, without which a nature is inconceivable, cannot be an end which surpasses this nature; such an end is natural to it. It is the end which is due to it, and which God owes to Himself to give to it. It is an end strictly exacted by nature, even though we must all hold that human nature, on its side, could have no strict exigency for it; deprived of the means to tend toward this unique end, nature would be in a violent, abnormal and disordered state, and all of its movements would be deordinate.¹⁰⁵

Here there is no question of Aristotelianism, but of the dictates of reason, which are imposed on our intellects; a nature cannot be, before any grace is received, ordered to a uniquely possible end, unless this end enters into the very notion of the nature in question. For, a nature is an essence which either finds rest in a good which is proportioned to it, or is in pursuit of such a good. It would be a contradiction to admit a nature of this kind without putting within its reach the only good for which it is made. There is no exigency more acute, whether for a created nature or for its Creator, than to avoid contradiction, especially when the contradiction would be found in the very core of a reasonable being. To say that a creature has no rights before God can have a religious meaning, if we intend only that no creature has anything which it has not received from God, or that its needs and interests have been lovingly looked out for by divine providence. But if one means to say that God could treat the work of His hands in any manner whatsoever, that He could, for instance, condemn an innocent person to hell or simply deprive him of the final goal which is proportioned to his nature and good works—this would be utterly irreconcilable with a true idea of God. In these last cases, it is traditional to say that God owes it to Himself not to act thus; and whatever P. de Lubac may assert, it has not been demonstrated that Baius or Jansen understood otherwise.¹⁰⁶

In the Church's doctrine of merit, the creature has true rights before God, even though they are rights *secundum quid*. These rights, moreover, signify what is just, and cannot be neglected by Him who is Jus-

¹⁰⁴ *Conc. Vat.*, can. 3, *de Revelatione*, DB, 1868. ¹⁰⁵ Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

¹⁰⁶ *Loc. cit.*: "Et quoi qu'en dise le P. de Lubac, il n'est pas démontré que Baius et Jansénius eux-mêmes l'aient compris autrement."

tice itself and the source of all created justice. An exigency founded on justice is the strongest possible. The intentions or attestations of any author can change nothing in this matter; once one assigns to a nature an uniquely possible end, not only is this end natural, but it is due; it is no longer a grace, except by the same title that creation and other natural gifts are graces. One has not thereby exalted the supernatural, one has abolished it.¹⁰⁷

P. Boyer finds the reasons assigned by P. de Lubac for his new theory more offensive even than the thesis itself. A Catholic school of thought has maintained for some centuries, although with an ever increasing timidity, that the bestowal of supernatural beatitude derives infallibly from the wisdom and goodness of God; and the documents of the *magisterium* have never condemned this position, although they have rendered it more and more difficult to sustain. But this Augustinian school maintains the concept of nature; it pleads, so to speak, the cause of nature before the divine attributes; and in affirming the consistency of finite nature, it remains faithful to its chief Doctor, St. Augustine, who, on occasion, insisted on the reality and the rigorosity of the laws imposed on natures.¹⁰⁸

In P. de Lubac's view, on the contrary, nature, considered in its true reality in relation to God, is not an absolute,¹⁰⁹ nor does it imply something constant and complete.¹¹⁰ It is "un néant dont le Créateur peut tout tirer à son gré."¹¹¹ It is not a center of properties and a source of activity strictly limited and enclosed in its own order.¹¹²

Certainly these expressions are startling, and it would be of some consequence to come to at least some mutual understanding of their meaning. If by "nature strictly delimited" one were to understand a nature so enclosed in itself that it could not be elevated to a higher order, added to it as accident is added to substance, he would certainly be wrong; but who among modern theologians would so understand the phrase? Again, if by rejecting a "nature enclosed in its own order,"

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 392: "On n'a pas exalté le surnaturel; on l'a supprimé."

¹⁰⁸ *Loc. cit.*: "Pour aller au fond du débat, je dirai que la raison invoquée par le P. de Lubac pour sa thèse me déplait plus encore que le thèse elle-même." Cf. Saint Augustine: *De genesi ad litteram*, lib. 9, c. 17, n. 32 (*PL* 34, 406).

¹⁰⁹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

¹¹² *Loc. cit.*

one intended only to obtain an acknowledgement that in every intellectual nature there is a desire for the supernatural, one would be in agreement with many excellent theologians. But, if by a "nature strictly delimited" is understood an essence, which is well defined, having its proper laws, its natural resources, and an end corresponding to these natural means, then such a nature is one of those possibles which have their foundation in the divine essence and in the eternal reasons which constitute the absolutely necessary and unchangeable knowledge of God. The constancy and solidity of such natures are the constancy and solidity of reason itself; if they become unsettled, all human knowledge, natural and supernatural, would collapse. God can perfect natures of this kind; He cannot modify their essential notes, and that is why they can support and justify the concept of strict exigencies which are inalienable.¹¹³

Does not such a concept of nature deny the existence in rational creatures of all desire to see God? If such a consequence followed logically, P. Boyer replies, it would be more prudent to accept it, but he thinks that it does not follow logically. Therefore, in more than one page of *Surnaturel*, P. de Lubac is wrong in identifying "pure nature" with an intellectual nature which possesses no natural desire to see God; theologians are brought in by P. de Lubac as denying the possibility of "pure nature," simply because they admit a natural desire to see God.¹¹⁴ Why cannot the natural desire of intellectual beings extend beyond their natural powers of attainment and beyond that which constitutes their natural end? This desire is witness to the excellence of these natures, and demonstrates, as many believe, the possibility of a more lofty end, but there is nothing in it incompatible with "pure nature." M. Maurice Blondel, who has insisted so much on the natural desire for an intuitive vision of God, and who has been so often reproached for seeming to profess the theory now advanced by P. de Lubac, admits clearly and justifies the possibility of "pure nature."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Boyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 392 f. ¹¹⁴ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-9.

¹¹⁵ M. Blondel, *L'Action* (Paris: 1936), I, p. 417: "Est-ce dire pour cela qu'un état de pure nature soit impossible, à moins d'être douloureusement frustré et que les êtres spirituels ne comportent aucun achèvement relatif à leur condition et capable de procurer la joie d'un devoir accompli, d'un service rendu, d'une humble et méritoire vertu récompensée? Nullement; car précisément parce que l'intelligence des esprits imparfaits connaît

As far as P. Boyer understands him, P. de Lubac thinks that if the natural desire for God were found in a state of pure nature, the supernatural would be compromised, because it is inconceivable that the natural desire should not be satisfied; but, *de facto*, pure nature could not elevate itself to such a lofty destiny. If, then, the desire is actually in our nature, this can only be because God has placed it there; and God has placed it in us, because without this natural desire human nature would not have been conformed to the exigencies of divine love. This line of reasoning seems to P. Boyer to be seeking a mean between two contradictories; for, ultimately, either the desire in question belongs to nature, or it does not; if one holds that it belongs to nature, then let him say frankly—because he really thinks—that it abolishes the supernatural. If it does not belong to nature, but is an excess added by God, it is a grace; it is already supernatural, and without it human nature is conceivable. But if you grant this, you must define the desire with reference to pure nature; to hold simultaneously that the desire is natural and that nature does not, of itself, possess it, is a contradiction.¹¹⁶

In conclusion, P. Boyer states his belief that the truth, brought into relief by many pages of *Surnaturel*, even though excluded in its main thesis, is that this desire is natural, that it is orientated toward a possible end, and not toward an end proportioned to human nature. There is, then, in us a natural desire to see God, but this does not prove that the vision of God is owed to us, or, if one prefers, it does not prove that the vision of God has actually been destined for us. These two manners of speaking are here identical in meaning; for we cannot know by inference from the desire itself that the vision of God is destined actually for us, unless we can demonstrate that it is owed to us. The beatific vision, however, is most certainly not owed to us. It is there-

ses limites et jugerait déraisonnable cette présomption dont se scandalisaient les anciens sages, l'attitude normale serait pour eux une réserve soumise à la sublimité divine, un rôle de louanges modestement adoratrices s'alliant à l'exercice des vertus naturelles, sous la conduite de la science, de la raison, de la mutuelle amitié, conforme à l'unité de nature et à la société des esprits. Il serait donc faux de dire qu'un état de pure nature raisonnable est inconcevable, faux également de prétendre qu'en dehors de la foi positive une morale naturelle et de justes sanctions n'auraient point de consistance, ni de justification possible."

¹¹⁶ Boyer, *op. cit.*, p. 394: "Tenir en même temps qu'il [le désir naturel] est naturel et que la nature ne l'a pas de soi, c'est une contradiction."

fore impossible to conceive the supernatural theologically without reference to "pure nature."¹¹⁷

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It is an incontestable fact that P. de Lubac's theory raises serious doubts in the minds of professional theologians. Apart from brief notices or short reviews, the only detailed and scientific evaluations written thus far have found his theory unsustainable; and these negative criticisms have been proposed in an atmosphere far removed from polemical controversy or preconceived bias. They are marked, not by a blind unwillingness to accept new viewpoints, but by a well substantiated conviction that the historical development of the supernatural during the last four hundred years represents a true and solid advance rather than an impoverishment of theological thought. The present writer agrees, in general, with the reserves expressed by PP. de Blic and Boyer. With them, he recognizes the extraordinary genius of P. de Lubac and the enduring value of his book, due to the richness of its erudition and the penetration of its insights, but feels that not a few problems will have to be answered before his theory can win the unrestricted approval of theologians.

The major obstacle, precluding my acceptance of P. de Lubac's theory, concerns the reconciliation of the natural desire as absolute, i.e., infrustrable, with the liberty of God. The following quotations from the text of *Surnaturel* will suffice to show the basis of the difficulty:

Ils [nos pères] savaient trop bien que la créature était entre les mains du créateur et que Dieu ne serait pas Dieu, s'il ne se donnait librement.¹¹⁸

Maintenons que le désir de Dieu est absolu. Le plus absolu de tous les désirs. Désirer la communication divine comme un libre don, comme une initiative gratuite, c'est bien la désirer d'un désir par lui-même inefficace, mais ce n'est pas pour autant, ainsi que l'on le dit parfois, n'en avoir qu'un désir platonique, conditionnel, ou conditionné.¹¹⁹

L'esprit désire non seulement Dieu lui-même, mais Dieu tel qu'il ne peut pas ne pas être, Dieu se donnant librement, dans l'initiative de son pur amour.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 394: "On ne peut donc concevoir théologiquement le surnaturel sans se référer à la nature pure." The point of P. Boyer's reasoning will be missed completely, in this and the preceding paragraph, unless one keeps in mind that he is assuming P. de Lubac's view that the natural desire is absolute, i.e., infrustrable.

¹¹⁸ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 427. ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 484. ¹²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

Nous comprendrons sans peine qu'il n'a rien d'attente à la liberté divine. Dieu ne le [the absolute natural desire] déposant en nous que parce qu'il veut librement se donner à nous.¹²¹

It seems inescapable, at least to the present writer after many hours of reflection on these and similar passages, that P. de Lubac's theory expresses the following progression of ideas: (1) The state of pure nature is impossible, because our natural desire for the beatific vision is absolute (infrustrable); (2) our desire for the beatific vision is absolute, because God has freely willed it so and placed it at the heart of our being; (3) the absolute gratuity of the supernatural order demands that it be established freely by God; (4) but neither the absolute gratuity of the supernatural nor God's freedom in bestowing it involve or imply any alternative choice in the divine will.¹²²

If this analysis has objective foundation, then P. de Lubac maintains that the absolute gratuity of the supernatural order, and the absolute liberty of God in establishing it, are compatible with its inevitable realization in the case of all spiritual beings. Although he never expresses it as such to my knowledge, his real point of contention with the theologians of the last four hundred years seems to be that they have constantly conceived the gratuity of the supernatural order as necessarily involving both freedom of choice in the divine decree which established it, and consequently, the alternative of a final destiny for men and angels, inferior to the beatific vision. For P. de Lubac, the absolute natural desire, without which God could not create a spiritual being, is a certain guarantee of our uniquely possible destiny to the beatific vision; but this certitude, he maintains, is due, not to the desire itself nor to any exigency in it, but solely to the divine will, which is absolutely free. To my mind, such a decree, which alone is responsible for the absolute nature of our unique destiny, is, considered terminatively, utterly necessary; it can only be called free (and gratuitous) if, in defining divine freedom, one were to exclude any crass determinism, but maintain simultaneously that the divine will in its infinite freedom cannot under any aspect, even terminatively, be considered

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 452: "... si ceux-ci [les êtres spirituels] sont susceptibles de deux fins, ce n'est pas de l'une *ou* de l'autre, comme si Dieu *choisisait* de les mettre dans un ordre naturel ou dans un ordre surnaturel" (*Italics ours*).

contingent. This is to identify the gratuity of God's supernatural communication with the exclusion of any constraint exercised upon Him from without or of any psychological and reasoned compulsion from within, but it does not exclude an absolute necessity intrinsic to the divine will, which is to my mind not only unexplained, but is not capable of explanation. Perhaps ultimately, among the differences of opinion which separate P. de Lubac and those who find his theory unacceptable, the most fundamental will be this: is the liberty of the divine decree establishing the supernatural order a true freedom of choice, or is it merely liberty of spontaneity?

The final answer to this question must be theological. Here it may be said that the historical precisions concerning divine liberty, which culminated in the Vatican definition excluding all necessity of any kind whatsoever from the divine decree of creation,¹²³ received their greatest impetus from St. Thomas' definitive rejection of the Platonic and Neoplatonic understanding of the axiom, "bonum est sui diffusivum."¹²⁴ In firmly stating that the axiom does not apply to God as efficient cause, but only as final,¹²⁵ St. Thomas lays a firm foundation for predicating intrinsically true liberty of choice of the divine will; because God cannot acquire anything from His creatures or from their activity, He is sovereignly free, with true liberty of indifference.¹²⁶

Essentially, then, this discussion on the relation of the gratuity of the supernatural to divine liberty may be stated as follows. All Catholics hold in accord with the solemn definition of the Vatican

¹²³ *Conc. Vat.*, can 5, *De Deo rerum omnium creatore*, DB 1805: "... aut [si quis] Deum dixerit non voluntate ab omni necessitate libera, sed tam necessario creasse quam necessario amat se ipsum . . . A. S."; cf. L. Orbán, *Theologia Guntheriana et Concilium Vaticanum* (Romae: Apud aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1942), pp. 148-57.

¹²⁴ Cf. J. de Blic, "Platonisme et Christianisme dans la conception augustinienne du Dieu créateur," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXX (1940), pp. 178 f.: "Que d'ailleurs cette volonté spontanée et gratuite de répandre sa richesse soit de l'essence du Souverain Bien, ou qu'il la faille concevoir comme une libre détermination, en quelque sorte contingente: Augustin ne précise pas cela. Il ne veut que soustraire l'action créatrice à toute nécessité d'indigence ou de sujétion. Il aime à dire avec Platon que Dieu est au-dessus de l'envie. Mais peut-être ne se défie-t-il pas assez de ce principe platonicien et des conséquences déterministes qui en peuvent sortir." P. de Blic's collection of texts where St. Augustine applies this Platonic principle equally to the eternal procession of the Son and to the origin of creatures is extremely illuminating.

¹²⁵ St. Thomas: *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2m.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, q. 19, a. 3; cf. also *C. Gent.* III, 17 ad fin.

Council that God is completely free, by an internal freedom of choice, to create finite spiritual beings; is He, however, equally free to destine men and angels to the beatific vision, or is the gratuity of the supernatural order identical with the gratuity of creation?

If my understanding of P. de Lubac is correct and does not do him an injustice, he holds that it is impossible for God not to destine men and angels to the beatific vision;¹²⁷ otherwise this would not be their only possible destiny, and, conversely, a state of pure nature would not be impossible. Is this not tantamount to a restriction of liberty of choice in God to the mere creation of finite spirits, and at the same time, to an exclusion of any divine choice concerning their destiny? In other words, does not P. de Lubac reduce the gratuity of the supernatural to an absolute identification with the gratuity of creation, in the case of all finite spiritual beings?

One may, of course, be completely wrong in attributing to P. de Lubac an affirmative answer to these questions, but his words seem to admit of no other objective interpretation. If so, his position seems to be in opposition with theological thought, from St. Thomas to the preliminary *schemata* and *adnotationes* formulated in the Vatican Council concerning the supernatural order. In answering the objection that, whatever is communicable to a creature by God, is actually communicated, St. Thomas replies: "Cum enim dicitur quod omne quod est a natura communicabile est ei communicatum, intellegendum est de illis quae *natura eius requirit*: non autem de illis quae *possunt esse* naturalibus superaddita ex sola *liberalitate divina*; de his enim non apparet invidia *si non conferantur*."¹²⁸ If it be objected that this divine liberality concerns only grace as the means, and not the beatific vision itself, we may point out that there seems to be no ground whatsoever in Scripture,¹²⁹ or in later theological development, for

¹²⁷ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 492 and *passim*.

¹²⁸ St. Thomas; *De Ver.*, q. 27, a. 3; see also J. Péghaire, "L'Axiome *bonum est diffusivum sui* dans le néo-platonisme et le thomisme," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa (Section spéciale)*, 1932), pp. 5-32. Ultimately, it seems to the present writer, the optimistic views of Platonism and of neo-Platonism can have no consistency, unless God is capable of acquiring an intrinsic perfection from creatures, and has a spontaneous inclination toward such an acquisition.

¹²⁹ Cf. P. Bonnetain, "Grâce," *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Supplément, III: "Ces deux états [grâce et gloire] diffèrent par leurs conditions accidentelles, mais ils sont identiques par leur fond substantiel . . . il y a entre ces deux états identité fondamentale de nature. . .

distinguishing between the gratuity of grace and of glory, since grace is the inchoate state of glory:

Sicut caritas viae non tollitur, sed in patria remanet augmentata, . . . ita gratia, cum nullum in sui ratione importet defectum, per sui augmentum fit gloria; nec dicitur esse diversa perfectio naturae in statu viae et patriae quantum ad gratiam propter diversam formam perficientem, sed propter diversam perfectionis mensuram.¹⁸⁰

Similarly in the *Acta* of the Vatican Council, we find a divine liberty of indifference at the source of the supernatural order:

Iam vero voluit Deus creaturae suae rationali impertiri cognitionem sui et amorem sui et communicationem sui atque unionem secum ipso in ordine longe superiori, quo vires naturae, quantumvis intra suum ordinem perficiantur, non pertingunt, et qui proinde ordo est *supra vires naturae creatae et supra omnem exigentiam* naturalis perfectionis atque ideo *ordo supernaturalis*. Bonum ergo huius ordinis, supposita etiam creatione naturae rationalis et supposita quavis eius naturali perfectione est *indebitum* tum exigentiae tum merito cuius naturali, et hoc sensu dicuntur *bona superaddita et gratuita* atque nonnisi *liberrimo divinae bonitatis consilio* collata.¹⁸¹

P. de Lubac stresses over and over again that divine liberty is the source of our desire for God and the fountain-head of the entire supernatural order. If this divine liberty is true liberty of indifference, then, despite all his denials, a state of pure nature is completely possible. Unless P. de Lubac can demonstrate conclusively that the divine freedom which established the supernatural order is not a freedom of choice, but is rather an ineluctable and eternal decree allowing for no possible alternative destiny of men or angels, his entire theory must be considered unproved. The latter view of divine liberty can

Bref, la grâce, dès cette vie, contient virtuellement la gloire et se trouve, par rapport à elle, dans la condition de cause à effet; l'une et l'autre sont donc à réduire au même genre, la grâce n'étant en nous que le commencement de la gloire et la gloire ne devant être que la grâce à son état d'achèvement et de perfection" (1242 f.). These statements of P. Bonne-tain are founded on many texts of Scripture, which he cites; it is therefore difficult to see how P. de Lubac bases his frequent distinction between the gratuity of grace and the gratuity of glory.

¹⁸⁰ St. Thomas, *De Ver.*, q. 27, a. 3, ad 17; the words italicized by us show clearly that St. Thomas understands the divine decree of our supernatural order to be intrinsically free with strict freedom of choice.

¹⁸¹ "Adnotationes in primum schema constitutionis de doctrina catholica," *Col. Lac.*, VII, 547 f.

find complete support in Plotinus,¹⁸² but there are substantial grounds for doubting that P. de Lubac's theory is imposed by Christian philosophy or that it is expressive of Catholic tradition, derived from meditation on the Scriptures and from interior religious experience.

Since this entire problem is theological and can find its solution only in theological sources, it seems to the present writer that the discussion outlined in the preceding paragraphs is of primary importance, not merely because it focuses attention on, and comes to grips with the singularly unique elements of P. de Lubac's theory, but even more so because it can be confined to theological documents and theological reasoning. Once the most fundamental point at issue, i. e., whether or not a state of pure nature is possible, has been thoroughly discussed and agreed upon, further discussion on the many other complex problems so forcibly brought to light by P. de Lubac can be carried on with much greater profit and much more hope of attaining definitive solutions.

¹⁸²Cf. Paul Henry, S. J., "Le problème de la liberté chez Plotin," *Revue néo-scholastique* XXXIV (1931), 50-79, 180-215, 318-39: "A tout ce qu'il toucha, l'esprit de Plotin imprima la marque d'une nécessité absolue et inconditionnée. Son rationalisme semble affirmer brutalement que tout ce qui existe, doit exister, peut-être même que tout ce qui est conçu, par cela seul qu'il est conçu, doit exister. Telle chose est; il était donc radicalement impossible qu'elle ne fût pas ou qu'elle fût autrement. Notre philosophe ne paraît pas s'être rendu compte que le contingent n'est nécessaire que par certains côtés. Or la liberté . . . est précisément une des choses qui participent le plus à la contingence. . . . Le philosophe décréta donc, consciemment, que, dans un même acte et par rapport au même objet, la nécessité n'excluait pas la liberté" (p. 211). "Cette définition ultime de la liberté: désir de Dieu, intellectuel, efficace et sans entraves, Plotin ne la doit qu'à son génie propre. . . . Il a insisté sur le caractère intellectuel de la liberté, puis sur son caractère divin, et il a bien fait. Mais, malgré tout, la différence spécifique de sa définition semble bien être l'absence d'entraves, qui réapparaît sous une forme ou sous une autre, dès ses premiers ouvrages. . . . Mais si toute la liberté des êtres transcendants consiste dans leur indépendance par rapport à une cause extérieure nécessitante, elle n'est plus qu'une liberté diminuée, ne dépasse pas l'affranchissement de la coaction, coïncide avec la liberté spinozienne et peut prendre place dans un système panthéiste" (pp. 213, f). According to Plotinus, divine liberty is anything except liberty of choice; it is ". . . affranchissement du hasard, de la contingence; absence de coaction, transcendance (solitude, auto-suffisance); maîtrise de soi; être par soi; toute puissance" (p. 336). P. Henry's conclusion is: "Sur la liberté de la création, Plotin a donc gardé le silence. Traiter dans le même livre de la liberté de Dieu et de la production du monde, sans mettre en rapport ces deux questions, c'est, ou bien se rendre coupable d'une impardonnable négligence, ou bien avouer implicitement que la création n'est pas libre. . . . En un mot, ni ses théories sur la liberté individuelle de l'homme, ni ses théories sur la liberté en Dieu ne permettent d'affirmer, avant tout autre examen, que Plotin n'est pas un panthéiste" (p. 339).

Probably the most enlightening phase of future discussion will revolve around the concept of nature, its historical development in relation to the evolution of dogma, and particularly, the divergent viewpoints of many patristic writers and of the Scholastics. The cardinal point here will be the integration of the dogma of original sin into a complete synthesis of the supernatural order. To my mind, it is a marked imperfection of P. de Lubac's historical studies that he did not note the perfect parallel between the development and crystallization of the concept of nature, on the one hand, and the extraordinary development of theological penetration into the dogma of original sin, on the other. St. Augustine's polemic with Julian would have been completely and immediately victorious, if he had had at his disposal later doctrinal developments on the essential constitution of man, on the creation of the human soul, on its substantial union with the body; his necessary, but unsuccessful, preoccupation with explaining how original sin can be transmitted, and why other sins are not, would have found a radical and completely satisfying solution, had he been able to quote the following trenchant passages from St. Thomas:

Neque hoc est contra ordinem iustitiae, quasi Deo puniente in filiis quod primus parens deliquit; quia ista poena non est nisi subtractio eorum quae supernaturaliter primo homini divinitus sunt concessa, per ipsum in alios derivanda: unde aliis non debebantur, nisi quatenus per primum parentem in eos erant transitura.¹³³

Nec tamen oportet quod omnia peccata alia vel primi parentis vel caeterorum traducantur in posteros quia primum peccatum primi parentis sustulit donum totum, quod supernaturaliter erat collatum in humana natura personae primi parentis, et sic dicitur corrupisse vel infecisse naturam: unde peccata consequentia non inveniunt aliquid huiusmodi, quod possint subtrahere a tota natura humana, sed auferunt ab homine, aut diminuunt aliquod bonum particulare scilicet personale, nec corrumpunt naturam, nisi in quantum pertinet ad hanc, vel illam personam.¹³⁴

St. Augustine never proposed his further explanations of original sin as solutions or even as satisfactory; his humble diffidence and life-long hesitations in this matter are a tribute to his greatness. The question, however, is whether the Platonic outlook on nature, on man and his essential constitution could ever have been integrated with a satisfactory theological explanation of original sin. This much is

¹³³ St. Thomas: *Comp. Theol.*, 195.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

true, that the Augustinian tradition never developed one step in this matter beyond Augustine himself; rather, by attributing to his confessedly tentative and inadequate solutions a value and certainty which they did not possess and by deducing further conclusions from unstable and unproved premises, Augustinianism not only impeded development, but caused a definite retrogression in theological speculation on original sin.¹⁸⁵

It seems then that the feasibility of P. de Lubac's plea that we return to the Fathers, and especially to St. Augustine, for the concept of nature proposed in *Surnaturel* is quite dubious. If the new theory of the supernatural expressly finds support in a concept of nature which is incompatible with an adequate theological explanation of original sin, it cannot expect to win the adherence of theologians. A revitalization of theology and of spirituality from patristic sources is a desideratum concerning which there can be no dissenting voice, as long as the renewal confines itself to what is truly traditional in the Fathers. In matters where their necessarily imperfect knowledge has been enriched by later theologians or by the directives of the Church, however, the process of revitalization must be restricted to applying the deeply religious perspective of the Fathers to the more completely developed truth.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Cf. D. O. Lottin, "Le péché originel chez Albert le Grand, Bonaventure et Thomas d'Aquin," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, XII (1940), 275-328: "Un dernier mot. L'histoire des théories du péché originel au XIIe et au XIIIe siècles jusqu'à saint Thomas d'Aquin a mis en lumière l'influence profonde de saint Augustin. Il importe peu que les théologiens du temps n'aient pas rendu en tous ses points la pensée authentique de l'évêque d'Hippone; il n'en reste pas moins vrai que l'intime connexion du péché originel avec la concupiscence est une donnée dûment augustinienne. Et c'est cette idée qui exerça une profonde influence sur les esprits. Ce qui ne veut pas dire que cette influence fut heureuse. . . . La conception de saint Anselme elle-même ne fut, peut-on dire, jamais reprise à l'état pur; . . . les maîtres les plus réputés du milieu du XIIIe siècle ne purent se libérer de l'emprise des conceptions augustinienes; et c'est manifestement le respect dont on entourait toute théorie d'Augustin qui empêcha saint Thomas d'Aquin d'exprimer son adhésion de plus en plus profonde à la théorie anselmienne. Faut-il ajouter que la conception augustinienne sur le péché originel commanda, pour une bonne part, la solution rigoriste du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle au sujet du péché d'ignorance et des mouvements indélébiles de l'appétit sensitif? A ces divers titres, les vues de saint Augustin sur le péché originel entravèrent, plutôt que de le favoriser, le progrès de la pensée théologique au moyen âge" (p. 328).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. De Blic, "Platonisme et Christianisme," *RSR*, XXX (1940), pp. 173 f.: "Mais si c'est en qualité de disciples des disciples du Christ que les Pères sont maîtres de sagesse

In concluding this survey, despite his disagreement with P. de Lubac, the present writer wishes to express his gratitude to the distinguished author of *Surnaturel* for stimulating Catholic theologians throughout the world toward a more vital realization of the acute need of presenting as forcefully as possible the obligation incumbent on all men of accepting the supernatural and of conforming their lives to its exigencies. Whether his theory finally shall win over Catholic theologians or not, not one of them, in reading *Surnaturel*, can fail to derive strong and lasting inspiration from the compelling spirit of Christ-like charity and apostolic zeal for souls, which are the interior power dominating and controlling the unusual genius and indefatigable labors of P. de Lubac.

dans l'Église, non pas du tout en tant qu'initiés aux systèmes des philosophes ou eux-mêmes constructeurs de théories, on comprend quel réflexe de prudente et respectueuse critique doit immédiatement jouer chez le théologien dès qu'il aborde la lecture d'un de ces écrivains chrétiens des premiers siècles, dont il est notoire que la pensée s'est nourrie de conceptions stoïciennes ou néo-platoniciennes. Certes, le platonisme des Pères a été exagéré au delà de toute mesure. . . . Toutefois, ce serait passer d'un extrême à l'autre que de méconnaître pour autant ce que la théologie patristique a incorporé—en proportions, à vrai dire, variables—d'éléments platoniciens. Une telle méconnaissance exposerait, répétons-le, à prendre indûment pour traditionnelles, au sens fort du mot, et vénérables par conséquent en bonne théologie, des vues qui, relevées chez saint Augustin ou chez Denys, ne seraient cependant, de fait, que les vues de Platon ou de Proclus. L'éventualité est-elle chimérique?"