HAPPINESS AS THE END OF HUMAN ACTION IN THOMAS AQUINAS MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Chidiebere Obi
Department of Philosophy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: ccy.obi@unizik.edu.ng
&
Andrew Mozia
Department of Philosophy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: andychi42@gmail.com

Abstract
It is being increasingly recognized that virtue ethics is central to Aquinas's moral thought and to his consideration of the characteristic capacities and achievements of human nature. Aquinas sees ethics as having two principal topics: first, the ultimate goal of human existence, and second, how that goal is to be won, or lost. Aquinas maintains that happiness doesn't lie in riches, honors, fame and glory, power, bodily endowment, pleasures any endowment of soul, and any created good. For him, however, the essential respect in which God constitutes our blessedness is in direct vision of the divine nature. Happy is he who has whatever he desires, and desires nothing amiss. Happiness is the attainment of the last end. The essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect; happiness is joy in truth. Aquinas maintains that the ultimate end of human beings, their perfected happiness, cannot be any finite or created good, since no finite or created good could finally and completely satisfy human desire. Only God could be that good, the God whose existence and goodness can be known through philosophical inquiry. Thus, this work through the method of hermeneutics reads Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* and unveils man's capacity for self-determination by free choices as the springboard through which Aquinas' doctrine of happiness is anchored and concludes that happiness lies in the service to humanity, that is, the internal tranquility one gets through the services rendered to alleviates mankind.
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Introduction

There are two ways in which we can speak about the ultimate end: in terms of what it means for something to be an ultimate end, and in terms of the thing that meets that description. In terms of what it means for something to be an ultimate end, all human beings agree in desiring the ultimate end because they all desire to attain their own perfection, and that is what is meant by "ultimate end,".But in terms of the thing that meets that description, human beings do not all agree in their ultimate end: some desire wealth as their full and complete good, whereas others desire pleasure and others desire something else, just as what is sweet is pleasant to everyone's taste, but some people prefer the sweetness of wine, others the sweetness of honey or some other sweet thing.[1] The unqualifiedly best sweet thing must be the one that someone with the best possible sense of taste finds most pleasant, and similarly the most complete good must be the one that someone with well-disposed affections desires as ultimate end. The human good consists in holding on to happiness rather than in letting it go.

The moral philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas involves a merger of at least two apparently disparate traditions: Aristotelian eudaimonism and Christian theology. On the one hand, Aquinas follows Aristotle in thinking that an act is good or bad depending on whether it contributes to or deters us from our proper human end or final goal at which all human actions aim. That *telos* is *eudaimonia,* or happiness, where "happiness" is understood in terms of completion, perfection, or well-being. Achieving happiness, however, requires a range of intellectual and moral virtues that enable us to understand the nature of happiness and motivate us to seek it in a reliable and consistent way.

On the other hand, Aquinas believes that we can never achieve complete or final happiness in this life. For him, final happiness consists in beatitude, or supernatural union with God. Such an end lies far beyond what we through our natural human capacities can attain. For this reason, we not only need the virtues, we also need God to transform our nature to perfect or "deify" it so that we might be suited to participate in divine beatitude. Moreover, Aquinas believes that we inherited a propensity to sin from our first parent, Adam. While our nature is not wholly corrupted by sin, it is nevertheless *diminished* by sin's stain, as evidenced by the fact that our wills are at enmity with God's. Thus we need God's help in order to restore the good of our nature and bring us into conformity with his will. To this end, God imbues us with his grace which comes in the form of divinely instantiated virtues and gifts.

This paper first considers Aquinas's meta-ethical views. Those views provide a good context for understanding his unique synthesis of Christian teaching and Aristotelian philosophy. Also, his meta-ethical views provide an ideal background for understanding other features of his moral philosophy such as the nature of human action, virtue, natural law, and the ultimate end of human beings. While contemporary moral philosophers tend to address these subjects as discrete topics of study, Aquinas's treatment of them yields a bracing, comprehensive view of the moral life. This article presents these subjects in a way that illuminates their interconnected roles.

Conceptualizing Human Action in Aquinas' Perspectives

According to Aquinas's ethics, human goodness depends on performing acts that are in accord with our human nature. But what sort of acts are those? In other words, what feature or features serve to distinguish human acts from acts of a different kind? Here we must go beyond the simple claim that an action is human just insofar as it is rational. For while this claim is no doubt true, the nature of rationality itself needs explanation. This section seeks to explore more fully just what rationality or reason consists in according to Aquinas. Only then can we understand the nature of human action and the end at which such action aims.

Aquinas provides the most comprehensive treatment of this subject in the second part of the *Summa theologiae*. There, he explains that reason is comprised of two powers: one cognitive, the other appetitive. The cognitive power is the "*intellect",* which enables us to know and understand. The intellect also enables us to apprehend the goodness a thing has. The appetitive power of reason is called the "*will"*. Aquinas describes the will as a native desire for the understood good. That is, it is an appetite that is responsive to the intellect's estimations of what is good or choice worthy. On this view, all acts of will are dependent on antecedent acts of intellect; the intellect must supply the will with the object to which the latter inclines. In turn, that object moves the will as a final cause "because the good understood is the object of the will, and moves it as an end".[2]

From the abbreviated account of intellect and will provided thus far, it may appear that the intellect necessitates the will's acts by its own evaluative portrayals of goodness. Yet Aquinas insists that no single account of the good can necessitate the will's movement. Most goods do not have a necessary connection to happiness. That is, we do not need them in order to be happy; thus the will does not incline to them of necessity. But what of those goods that *do* have a necessary connection to happiness? What about the goodness of God or those virtues that leads us to God "in whom alone true happiness consists"? According to Aquinas, the will does not incline necessarily to these goods, either. For in this life we cannot see God in all his goodness, and thus the connection between God, virtue, final happiness will always appear opaque. Aquinas writes: "until through the certitude of the Divine Vision the necessity of such connection be shown, the will does not adhere to God of necessity, nor to those things which are of God".[3] In this life, then, our intellectual limitations prevent us from apprehending what is good. Instead, we are presented with competing goods between which we must choose. Some goods provide immediate gratification but no long-term fulfillment. Other goods may precipitate hardship but eventually make us better people. Indeed, sometimes we must exercise considerable effort in ignoring superficial or petty pleasures while attending to more difficult yet enduring goods. To employ Aquinas's parlance, the will must exercise efficient causality on the intellect by instructing it to consider some goods rather than others. This happens whenever we, through our own determination, direct our attention away from certain desirable objects and toward those we think are more choice worthy. Of

course, our character will often govern the goods we desire and ultimately choose. Even so, Aquinas does not think that our character wholly determines our choices, as evidenced by the fact that we sometimes make decisions that are contrary to our established habits. This is actually fortunate for us, for it suggests that even people disposed toward evil can manage to make good choices and perhaps begin to correct their more hardened and inordinate inclinations.

Consequently, we are prepared to answer the question posed at the beginning of this section: what actions are those we can designate as human? The answer is this: human actions are those over which one has voluntary control. Unlike non-rational animals, human beings choose their actions according to a reasoned account of what they think are good. Seen this way, human actions are not products of deterministic causal forces. They are products of our own free judgment, the exercise of which is a function of both intellect and will. When discussing what it is that makes an action "human," then, Aquinas has in mind those capacities whereby one judges and chooses what is good. For it is through one's ability to deliberate and judge in this way that one exercises mastery over one's actions.

Thus, we have established that human actions are actions that are governed by a reasoned consideration of what is good. Aquinas also thinks that the good in question functions as an end, the object for the sake of which the agent acts. "For the object of the will is the end and the good".[4] There are two worries that emerge here, both of which can be resolved rather quickly. First, it seems we do not always act for the sake of an end. Many actions we perform are not products of our own deliberation and voluntary judgment. Yet Aquinas points out that acts of this sort are not *properly* human acts since they do not proceed from the deliberation of the reason. In order for an act to count as a "*human* act", it must be a product of the agent's reasoned consideration about what is good. Second, it appears that Aquinas is mistaken when he says that the ends for the sake of which we act are good. Clearly, many things we pursue in life are *not* good. Aquinas does not deny this. He agrees that cognitive errors and excessive passion can distort our moral views and, in turn, incline us to choose the wrong things. Aquinas's point, however, is that our actions are done for the sake of what we *believe* (rightly or wrongly) to be good.

Whether the ends we pursue are *in fact* good is a separate question one to which we will return below. He (Aquinas) does not simply wish to defend the claim that human acts are for the sake of some good. Following Augustine, he insists that our actions are for the sake of a *final*good, a last end which we desire for its own sake and for the sake of which everything else is chosen. If there was no such end, we would have a hard time explaining why anyone chooses to do anything at all. The reason for this is as follows. Aquinas argues that for every action or series of actions there must be something that is first in "order of intention". In other words, there must be some end or good that is intrinsically desirable and serves the will's final cause. According to this view, such a good is a catalyst for desire and is therefore necessary in order for us to act for the sake of what we desire. MacDonald writes, "one can explain a given action only by appealing to some end or good that is itself capable of moving the will that is; by appealing to an end that is viewed desirable in itself".[5]Were you to remove the intrinsically desirable end, then you would remove the very principle that motivates us to act in the first place. This account also helps explain why we cannot postulate an "indefinite series of ends" when explaining human actions.[6] For the existence of an indefinite series of ends would mean that there is no intrinsically desirable good for the sake of which we act. In the absence of any such good, we would not desire anything and thus never have the necessary motivation to act. So there must be a last end or final good that we desire for its own sake.

However, this last claim still does not capture what Aquinas ultimately wishes to show, namely, that there is a *single* end for the sake of which all of us act. To put the matter as starkly as possible, Aquinas wants to argue that *every* human act of *every* human being is for the sake of a *single* end that is the same for *everyone.* The previous argument did not require us to think that the final end for which we act is the same for everyone. Nor did it show that the end at which every human being aims consists in a specific, solitary good (as opposed to a constellation of goods). What, exactly, is this last end at which we aim? We do so by performing actions we think will directly or indirectly contribute to or facilitate a life that is more complete or fulfilling than it would be otherwise. In other words, the last end the end or good that we desire for its own sake is happiness, whereby "happiness" Aquinas means the sort of

perfection or fulfillment just described. Admittedly, this claim is fairly abstract and uncontroversial. After all, Aquinas does not say *what* happiness consists in the thing in which it is realized. He simply wishes to show that there is something everyone desires and pursues, namely, ultimate fulfillment. He says, "*everyone* desires the fulfillment of their perfection, and it is precisely this fulfillment in which the last end consists".[7] So construed, the idea of the last end is, as MacDonald explains, a "formal concept…of the complete and perfect good, that which completely satisfies desire".[8] But while everyone acts for the sake of such an end abstractly conceived, Aquinas recognizes that there is considerable disagreement over what it is in which happiness consists. So there is a difference between the *idea* of the last end (an idea for the sake of which everyone acts) and the *specific object* in which the last end is thought to consist. Some people think that the last end consists in the acquisition of external goods, like riches, power, or fame. Others think it consists in goods of the body, like comeliness or physical pleasure. And still others think that happiness consists in acquiring goods of the soul such as knowledge, virtue, and friendship. But as laudable as some of these good are (particularly those of the latter category), they are all beset with unique deficiencies that preclude them from providing the kind of complete fulfillment characteristic of final happiness.

What is it, then, in which our last end really consists or is realized? For Aquinas, the last end of happiness can *only* consist in that which is perfectly good, which is God. Because God is perfect goodness, he is the only one capable of fulfilling our heart's deepest longing and facilitating the perfection at which we aim. Thus he says that human beings attain their last end by knowing and loving God. Aquinas refers to this last end the state in which perfect happiness consists as the beatific vision. The beatific vision is a supernatural union with God, the enjoyment of which surpasses the satisfaction afforded by those goods people sometimes associate with the last end. But if perfect happiness consists in the beatific vision, then why do people fail to seek it? As we have already noted, all of us desire our own perfection, which is synonymous with final happiness. Unfortunately, many of our actions are informed by mistaken views of what happiness really consists in. These views may be the result of some intellectual or cognitive error (say if one's views are the result of ignorance or ill-informed deliberation).

Situating Happiness in Aquinas' Perspectives

There is no better way to begin to critique Thomas Aquinas's account of happiness than through a careful study of The Treatise on Happiness in his *Summa Theologiae*. From that Treatise, we can get a sense of the story that Aquinas tells about happiness, as Aquinas tells it, in the order he tells it, and using the terminology in which he asserts it. And so we begin by treatment of Aquinas's account of happiness with a thorough, largely uncontroversial and hopefully insightful summary of that Treatise. This treatment will serve as the foundation of the study moving forward. Without it, we cannot hope to address or, indeed, even recognize the most important questions that a systematic interpretation of Aquinas's account of happiness must answer. The Treatise on Happiness is a mature and comprehensive treatment of Aquinas's basic account of happiness. It is broken into five questions: one on the ultimate end and four on happiness. To even understand why the question about the ultimate end is asked in this context, it is important to know that Aquinas's views are situated in a broadly teleological framework, according to which human beings have apart from their choosing an orientation towards an ultimate end, or ultimate goal or purpose. Aquinas connects happiness with that unchosen human ultimate end. It is because of this connection that, in Question 1 at the beginning of the Treatise, Aquinas examines the ultimate end in general. He then by successive stages treats happiness itself. Aquinas first considers what happiness consists in, or in other words what thing (or collection of things), fundamentally, is capable of making a person happy, when attained (Question 2). For example, under this heading, he considers whether, fundamentally, wealth is capable of making a person happy. Now, it turns out that Aquinas thinks that happiness just is a particular sort of attainment of the thing out there in the world capable of making a person happy. So, in Question 3, he examines under the heading, 'what happiness is,' the nature of the attainment of the thing in which happiness consists. In other words, in this question, Aquinas elaborates on what happiness is by detailing what the relevant sort of attainment of the happiness-conducing thing(s) is like. Questions 4 and 5 concern how we can attain happiness. In particular, Question 4 details those things that are required for happiness, and Question 5 concerns aspects of the very attainment of happiness.

It is with good reason that Aquinas calls this an examination of the last end in general. Aquinas accepts a teleological view of all natural things, according to which all things necessarily act for the sake of an end. In other words, all things act to achieve goals or aims, even things like rocks and plants. Each thing in its own characteristic way pursues various ends either through some non-cognitive processes implanted in it by God (as in the case of rocks and plants) or through some cognitive processes (as in the case of animals). But not only do all things act for the sake of ends, all things act for the sake of ultimate ends. This is so because all things, in their own characteristic way, are oriented towards their own characteristic perfection (e.g. acorns are oriented towards becoming flourishing oaks) and, since being entirely perfected is the ratio or nature**.** Humans are just a variation on this underlying theme. But we are able to do so in a special way that Aquinas thinks that non-human animals are incapable of, to say nothing of rocks or plants. In particular, unlike other creatures, human beings very frequently "move themselves to an end because they have control (dominium) of their own acts through free will. Unlike other animals, we direct ourselves to ends that we conceive of as ends and so we act deliberately in a way that non-human animals do not. Furthermore, like everything else, we too have an ultimate end. We must have some ultimate end as we act, according to Aquinas, because a desire for some ultimate end fundamentally explains why we do anything at all; that ultimate end or aim gets all other desires moving. Indeed, according to Aquinas, ultimately, whatever we desire, we desire on account of the ultimate end. And it turns out that it is the ultimate end (singular) on any particular occasion that gets desire moving because Aquinas also thinks that it's impossible for a person to be oriented towards several ultimate ends at once. One reason he gives for thinking this is that a desire for an ultimate end is, by its very nature, a desire for a good that is complete. But one cannot desire two distinct goods as complete.

Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of lives and two kinds of happiness that require different amounts of external goods; the distinction is also put to use moving forward. On the one hand, there is the contemplative life, which is centered on the pursuit of truth, with its associated contemplative happiness. That sort of life requires only a small set of bare essential external goods; think, for example, of the philosopher on sabbatical. On the other hand, there is the active life, which is centered on securing various goods for one's self and others through all manner of activities; here we might think of elementary school teachers, doctors, and landscapers. That kind of life too has an associated happiness, namely, active happiness. But in comparison to lives characterized principally by the exercise of contemplative virtues, lives centered around "the works of active virtue," at least in general, require "very many more" external goods. The doctor, for example, often needs medicine or various implements in order to help others, whereas the philosopher can, at least in principle, get by with very little. That said, there is something beyond the most basic of necessities that even a contemplative needs in order to be imperfectly happy, according to Aquinas: friends. Aquinas says, "A human being needs the help of friends in order to do activities well as much in the activities of the active life as in the activities of the contemplative life. So an imperfectly happy person is reasonably healthy, has sufficient external goods to live and work, and she spends her time doing good and enjoyable activities, often in the company of friends. This portrait makes it quite clear that imperfect happiness, as Aquinas thinks of it, is not foreign to our way of thinking about what makes for a good and appealing life.

Aquinas is uncompromising in his view that our true happiness can only be found in knowledge of God. No other worldly good or pleasure can truly provide us with the ultimate good we seek. As he argues in the *Summa Theologica*:

> It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is that perfect good which entirely satisfies one's desire; otherwise it would not be the ultimate end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e., of man's desire, is what is universally good; just as the object of the intellect is what is universally true. Hence it is evident that nothing can satisfy man's will, except what is universally good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone, because every creature has only participated goodness. Therefore, God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of the Psalms (102:5): "Who alone satisfies your desire with good things." Therefore, God alone constitutes man's happiness.[9]

Thus for Aquinas we must make a sharp distinction between enjoyment and happiness. Enjoyment pertains to worldly goods and physical pleasures: but these tend to be very short-lived. And even if all of our worldly desires were satisfied, even if we were to experience every possible enjoyment, we would remain unhappy, since we would still have a nagging feeling that something is missing. Today Aquinas would point to the experience of many rich people and celebrities as evidence for this truth. Despite having every worldly good, fine foods, cars, houses, vacations, friends, family many of them remain deeply unhappy, even spiraling into the misery of drugs and suicide. Aquinas would explain this as follows: when every enjoyment is felt, the soul begins to crave for something more than mere enjoyment. But if one has no knowledge of this "something more" or doesn't know how to go about finding it, the enjoyment turns to pain and suffering. This also explains why we see a lot of billionaires suddenly change towards the middle or end of their lives: that nagging feeling that there is something more results in charitable work or an orientation to a higher purpose in life. One might, however, question Aquinas' insistence that perfect happiness is only possible in the afterlife. Is it possible to purify the soul in this lifetime, so that one can possess a direct experience of Ultimate Reality? The Buddhists and Hindus certainly think so: they can point to certain individuals such as the Buddha who have obtained absolute enlightenment. And there is a mystical side to monotheistic religions like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism as well, according to which the ultimate goal is Oneness with God, which has been attained by various saints or prophets throughout history. Aquinas' own mystical experience at the end of his life might be just such an example: perhaps he actually achieved a beatific vision of God, a vision so strong that it rendered all of his words obsolete. But more than likely, our mistaken views will be the result of certain appetitive excesses that corrupt our understanding of what is really good. For this reason, good actions require excellences or virtues of both mind *and* appetite. Further, we seek to explain in sharp focus what those virtues are and why we need them.

The Cardinal Virtues

A cursory glance at the second part of the *Summa Theologiae* would reveal a host of virtues that are indicative of human goodness. But there are essentially four virtues from which Aquinas's more extensive list flows. These virtues are prudence, justice, temperance, and courage. Aquinas refers to these virtues as the "cardinal" virtues. They are the principle habits on which the rest of the virtues hinged. Any virtue the point of which is to promote discretion with respect to action will be considered a part of prudence. Similarly, temperance concerns the moderation of passion, and thus will include any virtue that seeks to restrain those desires of a more or less insatiable sort. Moreover, Aquinas thinks the cardinal virtues provide general templates for the most salient forms of moral activity: commanding action (prudence); giving to those what is due (justice); curbing the passions (temperance); and strengthening the passions against fear (courage). A more detailed sketch of these virtues follows.

Prudence

In order to act well, we need to make good judgments about how we should behave. This is precisely the sort of habit associated with prudence, which Aquinas defines as "wisdom concerning human affairs. or "right reason with respect to action".[10] In order to make good moral judgments, a twofold knowledge is required: one must know (1) the general moral principles that guide actions and (2) the particular circumstances in which a decision is required. For "actions are about singular matters: and so it is necessary for the prudent man to know both the universal principles of reason, and the singulars about which actions are concerned". This passage may appear to suggest that prudence involves a fairly simple and straightforward process of applying moral rules to specific situations. But this is somewhat misleading since the activity of prudence involves a fairly developed ability to evaluate situations themselves. As Thomas Hibbs explains: "prudence involves not simply the subordination of particulars to appropriate universals, but the appraisal of concrete, contingent circumstances".[11] From this perspective, good decisions will always be responsive to what our situation requires. Thus we cannot simply consult a list of moral prescriptions in determining what we should do. We must also "grasp what is pertinent and to assess what ought to be done in complex circumstances".[12] As a cardinal virtue, prudence functions as a principal virtue on which a variety of other excellences hinge. Those excellences include: memory, intelligence, docility, shrewdness, reason, foresight, circumspection, and caution. Without these excellences, we may commit a number of cognitive errors that may prevent us from acting in a morally appropriate way. For example, we may reject the guidance of good counsel;

make decisions precipitously; or act thoughtlessly by failing "to judge rightly through contempt or neglect of those things on which a right judgment depends". We may also act for the sake of goods that are contrary to our nature. This invariably happens when the passions cloud our judgment and make deficient objects of satisfaction look more choice worthy than they really are. In order to make reliable judgments about what is really good; our passions need some measure of restraint so that they do not corrupt good judgment. In short, prudence depends on virtues of the appetite, and it is to these virtues we now turn.

Temperance

Temperance has a twofold meaning. In a general sense, the term denotes a kind of moderation common to every moral virtue. In its more restricted sense, temperance concerns the moderation of physical pleasures, especially those associated with eating, drinking, and sex. We display a common propensity to sacrifice our well-being for the sake of these transient goods. Thus we need some virtue that serves to restrain what Aquinas calls 'concupiscible passion', the appetite whereby we desire what is pleasing and avoid what is harmful. Temperance is that virtue, as it denotes a restrained desire for physical gratification. Like prudence, temperance is a cardinal virtue. There are a host of subsidiary virtues that fall under temperance because they serve to modify the most insatiable human passions. Yet there are other virtues associated with temperance that may strike the reader as surprising. For example, Aquinas argues that *humility* is a part of temperance. Humility aims to restrain the immoderate desire for what one cannot achieve. While humility is not concerned with tempering the appetites associated with touch, it nevertheless consists in a kind of restraint and thus bears a formal resemblance to temperance. He says: "whatever virtues restrain or suppress, and the actions which moderate the impetuosity of the passions, are considered parts of temperance."[13] Thus Aquinas also thinks *meekness*, *clemency*, and *studiousness* are parts of temperance. They, too, restrain certain appetitive drives: specifically anger, the desire to punish, and the desire to pursue vain curiosities, respectively.

Courage

Temperance and its subsidiary virtues restrain the strong appetite, such as the sexual appetite. But courage and its subsidiary virtues modify what Aquinas calls the irascible appetite. By "irascible appetite" Aquinas means the desire for that which is difficult to attain or avoid. Occasionally, the difficulty in achieving or avoiding certain objects can give rise to various degrees of fear and, in turn, discourage us from adhering to reason's instruction. In these cases we may refuse to endure the pain or discomfort required for achieving our proper human good. Like prudence and temperance, courage is a cardinal virtue. Those with courage will also have a considerable degree of *endurance.* Lack of endurance will no doubt undermine one's ability to bear life's travails. The courageous person must also be *confident (*which is closely aligned with *magnanimity)*. For he will not only have to endure pain and suffering, he must aggressively confront the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving his proper good. His success in confronting those obstacles requires that he exercise a "strength of hope" which arises from a confidence in his own strength, the strength of others, or the promises of God. Such hope enables him to confront threats and challenges without reservation. The courageous person will also display *magnificence*, that is, a sense of nobility with respect to the importance of his endeavors. Aquinas underscores the value of what the courageous person seeks to attain by executing his actions with a "greatness of purpose".[14] finally, the courageous person will have *patience* and *perseverance.* That is, he will not be broken by stress or sorrow, nor will he be wearied or discouraged due to the exigencies of his endeavors. And finally, **Justice!** The virtues we have considered thus far concern our *own* state. The virtue of justice, however, governs our relationships with others. Specifically, it denotes a sustained or constant willingness to extend to each person what he or she deserves. Beyond this, Aquinas's account of justice exhibits considerable breadth, complexity, and admits of various distinctions. Constraints of space, however, would compel me to mention only two sets of distinctions: (1) legal (or general) and particular justice, and (2) commutative and distributive justice.

The purpose of legal justice is to govern our actions according to the common good. Construed this way, justice is a general virtue which concerns not individual benefits but community welfare. According to Aquinas, everyone who is a member of a community stands to that community as a part to a whole. Whatever affects the part also affects the whole. And so whatever is good (or harmful) for

oneself will also be good (or harmful) for the community of which one is a part. For this reason, we should expect the good community to enact laws that will govern its members in ways that are beneficial to everyone. A clarification is in order. Aquinas acknowledges that legal justice does not appear to be altogether different from the virtues we previously considered. After all, courage, temperance, and prudence are just as likely to contribute to others' welfare as legal justice. Yet these virtues differ *logically* from legal justice because they have specific objects of their own. Whereas legal justice concerns the common good, prudence concerns commanding action, temperance concerns curbing concupiscent passion, and courage concerns strengthening irascible passion against fear. Failure to moderate our baser appetites not only forestalls the development of personal virtue but leads to acts which are contrary to others' well-being. For example, restraining impetuous sexual appetite is the province of temperance. But as Thomas Williams insightfully points out, "sexuality [also] has implications for the common good." For "there are precepts of justice that regulate our sex lives: fornication and adultery are violations not only of chastity but also of justice"[15] Thus Aquinas insists that temperance can do more than just modify our sexual drives. So long as it is shaped or informed by legal justice, temperance can direct us to preserve the common good in our actions. While distributive justice concerns the way in which collective goods and responsibilities "are fairly apportioned among people who stand in a social community" Yet with respect to distributive justice, what a person receives is not a matter of equal quantity but "due proportion".

This brief account of justice may seem like a stale precursor to more modern accounts of justice, particularly those that depict justice in terms of equality and economic fairness. Yet a brief survey of the virtues that hinge on justice reveals an account that is richer than the foregoing paragraphs may suggest. For Aquinas, justice is principally about our relations to others, and so he thinks that all the virtues that are directed to another person may by reason of this common aspect be annexed to justice The virtues Aquinas has in mind here are not simply those that regulate our relationships with other human beings, but with God. Thus he insists that *religion* is a virtue that falls under justice, since it involves offering God his due honor. The same can be said for *piety* and *observance*, since they seek to render to God service and deference, respectively. Other virtues annexed to justice include *truthfulness,* since the just person will always present himself to others without pretext or falsehood; *gratitude,* which involves an appreciation for others' kindness; and *revenge,* whereby we respond to or defend ourselves against others' injurious actions.

Using Philosophical Tool of Evaluation

Aquinas' character seems to have been one of imperturbability, and there is no doubting his sharpness of intellect. After his death the teaching of Aquinas and Thomism formed the official doctrine of the Dominicans, and this was adopted by some other Orders, but it was in general relatively neglected by the Catholic Church. However, No other area in contemporary philosophy is connected with its past in the way that ethics is. When it comes to the study of mind, language, or metaphysics, most scholars feel little obligation to look back more than 100 years or so. In ethics, matters are quite different. Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant, and Mill are not just a part of the curriculum-in many ways; these authors constitute the core curriculum. The study of ethics, in large part, just is the study of the history of ethics, and many leading contemporary ethicists are also experts on the history of their subject. In this light, the case of Thomas Aquinas is puzzling. Though it would be an exaggeration to say that his ethics has been neglected, it certainly has not received the same kind of attention that other areas of his thought receive, such as his metaphysics, theory of soul, or philosophical theology. Moreover, his ethical writings have had very little influence on mainstream contemporary ethics. Although everyone knows of his theory of natural law and his adoption of Aristotle's virtue theory to the development of his ethics.

However, though Aquinas' thought owes a great deal to Aristotle, and he attempts to reconcile the central tenets of Aristotelian philosophy with Christian dogma; these attempts deal with issues like the nature of God, our means to salvation, and our understanding of the nature of creation. Aquinas' thought begins with the presupposition that the universe is, at least partly, intelligible to finite human intellects: the structures and laws of the universe can be understood. Aquinas hatches a compromise between the conclusions derived from our natural cognitive faculties (the senses and reason of secular philosophy), and conclusions derived from divine revelation (the faith of divine theology). One could dismiss one or

the other as worthless, or say that each one ultimately depends on the other, as Augustine does; Aquinas however maintains the distinction, and says that they are two generally autonomous ways of looking at the same object, namely God. Whereas our natural cognition works "from below" to know God through His effects as the creator of the world, divine revelation-supernatural cognition-works "from above" to know God as cause. Thus faith and scientific knowledge are sharply distinguished not by object, but by method. Both are cognitive processes involving the assent of the intellect to truths; but whereas faith requires the addition of the will in order to believe truths with certainty, scientific knowledge requires no such application of will since the intellect either intuitively "sees" truths immediately, or argues validly to establish truths from intuitively known premises.

Furthermore, Aristotle considers man as a rational animal, whose involvement in the virtuous activity (function) is rewarded by happiness; while for Aquinas, man is a being searching for his ultimate happiness (where this ultimate happiness is, God). Aquinas makes a distinction between 'enjoyment' and happiness and this distinction is beyond Aristotle. The reason for this abounds in Aquinas' explanation that enjoyment has to do with temporary goods and physical pleasures, which, according to him, are "short-lived", imperfect and unsatisfactory, irrespective of the amount and duration of it. In other words, Aquinas believes there is no amount of enjoyment that can satisfy unsearchable human desires and wants, or rather, cravings for a lasting, permanent and perfect kind of happiness. The claim from Aquinas is consistent with what he adapts from Aristotle's ethics. There will always be a persistent vacuum of unhappiness (quasi happiness) created in the human mind, whenever enjoyment or these temporary goods are accepted in place of the perfect happiness. In other words, from Aquinas, we learn that nothing can satisfy these never-ending desires for true and perfect happiness. As a result of this, the more enjoyment that one feels, the more one's soul longs for more enjoyment, but because this chain of desire cannot go on to infinity, one must at a certain point, stop and desire something more than mere enjoyment, which is perfect happiness.

Aquinas' moral philosophy (ethics) has its foundation in Aristotle's teleological view of creation, the view that everything which exists in nature acts purposefully for an end or a goal, yet Aquinas takes this view to its supernatural conclusion. For Aquinas, since life in itself is goal-oriented or goal-directed, that would mean that to understand the nature of anything would depend on whether the natural goal or purpose of that thing is properly understood. Aquinas, then reasons that the human final cause or the ultimate end is the *beatific vision,* perfect happiness). This is an indication on how Aquinas understands or views a human being and his/her nature. As result, Aquinas considers a human being as an agent, whose action must always direct him/her to a higher and final end, the Final Cause, God. For Aquinas, wherever we find movement, that movement must be directed towards some good and that good must act according to the natural law imprinted into its being. Aquinas, concludes that an action of an agent is good in so far as "it tends to the perfection or full actuality" of the nature of that being. Hence, for Aquinas, everything acts for its natural good, whether consciously or unconsciously, and this good is the perfection of the agent.

Thus, Aquinas' definition of the human being in terms of his metaphysical composition of body and soul, as opposed to Aristotle's definition of the human being in terms of his/her function *(ergon)* aids Aquinas in his conclusion that man is a spiritual being. This is an expansion of Aristotle's thought about the human body and soul. Aristotle's concept of soul as a form of living organism ("life force"), both for human and non-human beings, would have had negative implications on Aquinas' definition and understanding of the human being as a spiritual being. Aquinas considers the soul as the form and first principle of life possessed by a human person because of his participation in the "divine nature" through his/her rationality. So, for one to have argued that Aquinas adopts some of ethical concepts of Aristotle in his moral philosophy is correct, but one needs to admit also that Aquinas transcends or transforms Aristotle's understanding of the soul in his moral philosophy. This proves that Joseph Owens and Stephen Wang are correct in their claims that Aquinas, in some of his ethical thought, transcends and transforms Aristotle's ethical concepts even though they (Aquinas and Aristotle) both use similar or at times, the same vocabularies. This is consistent with the position of this thesis because Aquinas' treatment of the human being is more balanced than that of Aristotle, who places much emphasis on the human mind (rationality), as if rationality is the only thing that constitutes a human being. Aquinas sees

the human being as a *knower*, *a* being composed of body (matter) and soul (form), without either of them stifling or dominating the other. Man is a spiritual being as well as a rational being: a claim, which is at the heart of Aquinas' moral philosophy. Consequently, Aquinas' view of God tends to be different from that of Aristotle, who believes God to be a substance, or rather, a cosmic movement, who is at one time, *one God* and another, many *Gods. H*owever, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle's notion of the first unmoved mover but Aquinas also believes that God is one and is the Absolute Being, the Final Cause, First Act; whose existence is knowable, though, not completely. This difference between Aristotle's and Aquinas' concepts of the soul, the human being and God, has great implications on how Aquinas understands human beings, their soul, their purpose and goal in life, their Maker and above all, their ultimate end, happiness.

Since happiness is the ultimate end, it is not desired for the sake of anything else; rather, other things are desired for the sake of happiness. And this is true of delight most of all: "for it is ridiculous to ask someone why he wants delight," as is said in Ethics. Therefore, happiness consists most of all in pleasure and delight. Since desire is for what is good, it seems that what all things desire is the best thing of all. Now all things desire delight: the wise, the unwise, even things that lack reason. Therefore, delight is the best thing of all; and so happiness, which is the supreme good, consists in pleasure.

Ultimate and perfect happiness cannot consist in anything other than a vision of the divine essence. In order to make this evident, we need to consider two things. First, human beings are not perfectly happy as long as something is left for them to desire and seek. Second, the perfection of each capacity is determined by the nature of its object. Now the object of the intellect is what something is, that is, the essence of a thing. Hence, the intellect attains perfection to the extent that it knows the essence of something. If, then, an intellect knows the essence of some effect through which the essence of the cause cannot be known (in other words, through which the intellect cannot know what the cause is), the intellect is not said to reach the cause in an unqualified sense, even though it can know through the effect that the cause is. And so when human beings know an effect, and know that it has a cause, there remains a natural desire in them to know what the cause is. That desire is a kind of wonder, and it causes inquiry, as is said at the beginning of the Metaphysics. For example, if someone sees a solar eclipse, he reflects that it has some cause. And because he does not know what that cause is, he wonders about it, and out of his wondering he proceeds to inquire. And this inquiry does not come to an end until he arrives at knowledge of the essence of the cause. So if the human intellect, through knowing the essence of some created effect, knows of God merely that he is, the perfection of that intellect has not yet reached the First Cause in an unqualified sense; instead, there remains in it a natural desire to seek the cause. Hence, it is not yet perfectly happy. So perfect happiness requires the intellect to reach the very essence of the First Cause. And in this way it will have its perfection by being united with God as its object; and human happiness consists in this alone.

The will follows the apprehension of intellect or reason. Now it can happen that reason can consider one and the same thing in various ways, and accordingly it can happen that one and the same thing is desired in one way but not desired in some other way. Thus, happiness can be considered under the description "final and complete good," which is the abstract notion of happiness; and the will naturally and necessarily tends toward happiness considered in this way, as we have said. Happiness can also be considered under various particular descriptions, involving the activity itself or the active power or its object; and the will does not necessarily tend toward happiness considered in that way.

This definition of happiness that some have put forward, "they are happy who have everything they want" (or, alternatively, "who have obtained everything they longed for") is good and sufficient if you understand it in a certain way; in another way, however, it is incomplete. For if one understands it simply in terms of all the things that human beings desire through their natural appetite, it turns out to be true that those who have everything they want are happy, because the only thing that satisfies natural human appetite is a perfect good, which is happiness. But if one understands that definition in terms of the things that human beings will according to the apprehension of reason, then having everything one wants is not characteristic of happiness, but rather of misery, since having such things can stand in the way of having everything one wills naturally, in much the same way that reason sometimes takes certain

things to be true that in fact stand in the way of knowing the truth. It is because he understands the definition in this way that Augustine adds "and wants nothing bad" to complete the definition, although the first part "they are happy who have everything they want" would be sufficient if interpreted correctly.

Conclusion

Perfect happiness (*beatitudo*) is not possible in this lifetime, but only in the afterlife for those who achieve a direct perception of God.[16] There can be an imperfect happiness (*felicitas*) attainable in this lifetime, in proportion to the exercise of reason (contemplation of truth) and the exercise of virtue. However, many neuroscientists would tell you that all happiness is a chemical and electrical process in the brain: motivation, followed by reward. While others would argue that true happiness entails material possession like money, lands, gaining political powers, and ability to woe different types of women for sexual stratifications. Ironically, true happiness does not lie in any of the above, as instances abounds where very rich and wealthy people end up taking their lives as a result of depression arising from perhaps, their inability to meet up with whatever demand of their lives. Rather, we would argue that true happiness greatly comes from service than acquisition of wealth. As St. Augustine would say, my heart is restless until it rests in Lord, meaning that it is simply in the pursuit of God's divine knowledge, made possible through great works and services to humanity, which it reward is hitherto life after death.

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