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A Thomistic Understanding of Happiness

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A Thomistic Understanding of Happiness

Master of Philosophy Thesis

Christian Stephens
8th August 2013
Feast of St Mary of the Cross
I am deeply grateful to the Fathers at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, especially Fr Bernard Gordon, for helping me to discover the genius of St. Thomas.

I would also like to thank the Staff at the School of Philosophy and Theology, Notre Dame, Sydney, for their constant support. Most especially, Dr Angus Brook, whose wisdom, patience and encouragement forged my love of St Thomas and made this work possible.

To Chloe, whose faith, hope and love sustained the man behind this work so that it could come to completion.

Finally, to St. Thomas Aquinas, from the least of his disciples, for the greater glory of God.
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Introduction

An Interesting Consideration

Imagine that extra-terrestrial researchers land on Earth with the mission of studying humanity. As part of their expedition they wish to sit in on one University Degree, but are unsure of which degree to choose. So they decide to carry out a survey, asking each individual human what it is they want in life. Based on the results, the aliens will then study the appropriate field. After conducting the survey and processing the data, they come to the conclusion that humans highly regard this thing called happiness. The Head Researchers unanimously decide that a ‘degree in happiness’ is in order. As they begin to search through the tertiary educational institutions of the world, they are amazed to find that there are little to no degrees in happiness. How could this possibly be? Did they misread the results of the survey? No. Were the humans deceiving them in their answers? No. How is it then that there is no degree in happiness?

Of course, one can find thousands of courses about achieving happiness: there are many self-help manuals, positive-thinking guides, ‘ten-step’ programs, but in all cases, the word ‘happiness’ is taken for granted as understood. But should this be assumed? Imagine a group of three friends, trying to have a discussion about happiness - one takes ‘happiness’ to mean having no obligations and restraints, another takes happiness as being married with a family, and another takes it as meeting any goals you have. While we may understand where each is coming from, we are also confronted with the contradictory nature of their answers: Isn’t starting a family, the quickest way to create more obligations? Isn’t one restraining themselves by limiting happiness to achieving these particular goals? Is it possible to achieve one’s goals and not be happy? Wouldn’t it be freeing to not have goals? All of these are valid questions which members of the group could raise to each other. After minimum reflection one realises that ‘(happiness) seems at one and the same time an assumption about what all men actually do seek and something about which we should become clear in order to seek it.’\(^2\) In other words, what is happiness must come before any ‘how-to’ program can be set.

\(^1\) For the sake of demonstrating the point, we will ignore the fact that as intelligent creatures, they too would be in the pursuit of happiness.
The question then arises, as was the concern of our intergalactic scientists, which field of study owns the question, ‘What is the nature of happiness,’ the very topic of the thesis at hand. In an age such as ours where the enormous sum of human knowledge is often splintered into isolated fields of specialisation, experts in one field tend to interpret areas exclusively through the lens of their particular field, while it never completely finds itself home in any of them. Since happiness is such a holistic or ultimate concept, members from the various professions are left to define happiness in their own inadequate terms. The physician and psychologist may define it as absence of illness or ‘positive psychology’, the lawyer as rights or freedom and the businessman as wealth. While all would rigorously claim their piece as a necessary component, very few if any would describe it as the very nature of happiness.

The first hint in the search for the field in which the nature of happiness is truly studied, is to notice the intimate relationship between goodness and happiness in the mind of all persons. In the same way that all persons wish to be happy, they all wish for the good. They believe they will be happy if they have what is good. This is further enforced when one realises that the concept of the good, as opposed to concepts of health, freedom or money, is universal or ultimate enough to match the concept of happiness itself. Since it is the fields of metaphysics and morality which deals with the good per se, this must also be where the nature of happiness is found. In fact, if our visitors had arrived anytime before the past 750 years of human history, it is highly likely they would have discovered that ethics, the study of the human good, is in fact what they wish to enrol in.³

Yet this is not self-evident to the popular mindset today. It is for this reason that a 21st century reader must be aware of at least the basic presuppositions of St Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), the person of focus in the present work. Since these points go beyond the scope of the thesis and will be taken for granted when the nature of happiness is discussed, it is appropriate in this introduction to contrast Thomas’ worldview with that of a typical contemporary mindset. Without recognising these fundamentally different views of the nature of reality and ethics, a discussion narrowly centred on happiness (or any other topic) risks simply ending in an irreconcilable stalemate.⁴

³ Anthony Kenny, A New History of Western Philosophy, 449.
⁴ The following discussion is relevant not so much for the academic as it is for lay reader, to assist in becoming aware of the general shift in approaches. Since these general paradigms shifts are not always
Brief Historical Considerations

A fundamentally Aristotelian metaphysic

One of the trademark shifts from the Thomistic to modern way of thinking is the relationship between ontology and morality. Aquinas held to an intimate relationship between being and goodness, so that the latter is nothing other than the desirability of the former.\(^5\) Although he was strongly influenced by Plato, Dionysius and Augustine, this position is underpinned by the understanding of nature proposed by Aristotle. Nature itself is essentially intelligible (through formal causes) and goal-driven (through final causes). Therefore what constitutes the good for any *esse* is the achievement of its *telos* as determined by its *essentia*. There was no tension between nature and intellect – rather they are both grounded in the First Principle and Cause which is an Act of Understanding Itself. Although epistemologically one slowly discovers the moral order through experience and reflection, the moral order itself flows directly from the ontological order. To be a good human, one must ultimately understand what it means to be human, which is then underpinned by what it means to be.

Although much has changed between Aquinas’ time and ours, there are two particularly (apparently) devastating blows to this metaphysic which have occurred. The first occurred within philosophical circles slowly then more rapidly in the 14\(^{th}\) century, and finally reached the popular mind through the medium of the Reformation. This is the rise of Nominalism. The second significant blow immediately affected the popular mind and occurred with the invention and widespread adoption of the tools and methods of the empirical sciences in the 16\(^{th}\) century. In a relatively short period of time, the previously predominant understanding of man and his environment seemed to be turned upside down.\(^6\)

What both of these movements encompassed was a rejection of the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of both existence and essence, and by direct consequence, the

\(^5\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q.5, A1 (Hereafter referred to as *ST*).

\(^6\) Unless the term ‘male’ is used, references to ‘man’ throughout the essay will represent humanity in general. This allows for a smoother transition between the authors own words and Thomas’. No distinguishing between the genders is implied or desired.
formal and final causes referred to above.\textsuperscript{7} It seemed that the universe could be explained solely in regards to material and efficient causality, ensuring a critical attitude to the metaphysics of their predecessors.\textsuperscript{8} According to this understanding, being (now reduced to a univocal concept of existing) is not intrinsically good or bad, but simply provides an arational, neutral arena of things. For thinkers such as William of Ockham, ‘it is impossible to prove that there is in the universe an immanent teleological order.’\textsuperscript{9} Most relevantly for the work at hand, with final causes removed, one could not simply ‘discover’ what is good – one has to make the concept of ‘goodness’ intelligible by looking elsewhere.

\textit{Separation of Being, Good and Happiness}

With the relation between being, nature and goodness severed, a new basis for morality had to be put forward – one which did not revolve around final causality. For those who reject an Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysic, alarms are set off at the slightest hint of the so-called ‘naturalistic fallacy’ - one cannot appeal to the reality or nature of something as a principle of how one ought to act.\textsuperscript{10} One’s worldview or explanation of nature could be utterly distinguished from moral advice (or the pursuit of happiness) with no apparent inconsistency.\textsuperscript{11} This may not seem like a problem to the modern mind, but the question must then become, whatever moral theory is proposed as true, what is it ultimately grounded in, if not one’s theory of being or reality?

Philosophers and theologians alike had to begin to take arbitrary or assumed starting points for their moral theories. Principles such as always act for the greatest happiness for the greatest number was accepted as self-evident for utilitarians.\textsuperscript{12} In this case though, ‘happiness’ simply means pleasure.\textsuperscript{13} Others, deontologists, held that duty and obligation should become the foundation in ethics. In this case, happiness is contrasted with morality.\textsuperscript{14} Others held that reason or emotion alone is the source and

\textsuperscript{7} Frederick Copleston, \textit{A History of Philosophy: Volume 3, Part 1}, 60.
\textsuperscript{9} Copleston, \textit{A History of Philosophy: Volume 3, Part 1}, 94.
\textsuperscript{10} David Hume, \textit{A Treatise of Human Nature}, 302.
\textsuperscript{11} One of the popular examples of this way of thinking is Richard Dawkins, who believing ‘survival of the fittest’ to be the ultimate principle of life, claims to not believe that humans should then act according to this principle. Richard Dawkins, \textit{The Greatest Show on Earth}, 62.
\textsuperscript{14} Immanuel Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 677 & 679.
judge of moral decision making. Those of a rationalist bent would view the emotions only as a hindrance to both morality and freedom. Others, describable as emotivists, would see moral decision making as a purely emotional or ‘taste’ judgment, with the reason having no ability to persuade, resist or justify one appetite over another. Theologians (according to this mentality) could only claim a similar arbitrariness – ‘God said so,’ or what is properly known as divine command theory. One simply has the duty to obey the will of the divine legislator as revealed in Revelation. Still to this day, many atheists, even within academia, assume this to be the primary rationale of Christian ethics. What these theories all have in common is ‘moralism, which… consists in the violent separation of being and duty from one another and in proclaiming something as obligatory without seeing and making visible its link to being.’

Daniel McInerny sums up the contrast well when he says, ‘On these older ethical views, this ‘fitness’ between our ethical relations and the world is brokered by a teleological conception of nature. In modern moral philosophy it is brokered by a conception of impersonal rationality.’ In the study of ethics, with the loss of consideration of the final cause of humanity, that which provided the overarching internal bond, uniting one’s successive acts into one integral and intelligible whole, disappeared. Moral philosophy began to focus on ‘moral dilemmas’ (something which Aquinas thought were only apparent but never true) and difficult, rare episodes, rather than the agent’s life as a whole. In this context, it is easy for one to see that morality, the study of the human good, something which would interest all people, was substituted for casuistry which interested a few of the intellectual elite and almost none of the general public. In fact, it can almost seem that if one wants to be happy, one would avoid burdening conversations about ethics.

16 In Louise M. Antony (ed.), Philosophers Without Gods, of the twenty atheist authors who contribute their reasons for being atheists, all of them associate religion with divine command theory.
18 Daniel McInerny, The Difficult Good, 4.
19 McInerny, The Difficult Good, 137.
21 That is, unless you thought it likely you would find yourself in the situation of having to choose whether three or five people die on a railway track, or whether in the next totalitarian dictatorship you will be asked about the refugees in your basement.
Aquinas moves in the classical tradition where ‘ethical theories are not seen *primarily* as mechanisms for answering ethical questions at all; they arise from the reflection provoked in the intelligent person about the shape and course of his life.’\(^{22}\) Hence in both of Thomas’ major *Summas*, the ethical sections are preceded by the metaphysical (he is not following an epistemological order, but rather an ontological), and the first concern in his section on ethics is the nature of the final end or happiness. Both Aristotle and Aquinas worked off the basis ‘that ethics, though an independently grounded practical science, is in harmony with the principles of the theoretical sciences of which metaphysics is supreme.’\(^{23}\) From this more holistic perspective of ethics, ‘a moral philosophy that lacks knowledge of the true end of man is radically deficient as a science of morals,’ hence the topic of the current work.\(^{24}\) ‘When humans freely choose a moral action, their acts stem from an implicit knowledge of an ultimate end, an implicit recognition of one’s current condition, and a reasoning process of how to get from one’s current position to that ultimate end.’\(^{25}\)

Yet in the typically modern view, the focus of morality is no longer concerned with ultimate ends or final causality of humanity, beatitude or *eudaimonia*, but rather concepts such as law, obligation and conscience become primary.\(^{26}\) Not that these concepts were not present earlier – but rather they were seen within a teleological framework, not as self-standing or basic concepts. But these ‘prevailing notions of morality, as a system of rules consisting of sets of obligations and prohibitions, are distractions from the primary business, which is that of living a good life… (and) how to live to the nature of the being whose life is in question.’\(^{27}\) Herbert McCabe gives a wonderful example, by using the metaphor of being good at a particular sport:

A game such as football imposes two different kinds of limitation on its players: they should play the game well and they should not cheat. The first is concerned with dispositions (skills), the second with particular acts and rules. Learning how to play

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\(^{22}\) Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 443.

\(^{23}\) Denis J.M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 236.

\(^{24}\) Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 487.


well is analogous to acquiring a virtue; cheating is not playing the game badly: it is not playing it at all.\(^{28}\)

To not cheat does not make one a good player. In the same way, a morality reduced to obeying rules are not generally attractive to rational creatures, and even for those who are so inclined, it cannot produce an integral co-operation of the aspects of the person toward an objective good.\(^{29}\) In the same way that a person who doesn’t drop the ball or step over the sideline doesn’t necessarily make a good player, so a ‘culture of obedience’ doesn’t necessarily make for happy people.\(^{30}\) So then in a society which considers ethics to consist in application of abstract principles, or obedience to rules, what concept of happiness do they gather?

**Law, Freedom & Happiness**

It would be oversimplifying the matter to think that law was not a key concept for Thomas. Rather, what should be highlighted is the shift from the Thomistic understanding of law as the guiding wisdom of an intellect for the common good, to law becoming predominantly viewed as simply the will of the legislator.\(^{31}\) With law understood as nothing but the will of the legislator, ethics took on an authoritarian flavour, the scene being set for a deeply entrenched clash of wills between the legislator and the people, with freedom and law being set up as more or less mutually incompatible concepts.\(^{32}\) Freedom seems to be the ability to do all that wells up from within, whereas law is all that is imposed from without. The implicit concept of happiness in this regard is that it consists in minimising submission to impersonal (laws of nature) and personal (legislative) laws.\(^{33}\)

Firstly, regarding happiness and the laws of nature. Included in this tension between law and freedom is nature, not understood in the Thomistic sense, but rather as the impersonal ‘laws of nature.’ The new ‘scientific’ understanding of nature (a series of blind, mechanical forces) seems to have intelligence for an enemy rather than a principle.

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\(^{28}\) Herbert McCabe, *The Good Life*, 87.  
\(^{29}\) John Bradshaw, *Reclaiming Virtue*, 33.  
\(^{30}\) ‘In general, Greek ethics asks, What am I to do if I am to fare well? Modern Ethics asks, What ought I to do if I am to do right? And it asks this question in such a way that doing right is made something quite independent of faring well.’ – MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 84.  
\(^{33}\) MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 156.
'When nature is placed in opposition to progress in thought and growth in freedom, nature becomes something to subdue and is no longer viewed as an interior rule to follow.' Therefore the more one can dominate and control ‘natural’ things, including the body and its environment, the happier one will be. This is manifested in the implicit belief that technology will bring about the happiness all desire. Whether it is the share market, computer chip, contraception, plastic surgery, smart phones, anti-depressants, virtual reality or the cure for cancer, one can easily begin to anticipate a time when all suffering and evil will be artificially removed. In this environment, the need to rationally order ones desires seems to be archaic. Rather, the only relationship between reason and happiness seems to be that the former can technologically manipulate ones external conditions to avoid the demands of virtue.

Secondly, regarding happiness and legislative law. Since it is taken for granted that nature does not reveal an intrinsic final cause discoverable through questions such as, ‘How does this *essentialia* reveal its *telos,*’ the main question becomes, ‘Who are you to attribute to myself or this thing its purpose?’ The battlefield becomes one of wills rather than intellects. It implies that questions and claims which did not lend themselves to the empirical method (for example, what is happiness) are relegated to the realm of subjective opinion. Therefore by what right does another person make his opinion binding on another? In this modern thought the dignity of man consists in his refusing to obey any law he does not impose on himself. In other words, ‘a will is autonomous when it is a law to itself as independent from all foreign causes… the will is self-ruling as determining its own laws independent of any natural necessity, external command, external reward, or punishment.’ In this case, happiness is seen as the ability to achieve wants free from religious or secular legislators. The only valid jurisdiction of the lawmaker seems to be in protecting individuals from those around them.

The only reconciling factor left between the now competing ideas of law and freedom becomes the individual conscience. Rather than an emphasis on the virtue of

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35 Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p.114. Also Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, p.56, which discusses the inevitable failure of a culture to externally equip itself (with technology) to the point where it sees moral advancement as secondary (or even a hindrance) to achieving goals.
36 According to this mentality, physics, biology, astronomy and mathematics operate on the ‘factual’ side of the epistemological chasm, while morality and religion operates on the ‘opinion’ side, based on arbitrary and/or subjectively-adopted principles. The most ‘scientific’ or objective one could be about the nature of happiness is mere surveys or observable patterns.
prudence as that virtue by which the individual makes good decisions in particular situations, emphasis is placed on the individual conscience, seen as an infallible and unquestionable guide. This has led to ‘debates between majorities and authorities replacing serious study of the principles underlying moral problems that demand competence and experience.’ The assumption was that as long as people act in accord with their conscience, they must be on the path to happiness. With teleology removed from nature,

the notion of good is changed, and instead of referring to the thing’s perfection, it comes to mean simply that which is desired… the good becomes relative to each individual and it is no longer possible to draw a distinction between the true good – what is truly perfective of a person – and the apparent good – what a person simply desires.

Without teleology, it seems that there can be no universal statements made about happiness for more or less all of humanity. Only the individual, via the infallible conscience, can decide what makes them happy - the individual’s judgment about his own happiness is beyond questioning or verifiability. The subject cannot be wrong or mislead. Therefore if one finds another person (for example, a lawmaker) inhibiting one’s ability to act in a certain way, it is in the interests of one’s happiness to challenge or discard this authority. With the extraction of morality out of the greater metaphysical context, ‘a necessary presupposition of this view of autonomy is that God is always considered to be extrinsic to the creature and a threat to absolute autonomy.’ In this case, for the unbeliever, God can be an obstacle to be overcome to attain happiness, and for the believer there is not a necessary correlation between happiness and the Will of God (at least in this life).

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38 Pinckaers, Morality: The Catholic View, 57.
39 David M. Gallagher, Person and Ethics in Thomas Aquinas, 68.
40 This demonstrates a fundamental departure from philosophy’s founding fathers, since ‘no ancient theory thinks that the views of most people, just as they stand, form a suitable criterion for testing ethical theories [Julia Annas, The Morality of Happiness, p.432].’ In fact, Socrates was convinced that even some of the so-called ‘experts’ were unjustly called so, let alone the average unreflective person. The idea that whichever side in an ethical debate wins a majority in a ‘conscience vote’ must be right, could frighten the daylight out of him, before one even considers that ‘conscience’ in this sense often means not having to justify your position to others. This in fact did occur in his own lifetime when he refused to put the lives of potentially innocent men in the hands of a vote. See Walter Hamilton’s Introduction in Plato, Gorgias, 13-14.
41 Rziha, Perfecting Human Actions, 263.
In fact, according to this radically erroneous understanding of freedom, even the conscience can be viewed as a burden to free oneself from—after all, it may simply be a product of a religious or authoritarian environment, or some other irrational unconscious cause. Guilt is clearly not an aspect of happiness as defined by anybody. Whereas previously the primary solution may have been to avoid bad behaviour, now it seems to be to abandon the moral code causing discomfort. This can even be a ‘medical’ solution as the moral code is seen to be a cause of psychological stress or neuroses. In summary of all the points raised, one could say that ‘the prodigal son’ becomes the classical contemporary example that resources and freedom seem to be the key to happiness. To rid oneself of external constraints while maximising external power is the default position on happiness in Western society.

Servais Pinckaers has highlighted that Catholics have not been immune to these paradigm shift between Aquinas and his late medieval and modern successors, which saw law or impersonal rationality as the pillar to ethics. Even for those within the Catholic tradition, since law is now seen as the primary subject matter of morality, a phenomenally disproportionate attention is given to Aquinas’ one explicit question on natural law, ST I-II, Q94, apart from its context in the Summa Theologica. As seen above already, the metaphysical and anthropological groundwork is laid before the questions on Law, and even then, it is immediately in the context of God’s Wisdom, the Eternal Law, not merely His Will. Fergus Kerr, echoing the concerns of Russell Hittinger, “deplores the way that natural law… is regarded as functioning independently of the eternal law in the mind of God: ‘what began for the Christian theologians as a doctrine explaining how the human mind participates in a higher order of law is turning into its opposite.’”

The emphasis on law is further manifested through the return to the Ten Commandments as the basic moral categories, rather than the New Testament Beatitudes, theological virtues and Law of Love. It becomes understandable to see how those

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42 Paul J. Waddell, Happiness and the Christian Moral Life, 6.
43 Servais Pinckaers, The Sources of Christian Ethics, 229-233.
45 Obviously it is metaphysically absurd to separate God’s Will from His Wisdom due to the Divine Simplicity, but it makes an enormous difference which of the two is emphasised to the lay person’s ears, since it destroys any idea of arbitrariness in moral theology.
46 Fergus Kerr, After Aquinas, 103.
47 In fact, phrases such as the Law of the Spirit, become utterly unintelligible in the new framework. Rather than the theological virtues seen as participation in the life of God, as well as the source of all meritorious acts, they are reinterpreted in the context of external acts and obligations. Faith is seen as a requirement,
unformed Catholics can view one of the first steps to happiness, as ‘freeing’ oneself from the additional obligations associated with belief.

The necessity of providing context in a paper regarding happiness has hopefully been made clear. To read Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of the nature of happiness from the above mentioned perspective, could seem to be nothing but an interesting hobby for a few historians. This is clearly not how Aquinas’ (or any other philosopher) would intend their work to be read. Therefore by making clear the potential context of the reader (even our extra-terrestrial inquirers), as well as the metaphysical assumptions which the following work will be building on, it is hoped that the question at hand, the nature of happiness, takes on a more relevant and significant meaning. It still remains to be addressed though – why the thought of Aquinas on happiness, rather than another ancient or medieval thinker?

The Thomistic Revival

Towards the end of the 19th century, Pope Leo XIII recognised the deficiencies in contemporary modern thought. This concern lead him to publish his now famous Encyclical, Aeterni Patris. Pope Leo’s words in hindsight seem almost prophetic. The great moral tragedies and miseries of the twentieth century still had not occurred, yet he could see they were all present in seed form:

If anyone look carefully at the bitterness of our times, and if, further, he consider earnestly the cause of those things that are done in public and in private, he will discover with certainty the fruitful root of the evils which are now overwhelming us, and of the evils which we greatly fear. The cause he will find to consist in this – evil teaching about things, human and divine, has come forth from the schools of

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not because it is necessary as an intellectual creature to order one’s life, but because it is demanded. God’s request for belief now looks like an egotistical need for affirmation or servile homage, rather than for the good of the creature himself. The virtues, beatitudes, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are relegated to the realm of the ‘ascetical’ or ‘optional extras’ for the elite few in the spiritual life. Grace, rather than being seen as the very source of Christian morality, becomes rather the concern of dogmatic and speculative theology. With the relationship between grace and everyday life severed, the Sacraments, those very channels of grace, are simply turned into additional obligations of the faithful.
philosophers; it has crept into all orders of the State; and it has been received with the common applause of very many.\textsuperscript{48}

The Pope does not hesitate in pointing to the solution. In the encyclical, he relentlessly exhorts both philosophers and theologians to return to the mind of Aquinas:

We, therefore… exhort all of you… with the greatest earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St Thomas, and to spread it as far as you can, for the safety and glory of the Catholic Faith, for the good of society, and for the increase of all sciences… clearly pointing out its solidity and excellence above all other teaching.\textsuperscript{49}

This would become a familiar, consistent theme for all Popes following Leo. Even when not explicitly mentioning Aquinas, they all point to the need to take metaphysics into account on moral matters. For example, in Paul VI’s most controversial work, \textit{Humanae Vitae}, he warns that ‘man cannot find true happiness – towards which he aspires with all his being – other than in respect of the laws written by God in his very nature, laws which he must observe with intelligence and love.’\textsuperscript{50}

One can confidently say, looking over the past hundred years, that the Popes’ requests may have been largely ignored. Not only did the evils spoken of escalate in the twentieth century, but it is also not uncommon for a person to complete her Catholic education never even having heard the name of the Universal Doctor, Thomas Aquinas.\textsuperscript{51}

One does not have to speculate only from his own limited experience that the calls of Leo XIII were largely ignored. In arguably the most significant encyclical on moral theology in centuries, John Paul II calls the contemporary situation ‘a genuine crisis,’ stating that ‘it is no longer a matter of limited and occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine, on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions.’\textsuperscript{52} The particular questions which he believes to have been

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter \textit{Aeterni Patri}. English translation: \textit{Eternal Father}. (4\textsuperscript{th} August 1879).
\item[49] Leo XIII, \textit{Aeterni Patri}.
\item[51] At times when he is mentioned, it may also be simply in the context of different historical names and theories. Rather than truth being the goal and the motivation of claims, many settle for, ‘Well, Kant would say…’, or ‘Hume believes…’, never having to take a position as their own and defend it as true in itself.
\item[52] Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter \textit{Veritatis Splendour}. English Translation: \textit{Splendour of Truth} (6\textsuperscript{th} August 1993) 4, 5 & 106.
\end{footnotes}
neglected are, ‘What is man? What is the purpose and meaning of life? ... What is the way to attaining true happiness?’  

None would doubt that there is an enormously difficult task ahead for those looking to resuscitate Thomism in popular thought, and with it, classical philosophy. One obvious obstacle is that modern and post-modern ideas still use the same words and language of the classics. The evolution of ideas can often take place unknowingly within a culture, with the extreme change of views not obvious without reflection. Alasdair MacIntyre has devoted much of his time to demonstrating how although the same words have persevered, the meaning has been significantly lost or changed. In fact, he would take the Encyclical Aeterni Patris as the ‘seminal text’ for how he believes ‘moral enquiry’ should be carried out. Reflecting on MacIntyre’s life work, Jean Porter states that he:

develops a narrative of late modernity in which Enlightenment liberalism, attempting to construct a philosophy and a society on the basis on nonteleological reason, falls into intellectual and especially moral incoherence. The unhappy fate of the modern liberal, left with only therapists for comfort and bureaucrats for security.

Another famous key figure of the twentieth century is Elizabeth Anscombe who has ‘proposed, in effect, that the best course for philosophers in a post-Christian culture who sought a completely secular ethics was to reconsider Plato and Aristotle. She states that ‘philosophically there is a huge gap, at present unfillable as far as we are concerned, which needs to be filled, by an account of human nature, human action, the type of characteristic a virtue is, and above all of human “flourishing.”’ These thoughts in fact are not isolated to Catholic academics, as related by Julia Annas who relates that ‘in recent years, there has been a growing sense that there is something deeply inadequate about the view that… we are faced with… a simple choice between consequentialist and

53 John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor, 30 & 84.
54 Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, p.1-5; A Short History of Ethics, 150.
55 MacIntyre, Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, 2 & 72-3.
57 Kerr, After Aquinas, 116.
deontological ways of thinking.’ Annas sees a returning to consider the ancients as the key to renewal.

More recently Robert Spitzer, looking to raise awareness regarding the ground shift of basic concepts over the past few centuries, focuses on how the concept of ‘happiness’ is the fundamental concept for nearly all areas of private and public life. He systematically shows how one’s understanding of happiness has automatic, conscious and subconscious effects on how one then understands ‘success’, which then influences one’s idea of ‘quality of life’, which defines one’s idea of ‘love’ and ‘suffering,’ which then effects the persons concept of ‘ethics’, ‘freedom’, ‘person’, ‘rights’ and ‘common good.’ How one understands happiness causes a ripple effect through his entire understanding of ethics.

What all these great thinkers have in common is a concern that current understandings of the human person, morality and (and consequently happiness) are radically deficient. They also believe that this deficiency is not part of the nature of the subject area, but that the current ‘stalemate’ is due to assumptions made recently in the history of thought. It is in the spirit of re-addressing these issues from a classical perspective that the following work is presented.

**The Approach Taken By This Work**

‘The credibility and force of Aquinas’ theory of goodness depends on the cogency of his overall account of what it is for a creature to exist.’ Yet as already mentioned, it is beyond the scope of the present work to explain and defend the metaphysical groundwork for Aquinas’ concept of happiness – most significantly, the fundamentally Aristotelian link between being, nature and goodness. The second assumption which the reader may need to be aware of is that Aquinas set his gigantic intellectual powers to constructing (or at least laying the foundation of) a grand unifying theory of reality to which his great intellectual predecessors, both pagan and sons of Abraham, would each contribute. Arguably, the three theories of happiness which Thomas is merging are those from

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61 Spitzer, Berncroft & De Blasi, *Healing the Culture*, 123.
Aristotle, Augustine and Boethius. Happiness for Aristotle is action in accordance with virtue, and if there are a number of them, the highest one. For Augustine, it is ‘joy in the truth’ and ‘fulfilment all desire.’ Boethius defined happiness as ‘a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things.’ Although not absolutely necessary to understand Aquinas’ view, a prior knowledge of each of these theories enables the reader to better grasp the continuity and uniqueness of the thought presented.

In Chapter One, the goal is to attain the general character or form of happiness. That is, before one can properly attained what instantiates (or materially constitutes) happiness, one must have the characteristics or profile of happiness, so that it can be recognised on attainment. It also allows only apparent instantiations of happiness to be exposed. More specifically, this will be accomplished by analysing the concept of an ultimate good or summa bonum. In this way, there is a set criteria which any potential candidates for happiness can be compared to. It will be demonstrated that the ultimate good is a perfect operation which fulfils all desire, is desired for its own sake alone, self-sufficient, without defect, suitable for all persons and able to act as an entire rule of life.

In the second chapter, various apparent and true goods are compared to the criteria of happiness established in chapter one. These are broken up into the three fundamental categories used by Aquinas himself: external, bodily and intellectual goods. It will be demonstrated that each of the goods proposed cannot fit the criteria of happiness in itself. In nearly all cases, the goods mentioned are not in fact goods in themselves, or if they are, they are still ordered toward the achievement of even greater goods. By the end of the chapter it will be demonstrated that there remains only one activity of the person as a possibility for fitting the criteria – the act of contemplation.

This leads the reader in the third chapter, where Aquinas’ understanding of what materially instantiates happiness will be explored. There will be three separate approaches which each arrive at the same conclusion: perfect happiness is contemplation of the Divine Essence. The first approach is from the perspective of mans ultimate operation, and continues the systematic sifting through the human operations of Chapter Two. The

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64 Georg Wieland, ‘Happiness: The Perfection of Man’ in The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy, p.673. Other significant influences include Avicenna and Averroes from the Middle East, as well as Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius from the Western tradition.
65 Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, 1101a15.
second approach is via man’s highest object of speculation. These first two approaches combine to affirm that happiness is man’s highest operation in accordance with its highest object. The third approach is of a different style than the earlier two, although it confirms their conclusion – this is an approach from metaphysics. Its primary purpose will be to show that all contingent being participates Perfect Being as much as possible for a creature of that kind, so that happiness for man would consist in that act by which he most imitates the Divine. The chapter will then revisit the criteria from Chapter One and explicitly show how the Beatific Vision fulfils the criteria set out. Only then can Aquinas’ understanding be shown to be internally consistent.

In Chapter Four, how Aquinas understands happiness to relate to this life is explained. Firstly, by its very nature it is unattainable by man in his current state. Although there are accidental reasons which account for this, for example, hunger, ignorance and unruly emotions, it is not merely these but rather our current epistemological and ontological limitations. These include all the uncertainty which comes from being a contingent being, as well as the fact that our intellect is limited to gathering knowledge from the senses. Yet this does not mean that perfect happiness has no relation whatsoever to earthly life – rather, someone can be called happy in as much as one begins now to participate in perfect happiness. The various degrees of imperfect happiness is divided into three fundamental categories: any satisfaction of desire, imperfect natural happiness and imperfect supernatural happiness, each with its particular principles and virtues. Finally, a brief discussion is undertaken regarding how the distinction between natural and supernatural is relevant to Aquinas’ understanding of happiness. Although humanity by its nature as an intellectual creature has the capacity to grasp universal being, truth and goodness, this capacity can only be fully realised or fulfilled by Divine Grace.

Finally in Chapter Five, the antecedents, concomitants and consequences of happiness are discussed. Although Thomas sees the essence of perfect happiness consisting in the Beatific Vision, and the degree of imperfect happiness depending on one’s degree of participation in this act, this is not to be taken to mean that happiness is not presupposed, accompanied and followed by other goods. The role of non-ultimate goods, moral virtue, the active life, friendship, pleasure and the body are each discussed individually in relation to both imperfect and perfect happiness.
The primary works to be studied are the *Summa Theologica*, *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. No single secondary author or source is taken as the sole authority on Thomistic thought. Rather, the author has endeavoured as much as the time, scope and depth of the work allows to deal with primary sources directly, only incorporating secondary sources when it is seen to clarify with what the author sees in Thomas’ own work. Since the work is considered primarily philosophical, Scripture is used sparingly, and when it is, it is to enforce a point rather than act as a principle. It is the author’s goal that the thesis may propose an understanding of the nature of happiness consistent with the thought of St. Thomas, contributing to the contemporary call to discuss and recover the relevance of classical moral philosophy and theology.
Criteria for the Ultimate Good

All people desire happiness in the most general sense of the word.\(^{68}\) Even if a person were to insist that he wants to be miserable, it would be because he believes he would be happier miserable.\(^{69}\) In the same way that the intellect necessarily has truth as its object, or the will has goodness for it, the whole person desires happiness. However, Aquinas is keenly aware that what instantiates happiness (what its material consists in) is highly debated.\(^{70}\) In the name of achieving happiness, two people can carry out actions which seem completely at odds with one another. For example, a man may insist that to be happy he must achieve peak physical condition. On the other hand, his friend may insist that he must sacrifice some of his physical health in order to be happy. Even within the same individual’s life, his goals may be inconsistent or even incompatible. One may put his happiness in different objects at different times - from Monday to Friday he may act as if happiness lies in building maximum wealth, but on the weekend he may act as if physical pleasure is the ultimate good. Alternatively, a man may spend years travelling solo around the world, looking to make it as a famous actor, while also believing happiness lies in spending time with his family back home. How is this possible, if his most general concept of ‘happiness’ has not in fact changed through the various circumstances?

\(^{68}\) ST I-II, Q5, A8 & I-II, Q13, A6.

\(^{69}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, C92, 4 (Hereafter referred to as SCG).

\(^{70}\) ST I-II, Q1, A7.
In order to understand this common dilemma, Aquinas explains that happiness can be considered in two ways. The first is in the most general sense as the complete satisfaction of the will, and the second is that in which the satisfaction itself consists in. This is the distinction between ‘happiness’ in the formal and material senses, and it is to not only understanding his view on this topic, but his whole moral philosophy. The formal understanding remains constant throughout all our lives, but what is changing as we experience, learn and reassess our lives, is what we believe will instantiate this formal concept of happiness. The desire for happiness (as complete satisfaction of the will) remains even though on Monday I think I need to keep my car, but on Tuesday I decide that I need to sell it. In fact, it is only because my formal concept or criteria of happiness has remained the same, that I can judge one course of action to be intelligibly better or more reasonable. It is my formal concept of happiness which is the rule and measure of whether keeping or selling my car was in fact a good decision. Hence, the question of happiness is synonymous with the question of what is the ultimate good – what is most desirable and finally fulfilling? To unpack the nature of the ultimate good then is to simultaneously discover the formal criteria of happiness.

The appropriate place to begin an investigation of the nature of happiness must then be this formal criteria which all persons share. In order to objectively assess what happiness consists in, it is necessary to have a set of criteria. If Thomas’ initial distinction between the formal and material understanding of happiness is true, it should be found that all people would agree on the criteria outlined in this chapter. In this sense, the work at hand would be progressing from those ideas most agreeable, to those which are potentially more disputable. These criteria are also put forward at the beginning so that the reader can be sure Thomas is not simply trying to convince them that a personal hobby he happens to enjoy should be pursued by everyone. Therefore this helps encourage the reader that this is primarily a work of the intellect pursuing truth, not an instance of a ‘battle of wills’ as discussed in the Introduction.

From viewing a range of Aquinas’ works, one is able to extract an objective criteria (or in Aristotelian terms, the form or that which makes the thing intelligible) that any possible candidates for the ultimate good must meet. These criteria are objective in

71 ST I-II, Q1, A7 & I-II, Q5, A8. Thomas Aquinas, ‘On the Virtues in General’, A7 in Disputed Questions on Virtue (Hereafter known as DQV).
the sense that the truth of a particular criteria does not depend on an individual’s taste. Frankness and honesty would at least require acknowledgment that all these criteria are reasonable – in other words, something which meets the criteria would be a higher good (and therefore more desirable) than one that does not meet the criteria.

In putting forward this criteria of happiness, Thomas is describing the formal concept of the ultimate good as opposed to what the ultimate good materially (or substantially) consists in, which will be addressed in the following chapters. Like all successful hunters, only once one has worked out the nature of the prey is it wise to set out to capture it in its material reality. It will be noticed that all the various criteria are intrinsically linked with each other, so that in some cases there is even an overlapping of considerations. Yet this should only help to demonstrate all the more how integrated and complete the concept being presented is.

**First Criteria: The Ultimate Good must fulfil all desire**

The first and possibly most obvious criteria, is that the ‘ultimate end is that beyond which the agent seeks nothing else.’ This first aspect of happiness is rooted intimately in the subject’s own nature. ‘A person has not attained his ultimate end until natural desire comes to a rest.’ The surest sign that a person has not reached the ultimate good is that he is still searching; he can still apprehend a good which he is yet to possess; there is still something that he can want. Keeping in line with St. Augustine’s remark, ‘Everyone who doesn’t have what he wants is unhappy,’ one is able to see how Thomas is making an obvious yet radical statement. When giving advice on happiness, many people will recommend being ‘happy with what you have.’ Yet this is far from what this criteria of the ultimate good demands. Aquinas dismisses any concept of happiness which would involve settling for something less, learning to get by without something, and even less is he talking about diminishing one’s desires in order to feel satisfied. He is taking

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73 SCG III, C2, 3 & C25, 11.
74 SCG III, C25, 12 & C2, 3.
75 Augustine, ‘The Happy Life’ in Trilogy on Faith and Happiness, 36.
76 Here one can see the vast and irreconcilable difference between happiness according to the Christian and Buddhist traditions. Both traditions realise that unsatisfied desire is the cause of a lack of fulfilment. Although this desire can be the cause of want or suffering in as much as one perceives a privation in their life, Christianity sees desire as a fundamentally good thing. Natural inclinations are inseparable from the very existence of the being itself, and these flow from the Source and Summit of nature – God Himself. Whereas according to a Buddhist philosophy, all desire which causes suffering is a result of the ego and
the extreme position that even if one could imagine better, then complete and utter fulfilment has not been reached. Hence, happiness can also be described as the ‘last good’ since it leaves nothing else to be desired.77

The temptation at this point is to understand desire to mean any and everything a person happens to want, and therefore conclude that the satisfaction of such would be impossible or even anarchic - the pursuit of happiness is nothing other than the egocentric lust of one who chases any passing whim until it is fulfilled, whatever that happens to be at a given time. Yet Thomas continues with Augustine’s line of thought, who reflecting the findings of common sense, realises that ‘if he wants and has good things, he is happy, but if he wants bad things, even if he has them, he is unhappy.’78 Today more than ever, one is aware of how ‘habituated vice, peer pressure, irrationality, mental illness, and the like can often deform our subjective desires so that they turn us away from… what is good for us.’79 Thomas is not giving drifters, the thoughtless, addicted and those plagued by phobias and neuroses, some apparent ‘right’ to carry out their activities in the name of pursuing happiness. In fact, ‘what characterises these individuals is their inability to sustain a consistent course of activity in accordance with an overall ideal of life,’ evaluating their immediate contingent desire and acting appropriately.80 Therefore there must be the possibility of evaluating one’s own desires, since the person who neglects to do so may be doomed to miss happiness even if he achieves his goal.81 This reveals that the criteria of fulfilment of all desire is inseparable from the question of whether one desires the right things:

Happy is the man that has all he desires, or, whose every wish is fulfilled… If we understand it simply of all that man desires by his natural appetite, thus it is true that he who has all that he desires, is happy: since nothing satisfies man’s natural desire, except the perfect good which is Happiness. But if we understand it of those things that man desires according to the apprehension of the reason, thus it does not belong to Happiness, to have certain things that man desires; rather does it belong to

79 Edward Feser, Aquinas, 179.
80 Jean Porter, The Recovery of Virtue, 81.
unhappiness, in so far as the possession of such things hinders man from having all that he desires naturally.\textsuperscript{82}

Since ‘the ultimate end is the ultimate term of desire’s natural inclination,’ the focus shifts now to the question of what does Thomas mean by a ‘natural desire’\textsuperscript{83}. Thomas ‘does not necessarily mean something consciously desired, and by “natural” he doesn’t mean something psychologically deep-seated, or even, necessarily, something genetically determined. What he has in mind are rather the \textit{final causes or natural teleology} of our various capacities.’\textsuperscript{84} As discussed in the Introduction, ‘in order to recognize anything as a true good, we must have some normative account of what it is to be human, which will include an account of the course of a good human life.’\textsuperscript{85}

All desires are not equally worthy, noble or valid. ‘Desire… does not constitute the good… (rather) because what is good is choiceworthy and lovable, we choose it and love it.’\textsuperscript{86} To assist this distinguishing of desires, Denis Bradley proposes that there are three categories of desires: acquired desires, acquired habitual natural desires and natural desires:

Acquired desires are desires for certain means; they are consequent upon reason’s deliberations and reason judges their rectitude. Acquired habitual natural desires are right when they are in accord with reason’s choice of means. Natural desire, however, is for the end of human action since “the end for man is determined by nature.”\textsuperscript{87}

In this first case, acquired desires are always contingent and deal with the particular choice of means in order to achieve a good. These may not always be in fact good, although they have a resemblance of the good. Acquired habitually natural desires occur when a particular appetite for a given mean is in accord with reason – these may also be describable as virtuous desires, or the desires of the virtuous man. Finally and ultimately, there is what is referred to as natural desire – those ends or goods which are found by nature in man as rational animal. When these are discovered through reflections on one’s appetite and anthropology, these are always good desires.

\textsuperscript{82} ST I-II, Q5, A8, R3.

\textsuperscript{83} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics}, 107 (Hereafter known as \textit{Commentary on N.E.})

\textsuperscript{84} Feser, \textit{Aquinas}, 178.

\textsuperscript{85} Porter, \textit{The Recovery of Virtue}, 194.

\textsuperscript{86} Bradley, \textit{Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good}, p.274.

\textsuperscript{87} Bradley, \textit{Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good}, p.211.
One final rebuttal to any understanding of the fulfilment of desire as essentially egotistical behaviour is that, in contrast to much modern theory about man’s natural state, Thomas insists that humans are social animals whose natural inclinations involve living in community with others. Hence it is no surprise that ‘his desire is not satisfied in providing for himself but he wants to be in a position to take care of others.’ When thinking of this first criteria then, it ought not ‘suffice merely for one man living a solitary life but also for his parents, children, wife, friends, and fellow citizens as well.’ The ultimate good, happiness, must be something which transcends the mere individual’s search for fulfilment and encompasses the natural wishes and hopes he has for his loved ones. It must be something which does not depend on competition amongst neighbours so that one’s happiness depends on another’s misery. Rather, the Ultimate Good ought to be something which is shared by all, yet without detriment to any. So that if a man were impart it to his neighbours, they too would enjoy fulfilment of their entire desire – the first criteria of happiness.

**Second Criteria: The Ultimate Good must be self-sufficient**

The second criteria for the ultimate good, which is closely related to the first, is such that ‘if it is not sufficient in some particular, it does not perfectly satisfy desire, and so it will not be the perfect good.’ This criteria can then be divided into two distinct aspects. The first is related to man’s capacity to grasp universal being. The second is that the ultimate good, if had by itself, should make life free from want. Regarding the first aspect, since man is a rational being, he is able to comprehend universal truth and goodness. His capacity to grasp reality is not limited to particular things, places or situations. For example, I can grasp the material reality of this woman, Chloe. However, what makes this particular being, Chloe, intelligible is her form, woman, which also allows me to grasp the nature or concept of woman in general. Although my knowledge begins with particular beings (in this case, various women) grasped through the senses, I can then extract the general or universal idea (in this case, woman).
Since the intellect can grasp these universal realities, it means the intellect’s appetite, the will, can desire these same super-particular realities. My will can desire a woman, without in fact having that woman in mind. In the same way then, the intellectual appetite (the will) desires the universal good, the attainment of all that is desirable, without being limited to any particular instantiation. Since man’s desire is for goodness per se, not just a particular good, if there is some good (for example, a computer, car, life or friendship) which leaves another particular desire unfulfilled (for example, health or knowledge) then it cannot be the ultimate good, since it violates the criteria of self-sufficiency. Man has an infinite desire for the good: ‘You can’t say after a million good things that you don’t want one more.’

This leads onto the second aspect of the self-sufficient criteria. ‘The self-sufficient is that which, even when had by itself, makes life desirable and free from want.’ In other words, if there were to be a situation where the only thing a person attained was the Ultimate Good, it would still completely rest the will. So happiness (synonymous with ‘ultimate good’ for rational beings) must be something which, even if it is the only thing had, leaves nothing wanting and nothing else to desire since the universal good has been attained. It is a ‘goodness so very good that there is nothing in it which is not good, and nothing outside of it which could be good.’ For example, if one had to choose between being happy and winning a million dollars, a reasonable person would choose happiness. However, this state of happiness would also entail a lack of missing the million dollars. In other words, one already has the good which he could foresee the wealth bringing about – there is nothing to be gained by having the money. Therefore happiness, the ultimate good, must be something which regardless of what it is contrasted against, one would always choose it and lack nothing good as a result of his choice. The ultimate good must be something not merely preferable to something else, but good in an absolute sense.

Logically following from this, it can then be said that ‘the perfect good, which is called self-sufficient, would be incapable of receiving an increase of goodness from

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94 One can immediately see here the potential difficulties. The same fundamental universal desire which leads one to meet, know and love a particular woman, without proper ordering, could in fact be the same thing which leads one to abandon her.
95 Peter Kreeft, The Best Things in Life, 78 – 79.
96 Commentary on N.E., 114.
97 ST I-II, Q1, A5.
98 Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 40.
99 SCG III, C31, 3.
another... Likewise, a thing taken alone, no addition being made, is said to be sufficient in that it has everything a man absolutely needs.\textsuperscript{100} The happy man (one who has achieved his ultimate end) cannot gain anything by addition – if this were the case, he would still lie in potential to the attainment of that end, and therefore, would not have achieved his ultimate end. The true ultimate good must not need anything outside of it in order for it to be perfect. This would even include the need of moderation by an appropriate virtue.\textsuperscript{101} It is impossible to add anything to it which it is either lacking in itself, or could make it better than it currently is. Regarding an object, a car may be better if it had a new coat of paint, a bigger engine, different suspension or leather seats. A tree may be better if it could produce bigger or juicier fruit with more fertiliser. In regards to the acting person, a body can be better if it were healthier or stronger, or an intellect could be better if it had more knowledge or wisdom. Thomas’ point here is that the ultimate good would have to be something which could not be made better in any way. Once again, building on the first criteria, the radical nature of happiness for Thomas is exemplified.

Third Criteria: The Ultimate Good must be able to act as an entire rule of life

The third criteria is deeply rooted in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy, which holds that all things which act move towards an end (whether this be knowingly or unknowingly).\textsuperscript{102} In regards to the human act, it begins with the apprehension of the end to be achieved.\textsuperscript{103} Since it is the intellect which provides the object for the will, and the first thing apprehended by the intellect is being itself, this has an implication for the will which ties neatly into the above criteria thus far.\textsuperscript{104} Since being in general is the first thing apprehended by the intellect, the first movement of the intellectual appetite is the good in general. ‘In this primary act of willing (velle), the will is unconditionally inclined to or desires the good that practical intellect apprehends in the act of simple insight.’\textsuperscript{105} This unconditional desire for good is nothing other than the desire for happiness, without which there would be nothing to move the appetite.\textsuperscript{106} ‘Particular beings can only become

\textsuperscript{100} Commentary on N.E., 115.
\textsuperscript{101} SCG III, C30, 4.
\textsuperscript{102} ST I-II, Q1, A2.
\textsuperscript{103} SCG III, C2, 4 & ST I-II, Q1, A4.
\textsuperscript{104} ST I, Q5, A2.
\textsuperscript{105} Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 360.
\textsuperscript{106} ST I-II, Q1, A4.
objects of the will in the measure in which they participate in the universal reason of
good.'

Therefore all of the wills particular inclinations and ends are undergirded (and
initiated) by this ultimate desire for the perfect good, otherwise known as happiness.

Since the ultimate or final end is the first thing desired by the intellect, there
cannot be an infinite number of ends, but rather agents must have an ultimate end.

‘There must be some end that is not desired on account of another.’

‘An end-tree for a fully rational human action cannot be infinitely long; if it were, no end in the tree could
explain the movement of will resulting in the action.’

In other words there would be no ultimate reason for one choice of action over another. ‘Without an ultimate term of
motion, an absolutely ultimate end, the motion of the other parts of the order cannot ever
be fully explained.’

The practical reason must see this particular act or object as
participating in goodness itself and therefore contributing in someway to one’s happiness.

An objection could arise at this point. A person might ask, ‘I can recognise that
various goods do exist. I recognise various inclinations that I have, each of which are
intelligible and have corresponding goods in which the appetite can rest. But why must
they meet in one ultimate good? Why can’t I have several goods which I am trying to
achieve in my life, but which have no inherent relation to each other so as to be called
one?’

Germain Grisez states a similar point when he says ‘it is not true that at any one
time a person’s will must have a single ultimate end in willing whatever it wills...
People’s wills can simultaneously have two or more ultimate ends, since sometimes they
do.’

Without critical reflection, a person can believe he is trying to achieve a plurality
of goods with no inherent relation to each other. So one must delve deeper to find what is
common to these various goods. In the same way that it would be a mistake for the
speculative intellect to remain at the plurality of individual supposedly unrelated truths, it
is a mistake for the practical reason to remain at a plurality of unrelated goods.

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108 There can be an infinite number of ends accidentally related to each other, but not essentially related
(ST I-II, Q1, A4).
109 Commentary on N.E., 20.
110 Scott MacDonald, ‘Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas’ Aristotelian Moral Psychology and
Anscome’s Fallacy’, *The Philosophical Review*, 100:1, 1991, 44.
112 Germain Grisez, ‘Natural Law, God, Religion and Human Fulfillment’, *American Journal of Jurisprudence*,
‘If at this point many goods arise to which the different ends of different arts are ordered, our reason will have to inquire beyond this number until it arrives at this one thing… there must be, indeed, one ultimate end for man precisely as man because of the unity of human nature.’ Thomas roots the necessity of the unity of goods in the single will of the human person. A person does not have a number of wills, one allocated to each particular good, which operate independently of each other. It is the one will seeking the universal good. Since these human capacities are all essentially united in the one being, so the various goods must be essentially related to form one ultimate good for the whole human being. This one ultimate good we refer to as happiness, and from it man takes ‘his entire rule of life… therefore it is impossible for one man to have several last ends not ordained to one another.’

Human nature is no exception to the rule that ‘nature tends to one thing only.’ To take the simple example of plant nature, one can see that a plant performs a number of various non-ultimate ends: photosynthesis in the leaves converting carbon dioxide to oxygen, absorption of water and nutrients through the roots and possibly growth of defence mechanisms such as thorns. However, these all contribute in some way to the final fruit or flowering appropriate to that kind of plant. Even though in the case of animals, and then rational animals, the situation becomes less obvious due to the increased number and complexity of the operations performed, they too must reach a pinnacle – ‘a single final end is what is required to make sense of a single life as a whole.’ If these particular goods actually did not have an intrinsic relationship to each other, ‘there would be no logical reason even to call them by the same name (basic human goods)... (but) they are of course all human goods by virtue of the same ratio boni: the good of the human being as a whole.’ One can then say that a person desires the car, education and any other particular goods for the same ultimate reason – they are seen as ‘tending to the perfect good’ in the formal sense as fulfilment of all desire. It is the ultimate end which is sought in all acts. ‘Every man naturally wills happiness: and all

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113 Commentary on N.E., 106.
114 ST I-II, Q1, A5.
115 ST I-II, Q1, A5.
118 ST I-II, Q1, A6.
119 SCG III, C38, 4.
other desires are caused by this natural desire; since whatever a man wills he wills on account of the end.\textsuperscript{120}

This objection raised above by Grisez is appropriate if one forgets that at this stage in the argument, Thomas is talking about the formal (or structural) concept of the ultimate end, not what it’s material instantiation (or content) consists in.\textsuperscript{121} Nor is Thomas disputing that the unreflective person can have irreconcilable goals in life. To present empirical data that there are some people who do not direct all their actions to a single ultimate end does not prove Aquinas wrong, but only proves that some (or most) people act only semi-intelligibly.\textsuperscript{122} But in regards to the formal concept of ultimate end, everyone’s ultimate end cannot help but be identical – a state of complete satisfaction of the will. This ‘is compatible with the denial that all human beings in fact share some strong material ultimate end... (since it) is not the false empirical generalisation that all human beings desire the same objects, activities or kinds of lives.’\textsuperscript{123} Aquinas is unpacking ‘what must be at work in practical reason for the agent to make every choice he makes. The Ultimate End taken formally is thus what makes practical reasoning possible.\textsuperscript{124} Thomas is well aware that people consider happiness to be instantiated in different things. He is simply demonstrating the common concept of happiness that all persons must have.

In fact, it is the formal ultimate good which allows various ideas of the material ultimate goods to be evaluated. ‘The ultimate end… is the formality under which whatever is chosen is chosen; it is the conception of that which is fully and completely perfective of the kind of agent we are.’\textsuperscript{125} It gives the individual, and any other parties, the ability to analyse what they currently believe happiness lies in. How else does someone come to realise that a life committed to maximum profit, or maximising sexual encounters, is not the ultimate good, if it is not the realisation that it does not meet the formal criteria of happiness? Without the formal concept, it would be impossible to

\textsuperscript{120} ST I, Q60, A2.
\textsuperscript{121} MacDonald, ‘Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas’ Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe’s Fallacy’, 41.
\textsuperscript{122} MacDonald, ‘Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas’ Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe’s Fallacy’, 40 & 58.
\textsuperscript{123} MacDonald, ‘Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas’ Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe’s Fallacy’, 62.
\textsuperscript{125} Ralph McInerny, \textit{St Thomas Aquinas}, 58.
evaluate whether wealth or virtue is the ultimate good. Hence the true ultimate good must be able to act as an entire rule of life.

This criteria of happiness also demands that it makes all true non-ultimate ends to be made intelligible. As a person critiques his overall life plan (identified primarily by what he believe happiness to instantiated in), it might occur to him ‘to abandon some ends, adopt some other ends not previously desired… (in order to have) a coherent overall plan intended to realise the best life.’\textsuperscript{126} The ultimate good also allows one to evaluate his desires as more or less rational, in as much as they guide him toward his ultimate end. ‘To the degree that her actions are fully rational, they will admit of explanation in terms of her beliefs about happiness.’\textsuperscript{127} A persons action’s will increase in reasonableness in as much as he incorporates in his practical reason as broad a range of desires and ends as possible.\textsuperscript{128} ‘In order for an action to be fully intelligible… it must be directed toward the attainment or preservation of that good toward which the agent has directed his whole life, which he takes to be the object of his happiness.’\textsuperscript{129} If a person were to encounter demonstrable proof that this particular car or this particular degree would not in fact lead him to happiness, he would immediately avoid it.\textsuperscript{130} If they didn’t, we would describe their behaviour as irrational. Whether that is due to moral or mental pathologies would be a different question – the main point is one would recognise that something is wrong.

‘Man must, of necessity, desire all, whatsoever he desires, for the last end.’\textsuperscript{131} These secondary objects, whether they be purely means (for example, the car) or ends (for example, knowledge) only move the appetite in as much as the person recognises them as ordained to the last end, happiness. The most extreme yet therefore clarifying example of this is the good of life itself. Life itself is recognised by the vast majority of people as good and desirable. In other words, they apprehend life as a necessary precursor to happiness. Yet when the reality of life is severed from the reality of happiness in the mind of the acting person, even it loses its desirability, and the thought enters the mind of the

\textsuperscript{126} MacDonald, ‘Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas’ Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe’s Fallacy’, 56.
\textsuperscript{127} Porter, The Recovery of Virtue, 47.
\textsuperscript{128} MacDonald, ‘Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas’ Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe’s Fallacy’, 56.
\textsuperscript{129} Porter, The Recovery of Virtue, 75.
\textsuperscript{130} This in reality is quite rare since ethics, which deals with particulars and contingents, cannot meet the strict criteria of a demonstrative science.
\textsuperscript{131} ST I-II, Q1, A6.
person that the only way he can be happy is to take his life. Yet as long as the good of life is seen in its relationship to happiness, he could not wish the end of his life.

Even though the ultimate good acts as an entire rule of life for the person, it is not necessary that he always consciously have it in mind whenever he acts. ‘One need not always be thinking of the last end, whenever one desires or does something: but the virtue of the first intention, which was in respect of the last end, remains in every desire directed to any object whatever, even though one’s thoughts be not actually directed to the last end.’ Since the very first movement of the will is toward to the universal good, the complete satisfaction of desire or happiness, it remains through the various particular movements.

The significance of the capacity for the Ultimate Good to be an entire rule of life has been demonstrated. ‘Man’s whole life ought to be ordered to the supreme and ultimate end of human life.’ The ultimate good must be something which provides an order and reference point to all other activities carried out in one’s life. ‘For only the supreme good is good without limitations, and only its pursuit if necessarily commanded.’ If something were to be proposed as the ultimate good, yet would be insufficient or inappropriate for dedicating all of one’s activities towards attaining, then it could not be the ultimate good.

This criteria demonstrates just how significant the concept of happiness is for any complete study of ethics. ‘Thomistic moral science begins… with an examination of the nature of an ultimate end in general.’ ‘Since the end relates to actions as a principle does to speculative (truths), there is not able to be, in the strict sense, a true science if it lacks the right estimation of the first indemonstrable principle.’ As referred to in the Introduction, if one gets this concept wrong, it has a chain-reaction to all concepts under

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132 Of course this is irrational for many reasons. The point remains though that suicide can only become an apparently desirable act once the relationship between life and the ultimate good has been broken.
133 The situation of the martyr does not refute this point, as the person did not actively will death itself or participate in the act. What they did actively carry out is their adherence to the truth, and left the consequences to their oppressors.
134 There is an exception to this – that is in the case of the theological virtue of charity in which all actions are consciously aimed toward the glory of God. This will be discussed further below.
135 ST I-II, Q1, A6, R3.
136 Commentary on N.E., 23.
138 Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 486. McInerney, St Thomas Aquinas, 64.
139 ST II-II, Q23, A8.
the umbrella of ethics. ‘A moral philosophy that lacks knowledge of the true end of man is radically deficient as a science of morals.’

Fourth Criteria: The Ultimate Good must be that which is desired for its own sake alone

The ultimate end, otherwise known as happiness, must by it very nature be desired ‘for its own sake alone.’ It mustn’t be something which can be intelligibly approached as a means or non-ultimate end. ‘Only the Ultimate End, happiness, is never a means to some further end; other ends are also basic but if considered in relationship to happiness, they are, in this context, “penultimate” ends.’141 There is no contradiction in having ‘the same act… ordained to but one proximate end… (and) ordained to several remote ends, of which one is the end of the other.’142 Yet the ultimate end, happiness, must never be sought for the sake of anything else.

In regards to the material cause of the ultimate end, it is possible (and common) for someone with an incorrect idea and therefore approach a greater good as a means to a lesser. For example, a person may say, ‘I want to be close to God because then I will be healthy.’ Or, ‘I want to be virtuous because then I will get some respect around here.’ However, as long as we keep to happiness in Aquinas’ general and formal sense, it is impossible for it to be regarded as a means. ‘The most perfect good is that which is so desired for its own sake that it is never desired for the sake of anything else.’143 To use the same examples just mentioned, the persons quoted regard health and respect as material constituents of happiness. Therefore, regardless of what one supposes happiness to consist in materially, even if one has a disordered appetite, it must always be desired for its own sake formally. ‘Human happiness is incapable of being ordered to a further end, if it is ultimate.’144

For Thomas then, like Aristotle, we clearly see that there is a hierarchy of ends divided into three kinds.145 The first category are those which are not desirable in themselves, but never the less are desirable as useful. These are goods or ends which may

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140 Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 487.
142 *ST I-II, Q1, A3, R3.*
143 *Commentary on N.E., 65, 109 & 111.*
144 *SCG III, C34, 2. Commentary on N.E., 72.*
145 *Commentary on N.E., 109.*
be necessary in order to bring about other goods, but are not desirable in themselves. An example of such would be medicine in both its preventative and curative forms. Even though I may be required to take a multivitamin in order to function properly, it would be incorrect to then include multivitamins in the substance of happiness itself. Since if it were to be included as a part of happiness itself, taking multivitamins would have to be desired for nothing other than itself. In other words, I would still take them even if my diet was sufficient and my health perfect. I would also encourage those who do not take them to do so in order to achieve their own fulfilment. However, the reality is that I take these tablets as ‘productive or preservative of goods in themselves.’ In this case, production or preservation of health. ‘The category of means includes all things, whether natural or artificial, that are not persons.’ Those things that are productive or preservative of goods in themselves, or restrictive of contraries, are called good because they are useful, and the nature of absolute good does not belong to the merely useful.

The next category of goods consists in those which are both desirable in themselves and useful for attaining something else. These ‘are worthy choices in themselves because, even if no further benefit might come from them they have a characteristic desirability in themselves.’ We do choose honor, pleasure, knowledge, and virtue for themselves. We would choose them or have a desire for them even if no other good would come to us through them. But none the less, people can also desire these goods as a means to something else, for example, people may wish to stay alive and healthy to care for loved ones. In this category, there clearly is a plurality of more basic ends (in the sense that there are things desirable in themselves, not merely useful, and proximate goals of acting), without denying the single ultimate end of the human person as a whole (which as described above is necessarily one). Yet it is the next and last

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146 The sad reality is that this is the kind of reasoning which advertising constantly employs. Even though the general public is smart enough to know the deceptiveness of these claims, it still has an effect on the viewer who is constantly exposed to them. An unfortunate consequence of this is a general mistrust of ‘the experts’ or people’s objectivity in commenting about their own industry. Also, it generally desensitises people to claims about what happiness consists in. In this case, genuine philosophical and religious claims subconsciously get considered as just another example of ‘someone trying to sell you something.’ See also the reinterpretation of morality as a ‘clash of wills’ in the Introduction.


148 *Commentary on N.E.*, 91.

149 *Commentary on N.E.*, 2068.

150 *Commentary on N.E.*, 111.
category which truly deserves the term ultimate, since ‘it is impossible to desire the good of the whole for the sake of the part.’\textsuperscript{151}

The final and most perfect category is that good which is desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. This as we have discussed is happiness, and it is fundamentally separated from non-ultimate ends by this and the other criteria of happiness discussed in this chapter: once attained, nothing else is desired and hence it is the last, final or ultimate good.\textsuperscript{152} It cannot be excessively pursued and is that which ultimately unifies and makes intelligible all other goods. ‘Whenever an end is such that we wish other things because of it, and we wish it for itself and not because of something else, then that end is not only a good end but a supreme one.’\textsuperscript{153}

For Thomas, all of these goods are in an ontological and practical relationship to each other, with the ‘merely useful’ always ordered to the ‘desirable in itself and useful’, which is always ordered to the Ultimate Good. ‘Something is called good, falls under the ratio boni, either because it is the ultimate end or is ordered to the ultimate end’ – there can be no other way.\textsuperscript{154} It would be a misrepresentation of Thomas to suppose that he is implicitly degrading any of man’s operations not in the third category (Ultimate End), making them somehow irrelevant. Yet eating is not any less enjoyable or even degrading because it is viewed in the context of sustaining my body. In fact, as analysed above, once I attempt to understand or enjoy eating apart from this context, it ceases to be intelligible (Why are you eating? What should you eat? How much should you eat), and pleasurable (pains associated with under or overeating). Each higher category of goods are architectonic to the category below it, meaning that ‘lower goods are for the sake of higher goods, which in turn dictate whether and how the lower goods are to be pursued.’\textsuperscript{155} Therefore man’s ultimate good is that which is most architectonic, as seen above when it is able to act as an entire rule of life.

All of these goods then ‘have an ordered relation to one another and to a single end.’\textsuperscript{156} This two-fold relationship which all goods have to each other, and the ultimate

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Commentary on N.E.}, 2069.
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Commentary on N.E.}, 19.
\textsuperscript{154} McInerny, \textit{The Difficult Good}, 47.
\textsuperscript{155} McInerny, \textit{The Difficult Good}, 42.
\textsuperscript{156} Etienne Gilson, \textit{Moral Values and the Moral Life}, 19.
good, is known as the *duplex ordo*. Following from this, it is the moral philosopher’s task ‘to consider human actions insofar as they are ordered to each other and to their end.’ With respect to the *whole*, all the different goods are of course commensurable… they are parts of it… through the specific role they play with respect to the (qualitatively different) end… as a *whole*.

In other words, all non-ultimate goods are commensurable against the ultimate good, in the same way that the ‘ordered complex of “personal goods”… serve the “good of the person.”’ This is what allows the acting person to use prudence in order to decide how exactly, given his current situation, to approach the Ultimate Good. ‘Choosing particular goods in view of the ultimate end is like choosing, in view of the good overall condition of a car, whether this is the best time to change the tires or check the oil.’

The example demonstrates well that while non-ultimate goods are *commensurable in regard to the Ultimate End*, each of the goods of the car have an *incommensurability in regard to each other*. This latter relationship of goods is the other aspect of the *duplex ordo*. If the car is short on oil, then no amount of water can make up for the absence of oil. Yet what ultimately decides whether water or oil is needed, how much and why one should get some, is the ultimate end of the car – getting from A to B. In the same way then with the acting person: if one is dying of thirst, no amount of friendship or knowledge can quench his thirst. Prudence would demand that one pursue the good of nutrition. Yet the ultimate rationale for the good of nutrition, its intelligibility in one’s life plan and whether one should pursue this rather than friendship or knowledge at the moment is all in light of the Ultimate End.

Phrases such as greater good or hierarchy of goods can never mean ‘all goods are quantitatively or quasi-quantitatively measured in terms of greater and less. Rather, it is meant to indicate the order that exists between goods when one is recognised to be for the sake of the other.’ If it were a pseudo-quantitative ‘greater than’, then it would open itself up to all the arguments against the various forms of consequentialism. So in the case of the goods of knowledge and nutrition, the term ‘greater’ does not imply the other is not necessary, always merely a means, or that there are never situations where prudence would demand making an end of nutrition.

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158 Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 486.
162 McInerny, *The Difficult Good*, 52.
Another way to express clearly Thomas’ relationship of the goods to each other and avoid confusion is the distinction between order of necessity and order of nobility.\textsuperscript{163} ‘Frequently there are fruitless disputes about what happiness consists in, because some treat as parts of happiness what are really necessary conditions for it; hence we must scrutinise any account of happiness to see whether it is counting a necessary condition as a part.’\textsuperscript{164} ‘It often happens in the case of active powers ordained to one another, that it belongs to the highest power to reach the last end, while the lower powers contribute to the attainment of that last end, by causing a disposition thereto.’\textsuperscript{165} Hence it is important to be able distinguish those things which are necessary for the person to perfect its own operation, and that which is most noble which the whole person is ordered towards.

It is here, in the need for prudence to select amongst possible goods to attain the ultimate good, that the possibility of freedom and immorality arises. Freedom, because man’s universal appetite is not necessarily attracted to finite goods. Immorality, because since the goods are in a natural order (\textit{the duplex ordo}), to choose a lesser good to the detriment of a greater one is to act immorally.\textsuperscript{166} ‘Those who sin turn away from that in which the notion of ultimate end is truly found but not from the intention itself of the ultimate end, which they falsely seek in other things.’\textsuperscript{167} This is perfectly consistent with the anthropological conclusions drawn earlier about the necessary pursuit of happiness. Sin occurs when ‘we desire what is only relatively good for us, in opposition to what is absolutely good.’\textsuperscript{168} Therefore another way in which the relationship of non-ultimate goods to the Ultimate Good can be understood, is that non-ultimate goods are never unconditionally pursued. They are not to be approached from a ‘more is better’ mentality, but rather viewed in light of the Ultimate Good, which is the only good that can be unconditionally pursued at every moment.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} McInerny, \textit{Ethica Thomistica}, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Annas, \textit{The Morality of Happiness}, 377.
\item \textsuperscript{165} ST I-II, Q5, A6, R1. \textit{SCG III}, C26, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{166} ST I-II, Q78, A1.
\item \textsuperscript{167} ST I-II, Q1, A6, R1 & II-II, Q9, A4.
\item \textsuperscript{168} SCG III, C127.
\end{itemize}
Fifth Criteria: The Ultimate Good contains no defect

‘Since happiness is the perfect and sufficient good, it must… exclude every evil.’ In Aquinas’ philosophy, ‘all things are good in as much as they have being.’ Therefore it is impossible that the Ultimate Good be lacking in being since this is the very definition of evil. This statement includes both moral and metaphysical evil. The former being any deviation in the will of a rational creature and the latter being the negation of something a being ought to have. From the perspective of the acting person, to possess the true ultimate good must mean one is lacking nothing appropriate to one’s nature. It must not be possible for an immoral man or even an imperfect person (through no fault of their own) to possess the ultimate good. In the case of the imperfect yet moral person, the case of blindness can illustrate Thomas’ point. Since the ultimate good is the fulfilment of all desires and the perfection of all human capacities, the blind man still has a desire or capacity left unfulfilled. Here again, the point is highlighted that mere satisfaction with what one has is not the happiness being spoken about. The blind man can become accustomed to his situation, grateful to God for the life he has, while inspiring others by his lack of despair and misery due to his handicap. However, as mentioned above, the criteria for the ultimate good demand that a reasonable person (apart from specific circumstances) would prefer to have the criteria met than not met.

‘Happiness excludes misery.’ Besides the obvious situation of a present tragedy, included in this statement is also the possibility of misery. Even though there may not be illness or other goods absent at the present moment, it is still possible for the intellectual creature to foresee and imagine such a situation. ‘Continuity and perpetuity, to some extent… are naturally desired by the appetite of a person endowed with reason, who apprehends not a particular being, as our senses do, but also being in itself… It follows then that… man apprehending being in itself desires it always as existing.’ The intellect

169 ST I-II, Q5, A4. SCG III, C28, 6.
170 ST I, Q6, A4.
171 ST I-II, Q18, A1.
172 In some circumstances, a person may choose to remain with their handicap in order to continue fraternity with their particular community. For example, a person may decide not to undergo a possible cure in order to keep a bond with their spouse who suffers incurably from the same handicap. It is important to note that this is not because the person believes a state of handicap to be objectively better than normal function, but only that they do not want to leave their spouse behind in the handicap state. This is also similar to the same way that a person who may escape a concentration camp chooses to stay to comfort those who cannot escape.
173 ST I-II, Q5, A3.
174 Commentary on N.E., 129.
then, which is able to transcend the particulars beheld by the senses, contains a double edged sword. Since man is able to see beyond the mere present temporality of finite creatures, he desires endless being. Therefore, the ultimate good must be ‘something permanent… otherwise it would not satisfy the natural desire. For everyone naturally desires to remain secure in the good he possesses.’

In this criteria of the ultimate good, Aquinas follows St. Augustine, holding fear of loss of the good incompatible with perfect happiness. Man naturally desires to hold to the good that he has, and to have the surety of his holding: else he must of necessity be troubled with the fear of losing it, or with the sorrow of knowing that he will lose it. Whether it is time spent with the family on the rare occasion they are all gathered, or the last days of a wonderful holiday, one is always aware of the impending conclusion of the good times. One’s health and skills are constantly deteriorating so that even the most luxurious life must be one whose close is ever approaching. This is not to mention the constant threat of external foes both near and far. ‘All good things must come to an end’ is an unfortunate saying which has entered into the common pool of contemporary sophistry. But it does contain elements of truth. From the moment that the person is aware of the nearness of the end, it is almost as if the end is present now, and it affects ones ability to enjoy the moment. ‘Can anyone be free from fear if he can lose what he loves?’ Therefore that which is the ultimate good must be something which once attained, has no accompanying fear of loss.

**Sixth Criteria: The Ultimate Good must consist in perfect operation**

This criteria is the positive form of the previous one which described the ultimate good as free from all defect and error. The trademark influence of Aristotle on Aquinas’ theory of happiness is that ‘man’s felicity is activity according to perfect virtue.’ To arrive at this point however, one must consider that man’s acts are ordered towards the perfection of something outside of him, or to the perfection of the agent himself. Since happiness is not something outside the happy person, happiness must necessarily be an

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175 Commentary on N.E., 186. SCG III, C48, 3. ST I-II, Q5, A3.
176 SCG III, C48, 8.
177 ST I-II, Q5, A4. Commentary on N.E., 129.
179 Commentary on N.E., 128 & 130. ST I-II, Q3, A2.
180 ST I-II, Q3, A2, R3.
act perfecting the very person themselves. ‘Happiness is by nature an activity whose effects work inward. This cannot be otherwise, for only in such an activity does the acting person actualise himself. Action which reaches outward perfects the work rather than the person who acts.’

‘Perfection is… the fullest possible development and expression of a creature’s dispositions and capacities, in accordance with the inclinations proper to the specific kind of thing it is.’ As seen briefly in the Introduction, the Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysic holds an intimate relationship between form, being and act as its very foundation.

‘Actuality is the fundamental characteristic of any kind of existence – every actually existing thing is in act, and can be said to be perfect insofar as it is fully in act.’ Happiness then must be an act in which all of man’s capacities are exercised, which perfects his very humanity. The perfect operation of man… cannot involve any defects or errors.

Since happiness is an activity, it then is not enough that a man simply be potentially happy. In order to have attained his highest good, it is necessarily ‘based on what is actual and not simply on what is potential, for potency perfected by act has the essential character of the good.’ Simply being disposed to this activity by being in potential to it is a kind of imperfection. There can be no potential remaining in the activity of happiness. The happy man is literally the perfect man, being everything he can be. It is because of this required transition from potency to act, that human happiness must be an activity.

Since happiness is the perfect operation of man qua man, it must be a good proper him. In other words, it is appropriate to his particular essence as rational animal. Therefore the search for man’s happiness is also the search for his unique function which he does not share with non-rational animals or other physical substances. ‘Some operation

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181 Pieper, Contemplation and Happiness, 57.
184 SCG III, C38, 3.
185 SCG III, C38, 6 & C28, 2.
186 Commentary on N.E., 107.
187 SCG III, C39, 2.
188 SCG III, C38, 6 & C28, 2.
189 Commentary on N.E., 107.
proper to man as a whole exists.'

‘If man’s happiness is an operation, it must needs be man’s highest operation… (that is) his highest power in respect of its highest object.’

Therefore the ultimate good must be something proper to the whole being of man to which all of his faculties are leading.

**Seventh Criteria: The Ultimate Good must be achievable and suitable to all men**

‘Felicity is the end of the human species, since all men naturally desire it. So, felicity is a definite common good, capable of accruing to all men, unless an impediment occurs.’ Happiness must be something which it is possible for all humans to attain without accidental interference. Since this ultimate good is necessarily bound to the essence of the creature, it cannot be possible that a member of the species be a priori excluded from its achievement. To say that even without impediment a creature’s perfect operation cannot be attained is a contradiction in itself. It is equivalent to saying that even if a plant had no internal defects and all the required nutrients it still could not grow. In that case, its classification as a plant would necessarily be questioned. If it were impossible for someone to achieve happiness apart from any consideration of his acts or circumstances, this would be to question their membership in the human family.

This however is different to stating that all members of the species will attain happiness. Impediments or interferences can be external (as in the cases of involuntary loss of external or bodily goods) or internal (in the case of moral defects). Happiness, since it is the perfect operation of man, cannot be something reserved for an elite few in society, or something which most people can never hope to have. Once again the radical nature of Thomas’ theory is shown. ‘Felicity is a definite common good, which many people can attain unless they are defective… this is true of every natural end in any species, that the members of this species do attain it, in most cases.’

‘It is not possible for the felicity of man to be placed in something that man cannot achieve. Otherwise, it would follow that man is a futile being, and his natural desire

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190 Commentary on N.E., 122.
191 ST I-II, Q3, A5.
192 SCG III, C39, 2.
193 SCG III, C44, 4.
would be incapable of fulfilment which is impossible.\textsuperscript{194} Aquinas takes it for granted that due to the intelligible foundation of reality, all natural desires must correlate with something else in reality. In this sense, the experience of hunger is only explainable by the clear existence of food and its co-naturalness with the human body. In the same way then, the fulfilment of man’s desires in general must be achievable, regardless of how difficult or unlikely one may consider it to be.

\textbf{Conclusion}

It has now been demonstrated that the formal concept of happiness consists of seven criteria according to Thomas. Although all interrelated, they could be distinguished so that happiness could be described as a perfection operation of man, free from all defect, desired for its own sake, in which all his desires are fulfilled, providing an entire rule for his whole life. This general concept of happiness is necessarily held (consciously or unconsciously) by all people as they carry out their daily activities, making their individual choices intelligible, even though they may disagree drastically about what such a state would consist in, or even whether it is possible. However, since the pursuit of the ultimate good is also the pursuit of that which is most desirable, all reasonable persons would acknowledge it is preferable to meet each criteria than not.

\textsuperscript{194} \textit{SCG} III, C44, 2 & C49, 11. \textit{ST} I, Q12, A1.
WHAT THE ULTIMATE END IS NOT

All want to be happy in as much as they know they want complete satisfaction of the will, but not all desire happiness in the sense that they do not know what that materially consists in. In light of this distinction, not all people could be said to be actually pursuing happiness in their lives, ‘because they know not in what thing the general notion of happiness is found.’

This disparity between desire for the ultimate good and knowledge of what it consists in is a consequence of the rational nature of man, who must intellectually apprehend a good in order to pursue and obtain it. ‘Man’s whole life ought to be ordered to the supreme and ultimate end of human life. It is necessary, therefore, to have knowledge of this end of human life.’

In non-rational creatures, there is not this gap between the desire for fulfilment and the knowledge of what will bring it about. The natural or sensitive appetites unfailingly incline them to their true good. The bird unfailingly pursues its fulfilment in nourishment and reproduction; it does not mistakenly pursue an upgrade in its nest when in fact it should be concentrating on feeding. Since they do not have to intellectually apprehend the good in order to pursue it, they suffer neither from faulty ideas of their ultimate good and/or poor choice of the means to it.

195 ST I-II, Q5, A8.
197 SCG III, C1, 5. ST I-II, Q13, A2, R3.
198 There are exceptions to this which are due to accidental causes, not the nature of the animal per se.
199 ST I-II, Q13, A2.
Yet this is the blessing (or curse) of the rational animal: since he has an appetite for the universal good, he is able to perceive the benefits and disadvantages of particular goods, meaning his will is not necessarily moved to one particular thing. It is this anthropological fact which makes possible the confusion, debate and discussion over what happiness materially consists in. For rational man, to be unqualifiedly described as pursuing happiness requires understanding exactly what happiness materially lies in. For those who mistakenly pursue the wrong object, they can be, in a qualified sense, described as not desiring happiness.

A phraseology which may help modern readers to understand this distinction is Jean Porter’s use of the terms subjective and objective final ends. ‘Each person aims at some final end, identified by the agent with his or her ultimate happiness, and every human action is ultimately directed toward the individual’s subjective end.’ However, the person’s subjective or personal goals may not coincide with the objective final end of human life, which ‘they mistakenly seek in other things.’ This rupture between the objective end of human life and the subjective understanding of that end is the key point addressed in the current chapter.

Although all people share the objective end of human life in its formal sense (as discussed in Chapter One), disagreement reigns in regard to the subjective understanding of what the ultimate good materially consists in. One distinction which can be made between the various views is whether the Ultimate Good is monolithic (exclusive) or an aggregate (inclusive). In the former view, all the various ends a fully rational agent pursues lead to a single object or act. For example, pleasure or an act of contemplation. In the latter view, all the various ends a fully rational agent pursue unite to constitute the ultimate end itself. For example, a person who holds happiness to be pleasure and wealth. Therefore, it is possible for people to view the various goods addressed in this chapter as either solely or partially constituting the Ultimate Good itself. Thomas’ rebuttals focus primarily on proving they cannot be the exclusive substance of happiness.

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200 Porter, The Recovery of Virtue, 86.
202 ST I-II, Q1, A7, R1.
Whether he believes they can partially constitute the true Ultimate Good will be addressed in later chapters.

By the time he addresses these rebuttals in both of his major works, Aquinas has already laid the metaphysical and theological foundations of his theory, possibly making this task seem a needless exercise. Nevertheless, from his pastoral (and from one’s own) experience, it is obvious that for various reasons, one can easily find themselves drawn towards these particular goods in a way detrimental to one’s happiness. It is therefore necessary, even for the most saintly, to constantly remind himself of these truths, lest he unwittingly find himself victim to lust or avarice.

**External Goods**

The first category of goods which Thomas addresses are known as external goods or goods of fortune. These consists of all things in the world which are external to the person, including honour, fame, wealth and power. According to the three tier order of goods explained in the previous chapter, these consist of goods which are always a means, and should not be ends in themselves. Exactly why or how this is so, is the immediate subject of discussion.

**Praise, Honour and Glory**

As a social animal, humans experience within themselves the desire for affirmation from others in their community. Can a person truly experience being a member of a society if he is not to some extent accepted by it? It seems hardly possible. From the moment a young boy is introduced into the new environment at Kindergarten, he desires the approval of his peers. In secondary education, ‘peer pressure’ is something which is often spoken about. The adolescent can often find themselves carrying out activities against his better judgment in order to win the approval of so-called friends. Even throughout one’s life, it seems that a successful career in one’s field of work depends on receiving accolades, awards and recognition from others in the industry. Is it not possible that the ultimate good can lie here, in receiving the highest honours from one’s peers?

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206 That is, if one considers the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, and first two books of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. 
Thomas makes a distinction between praise, honour and glory. The first two are given 'on account of some excellence' but differ in degree. 207 Praise is the lower degree of honour, involving only words given to a person who has done well in something particular. Honour on the other hand, 'signifies testimony manifesting a person’s excellence either by word or deed,' involving an excellence of the whole person. Glory is defined as ‘a widely recognised reputation.’ 208 This is the equivalent of our modern understanding of fame, which is still intimately linked with honour, since honour may be the reason one seeks fame. 209 Thomas sees the belief that happiness consists in these as a particular attraction for those involved in the public or active life. 210

The first argument which Thomas brings out against glory being the ultimate good, is that happiness is the perfect operation of the person themselves, but honour is the operation of another. 211 It is something external to the person receiving it. Since happiness is in the happy man, whereas honour or glory is an act performed outside the person (even when he is receiving it), it cannot be the ultimate good.

Since happiness is an operation, it ought to be something attainable or within the power of the person. Honour though, is completely dependant on the judgment of another person. ‘Gaining honour is not within the power of any man; rather it is in the power of the one who gives honour.’ 212 If a person accomplishes a magnificent act of courage such as saving another’s life, does the goodness (and therefore happiness) of that act depend on someone giving him a reward? This is certainly not the case. There is a proper joy and good which comes from fulfilling one’s nature, which precedes the receiving of any praise or honour. It may also be the case that the man who does many good works is surrounded by the proud, envious or ‘politically correct,’ who will not give him his due honour. For example, a student may achieve top grades in an assessment, or a man may receive a promotion, but they happen to be surrounded by those who refuse to congratulate them. It does not make sense then that a good man should depend on the evil man for happiness. This would be the ridiculous result if honour were the ultimate good.

207 Commentary on N.E., 214.
208 SCG III, C29, 1.
209 SCG III, C29, 2.
210 Commentary on N.E., 62.
211 ST I-II, Q2, A2.
212 SCG III, C28, 4.
This also contradicts the virtue of courage, which would at times require the good to be pursued in the face of receiving insults and humiliation.

The flipside of the same situation is that it is possible for evil men to receive honour and glory if surrounded by the right (or wrong) persons. This violates another criteria of the ultimate good, since the ultimate good must be incompatible with evil - one cannot simultaneously possess the highest good and be evil.\textsuperscript{213} Yet this could easily happen as people are honoured mistakenly or accidentally, and not because of a true good within them. On that basis then, a person does not desire honour from a fool, but from the wise.\textsuperscript{214} The degree and worthwhileness of true honour comes from the quality of the judgment of the one giving the honour. It is much more worthwhile to receive a pat on the back from a great Philosophy Professor, than a gold watch and Ferrari from the local drug dealer. Yet if honour were happiness itself, one should not have reason to prefer receiving it from one person rather than another.

So it can be confidently said ‘it is better to become worthy of honour than to be honoured.’\textsuperscript{215} Honour is a sign of already existing excellence, not the cause of the excellence itself.\textsuperscript{216} To believe honour is the ultimate good is to confuse the cause with the effect. It is ‘one’s possession of goods that arouse the respect and envy of others.’\textsuperscript{217} One is already a successful mother, student or sportsman, before the recognition is given. Honour is only desirable in as far as it is the recognition of a true good already attained. Since ‘praiseworthy habits are called virtues,’ one can conclude that because the virtues make men truly deserving of honour, yet honour cannot make men virtuous, virtue is a greater good than honour.\textsuperscript{218} Therefore the good ‘for whose sake honour is sought, is a better thing than honour.’\textsuperscript{219} Yet ‘that which is good and desirable on account of something else is not the ultimate end.’\textsuperscript{220} One must already have attained the good in order to be worthy of honour, which is impossible if honour or glory itself is the ultimate good.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{213} SCG III, C28, 6.
\item\textsuperscript{214} ST I-II, Q2, A2, R3.
\item\textsuperscript{215} SCG III, C28, 5. ST I-II, Q2, A2.
\item\textsuperscript{216} ST I-II, Q2, A3.
\item\textsuperscript{217} Anthony Kenny and Charles Kenny, \textit{Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility}, 108 (italics are mine)
\item\textsuperscript{218} ST II-II, Q144, A1.
\item\textsuperscript{219} Commentary on N.E., 65.
\item\textsuperscript{220} SCG III, C28, 3.
\end{itemize}
In the case of God, who receives more world-wide honour and glory than anyone or thing, one can ask, ‘Does the honour God receives make Him honourable, good, or divine? Or is the honour paid to Him because He is first of all honourable, good, or divine?’\textsuperscript{221} It is obvious in this case that God clearly receives honour because of His inherent Goodness. It would be an absurd conclusion that if no one was to worship God, His very nature would then be altered. If this is the case with God who is perfect Beatitude, how much more should those seeking beatitude avoid the idea that honour is goodness itself.

The thin-ice which all those seeking fame and glory tread on is especially exposed when considering ‘human glory… is possessed with the greatest uncertainty and error.’\textsuperscript{222} Yet it belongs to the nature of the ultimate good to be ‘what is most enduring… for an endless duration of the good is naturally desired.’\textsuperscript{223} The person pursuing fame is at the whim of the wavering opinions and moods of the populace. The pop culture is constantly getting bored with fads and moving on. For example, the person who believed he would win the hearts of the people by inventing the best spinning Yo-Yo, would have been shocked to find that in only a couple of years, Yo-Yo’s were out of fashion. Or a person may purchase the latest model BMW to impress his friends, only to find that next year it will not be the latest. The person who then believes fame to be the ultimate good is left with two options: Either re-invent himself (or his possessions) to suit the masses, or decide that the consistency and quality of his character is more important than being on the front pages.\textsuperscript{224}

Another demonstration of the uncertainty and error which accompanies the popular judgment is that it can even be unjustly taken away by false claims.\textsuperscript{225} Human opinions are formed and destroyed so easily that if a lie becomes well-known enough, people will consider it to be true without any further thought. By the time a person establishes a defence of his reputation it may be too late – the media in the meantime have moved onto more interesting stories. This is why Thomas ultimately describes fame

\textsuperscript{221} Peter Kreeft, \textit{The Best Things in Life}, 71.
\textsuperscript{222} SCG III, C29, 6.
\textsuperscript{223} SCG III, C29, 7.
\textsuperscript{224} If the person were to choose the latter, we would say they have realised fame is not the ultimate good. On the other hand, if they were to choose to change their very image for the sake of ‘staying with it’, one can easily imagine the constant anxiety and dread accompanying the thought that they may not be accepted, or that once again what is in fashion may change.
\textsuperscript{225} STI-II, Q2, A3, R3.
as a good of fortune – it is very much out of the control of the famous person as to whether he maintains his wide repute. Therefore it is possible (or even likely) that the fame will be taken against his will, and this does not befit the nature of the ultimate good.

In contemporary society, the temptation to believe fame to be the ultimate good has taken on new proportions. With the rapid spread of the internet and smart phones, through programs such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and personal blogs, individuals can become instantly famous for the most trivial reasons. This is exemplified well is today’s society where undue attention is given to those who have even excelled in immoral activities. For example, ‘celebrities’ have launched a public persona through involvement in pornography (the Paris Hilton phenomena), crime (The Underbelly TV series) or simply shocking other people through self-inflicted harm (The Jack-Ass Series and Movies). There seems to be a desire to be known at any cost, regardless of whether in a positive or negative light. Historians may well look back at this embryonic period of globalised, easily-accessible media, and characterise the desire to be seen at any cost (or get the most ‘likes’) as peculiar to our time.

The individual who believes that honour or fame are the ultimate good, forgets that ‘to know is more noble than to be known; only the more noble things know, but the lowest things are known.’

In man’s intellect he has the capacity to understand universal truth, goodness and beauty. This is his great calling. In as much as anything has being it is knowable – therefore to be widely known is no great dignity. However, to be the knower, to perfect the intellect which can becomes all things, is truly the dignity of a rational creature. In as much as one simply wishes to be known, he takes on a goal which is accomplished by even the least noble creatures such as rocks or plants. But to be the knower is to share an activity with the most noble of beings.

In summary, when analysing the deficiencies of honour and fame, several criteria of the ultimate good have been violated. These goods fail to meet that fact that happiness is a perfect activity proper to the happy man himself and not another, and it is a thing belonging pre-eminently to him and taken from him with only with difficulty.

\[226\] SCG III, C29, 4.
\[227\] Commentary on N.E., 64.
the ultimate good, happiness, cannot be sought for the sake of something else, or received on account of another good.\textsuperscript{228}

\textit{Wealth and Power}

Aquinas divides material possessions or wealth into two categories: natural and artificial wealth. ‘Natural wealth is that which serves man as a remedy for his natural wants.’\textsuperscript{229} These include food, water, shelter, clothing and some basics tools for leisure. On the other hand, artificial wealth (money), is invented by man for the purpose of exchange to obtain natural wealth.

Money obviously cannot be man’s happiness since it is simply a means for obtaining natural wealth. Yet neither can natural wealth be happiness since it finds its purpose in supporting human nature.\textsuperscript{230} So in both cases, ‘riches are only desired for the sake of something else.’\textsuperscript{231} This contradicts the very nature of the ultimate end since it is not desired for anything other than itself. Even putting this point aside, if natural wealth was the ultimate end, Josef Pieper asks, ‘Is it not patently absurd to say that the meaning of life consists in securing the means of livelihood?’\textsuperscript{232}

Aquinas’ exposition of the inadequacy of wealth as the ultimate good continues as he explains: ‘Man’s highest good cannot lie in the possession or keeping of things that chiefly benefit man through being spent.’\textsuperscript{233} That is, happiness is something which the person possesses. Happiness cannot lie in something which must be given away, if by its nature it is something which must be had within. Due to the corporeal nature of money it must be divided (or lost completely) in order to be of any benefit. This is in contrast to spiritual things which multiply without division. For example, knowledge is imparted to the student without a loss to the teacher. Laughter is not reduced as more people find a joke funny, but in fact it can increase the intensity of the enjoyment for all involved.

Therefore, since happiness is every person’s ultimate end, it cannot be that it must be only

\textsuperscript{228} Commentary on N.E., 65.
\textsuperscript{229} ST I-II, Q2, A1.
\textsuperscript{230} ST I-II, Q2, A1.
\textsuperscript{232} Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 91.
\textsuperscript{233} SCG III, C30, 3. ST I-II, Q2, A1.
attained by some at the cost of others. However, this would be the case if the ultimate good was material possessions in itself.\textsuperscript{234}

Another argument against wealth being the ultimate good is that there is a virtue associated with moderating its possession. But the ultimate good is not something which needs moderating – since it is ultimate, it impossible to possess it to an excess. The virtues of ‘liberality and magnificence… are more praiseworthy in a situation where money is spent than in one in which it is saved.’\textsuperscript{235} Therefore a person is more perfected in his appetite and operation the more he is able to dispense with material wealth. Without the accompanying virtues, material wealth gained does not make a man better, but in fact the opposite. The true ultimate good however, does not need the addition of something else to perfect it – as seen by the second criteria, it is self-sufficient. Therefore since riches require the addition of virtue to moderate their possession, they cannot be the ultimate good.

Anthony and Charles Kenny have recently explored empirical data on the relationship between wealth and happiness. It has been found that ‘diseases of the rich’ are just as serious a problem as ‘diseases of the poor.’ High blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, physical inactivity, tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug consumption, excessive television or computer use, social isolation, resentment from peers, rich-bashing from society, betrayal or exploitation by friends, unrealistic expectations from family and society and unequal financial status in marriage are all risks increasingly associated with those having much expendable income.\textsuperscript{236} In layman’s terms, it could seem that Aquinas’ understanding of artificial wealth serving natural wealth, has two benefits which empirical studies are only now revealing.\textsuperscript{237} Firstly, avoidance of excessive wealth reduces risks associated particularly with the wealthy. ‘The amount of income required to purchase the most cost-effective technologies that have driven the morbidity revolution is very small.’\textsuperscript{238} Secondly, it provides a stable measure which allows someone to be satisfied with an income which meets his true necessities. ‘Today,

\textsuperscript{234} ST I-II, Q2, A1, R2.
\textsuperscript{235} SCG III, C30, 4.
\textsuperscript{236} Anthony Kenny and Charles Kenny, \textit{Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility}, 84-5 & 154-5.
\textsuperscript{237} ‘In fact, there is a better understanding today that the mere accumulation of goods and services, even for the benefit of the majority, is not enough for the realization of human happiness. Nor, in consequence, does the availability of the many real benefits provided in recent times by science and technology, including the computer sciences, bring freedom from every form of slavery.’ – John Paul II, \textit{Sollicitudo Rei Socialis}, 28
\textsuperscript{238} Kenny & Kenny, \textit{Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility}, 99.
more than half of Americans say that they cannot afford everything they really need… this is because the impression of what people “really need” has been expanding.\footnote{Kenny & Kenny, \textit{Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility}, 128.}

Considering that ‘for most of history, the average Western European has lived on an income which is less than one tenth the average income of the poorest ten percent of US citizens in 2000’, this warped understanding of what is necessary for living is a grave concern.\footnote{Kenny & Kenny, \textit{Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility}, 46.}

‘That object in whose attainment man’s highest good lies must be better than man.’\footnote{SCG III, C30, 5.} As man strives to perfect his being, it must involve a striving towards realities which are greater than his current state encompasses. For example, striving after understanding or charity involve an attempt to know, encounter and make one’s own, those realities which surpass any individual humans existence. This principle cannot be applied to wealth. Since man is an intellectual substance, he uses material objects to achieve his own ends. In other words, because of his intellectual nature, man himself is the end of non-personal objects.\footnote{This is demonstrated clearly by the intellectual virtue of art.} Therefore it is impossible that a physical object be the ultimate end of an intellectual substance.

The acquisition of wealth can occur in many ways. Common ways can include family inheritance, winning a lotto or even more accidental forms such as living next to a gold mine. In fact, ‘of the world’s 691 billionaires Forbes claims over 42 percent largely inherited their wealth.’\footnote{Kenny & Kenny, \textit{Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness}, 200.} Our day to day experience proves that people are not born happy or perfect, yet many are born or inherit vast amounts of material wealth. All are aware also that ‘riches may accrue to evil men who fail to achieve the highest good.’\footnote{SCG III, C30, 7.} As with all the other goods of fortune, since they can be gained in an involuntary manner (without rational effort), they also ‘are lost in an involuntary manner.’\footnote{SCG III, C30, 7.} Whether it is through stock-market changes, health, coercion or the immorality of others, people find themselves having to part with material wealth against their will. In contrast to this, ‘man’s highest good cannot be subject to fortune, for things subject to fortune come about independent of rational effort… it must be through reason that man will achieve his
Since it has been shown that happiness is man’s perfect operation, is incompatible with evil and cannot be involuntarily lost, it cannot consist in wealth.

When the ultimate good has been attained, it means that the will is completely at rest and joy. On the contrary, in regards to material objects, Thomas notes that when ‘we already possess them, we despise them, and seek others… The reason of this is that we realise more their insufficiency when we possess them.’

The possessors of material wealth and other temporal goods do not find their appetite completely satisfied. This is explained by the fact that particular finite goods can never satisfy a universal appetite. Those who hold wealth to be the ultimate good are never satisfied with their current house, car, phone or bank account. As the latest model comes out, or as their salary comes up for review, they continue to set themselves monetary goals which go well beyond the demands of natural wealth. The avaricious person in his current state believes that his current dissatisfaction is due to the inadequacy of his current model or bank account. He confuses the inferior quality of material goods with inferior quantity - yet no quantity can change the nature of these goods. ‘The provisional happiness we might attain through (material goods) is always accompanied by a deepening appreciation of their insufficiency.’

Thomas in his next argument asks us to observe that a man is ‘not called good or bad simply because he has power.’ The wealthy or politically powerful are not referred to as good human beings, simply because they have wealth or power. The reason for this is that the good (as mentioned earlier) has the nature of an end, whereas power has the nature of a principle, therefore it cannot be man’s end.

Power and money provide potential or means to achieve ends. A millionaire is not said to be good because he could give a lot to charity, but because he has or does. In the same way, a politician is not said to be good because she can act in the interest of the common good, but because she does. This obviously disqualifies power itself from being the ultimate good, since it can either be not used at all or even used for evil. But ‘something is better which cannot be

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246 SCG III, C30, 6.
247 ST I-II, Q2, A1, R3.
249 SCG III, C31, 2.
250 ST I-II, Q2, A4.
251 Peter Kreeft, in one of his entertaining dialogues, has his imaginary Socrates ask a student, ‘Suppose there were two gods, one perfect in power but imperfect in goodness, and the other perfect in goodness but imperfect in power. Which one would you seek?’ The student replies, ‘The good one.’ Socrates responds, ‘Then it is not power that you seek.’ – Peter Kreeft, The Best Things In Life, 70.
used in a bad way’, therefore the ultimate good, would be that which has no potential for evil.\textsuperscript{252}

‘All power is relative to something else, but the highest good is not relative to something else.’\textsuperscript{253} By relative, Thomas means that a person may be considered powerful in his household, but relative to the state, he is powerless. Then again, a person may be the most powerful person in Australia because of his corporate ties, yet powerless to change parliamentary laws. Power is specified to a particular area. The ultimate good is that which is not lessened by being compared to other goods, nor is it simply highest by comparison to lower goods. Rather it is the complete good by its very nature. The ultimate good is not isolated to particular areas, as is proved by the criteria of self-sufficiency.

‘Human power is most imperfect since it is rooted in the will and opinions of men, in which there is the greatest inconsistency.’\textsuperscript{254} As seen with the arguments against the other goods of fortune, honour and fame, anything which depends on popular opinion does not stand on certain ground. Even if one were to point out the most powerful dictactorships, where power did not lie with majority opinion, it is not long before dictators can still be involuntarily removed from power. History has shown that whether the hands are foreign or domestic, sometimes it only required one who was close enough to bring their downfall, while in other times it required ten or ten million. But in all cases, it is utterly beyond prevention by the so-called powerful. Since one of the criteria of the ultimate good is that it is free from all defect, man’s ultimate good cannot lie in a life of bowing to opinion polls, fear of backstabbing or assassination and widespread hatred.

In our contemporary society, the form of power which people often believe will bring about happiness is that which is possessed through technology, and the ability to manipulate nature. For many, it is the place where both wealth and power meet so that one can be alternatively used to gain the other in a vicious cycle. All the above arguments then against wealth and power being the ultimate good can be applied to technology. One worth reiterating is the irreplaceable role which virtue plays in perfecting the human operation. No amount of technology can make temperance and prudence irrelevant. In fact, as the ease of access increases (through laptops and smart phones), without the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{252} SCG III, C31, 4.
\textsuperscript{253} SCG III, C31, 3.
\textsuperscript{254} SCG III, C31, 5.
\end{footnotesize}
accompanying virtue, it is much easier for a person to be drawn into an addictive spiral, until he is unable to distinguish reality from fiction. ‘The opportunity to adopt new identities in cyberspace renews the mind/body split. The more time one spends in virtual spaces the more real those spaces seem to be.’ Without the perpetual wisdom involved in discerning true happiness, it seems that our society has gained ‘a much faster and more powerful vehicle just at the time when it has thrown away all the road maps.’

**Goods of the Body**

It has been shown above that external goods or goods of fortune, always find their end in the person themselves, vindicating the claim that these are the lowest form of goods, those which cannot be ends in themselves. It is now appropriate to address the second category of goods – those which are both means and desirable in themselves. These will be distinguished into goods of the body and goods of the soul.

Thomas views bodily goods as a further extension of that category of goods which find their end in the person. ‘Factors which preserve a thing in its species, such as health and the nutritive power, though perfectants of the animal, are not the end of the animal; rather the opposite is true.’ That is, any operation whose end is simply to maintain the person, cannot be the end of the whole person, since the good of a part depends on and finds its good in that of the whole. The reason that these goods are not merely means is that they are appropriate to the very nature of man as a physical creature and therefore have desirability in themselves. As should be expected, since these goods relate more directly to human nature, they become greater attractions to those who may seem to have surpassed the illusionary grandeur of wealth, honour or power. Therefore it remains to demonstrate clearly why each of these goods, though desirable in themselves, cannot be the ultimate good or happiness.

**Health, Beauty and Strength**

In a society where materialism dominates both popular and academic anthropology, it is easy for people to believe that health and happiness are the same thing. In that case, the ultimate good is seen as having unimpaired and efficient bodily function.

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257 SCG III, C26, 18.
258 SCG III, C17, 6.
However, as seen above in one of Aquinas’ arguments against wealth, those who have health tend not to be fully satisfied with all aspects of their life – an indication of not having achieved the ultimate good. Often those who are privileged enough to have a healthy, fully functioning body, begin to turn their time and attention towards beauty or extraordinary physical performance. These are all areas which have taken primary roles in marketing and consumerism in its various forms.

Many arguments which were used above regarding external goods, also apply to the goods of health, beauty and strength. Many of these, first and foremost, one should consider that these are possessed both by the good and the bad, something which is incompatible with the ultimate good. One is not a good man because of his health or strength, but rather we see that many vicious men carry out their evil exactly because of their physical attributes. Secondly, as with the external goods, it too is very much unstable and not subject to the will of the person. One cannot will away disease which is hereditary or caused by other factors out of control of the individual. In many cases, where people have made health or beauty their aim, other factors such as accidents or environmental changes can instantly undo years of work. All of these are incompatible with the ultimate good, which cannot be taken from a person against his will.

Due to the goods of the body being more intimately tied to the perfection of the human person, there are a new set of arguments which Aquinas employs. The first of these is that a thing’s ‘last end cannot consist in the preservation of its being.’ Thomas uses the analogy of a captain and his ship to speak about the relationship between the will, reason and body. The intellect is seen as the body’s captain in the sense that it uses the body to achieve its purpose – in this case, the good and true. Just as a captain’s intention is not simply to preserve a ship, the intellect intention cannot be merely to maintain the body. If this were the case, health would be in fact be the ultimate good, and other factors such as truth and goodness would exist only to serve it. The goods of friendship, knowledge and fortitude would only be good in as much as they preserve one’s existence. In a way, this is to reverse the hierarchical nature of being and put the vegetative life (or even mere existence) as the ultimate good. To follow the argument further, it would mean that anyone who is fully physically functional is automatically

259 SCG III, C32, 1.
260 ST I-II, Q2, A5.
261 ST I-II, Q2, A5.
262 ST I, Q78, A1.
achieving the ultimate good. This would mean that everyone who is healthy is perfect which is clearly not true.

To carry Thomas’ analogy further and into his next argument, we can say that just as the human captain is superior to his inanimate ship by nature, he is also superior in that a ship cannot achieve its purpose (say, carrying cargo) apart from the captain’s direction. ‘The soul is better than the body, which is not alive, and which does not possess these goods except by means of the soul.’\textsuperscript{263} Just as the body is unable to maintain its constitution (and therefore existence) without the soul, so too is it unable to attain other goods without the soul. Although health, beauty and strength are physical traits, they depend on the soul for their existence. However, the intellectual aspect of the soul does not depend on the body for its existence or operation.\textsuperscript{264} ‘So, a good of the soul, like understanding, is better than a good of the body.’\textsuperscript{265} This is proven both because the body depends on the good of the soul (e.g., knowledge) to find its good, and because the body is directed and put to use to fulfil the goods of the soul (e.g., knowledge). The good of the soul is both what makes the bodily goods possible, and is at the same time that to which the bodily goods are directed.\textsuperscript{266} Therefore bodily goods cannot be the ultimate good, since the ultimate good cannot (even logically) be approached as a means.

If the intellectual goods were not greater than bodily goods, for example, food and sexual activity, then the ultimate good would lie in these areas, but once again this is clearly wrong.\textsuperscript{267} To be not-hungry, is not to be perfected as a human being. To reproduce abundantly is not to be a perfect human being. Or to phrase it negatively, to not be sexually dissatisfied, does not mean one is a perfect human being. This can only be explained if ‘the good of the intellect is better than the good of the senses.’\textsuperscript{268} The intellectual appetite for universal truth and goodness is not exhausted by bodily goods, therefore bodily goods cannot be the ultimate good of the whole being.

Happiness is the term which denotes the ultimate good particular to rational beings.\textsuperscript{269} This means that happiness is something proper to rational beings and not found

\textsuperscript{263} SCG III, C32, 2.
\textsuperscript{264} ST I, Q75, A2.
\textsuperscript{265} SCG III, C32, 2.
\textsuperscript{266} ST I-II, Q2, A5.
\textsuperscript{267} SCG III, C33, 3.
\textsuperscript{268} SCG III, C33, 2.
\textsuperscript{269} SCG III, C25, 14.
in non-rational creatures. ‘If, then, man’s highest good lay in these (bodily) things, man would not be the most excellent of animals which is obviously false.’ In many bodily traits man is surpassed by the non-rational animals. Whether it be in speed, strength, stamina, fertility or longevity of life, there are animals which go beyond human capabilities. Therefore if the ultimate good were to lie in these goods, non-rational animals would surpass humans in ‘happiness.’

**Pleasures of the flesh**

One of the arguments which Aquinas puts forward against physical pleasure being man’s ultimate good is rooted in his epistemology. This is the fact that in the realm of the senses it is strictly the particular which is apprehended. Therefore it contains an inherent limitation – the senses are unable to directly perceive universals. This can cause issues since as had been discussed earlier, the object of the intellect and will is universal truth and goodness respectively. Bodily pleasure ‘results from a good apprehended by sense, which is a power of the soul, which power makes use of the body.’ Therefore all pleasures of the body are associated with particular goods. Since the senses can only apprehend singulars, their associated delight, ‘which is nothing else than the appetite’s rest in the good’, is extremely limited. Since this capacity of the body does not match the capacity of the intellect, physical pleasures cannot be man’s ultimate good. He will always be left dissatisfied, directly violating the first criteria of the ultimate good.

‘In the order of nature pleasure depends on operation, and not the converse.’ Activities which are properly ordered achieve a good, and it is at the achievement of this good that a concomitant pleasure or delight occurs. For example, there are associated pleasures on achieving the good of the nutritional or reproductive faculties. Unless the good of the faculty is achieved, such as satisfaction of hunger or completion of the sexual act, then the associated pleasure does not pertain. This is otherwise known as the ‘hedonistic paradox.’ In order to experience the accompanying physical pleasure, ‘an agent must “aim” at the mode of activity itself’ rather than the expected accompanying

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270 *SCG III, C32, 4.*
271 For example, turtles live longer, tigers are stronger and eagles are faster.
272 *ST I-II, Q2, A6.*
273 *ST I-II, Q2, A6, R1. Commentary on N.E.,* 293.
274 *SCG III, C27, 1 & C26, 14. ST I-II, Q4, A2.*
275 *Commentary on N.E.,* 1994.
pleasure. So Aquinas puts forward the argument that pleasure is a proper accident of achieving the good rather than the substance of the good itself. Since it has already been shown above that these bodily operations cannot be the ultimate good, it is impossible for their concomitant pleasures to be the ultimate end.

Epicurus and the fathers of utilitarianism identify happiness with pleasure, or its negative form of freedom from pain. The logic of this position is that pleasure is the ultimate reason for doing anything. In other words, ‘if you could get the experience some other more convenient way you would not bother with the activity.’ This means that there are not activities intrinsically worthwhile in themselves apart from the pleasure one receives doing them. Acts of kindness or honesty (even though they ought to be pleasurable to the kind or honest person) have no objective goodness to them. A convincing argument against this was put forward by Robert Nozick who invented a thought experiment called ‘the experience machine.’ His conclusions can be summed up by his statement that ‘perhaps what we desire is to live (an active verb) ourselves, in contact with reality.’ It is not the satisfying but the satisfactory life we really want… the life which in actual fact is fulfilled. This highlights the criteria of happiness being a proper activity, rather than a side-effect of an activity. Therefore pleasure cannot be the ultimate good.

It is also possible that ‘one can feel moments of genuine pleasure… in the middle of a long period of misery… (or) no matter what went before or followed that instant… abstracted from any preceding or subsequent context.’ However, happiness, the ultimate good, must also be an enduring state as several of the criteria demand. It is

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277 SCG III, C26, 15.
280 McCabe, The Good Life, 49.
281 A super-machine would allow people to artificially feel as though they have achieved great things, along with their accompanying delights. However in reality, the person remains in a vegetable-like state. After elaborately setting the scene, he asks the reader if they would step into the machine. If one would hesitate, then it is clearly not just the ‘experience’ of things we desire.
282 Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia, 45.
283 McCabe, The Good Life, 51.
284 ‘Those who think that (bodily and external goods) fulfil happiness, do not know that happiness is life, and life is the fulfilment of action. No bodily or external good is in itself an action, or in general an activity.’ - Arius Didymus, ‘Eclogae II, 126.22 – 127.2’ in Annas, The Morality of Happiness, 415.
deeply rooted in the reality of the person, including his character, life plan and the full spectrum of his desires. It cannot be isolated into mere episodes – yet physical pleasure can. Therefore it is impossible that pleasure is the ultimate good.

Aquinas also takes issue with the fact that ‘these pleasures are common to men and brutes’, because as per the criteria, the ultimate end must lie in something proper to the substance.\(^{285}\) In this case, it is a rational substance. Yet there is nothing inherent in the pleasure associated with achieving the good of the sensitive appetite which is proper to man. Since then the ultimate end must be ‘the noblest appurtenance of a thing’, and an intellectual power such as understanding is much more nobler than the sense capacity, physical pleasure cannot be man’s ultimate good.\(^{286}\)

It is significant to point out at this stage that even if a person were to insist that the intellect has a *role* in satisfying the sensitive appetite in humans, as long as it is only a supporting role, or a role of service to pleasure (even though it may be a crucial one), it still does not escape the above criticism. An example is that ‘for Epicurus the mind does play an important part in the happy life: but its function is only to anticipate and recollect the pleasures of the senses.’\(^{287}\) Even if Epicurus’ (and Hume\(^ {288}\)) make the intellect a *means* to achieving pleasure, it does not make pleasure a good proper to man as a rational creature.

An argument which Thomas applies in regard to wealth, also reappears when addressing physical pleasure. ‘The highest perfection of man cannot lie in a union with things inferior to himself, but, rather in a union with some reality of a higher character, for the end is better than that which is for the sake of the end.’\(^ {289}\) When the good is possessed, a true union between the subject and object occurs. After all, it is this very union itself which is the cause of pleasure. But to experience pleasures of the flesh, man, who is a rational animal, unites with another object via the senses. This means that it is an exclusively (or predominantly) physical union, and one which does not necessarily achieve an intellectual union. Therefore the object of union is inferior by nature to the

\(^{285}\) SCG III, C27, 4.

\(^{286}\) SCG III, C27, 5.


\(^{288}\) ‘Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions...’ - David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.4.

\(^{289}\) SCG III, C27, 6.
man himself, and his ultimate good cannot lie in something which is below his overall capacity.\textsuperscript{290}

One of the criteria for the ultimate good is that of self-sufficiency. ‘Something which is not good unless it be moderated is not good of itself; rather it receives goodness from the sources of moderation.’\textsuperscript{291} Aquinas here is pointing out the crucial role of the cardinal virtue of temperance in regard to physical pleasures. Physical pleasures depend on this virtue for their goodness, since intemperate pleasures are evil. ‘The pleasure proper to a virtuous activity is good, and the pleasure proper to a vicious activity is bad.’\textsuperscript{292} For example, a man may enjoy the concomitant pleasure of engaging in the marital act with his wife. However, the exact same physical pleasure enjoyed at the hands of his mistress would be considered evil. But it is impossible for the ultimate good to be mingled with evil. Temperance at times even involves necessarily abstaining completely from some bodily pleasures which in itself is proof that it cannot be the ultimate good.\textsuperscript{293}

Even if one were to ignore the role of temperance in applying reason to the attainment of physical pleasures, ‘excessive enjoyment of them is considered vicious, and is also harmful to the body, and it prevents enjoyment of similar pleasures.’\textsuperscript{294} Since the body has a way of becoming de-sensitised to repeated intense bodily pleasures, people often find themselves having to pursue more extreme activities, leading to the point of even disabling themselves from achieving any pleasure in the particular faculties. In the same way in which a person has to increase the temperature of the water during a shower, people who indulge their sexual appetites need to look to more frequent or extreme avenues to experience the same pleasure. Often the very bodily faculties themselves can eventually begin to fail before the person’s appetite is satisfied.\textsuperscript{295} Unfortunately this is

\textsuperscript{290} Hence, the ultimate physical unions which can occur are between persons, where the bodily union truly manifests a union of intellect and will. A minimal version of the union could take the form of a handshake where (in the case of welcoming) there is acknowledgment of the reality of the other person and good will, or (in the case of departing) there is an affirmation of the truth which has been exchanged. The ultimate union of persons is the marital act where the two persons form one biological unit (one in the sense of a single \textit{telos} which cannot be achieved by either person on their own) and can represent a union of intellect and will which is lifelong, exclusive, total and open to life.

\textsuperscript{291} SCG III, C27, 7.

\textsuperscript{292} Commentary on N.E., 2050.

\textsuperscript{293} SCG III, C27, 9. \textit{Commentary on N.E.}, 2002: ‘Pleasure is not a good in itself (per se), because it would have to be chosen under every circumstance.’

\textsuperscript{294} SCG III, C27, 8.

\textsuperscript{295} One has only to consider the enormous rise in products and services attempting to cure various forms of sexual impotency or dissatisfaction. One has to wonder if there is an ironic correlation between a society which is saturated in sexual expressivism and its own reported amounts of sexual dissatisfaction.
the sad state of affairs whenever a person attempts to fill a universal desire with a particular good. It is the same way in which ‘the desire for artificial wealth is infinite, for it is the servant of disordered concupiscence.’ Once a physical pleasure is disassociated from its proper operation and end, the desire becomes unsatisfiable. These associated ails that come with excessive pursuit of physical pleasure are another proof that they cannot be the ultimate good.

Those who plunge themselves into pursuing physical pleasures also hinder their capacity for the enjoyment of finer intellectual delights. More specifically the enjoyment of contemplation is directly affected, since being plunged into sensible objects distracts one from intellectual objects. The person who is used to immediate, intense pleasures becomes easily impatient and frustrated by delights which are slow and more difficult to achieve. One’s own internal radar which measures the success or worthwhile of activity decides that reading, meditation or prayer is ‘not working.’ A person may decide spiritual activity is objectively pointless or that it is simply ‘not for me.’ The vices of sloth and despair can easily take hold on an individual used to immediate gratification. This reduced capacity to appreciate intellectual endeavour is a sign of a hedonistic culture. Since physical pleasure can interfere with mans pursuit of other true goods, it cannot be the ultimate good.

For St Thomas, this explains why ‘there are more people who seek sensual pleasures… because things that are external stand out as better known, since human knowledge starts from sensible objects.’ Physical pleasure is more obvious in that one does not need years of character refinement in order to experience satisfaction of a particular sensible appetite. One does not need to exercise the various virtues involved to realise its worth, in contrast to other goods such as contemplation or worship. We should therefore expect physical pleasure to be something the majority of people pursue. Even

296 ‘Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee’ – Augustine, Confessions, Book 1, 1.
297 ST I-II, Q2, R2.
298 SCG III, C27, 10.
299 In a famous incident of Thomas’ life, he drove out a prostitute who had been locked in his room as part of a plan to prevent him joining the Dominican Order. One can only wonder: if Aquinas had given into temptation, would we still have the quantity and quality of the corpus of work he left us? Thomas, echoing the thoughts of Pope St Gregory the Great, would seem to answer ‘no’, since they see lust as a particular cause of ‘blindness of mind (ST II-II, Q15, A3).’ This does however leave unanswered what possibilities still remained after repentance.
for those attempting to develop the virtue of temperance, often the intensity, proximity and knowableness of sensual objects makes them hard to ignore. Many assaults on intellectual goods occur ‘from the fact that most men live on the sense level, because sensory objects are better known to us, and they are more effective motives in the domain of particular things where action goes on.’ This too is proof that physical pleasure cannot be identical to the person’s ultimate end, since if it were, it would be impossible for pleasure to lead one away from it.

**Goods of the Soul**

It has been demonstrated that happiness cannot consist in achieving the bodily goods of health, beauty or pleasure. When each is analysed in light of the formal criteria, they are found wanting. It was shown that physical goods ‘are limited goods, that is, good only to the extent that they promote the good of the soul.’ Hence, in the search for the ultimate good one must move to the next order of goods – those proper to man as an intellectual creature. ‘These (goods of the soul) are the chief goods, for external things are for the sake of the body, and the body for the sake of the soul.’

These goods are in the second category of goods mentioned above – those which are a means and desirable in themselves. Once again, as the search gets closer to what the ultimate good actually encompass, these goods become more tempting to believe as being happiness itself. Many persons consciously trying to live the good life, may have avoided the pitfalls in pursuing ultimately money, power, and now even bodily health and pleasure. It remains now to evaluate the goods of the soul in relation to the formal criteria.

**Acts of the will**

There are three kinds of acts that the intellectual appetite (will) can perform; desiring, loving or enjoying. It is impossible for the first act, that of desiring, to be the ultimate good since the being wants what it does not possess. The object of one’s will is the end. It would be absurd to say that one’s desire is satisfied (the good is made

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301 SCG III, C6, 8.
302 Commentary on N.E., 2002.
303 Denis J.M. Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 402.
304 Commentary on N.E., 142: ST I-II, Q2, A5. SCG III, C33, 4.
305 SCG III, C26, 12.
306 ST I-III, Q1, A1, R2.
present) by the act of desiring - this is to confuse the object of the will and the act of the will as the same thing.\(^{307}\) In actual fact, in all acts of the will, it is an object, not an act, which is the first thing willed.\(^{308}\) In the case of humans, it is the ultimate good or happiness which is the first and fundamental thing desired.\(^{309}\) Obviously, the desire for happiness does not make one happy, otherwise it would be impossible to be unhappy.

The second act of the will which Thomas mentions is that of loving. If the act of desiring only occurs when the good is not present, the act of loving includes both the presence and absence of the good. Even when the object of one’s love is absent, one can still imperfectly love the object.\(^{310}\) For example, a lonely woman may remember her husband who is at war and will his good, or a hungry man may imagine a fresh burger, willing a union of digestion with it - but in neither case does the loving itself cause substantial union. Therefore simply loving the good cannot be the ultimate good – there must be an attainment of it since ‘it is a different thing to possess a good which is the end, and to love it.’\(^{311}\) This act of possessing the good must then occur via an act other than the will.\(^{312}\) Therefore the act of loving cannot be the ultimate good.

Another reason that the act of loving cannot be happiness is that in the order of nature the intellect moves the will. Since the intellect provides the will with its object, ‘we cannot will what we do not understand.’\(^{313}\) The will only moves the intellect accidently, that is, in as far as it is good for the intellect to understand, the will moves it to do so. However, ‘even in this act, the intellect precedes the will, for the will would never desire the act of understanding unless, first of all, the intellect were to apprehend the act of understanding as a good.’\(^{314}\) So then, ‘the intellect apprehends the good before the will does: yet motion towards the end begins in the will.’\(^{315}\) Love ranks above knowledge in moving, but knowledge precedes love in attaining.\(^{316}\) Since the cause is greater than the

\(^{307}\) ST I-II, Q3, A4, R2.
\(^{308}\) SCG III, C26, 10.
\(^{309}\) SCG III, C26, 9.
\(^{310}\) This point will become significant again in the section, ‘Imperfect Supernatural Happiness’ in Chapter 4.
\(^{311}\) SCG III, C26, 12.
\(^{312}\) David M. Gallagher, ‘Person and Ethics in Thomas Aquinas’, 69.
\(^{313}\) SCG III, C26, 16.
\(^{314}\) SCG III, C26, 21.
\(^{315}\) ST I-II, Q3, A4, R3.
\(^{316}\) ST I-II, Q3, A4, R4.
effect, ‘the intellect is higher than the will.’ Therefore since the ultimate good is mans highest act, an act of the will cannot be happiness.

The third act of the will Thomas mentions is that of delight. This act ‘is nothing else than the appetite’s rest in good.’ One might recognise here a similar definition to that given of pleasure. This is not accidental: pleasure can be used to denote the particular satisfaction of the sensitive appetite, while delight can be used to refer to the satisfaction of the intellectual appetite. In that case, all the arguments used above against pleasure being the ultimate good also apply to whether delight in the ultimate good. The most significant of these is that ‘delight comes to the will from the end being present.’ Therefore, since delight implies the good is already present, the act of delight cannot be the ultimate good. ‘Love… gives rise to desire when the loved object is not possessed, and to joy when the object is possessed. None of these acts, however, actually brings about the possession of the object.’ Whatever act actually involves possessing the ultimate good would be greater than the act of delight then. Therefore happiness cannot consist in an act of the will.

Whether the will is desiring, loving or enjoying, it relates in the same way to the object whether it be an actual or apparent good. ‘In relation to the will, true happiness does not differ from false happiness.’ The will depends on the intellect to distinguish true from false goods. The wrathful man rejoices in getting revenge, the coward in avoiding dangers, the avaricious in stealing millions and the adulterer in sleeping with another mans wife. The delight (or lack thereof) one derives from a certain activity depends on an individual’s character. While it is true that enjoyment requires the subject to perceive the object as good, the act of enjoying something does not make it good. Rather, as with physical pleasure, it is the goodness of the act which determines the goodness of the delight, not vice versa. Delight which accompanies a truly good object is desirable, but the delight which accompanies union with a merely apparently good

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317 SCG III, C26, 21. ST I-II, Q4, A2.
318 ST I-II, Q2, A6, R1.
319 ST I-II, Q3, A4.
321 ST I-II, Q4, A2.
322 SCG III, C26, 11.
323 Commentary on N.E., 269.
324 Commentary on N.E., 2000.
325 SCG III, C26, 13.
object is repulsive. However, as mentioned in the formal criteria, the ultimate good is incompatible with evil and involves perfect operation. Therefore, delight in itself cannot be the ultimate good.

It is obvious here that any denial of the intellect’s ability to obtain reality has a devastating effect on theories of happiness. Where it is denied that one can objectively identify good and evil, the will necessarily takes the leading role as the essence of happiness. With the inability of the intellect to critique desires as ordered or disordered, all desires seem equally legitimate. This is displayed the most clearly in popular contemporary societies approach to sexual morality. The assumption which acts as a pillar for the ‘pro-homosexual’ lobbyists is that all satisfaction of sexual desire, regardless of its object, is equally fulfilling and flourishing for the person. With this subjectivist approach, happiness necessarily becomes ‘satisfaction’ of the will, with nothing to gauge the true goodness of the object of desire.

With the same focus on the will as the key to happiness, law is no longer viewed as a promulgated act of reason for the common good, but rather as simply the imposition of another’s will (as discussed in the Introduction). Any attempt to reprove or teach someone about the nature of happiness can only be seen as a battle of wills. The ‘Pro-Choice’ movement is the most explicit declaration that an act of the will is the ultimate good. ‘Desire in secular academic arguments and in Western culture has become increasingly privatised and immunised… exempt from moral or social criticism… (due to) modernity’s separation of fact and value.’ Rather than engage in intellectual

326 ST I-II, Q3, A4, R5.
327 It is unfortunate that the phrase ‘pro-homosexual’ conceals or abolishes the distinction between a person’s spontaneous inclination, and the same person’s freely chosen behaviour. In this context, the phrase is meant to denote that movement which strives to promote the homosexual inclination and act as equally moral to the marital act and worthy of the same legal and educational promotion. Although the author disagrees with this position, he would still be identifiable as ‘pro-homosexual’, if the term means willing the good of a human being who has an inviolable dignity and deserves only love, regardless of their accidental and spontaneous inclinations.
328 A particularly tragic result of the denial of the ability to evaluate desires, is that people begin to identify themselves by their pre-moral spontaneous passions, rather than their freely chosen acts. By the very fact that these inclinations are pre-moral (for example, if one discovers and doesn’t choose attraction to the same sex), any attempt to evaluate the inclination is interpreted as a critique of the whole person. A particular concern for the future is that if in principal there is no such thing as a disordered sexual desire, what remains as arguments against consensual acts of paedophilia, polygamy, polyandry and bestiality?
329 Slogans such as ‘Keep your rosaries off my ovaries’ and ‘It’s my body’ don’t attempt to prove abortion is good, but only that one can do it if it is their will. In fact, it is not uncommon to find people who think the act is gravely immoral but are not willing to vote so in fear of ‘imposing’ their will on others.
discussion about the metaphysical and moral act itself, often protests, propaganda, surveys and popular opinion are used to convince those in charge of the common good that there is a communal will they must bow to. The current abuse of ‘rights talk’ apart from discussion about the nature of goodness and freedom, enforces in the minds of the hearer that happiness is nothing other than the ability to exercise your will.

Sexual morality is not the only thing affected when acts of the will (particularly enjoyment) are seen as the ultimate good. Taken to its most extreme form, people even begin to view religion and God as realities which ought to serve the unevaluated will of a person, rather than challenge them to new and greater realities. The result is ‘church shopping’ or ‘smorgasbord Christianity’, where persons search not for true religion but rather one which gives them delight. The subjective experience of delight is then seen as the true indicator of one’s objective union with God.\(^{331}\) By extension, Julia Annas’ example can be applied to that of religion: ‘Any parent would be disconcerted to find that her child had grown up to regard her life as happy because of the enjoyment she got from, say, helping others, but would unhesitatingly drop helping others the minute she ceased enjoying it.’\(^{332}\) If the ultimate good is delight, then even goods such as truth and generosity must be pursued only in as much as they bring one delight. Since this is not the case, the ultimate good cannot be an act of the will.

*Not in Acts of Moral Virtue*

The reasonable life is that which is proper to man. ‘Now the rational has two parts. One is rational by participation insofar as it is obedient to and is regulated by reason. The other is rational by nature as it can of itself reason and understand.’\(^{333}\) Moral virtue comes under the first category since it is their function to regulate man’s powers in order to execute their proper movements.\(^{334}\) More particularly, they allow man to infiltrate and order his interior passions and external things to reason. Yet as proved above, ‘it is not possible for such a measuring of passions, or of external things, to be the ultimate end of human life, since these passions and exterior things are capable of being

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\(^{331}\) This can even become the case within Christianity. A person may go to Church ‘because it makes me feel good.’ Unfortunately when the inevitable occurs, and they experience a period of emotional difficulty in their life, they are likely to interpret this as proof of abandonment by God or even the falsity of the religion itself.

\(^{332}\) Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 133.

\(^{333}\) *Commentary on N.E.*, 126.

\(^{334}\) *ST I-II*, Q59, A5.
ordered to something else.\textsuperscript{335} Also, ‘happiness is a good which resides in reason itself, not something produced by reason.\textsuperscript{336} This is necessarily the case, since it is not possible that the purpose of a higher power is simply to serve lower ones – in fact, this is the opposite of their true relationship.\textsuperscript{337} Hence, reason’s secondary activity, moral virtue, cannot be happiness.

As was proved in the criteria in Chapter One, it is not possible that the ultimate good be approached as useful to a further end. ‘But the act of the practical intellect is not sought for its own sake but for the sake of action: and these very actions are ordained to some end.’\textsuperscript{338} In the same place, Thomas uses the examples of fortitude as ordered toward victory and peace, and justice as ordered toward preservation of peace. Other examples might include a person pursuing temperance because it will allow him to be faithful to his spouse. In this case, fidelity and marriage are seen as goods that moral virtue is ordered towards. Since the ultimate good cannot be viewed as a means to anything else, moral virtue cannot itself be the ultimate good.

The example used in the above paragraph also exhibits how another criteria of the ultimate good is not met – that of self-sufficiency and perfect operation. If moral virtue was synonymous with happiness, a person who has achieved the moral virtues would be considered to have the ultimate end. However, clearly those who have the moral virtues continue to order their lives to something other than simply maintaining temperance or courage. For example, a chaste person may desire to marry, a brave man desire to defend the needy or the prudent woman may wish to contemplate. In each of these situations, the person perceives a good which he has not achieved. However, one cannot have achieved the ultimate good, yet gain from the addition of other good. Therefore if moral virtue was happiness itself, the man must not be able to gain any good by meeting a spouse, correcting injustice or contemplating. Also, as seen in the criteria, happiness is a perfect operation, whereas the moral virtues, as habits, are simply dispositions to act well. Therefore moral virtue cannot be the ultimate good.

One of the criteria for the ultimate good was that it be an operation proper to man. Aquinas point out however that some animals share somewhat in liberality, fortitude or

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{335} SCG III, C34, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{336} SCG III, 34, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{337} SCG III, C36, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{338} ST I-II, Q3, A5. SCG III, C34, 2.
\end{itemize}
prudence, but an animal does not carry out any intellectual action. For example, when a lion’s sensitive appetite may be geared towards defending his cubs from the attack of predators. Although it does not have an intellectual principle to order this reaction, nature has provided for the passions ordering already. Therefore in being consistent with happiness as the proper good of rational substances, it cannot lie in moral virtue. Although they participate somewhat in moral virtue, irrational animals do not participate in happiness. Therefore moral virtue cannot be man’s ultimate good.

**Conclusion**

External and bodily good, as well as the moral virtues, could all be considered as necessary or appropriate to help man attain happiness, yet they cannot be the ultimate end of man, rather, the opposite is so – all of these things find their end in him. Although playing roles of varying significance, the best that they can offer the person is the providing a disposition to achieve whatever happiness is actually materially instantiated in.

The current chapter just systematically worked through nearly all the various particular goods and acts that one encounters, coming to the conclusion that none of them can be the ultimate good. ‘If one of these finite basic goods is pursued as if it were itself the ultimate end it can finally yield only despair.’ One will realise, whether it be tomorrow or in years, that what in fact one was pursuing or attained is not perfect happiness.

There remains one act of man which has not been addressed, yet was touched on in the section on moral virtue. That is, those pure acts of reasons which are not ordered toward the regulation of the passions or external goods; the intellectual virtues which have truth itself as their good. This has been reserved for the next Chapter because it is this particular activity which Thomas sees as the only potential candidate for fulfilling the formal criteria of happiness. It is appropriate then that it is addressed in the next chapter, ‘The Essence of Happiness.’

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339 SCG III, C34, 6 & C35, 5.
340 SCG III, C26, 18.
341 ST I-II, Q5, A6, R1. SCG III, C35, 4.
The Essence of Happiness

In Chapter One, the formal criteria of happiness was explored so that it was defined as a perfect operation which fulfils all desire, is desired for its own sake alone, self-sufficient, without defect, suitable for all persons and able to act as an entire rule of life. In Chapter Two, Aquinas eliminated apparent instantiations of happiness. The following chapter will unpack Thomas’ understanding of what happiness materially consists in. Only if what Thomas proposes as the material of happiness meets this formal criteria, can one say that he has presented a consistent and complete understanding. If he has in fact done this, then one must acknowledge that he set the highest possible benchmark for what happiness consists in and achieved it.

The first crucial distinction regarding what happiness materially consists in merging the views of Aristotle and Boethius. Boethius defined happiness as ‘a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things.’ We see here an emphasis on happiness as possession of good objects. For Aristotle on the other hand, it is ‘action conformable to the best and most perfect’ virtue. This highlights the subjective aspect, the individual’s act, of attaining happiness.

For Thomas then, all ends are to be understood under two aspects – the act of attainment (subjective) and that which is obtained (objective). ‘The end is two-fold; the

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343 ST I-II, Q3, A2, R2.
344 Boethius, Consolations of Philosophy, III, 2.
345 Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, 1101a15.
end *for which* and the end *by which*; the thing itself in which is found the aspect of good, and the use or acquisition of that thing.\(^{346}\) Take the example of a person setting themselves the end of being in a romantic relationship. This end is a unity of the subjective act of loving another (willing their good), combined with the person whose good you will. To simply will the good of an unspecified other or, on the other hand, to have someone by your side at a dinner table, is not to have achieved the end of a romantic relationship. If the nature of ends are such, then the Ultimate End is no exception: ‘Happiness implies two things, to wit, the last end itself, i.e., the Sovereign Good; and the attainment or enjoyment of that same Good.’\(^{347}\)

‘Happiness itself, since it is a perfection of the soul, is an inherent good of the soul; but that which constitutes happiness, viz., which makes man happy, is something outside his soul.’\(^{348}\) It is very clear then that happiness for St Thomas has a two fold sense. It is not enough to simply fulfil one’s capacities, and it is not enough to simply acknowledge the Ultimate Good as out there. Happiness is a two-fold reality. It is easy to fall into this trap of neglecting the two-fold nature of happiness. A person may be intelligent, healthy, funny and wealthy, yet not happy. At the same time, the person who is in good relationship with God, spouse or work (or whatever he considers the ultimate good to be), may wonder why he too is not happy when he has some sense of the ultimate good in his life. Both characters are failing to see that not only must one actualise their capacities, but it must also be in regard to the Highest Good.

Therefore felicity lies in man’s ultimate operation in relationship to the ultimate good external to him.\(^{349}\) In order to clarify what exactly what this particular act and object is, the chapter will be broken up into four approaches, each arriving at the same conclusion: happiness is an act of contemplation, whose object is the Divine Essence.

**Approaching via Man’s Ultimate Operation**

It was demanded by the criteria that happiness lie in the perfect execution of man’s proper and ultimate act. In the second chapter, false candidates for that operation were eliminated. It must be an operation of man which is carried out for no other purpose

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\(^{346}\) ST I-II, Q1, A8 & Q3, A8, R2.

\(^{347}\) ST I-II, Q3, A1, R3 & A8, R2. ST I-II, Q5, A2.

\(^{348}\) ST I-II, Q2, A7, R3.

\(^{349}\) SCG III, C35, 3.
than itself. In this section, the search for this proper operation will be continued and its final conclusion discovered.

Since the order of ends follows the order of agents, so that the end of the first mover is the ultimate end for all, by analysing the principle of human actions, one arrives at the good of the whole person. In man the order of movers is: the intellect moves the will by providing its object, the will moves the sensory appetites, then with consent of the will the sensual appetite moves the body. So the end of the intellect, as first mover for all human acts, is the ultimate end of the whole human person. Since the end of the intellect is the truth, it must mean that truth is the ultimate end of the human person. This has a corresponding appetite, the will, which then approaches truth as desirable and good. Since the intellects goal is universal truth (and the corresponding appetite is universal goodness), happiness is the attainment of this perfect truth and goodness.

‘We are left with the conclusion that the ultimate felicity of man lies in the contemplation of truth.’ Happiness will be more properly found in the life of thought than in a life of activity, and in an act of reason itself rather than in an act of the appetitive power controlled by reason. That is, that action of the intellect which has no other end than the truth itself. Therefore in the deepest understanding, the true and good are the same for man: that act of attaining the ultimate truth is his ultimate good. ‘It is the “perfective” that adds to “being” the rationes of “good”, “desirable” and “end.”’ This parallels ‘the fundamental way reality is constituted: good presupposes truth, and truth presupposes being.’ This point however will be addressed further in the below section, ‘The Approach via Metaphysics.’

Yet it is not just any pursuit of truth which is being spoken of. The speculative intellect, ‘that part of the soul which considers necessary things that cannot be otherwise than they are’, has three virtues which perfect its operation. These are the intellectual

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351 SCG III, C25, 10.
352 ST I-II, Q1, A2, R3.
353 ST I-II, Q5, A1.
354 SCG III, C37, 1.
355 Commentary on N.E., 126.
358 STI-II, Q57, A1.
virtues of science, wisdom and understanding. The person who possesses the virtue of science, habitually reasons from principles to conclusions well. Science however is ordered toward wisdom, which is knowledge of causes, especially the highest causes. Finally, wisdom serves understanding, or intellectus. Understanding stands apart from the other two intellectual virtues in that it does not involve any ‘thinking’ as such. It is this particular act of the speculative intellect, that which the others are ordered toward, which is finally ordered to nothing else.

To understand (otherwise known as contemplate) is to already have arrived at the goal which science and wisdom are trying to achieve. It is the perfect form of knowing. The person who contemplates ‘sees’ an intellectual reality in the way in the eyes see physical objects. ‘In understanding, a whole multitude of truths are seen in the first unified and simple truth.’ This is in contrast once again with science or wisdom whose intellectual activities seek to arrive at a reality which is not yet present to the individual mind. Therefore the intellect, beginning with what is present to the mind, attempts to ‘work out’ the rest. In contrast, contemplation occurs when the person ‘already rests in (the truth)… The person who knows by intuition has already found what the thinker is seeking; what he knows is present “before his eyes.”’

Josef Pieper rather poetically contrasts contemplation with the other intellectual virtues by pointing out how it is ultimately grounded beyond the temporal or contingent. ‘The simple insightful gaze of intellectus is related to the “discursive” movements of the ratio as the eternal to the temporal… time flies by. In happiness as in contemplation, man takes a step out of time.’

One may immediately think however, ‘I desire more than to simply know something – isn’t this a bit shallow? Is Thomas not undermining the non-intellectual desires I have?’ This could be a complaint one is magnetically drawn back to, when one forgets the role that the intellect plays in human life. To understand how contemplation can fulfil all desire it is necessary once again to analyse the true depths of the reality of desire. In order to model this, one may analyse the sensitive appetite. The sensitive

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359 ST I-II, Q57, A2.  
360 Commentary on N.E., 1184.  
361 ‘Thinking’ in this case defined as conscious, somewhat laborious, logical movement through successive thoughts or ideas.  
362 SCG I, C57, 2.  
363 Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 74 (Italics are mine).  
appetite encompasses those desires or capacities which are intrinsically related to animality. What is it to have an animal desire? It must be an inclination experienced by a being in which the good to be attained or made present is essentially physical. In this case, food, drink, bodily pleasure, offspring, rest, etc. This is simple enough to understand, and is likely what the questioner has in mind. With this as a basis, one can now relate it to the intellectual appetite, which humanity has in addition to the sensitive. These are such desires and capacities in which spiritual or intellectual goods are yearned for. But what exactly does this mean? How can an intellectual good be present or attained in the same way a physical good can? The obvious answer is that it cannot be. However, since the terms ‘desire’, ‘good’ and ‘appetite’ cannot be understood univocally, one should not immediately assume an equivocal relationship.

It has already been established that truth is the goal of the intellect. The intellect attains its good by being informed by the truth. To use a sensitive analogy, like the digestive system encompasses the good of food and drink, breaks it down and transforms it in the substance of the body itself, so does the intellect receive ideas, analyse or break them down to their basic components, then make it one’s own. This ‘making it one’s own’ is a making present of the reality to the individual’s mind. It is no longer simply a good, in this case, truth, which is ‘out there’ either for no one or for someone else; it is a good attained by that very individual. This analogy to physical consumption is quite effective, since ‘in this fashion the pleasure of contemplation of wisdom and the assumption of the intelligible truth into our intellect is customarily indicated in sacred Scripture as the use of food.’

The clearest way in which the intellectual appetite manifests itself is through the human desire to experience persons, events and places. What is the basis of this strong desire to experience that humans have? It is this very desire to grasp reality - to make it their own. ‘The delight we take in our senses is an implicit desire to know the ultimate reason for things… All other knowledge contains the seeds of contemplation.’ From the youngest members of the human race desiring to see, touch and even taste the objects around them, we see this desire to know the reality which surrounds them. On encountering being, the young mind desires to know what it is. The more developed

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365 SCG IV, C83, 20. For example, ‘(Wisdom) has slaughtered her beasts, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table... “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave simpleness, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”’ – Prov. 9:2,5-6, also Ecc. 15:3, Is. 25:6-8 & 65:13-17, Luke 22:29-30

366 Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 10.
mind, on expanding its view of the enormity of being, then desires to make its own other experiences – the experience of being in love and loved, seeing other countries, excelling in a field of work, having children – the list is endless. However, notice that the last of the realities on this short list, also coincides with a desire of the sensitive appetite. Hence although rational animals too desire to procreate, they pursue this in a way appropriate to the reality of the intellectual creature. This means we have arrived at something which is distinctly human, even within the realm of the sensitive appetite – the questioner’s original concern. That even the pursuit of sensitive goods as a rational creature is never isolated from truth or reason – what underpins them all is the belief that reality is good, and the more one can experience or know it, the happier one is.

Another way of understanding is to notice that non-rational animals are only able to encounter food and drink as satisfying the sensitive appetite, not that of the intellectual appetite. There is something distinctly human about realising the goodness of a thing beyond its mere ability to satisfy physical hunger.\(^{367}\) Even when we play, ‘we do not play as other animals do, but we play *contemplating* rationally our relevant experience and enjoying it exactly at this rational-contemplative level.’\(^ {368}\)

Daniel McInerny explains this well when he states:

Truth, in other words, as a higher good, is not hermetically sealed and placed in some separate realm apart from the practice of family life. Rather, as a higher good, truth informs the activities of family life, becomes bound up with them, so that the education of children is ordered to truth, conversation between the spouses is directed to truth, and the spouses’ temperance manifests the truth about human sexuality.\(^ {369}\)

To take another example, imagine a man who sees his wife in the most intimate way on his wedding night. He beholds the naked truth about the human person, marriage, life-long commitment and, overwhelmed by the beauty of it all, he whispers to his beloved, ‘You are beautiful.’ It is easy in this statement to focus on the term ‘you’, or likewise on the universal, ‘beautiful.’ This focus is understandable, as each term reflects a truth. However, the key word, and what gets taken for granted in this sentence, is in fact the ‘are.’ This is the term which ultimately denotes the husband’s apprehension (or

\(^{367}\) This is in fact what makes the vice of gluttony or avarice possible.
\(^{369}\) McInerny, *The Difficult Good*, 114.
subjective act) of the reality (goodness of the object) before him. In truth, this is beautiful, and it is the realisation of this that is his happiness. It is the realisation that inspires love, poetry, music and even Scripture. Being informed of this truth then influences the husbands practical intellect about how he will and ought to treat her. ‘The fulfilment of existence takes place in the manner in which we become aware of reality; the whole energy of our being is ultimately directed toward attainment of insight.’

To reinforce the point that Thomas has not lost touch with the ‘everyday’ person, throughout his work he refers to these sensible goods sometimes when least expected. In one section, he explains that, ‘Anyone who refrained from wine to such an extent that he severely tried nature would in some measure incur guilt.’ Elsewhere he suggests the remedial effect of ‘a glass of wine, a bath and a nap’ for those who are feeling a bit flat. When a person enjoys a nice glass of wine, what is this other than enjoying the truth that, ‘This is good wine.’ The person delights in realising this truth. Their statement is in fact a metaphysical one – it cannot be reduced to biology or physics. Although the taste buds can be analysed, the material cause of fine wine studied, this is an altogether different thing to the realisation this is good wine. To have a hot relaxing bath and a nap is not merely to wash or sleep, but also so that afterwards the intellect is more inclined to see things as they are. Hence the ethical difference in that advice in comparison to recommending a bottle of scotch and eight hours of mind-blowing sound. In that case the goal is distraction and disturbance of the intellects capacity to grasp reality, not recreation ordered toward the faculties refreshment.

An example of misery may assist in demonstrating Thomas’ point as well. In all the evils and tragedies which one encounters in his own life and the lives of others, what are these other than the remembrance, realisation or foreseeing of a personal encounter with being which will not occur. When a child is lost at a young age, the mourning parent foresees the future of the child and his relationship with him which will not occur. Phrases such as, ‘I will never see him again’, ‘He never got to experience more of life’ and, ‘I had imagined watching him play Saturday morning sport,’ all reveal that the person is mourning due to missed personal encounters with being, which he may not even be able to regain. This is not to say that the mourning is egotistical, since they also mourn

370 Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 58.
371 ST II-II, Q150, A1, R1.
372 ST I-II, Q38, A5.
that the child themselves will never be able to realise the truth, goodness and beauty of reality.\textsuperscript{373} Whether it’s the sadness of dropping an ice cream, paying a parking fine, being diagnosed with cancer or even the depths of Hell, the very source of unhappiness is the apprehension that to some degree, one will not know being. In other words, the awareness that some good has escaped myself or others, whether temporarily or permanently, is to encounter evil.\textsuperscript{374}

For Aquinas then, ‘Perfect happiness consists in the activity of contemplative virtue.’\textsuperscript{375} This is the proper act of man which is desired in itself for no other reason. This act does not end when reality is grasped, but is also a ‘reflection on the truth already discovered and known.’\textsuperscript{376} Therefore although it involves a ‘purely receptive approach to reality… (it) still involves interest, participation, attention, purposiveness.’\textsuperscript{377} Contemplation, the highest act of man, is not to be seen as limited to any particular areas of life, but rather what makes enjoyment of any true good possible for the rational animal.

**Approaching via the Highest Object of Speculation**

Yet, in application of the act-object distinction mentioned above, it is not contemplation of any truth which man’s happiness consists in. Since the Ultimate Good, happiness, lies (at least partly) outside of the person, ‘the theoretical intellect can neither guarantee nor cause true human perfection (or completion).’\textsuperscript{378} Thomas therefore begins to eliminate that knowledge which happiness cannot consist in.

First are those forms of science in which action is their goal. ‘All practical sciences, arts, and powers are objects of love only because they are means to something else, for their purpose is not knowledge but operation.’\textsuperscript{379} Examples of practical sciences are fields of study such as medicine (which is knowledge ordered toward causing health), economics (knowledge ordered towards financial management), art (knowledge ordered

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\textsuperscript{373} Only apparently. Revelation reveals that in fact their encounter with ultimate reality has not been hindered: ‘But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.’ – 1 Thess. 4:13.

\textsuperscript{374} This fits perfectly with the classical metaphysical understanding of evil as a negation of being. Views which would associate the very nature of evil with pain, rather than recognising pain as a concomitant or consequence of evil, disable any deeper understanding of the issue at hand.

\textsuperscript{375} Commentary on N.E., 2086.

\textsuperscript{376} Commentary on N.E., 2092.

\textsuperscript{377} Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 73.

\textsuperscript{378} Georg Wieland, ‘Happiness’, 63.

\textsuperscript{379} SCG III, C25, 9. ST II-II, Q8, A8, R3.
toward making) and law (knowledge ordered toward a just society). In each of these cases, and there are many more, the purpose of study is to practice in the particular field. Therefore the knowledge gained from them is not for the sake of itself.\(^{380}\) All practical activity, from practice of the ethical virtues to gaining the means of livelihood, serves something other than itself.\(^{381}\) Since ‘the practical arts are ordered to the speculative ones’, it is not possible that they are the ultimate end.\(^{382}\)

Keeping with his logical progression, Thomas then asks whether it is the pursuit of the speculative sciences that happiness lies. Examples of these may include speculative sciences such as biology, physics, astronomy, geology, metaphysics and theology, where knowledge is desired for its own sake.\(^{383}\) Yet not just any of these are sufficient for happiness, since ‘the consideration of a speculative science does not extend beyond the scope of the principles of that science.’\(^{384}\) Therefore any science which consists merely in knowledge of the natural world cannot be man’s happiness since he is greater than all sensible objects.\(^{385}\) Secondly, fields of knowledge which do not go beyond sensible realities do not fulfil mans desires. Etienne Gilson says that,

To minds tormented by the divine thirst, it is useless to offer the most certain knowledge of the laws of numbers and the arrangement of the universe. Straining… they endeavour to lift a corner of the veil, only too happy to perceive… glimmerings of the eternal light. The slightest knowledge touching the highest realities is far more desirable than the most absolute certitude touching minor objects.\(^{386}\)

Knowledge of the mating habits of ants pales, in terms of desirability, pales in comparison to knowing the smallest truths about man or the universe. Therefore not just any of the speculative sciences can be the ultimate good, since the Ultimate Good must be that which satisfies all desire.

One then can ask, ‘What about knowledge in which the object known is greater than man?’ This in fact is the question Thomas wishes to lead the reader to. Man’s natural


\(^{381}\) Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, 93.

\(^{382}\) SCG III, C25, 9.

\(^{383}\) Commentary on N.E., 1185. SCG III, C25, 9.

\(^{384}\) ST I-II, Q3, A6.

\(^{385}\) ST I-II, Q3, A6.

\(^{386}\) Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, 24.
desire to know is manifested through the experience of wonder. The earliest recorded history of philosophising, both in the eastern and western tradition, revolves around the search for the unseen causes of those things seen.\textsuperscript{387} The intellect is spurred along through recognising effects, which bring one to wonder, which leads to inquiry. This movement from wonder to enquiry even occurs with created effects as a whole.\textsuperscript{388} Man desires to see past the veil of the seeming and behold the foundations of reality. ‘Knowledge is higher to the degree that it is more unified and extends to more things.’\textsuperscript{389} Hence man knows more perfectly when he knows the highest causes, since to grasp these would, in a way, to be grasping everything.\textsuperscript{390} This then, must be the highest object of the speculative intellect.\textsuperscript{391}

Monotheists have always understood this first cause as God. Keeping in mind that it was proven all of man’s capacities are ordered toward contemplation (an act of the speculative intellect), Thomas can then state that ‘the ultimate end of the whole man, and of all his operations and desires, is to know the first truth, which is God.’\textsuperscript{392} By doing so, man will be exercising his highest capacity in regard to its highest object. ‘Man’s highest operation is that of his highest power in respect of its highest object: and his highest power is the intellect, whose highest object is the Divine Good.’\textsuperscript{393}

This may seem like a religious truism, shallow even to the believer who considers his own life. Aren’t there people who have dedicated their lives to God who still are not happy? In order to properly understand Thomas’ conclusion, he highlights two points. The first is that one ‘is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek: secondly, that the nature of any power is determined by the nature of it’s object.’\textsuperscript{394} In the first point, Thomas is making it very clear that he has not abandoned the formal criteria discussed in Chapter 1, but rather will draw them out to their logical conclusion.\textsuperscript{395} In regard to the second point, ‘the object of the intellect is what a thing is,
i.e., the essence of a thing.\textsuperscript{396} It is not mere knowledge of a thing’s effect, or knowledge of its accidents which is required. Neither is it the kind of knowledge which results from demonstration. It is to apprehend or ‘see’ the essence of a reality. Therefore, for perfect happiness, the intellect cannot rest until it ‘sees’ the very Essence of the First Cause, God.\textsuperscript{397}

To understand the significance of this statement, one is required to know a key aspect of Aristotelian-Thomistic epistemology. Within this framework, knowledge is not merely impersonal, disinterested, ‘factual’ information about an object. To know an object is to have its very form reside in the intellect – a true, substantial union occurs between the immaterial intellect (which can become all things) and the thing itself.\textsuperscript{398} In other words, ‘what is known by the knower is in some way in the knower.’\textsuperscript{399} Therefore to know the Essence of God is not to have the equivalent of numerous theology doctorates, but rather to have a substantial union with God Himself. To know the Divine Essence is not to have information about, but rather to be literally in-formed by the Divine Nature, to have a substantial union with this immaterial Being. It is a most intimate union, one so personal and communicative that even the marital act is but a mere symbol.\textsuperscript{400}

Thomas’ use of the word ‘seeing’ to describe that relationship to God is not so foreign to our everyday life. Even within our own language, there is

‘basically only one word to describe what actually happens when we “realise” the presence of another person. That word is “seeing.”... All other words are either spatial metaphors (nearness, closeness) or derive from the sense of touch (tangibility, being at hand, being in contact). That is to say, they refer to externalities.’\textsuperscript{401}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[396] ST I-II, Q3, A2, R4 & II-II, Q8, A1.
\item[397] ST I-II, Q3, A8.
\item[398] ST I, Q84, A3.
\item[399] Ralph McInerny, \textit{St Thomas Aquinas}, 44.
\item[400] In this particular piece of writing by St John of the Cross, he sums up both the influence of St. Thomas on his thought, and the relational aspect of the Beatific Vision so felt by the saints: ‘She is no longer satisfied with the knowledge and communication of the “back” of God... (that is) knowledge of Him in His effects and works; she can only be satisfied with God’s face, which is an essential communication of the divinity to the soul. This communication is not brought about through any means, but through a certain contact of the soul with the divinity. This contact is something foreign to everything sensory and accidental, since it is a touch of naked substances – of the soul and divinity.’ - St John of the Cross, 'The Spiritual Canticle' in \textit{The Collected Works of St John of the Cross}, 550 & 498.
\item[401] Pieper, \textit{Happiness and Contemplation}, 69.
\end{footnotes}
From this description, we begin to see that ‘contemplation is not merely an intellectual act: rather, as the union with the loved person, it is the fulfilment of personal love.’\textsuperscript{402} Although philosophy sees a union between the knower and the thing known, it is Revelation which confirms that the Unconditional Reality the intellect is moving towards is truly personal and Eternal Communion. ‘In (a Biblical) context, the verb “to know” has a more profound and intimate meaning than consciousness of existence. It expresses a personal relationship more intimate than simply intellectual knowledge.’\textsuperscript{403} Key examples include Adam knowing Eve (Gen 4:1 & 27), God knowing Israel (Amos 3:2) and Jesus knowing his disciples (John 15:15).

The point could be demonstrated by contrasting it with its opposite – that is, failing relationships. There is an intrinsic link between ‘seeing’, knowledge and love known by all humans.\textsuperscript{404} A common complaint from a lover could be, ‘You don’t know me’, or ‘I don’t see you.’ Both phrases are synonymous in meaning the person feels the very essence of their union has been threatened. Loneliness is something which goes beyond a simple physical absence of another, and enters into the intellectual realm where one feels unknown by another. The ‘loving knowledge’ which occurs then between the person and the ‘I Am’, is not merely one of disinterested facts, but rather the realisation (the making present to the individual) that he is intimately known, affirmed and loved by the very source of his being. It is the complete fulfilment of all desire, attained by a knowledge of the goodness of Being which is utterly irreplaceable by knowledge of any (or all) contingent beings. One who contemplates the Divine Essence ‘steps away from the here and now to utterly tranquil contemplation of the ground of existence; to happiness, as in absorption in beloved eyes.’\textsuperscript{405} This ‘act of contemplation is not at all impersonal: rather it is the fulfilment of a personal relationship, the affective relationship between two persons.’\textsuperscript{406}

\textsuperscript{402} David M. Gallagher, ‘Person and Ethics in Thomas Aquinas’, 70.
\textsuperscript{403} Pontifical Biblical Commission, \textit{The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible}, 34.
\textsuperscript{404} In fact, the common contemporary phrase to describe the early dating period when a couple first begin to go out on their own, is that of ‘seeing each other.’
\textsuperscript{405} Pieper, \textit{In Tune with the World}, 39.
\textsuperscript{406} David M. Gallagher, ‘Person and Ethics in Thomas Aquinas’, 69.
Approaching via Metaphysics

There remains one other approach used by St Thomas. This one takes the broadest possible scope in dimension and approaches human happiness from a purely metaphysical perspective. ‘The credibility and force of Aquinas’ theory of goodness depends on the cogency of his overall account of what it is for a creature to exist.’\(^{407}\) This approach highlights the essential relationship between Unconditioned, Infinite and Uncreated Reality and conditional, finite and created reality. This area deserves a much more proper treatment which goes beyond the scope of this work, but it is nevertheless necessary to mention it in order to understand the depth and consistency of Thomas’ genius.

It can be a neglected point that in both of Thomas’ Summas, mans happiness is discussed in the sections on Providence. For Aquinas, man’s search for happiness is explicitly and intimately tied into God’s governance of creation, in bringing it to its ultimate end as a whole. This ultimate end can be none other than Himself: ‘Order among ends is a consequence of order among agents… Whatever the Supreme Agent does, He does for the sake of His end… There is no other end for His Will than His goodness, which is Himself. Therefore, all things… are ordered to God as to their end.’\(^{408}\) He is the Ultimate End of all created being since He is it’s Ultimate Cause.\(^{409}\)

‘That which is supreme in any genus is the cause of all the members that belong in that genus. The highest good which is God is the cause of the goodness in all things.’\(^{410}\) As the Final Cause par excellence, all things receive their goodness in due measure by participating in God’s goodness; not only because of a common final cause (Himself), but also sharing in His efficient causality (through their acting in the universe) and His \textit{ratio} (through their form).\(^{411}\) ‘It is from this First Good which flow all other goods.’\(^{412}\) It is impossible for there to be a true good which does not participate in the Ultimate Good Himself. To nuance the point with a slight change in terminology, all true final causes are ordered toward the Ultimate Final Cause. ‘That which is the highest good is the end of all things.’\(^{413}\)

\(^{407}\) Porter, \textit{The Recovery of Virtue}, 38.
\(^{408}\) SCG III, C17, 7.
\(^{409}\) SCG III, C1, 8.
\(^{410}\) SCG III, C17, 3.
\(^{412}\) ST I-II, Q1, A4, R1.
\(^{413}\) SCG III, C17, 2.
We have now reached a point where Thomas’ act/object distinction regarding happiness specifically emerges. Regarding the object aspect of happiness, St Thomas tells us: ‘If one thing has another thing as its external end, then the operation whereby the first thing primarily attains the second will be called the ultimate end of the first thing.’\(^{414}\) Regarding the act aspect of happiness then, the proper operation of a thing is its secondary end. Therefore the act/object distinction also reveals a secondary/primary end distinction.

What particularly distinguishes the metaphysical approach, from the other act/object approaches mentioned, is that according to this approach, there is an automatic moving toward the object of happiness (God) simultaneously as the agent achieves its own telos. In other words, all created realities attain God (their primary end), by achieving a likeness to the Divine Substance which is appropriate to its own nature (their secondary end).\(^{415}\) On reflection, this makes perfect sense: anything can only have act/being, inasmuch as it imitates, reflects or participates in Pure Act/Being itself.\(^{416}\) ‘This ordering towards God as end can be analysed in terms of the resemblance to God that depends, at bottom, on the doctrine of participation of being.’\(^{417}\) It is impossible for it to be any other way. In as much as things display attributes which are opposite to that of Being, it is rather non-being they are participating in, otherwise known as nothingness.\(^{418}\) Therefore in as much as a thing fails to participate in the divine likeness it is nothing.

Created things imitate God by three main avenues: by ‘naturally desiring to be’\(^{419}\), as mover or causer of another\(^{420}\) (e.g., causing beings in their own likeness) and as achieving its end.\(^{421}\) This means that all acts, whether it be a rock sitting on the floor, a single-cell life replicating or a human being writing (or reading) a thesis, all are imitating (analogously) the divine act to some degree. This is necessarily the case because, as mentioned above, in as much their activity fails to participate/imitate the divine act, it has no act and therefore no being. Since there is then such an intimate link between a things

\(^{414}\) SCG III, C26, 16.
\(^{415}\) SCG III, C19 & C25, 1.
\(^{416}\) ST II-II, Q2, A3.
\(^{417}\) Di Blasi, *God and the Natural Law*, 162.
\(^{418}\) A further distinction can be made between negation and privation, however, it is not necessary for the current discussion.
\(^{419}\) SCG III, C19, 3.
\(^{420}\) SCG III, C19, 4; C21, C22, 5 & C24, 8.
\(^{421}\) SCG III, C19, 5, C20 & C22, 7.
own telos and its divine likeness, insofar as all things intend their own good, they also intend the divine likeness as their ultimate end.\textsuperscript{422}

However, as is obvious by the examples of a rock, single-cell organism and thesis writing, not all things participate to an equal extent in Being.\textsuperscript{423} For example, something which is living (a single-cell organism) participates more fully than something which simply exists (a rock). Something which has intellectual faculties (a human being) participates more fully than something with sensitive faculties only (an ant). The reason one participates more than the other is that one has all the likenesses to divine being as the other, plus an extra capacity to grasp reality.\textsuperscript{424} The difference of level on the ladder then is defined by a thing’s essence, which is particularly manifested through their esse. Beings are more closely united with God to the extent they attain to His very substance in some manner.\textsuperscript{425}

One can combine these various aspects of Final Cause and Being so that it could be said, ‘since the end corresponds to the beginning… the last end is the beginning of being, in Whom every perfection of being is: Whose likeness, according to their proportion’ all things desire.’\textsuperscript{426} All the perfections of being are found in Being itself, which is finite reality’s efficient and final cause.\textsuperscript{427} So then the question about man’s happiness, or achievement of his ultimate end, then becomes a question of how can he most perfectly imitate Perfect Being according to his nature.\textsuperscript{428} At the risk of it sounding like a cliché: how can man be all that he can be?

Since intellectual activity is that which is proper to man who is an intellectual animal, his participation in Being and his imitation of the Divine Act occurs most fully in his acts of understanding. These are his highest operation since in contemplating truth, man has something in common with greater substances than him, whereas in his other activities he has something in common with lower animals.\textsuperscript{429} Intelligent creatures must attain their end in a manner peculiar to them, that is, by the operation proper to them as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{422} \textit{SCG} III, C24, 9. \textit{ST} I, Q44, A3.
\item \textsuperscript{423} \textit{ST} I, Q2, A3.
\item \textsuperscript{424} Beings higher on the ladder do not necessarily have all the traits of the lower beings \textit{formally}, but can have them \textit{eminentely}.
\item \textsuperscript{425} \textit{SCG} III, C25, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{426} \textit{ST} I-II, Q2, A5, R3.
\item \textsuperscript{427} \textit{ST} I, Q44, A4.
\item \textsuperscript{428} \textit{SCG} III, C18, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{429} \textit{SCG} III, C37, 4.
\end{itemize}
intelligent creatures. They must know it. It is immediately evident, then, that the last end of an intelligent creature is to know God. \[430\] This is further highlighted by the nature of the Divine Intellect, which has Itself as It’s object of contemplation. Therefore when man contemplates God, he in fact is carrying out the same activity which God Himself does. That being said, it is impossible for the activity of any created being to resemble God further than by contemplating God Himself, since He understands all things in the act of understanding Himself. \[431\] Both God and man will share the object of their speculative intellect – the Divine Essence Itself. \[432\]

Sertillanges sums up all three approaches to mans happiness when he says, ‘The surest metaphysic tells us that at the summit of things, the true and the good are not only connected, but are identical… (All) ends are related. They all depend on one ultimate end. It is this ultimate end which links up with the true and is one with it.’ \[433\]

**Fulfilling the Criteria of Happiness**

It remains then, to demonstrate how the Beatific Vision can fulfil the formal criteria for perfect happiness outlined in Chapter one. Since many of these points have been addressed already, the following will simply highlight or remind the reader of key points pertaining to each criteria.

*The Beatific Vision Is Fulfilment Of All Desire*

The first criteria of happiness outlined the need for the fulfilment of all desire. The knowledge which the perfectly happy have, is a ‘knowledge of God which, when acquired, leaves no knowledge of a knowable object to be desired.’ \[434\] How is this possible? How can one know all things, by knowing One Thing?

One can immediately begin to see that Thomas is talking of a knowledge, vision or awareness which is unlike our day to day experience. \[435\] It is a perfect, uninterrupted actualising of the intellect which leaves no room for potential and is therefore the perfect

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\[430\] Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, 351.
\[431\] SCG I, C49 & III, C25, 8.
\[434\] SCG III, C39, 6.
\[435\] ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.’ – 1 Cor. 2:9 (paraphrasing Isaiah 64:4), and, ‘The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding...’ – Phil 4:7
fulfilment of the intellectual appetite. To try and comprehend the magnificence of this act, one must once again visit the nature of our current limitations, and contrast this with seeing the Divine Essence.\textsuperscript{436} Firstly, the intellect is in potency to all intelligible objects – it can know anything which is knowable. Secondly, two intelligible objects can exist simultaneously in the possible intellect – in other words, since we have accumulated knowledge about a number of things in our lives, we can have knowledge of more than one thing. Thirdly, and this is the key point, we cannot consider two separate intelligible objects at the same time - it is not possible for me to consciously concentrate on more than one thing at a time. ‘Our intellect cannot be actually informed by many diverse ideas at the same time, so as to understand them; as one body cannot bear different shapes simultaneously.’\textsuperscript{437} I must constantly select aspects to focus on from amongst my current knowledge, visual view or ideas. This means that in practice, I am always potentially thinking about something else. In fact, it is necessary for me to change the object of my thoughts quite frequently, since I do not perfectly grasp that which may be the unity of all these intelligible species. Therefore it seems that in my day to day workings, it is impossible for me to achieve perfect operation (complete actualising) of the intellect.

This poses an unacceptable problem for Aquinas. The fifth criteria for happiness demanded that it be a perfect operation, free from all defect, leaving nothing to desire. To achieve happiness, the ultimate end, the entire potential of the intellect must be reduced to act at one time.\textsuperscript{438} This means that a) the intellect completely fulfils its capacity to know, and b) considers all of these intelligible species in one single conscious act. How is this possible? Through the single act of understanding that which unifies and causes all of created, conditional, finite reality. To understand this Reality, is to understand all reality. Since God is the First Cause and Principal of created being, He is that which both unifies and makes intelligible created being. ‘The ultimate completion of human perfection is in understanding the most perfect intelligible, which is the divine essence.’\textsuperscript{439}

By beholding the perfect unity of the Uncreated, all the diversity of created reality is known simultaneously.\textsuperscript{440} ‘With St Gregory, Thomas asks what would not be seen by
those who see God?" In this perfect state of happiness, man’s mind will be united to God by one, continual, everlasting act of contemplation. Through the vision of the First Truth, all that the intellect naturally desires to know becomes known to it. Perfect happiness then, which is to realise the ultimate truth, goodness and beauty of ultimate reality, is then the fulfilment of all desires which a person can have.

**The Beatific Vision is Self-Sufficient**

The Beatific Vision is able to meet the second criteria of happiness, that of self-sufficiency. This criteria demanded the ultimate good not be deficient in any particular good, and secondly, that if it is the only thing had, it would still make life free from want. The act of attaining the Divine Essence satisfies both of these aspects. ‘As an additional part is not greater than the whole since the part itself is included in the whole, so too any good added whatsoever to God does not increase His Goodness because the addition is good only by participating in the divine goodness.’

Denis Bradley explains how Thomas’ metaphysics, surmounts, in advance as it were, the contemporary exegetical dilemma about Aristotelian man’s ultimate end, whether it should be regarded as exclusive or inclusive of all other goods. The latter question cannot be sustained against the back of Aquinas’ doctrine of participation. God, in the Thomistic metaphysical context, is an inclusive good.

By this single act and ‘object’, which is the source and form of all that is good, all that a person could ever desire or imagine is fulfilled. ‘None of the Blessed lacks any desirable good’ since in this vision of the divine substance, he experiences the full sufficiency and accumulation of all goods. All goods not simply that they personally could want or imagine, but that are possible, since they are united to the Source of all goodness.

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441 McInerny, St Thomas Aquinas, 44.
442 ST I-II, Q3, A2, R4.
443 SCG III, C63, 2.
444 Commentary on N.E., 115.
445 Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 127.
446 ST I-II, Q5, A2, R3. SCG III, C63, 6.
447 ST I-II, Q5, A4 & I-II, Q4, A7, R2.
The perfection of this happiness can be further appreciated by revisiting those least of the non-ultimate goods – external goods. It can be demonstrated that those who have perfect happiness have in fact obtained all of these.⁴⁴⁸ The good of honour is completely fulfilled through union with God who is the highest, most honourable object. Since honour is received from outside the person, receiving it from other creatures made it vulnerable to error or corruption. However honour from God and the Saints, who cannot be mistaken or corrupted, is the greatest and most worthy to receive.⁴⁴⁹ The desire for fame and glory is fulfilled, since the blessed are both known and know all others perfectly.⁴⁵⁰ This is because their knowledge of the other goes beyond the limitations of the senses which man otherwise encounters. This is only possible because each sees the other through the eyes of God so that rather than their knowledge being directly caused by the object or person in question, they receive it through God whose knowledge is in fact ‘the cause of the things known.’⁴⁵¹ Therefore each person is known more intimately by all than even the most perfect marital relationships.

The desire for wealth is utterly fulfilled as there ‘is a plenitude of all goods, inasmuch as the blessed come to enjoy Him Who contains the perfection of all things.’⁴⁵² Material wealth, which is nothing but a means to purchasing other goods like sustenance and security, is made utterly void as all of these things are inexhaustibly already present. External and bodily goods, which are normally the direct objects of one’s spending are nowise necessary for perfect happiness, which consists in seeing God ‘either in the soul separated from the body, or in the soul united to the body then no longer animal but spiritual.’⁴⁵³ To have a ‘spiritual body’ does not mean that it is non-physical, but rather that it is perfectly formed and acted upon by of the soul.⁴⁵⁴

One has to keep in mind though, it is not having these non-ultimate goods which makes happiness perfect. All of these things are appealing (and ought to be), but without the Beatific Vision, it is easy to imagine that after millennia has gone by, one would begin to wonder what else is there, or what is the point of it all? It is because one knows the answer to that question, that even non-ultimate goods such as the ones mentioned, which

⁴⁴⁸ ST SUPP. Q95, A5, R7.
⁴⁴⁹ SCG III, C63, 4.
⁴⁵⁰ SCG III, C63, 5.
⁴⁵¹ ST I-II, Q2, A3.
⁴⁵² SCG III, C63, 6.
⁴⁵³ ST I-II, Q4, A7.
⁴⁵⁴ See ‘Happiness and the Body’ in Chapter 5 below.
have an inherently limited desirability, can remain eternally intelligibly desirable. Without this, the wonder which is the beginning of philosophy would once again rear its head.\footnote{One can imagine this to be the case if one’s present earthly life was eternal. Even those who seem to have everything, with no threat of loss, would start to see their eternity as a curse. The imaginary examples of the vampire, or the zombie, showcase that the inability to die, combined with the inability to progress in being, is a torment rather than a blessing.}

**The Beatific Vision Is An Entire Rule Of Life**

Contemplation of the Divine Essence meets the third criteria since it can be provide an entire rule of life. To demonstrate the truth of this is obviously beyond the scope of this work whose focus is the nature of happiness, but nevertheless it demands some attention.\footnote{To demonstrat\text{e} the truth of this is obviously beyond the scope of this work whose focus is the nature of happiness, but nevertheless it demands some attention.}

‘All other human operations seem to be ordered to this one as to an end.’\footnote{Thomas himself dedicates the entire second part of the *Summa Theologica* to doing so. It ends up constituting the majority of His greatest work.} To expand and deepen one’s participation of being, through the apprehension of its truth, goodness and beauty, is the principal and end of all truly human activities. It is this ultimate and final activity which is the very source of all moral rights, and the goal of all virtues which a human sets out to acquire. ‘Everything depends upon the Supreme Value in accordance with which all these rights will be ordered and will mutually limit each other.’\footnote{SCG III, C37, 7.}

By once again dividing up happiness into its act and object components, one is provided with two pillars of morality which should always be pursued and never attacked or neglected, regardless of circumstances. The first of these is that one should always adhere to reason, and never act unreasonably. One can never act unreasonably, since it is the rule of all human acts, and it is a summit of the intellectual act, contemplation, which all of man is ordered towards. The second is that one should always pursue God, and never attack or neglect what one understands attainment of Him to consist in. This is the rule of charity. One should always love oneself, one’s neighbour and God in all his actions. This is because the love of being, both the created and Uncreated kind, is what man’s happiness consists in. ‘Wherefore every human act is good which attains reason or God Himself.’\footnote{Maritain, *Man and the State*, 106.} Pope Benedict XVI echoes Thomas’ thought well when he states, ‘That
which is prior to us and constitutes us – subsistent Love and Truth – shows us what
goodness is, and in what our true happiness consists. It shows us the road to true
development.  

Yet even though a person knows that happiness consists in contemplation of
universal Truth and Goodness Himself, this does not absolve the need for prudence, but
rather highlights it. Since man’s first mover, the intellect, has a universal end and
accompanying desire, there is a complexity to everyday human choices and acts. In the
body, man’s ‘intention is always directed to some particular good, if action is to result, for
universals cause no movement, but particular things do since action goes on in their
area.’ In other words, since all actions are of a particular kind, a universal desire
in abstract apart from any context, does not cause any action. One can liken it to giving
someone a master key when there are no locks in existence. Although it falls short like all
analogies, this example highlights that for man, a universal desire/capacity (or a master
key), is of no use and is unintelligible apart from particular goods to be attained (or
particular locks to be unlocked). Therefore, because human actions always happen in the
realm of particulars (since they need an object, intention and circumstances), they require
prudence to choose amongst the particular goods brought to ones attention at any one
time.

In this regard then the Beatific Vision can meet the third criteria of happiness, act
as an entire rule of life, since it is able to both make intelligible and order all pursuit of
non-ultimate goods. Since happiness consists in the apprehension of the goodness of
being, each human act should reflect the desire to become what we are not, to attain ‘the
being that we do not yet have.’ Each act should seek to enlarge one’s own, or another’s,
capacity for experiencing goodness which they do not yet have. All of man’s natural
inclinations and the objects of his particular acts, should be acted on is as much as they
refer to the human person, in his unified totality, and his ultimate end as a human
being. In contrast then to some moral theories discussed in the Introduction, ‘the only

460 Benedict XVI, Caritas In Veritate, 52.
461 SCG III, C6, 7.
464 Pope John Paul II, Veritatis Splendour, 50, 72, 78 & 82.
obligation that the ethics of Thomism knows for man is that he be wholly a man, for by that fact he is sure that he is what God wishes him to be.\(^{465}\)

**The Beatific Vision Is Desired For Its Own Sake Alone**

From the perspective of the acting person, the Beatific Vision meets the fourth criteria in that it cannot be ordered to anything else. Since ‘we do not find any action in human affairs, except speculative thought, that is not directed to some other end,’ it is impossible that contemplation of the highest object be a mean.\(^{466}\) Even though apprehending the goodness of Reality has its associated benefits, for example, delight and good practical activity, it is not sought for these things, but primarily for its own sake.\(^{467}\)

From the perspective of the object attained, ‘God who is goodness itself, is the only object that can exhaust the formality under which we desire and act.’\(^{468}\) For this very reason, Thomas can say that perfect happiness is so perfect, it is impossible to turn away from it once attained.\(^{469}\) How can the person who has attained the ultimate end of all being, the universal true and good, possibly order it to something else? There is no true or good thing *apart from it* to order it towards. Since then, there can be nothing desirable outside of the apprehension of the Ultimate Good itself, it cannot be neither logically or ontologically regarded as a means.

For those who have the Beatific Vision, they are unable to turn away from it since freedom is perfectly fulfilled in the attainment of the Perfect Good. Yet for those who treat it as a means to something else, they may be sure of not attaining it in the first place, since that which they would consider it ordered towards is mistakenly thought to be the ultimate good.

**The Beatific Vision Is Without Defect**

It has already been discussed above how both the act and object of the Beatific Vision are free from all defect and evil. Yet one aspect which is still to be revisited is the fear of loss which was prominent in Augustine’s thought. ‘The Divine power… raises

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\(^{466}\) SCG III, C25, 9 & C37, 3.

\(^{467}\) ST I-II, Q3, A5, R1.


\(^{469}\) SCG IV, C92.
man to the participation of eternity which transcends all change.\textsuperscript{470} In this case the person rests in the utter comfort and peace that his happiness cannot be lost.

The person completely rests in the perfection he has attained knowing that God would not take it away from him and it cannot be taken from him by another agent.\textsuperscript{471} Since the person has attained the Final Cause of all contingent reality, the very reason God brought and sustains them in existence, it is impossible that God, who wills the good of His creature, would take the Beatific Vision from the perfectly happy. There is also no fear of loss due to the actions of a third party, since it is not within their power to affect this perfect union of truth and love. Finally, the person does not suffer from that defect of the intellectual appetite called temptation, since knowing he has attained the ultimate good, he cannot even imagine a reason to turn away.

\textit{The Beatific Vision Is Man's Perfect Operation}

Contemplation of the Divine Essence meets the sixth criteria of perfect operation of man. In regards to it be the full actualisation of man’s proper capacities, this has been explained above in dealing with the first criteria. Yet it also meets another aspect of the criteria since it is the only operation proper to man which he doesn’t share with the animals.\textsuperscript{472} The act of understanding is that which is unique and proper to intellectual animals: ‘Since the supreme, proper operation of man is to know, it is necessary to assign human beatitude to this operation when it will be perfect.’\textsuperscript{473} Since the moral virtues are ordered by and toward the intellectual virtues, and since science and wisdom are ordered toward understanding or contemplation, this criteria is perfectly fulfilled.

\textit{The Beatific Vision Is Suitable To All Men}

Thomas’ understanding of happiness satisfies the seventh criteria of being achievable and suitable to all men. No member of the human species is \textit{a priori} ruled out from attaining the Beatific Vision. In an unparalleled and most radical way it is available to all. Regardless of ones the material wealth, social status, bodily beauty or strength, physical or mental handicap which one is born into, this perfection is possible. The reason

\textsuperscript{470} ST I-II, Q5, A4, R1.
\textsuperscript{471} SCG III, C63, 8; ‘... but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.’ – John 16:22; ‘They shall neither hunger no more, neither thirst anymore... and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’ – Rev. 7:16-17
\textsuperscript{472} SCG III, C37, 2.
\textsuperscript{473} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{IV Sent.}, D49, Q2, A1 quoted by Bradley, \textit{Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good}, 432. ST II-II, Q182, A1
that this is so, is the very same reason many find it to be an impossibility – it ultimately depends on God’s gratuitous action rather than one of human performance. In strictly natural terms, it is no more possible for a Padre Pio or Einstein to make or earn the Beatific Vision than it is for a Nero or young boy with Downs Syndrome. It necessarily depends on the gracious divine act of sustaining a contingent creature in being, as well as uniting Himself to it in such a way as to allow it to participate in His Inner Life.

However, this need not be understood as implying that earthly character and actions have no bearing on whether or not perfect happiness in attained. This will be the point of discussion in the next chapter, ‘Imperfect Happiness.’

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this chapter that what materially constitutes happiness is the Beatific Vision. That perfect act of contemplation in which the person beholds the essence of Perfect Being. It was first approached by showing that contemplation is man’s ultimate act – that which is proper to him as rational animal, and that which is not ordered to anything else. The second stage was to then show that the highest object of contemplation is the First Truth Himself, who by contemplating man definitively comes to know the truth, goodness and beauty of being. The final approach was via metaphysics in which each being attempts to imitate or participate in Perfect Being, by perfecting the operation appropriate to its essence. The activity of contemplation or understanding the Divine Essence is both that which is proper to man, and most like the activity of God which is possible for a creature. The second half of the chapter consisted in revisiting the formal criteria of happiness as drawn from Aquinas’ work. It was shown that the Beatific Vision can provide the unique and perfective situation demanded by the universal appetite of man in all its splendour.

It remains however to be discussed how Thomas understands the everyday life of man to relate to perfect happiness. Is it possible in this life? If it is not, does one merely wait to be happy, or is there a kind of sub-perfect happiness appropriate to earthly life? If so, what does he understand that to consist in? These will be the key questions addressed in the next chapter.
Imperfect Happiness

In the first chapter, it was demonstrated that St. Thomas Aquinas sets the highest possible bar in defining the formal nature of happiness. He spares nothing when analysing the depths of human desire and the depths of being, both created and Uncreated. It was then discussed in the previous chapter that he sees this criteria of happiness instantiated in nothing other than the Beatific Vision – that perfect act of contemplating the Divine Essence.

Yet what is now to be discussed is the ‘flipside’ of that coin. The Beatific Vision seems for most people to be far away; not just into the future, but also from their day to day activities. It belongs to this chapter now to discuss how exactly Thomas sees perfect happiness relating to the everyday life of the human person. Is it possible to attain in this life? If not, how can we call someone happy in this life? Is it a true happiness people seem to glimpse, or only an illusion? Finally, if it is so far from man’s natural capacities, how can it be called the ultimate end of human nature? The questions will be addressed in that order.

Perfect Happiness Is Not Possible In This Life

It was demonstrated in chapter two that all the particular goods encountered in this life cannot satisfy a universal appetite. This is not simply a quantitative judgment, but also a qualitative one. A person can have unlimited food, drink, money and all finite goods, yet still experience a yearning in the intellectual appetite. Man’s blessing is
potentially his greatest curse — that is, the good to which he is open (as an object of his intellect and will) is infinite. ‘In other words, our understanding and desire are quite literally without limits, never ending, in-finite… we always desire more even though we have attained what we previously desired.’  

The one way to escape this apparently useless search for happiness was for man, through a particular act, to attain a universal object. It was found that this particular act is that of contemplation, and the universal good is God. Since the object of man’s will is the universal good, nothing is able to entirely put his will to rest apart from the universal good. 

Yet by man’s natural principles, he has an inherent limitation in acquiring knowledge of God since ‘the human mind does not go beyond the type of knowledge that is derived from sensible things… so throughout this life God can be known in no higher way than that whereby a cause is known through it’s effect.’ Since ‘the mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower’, all knowledge for man begins in the senses, and from these sensible objects, phantasms (or images) are used by the mind to extract ideas. Without being able to form these images, it is impossible for man to begin to contemplate something. 

Thomas however held that humanity would not be forever bound to this epistemological limitation. In keeping with what he believed to be consistent with Revelation and Aristotelian principles, he explains that ‘when the soul will have been separated from this body, the possible intellect will be able to understand things that are intelligible in themselves.’ It was strictly only in this extra-sensory way that the mind could see the Divine Substance, and Thomas foresaw only two avenues for this occurring - ‘death or by ecstasy.’ Aquinas concludes therefore that, according to the criteria mentioned in Chapter One, ‘perfect happiness cannot be had in this life.’ 

Since perfect apprehension of the truth, goodness and beauty of Perfect Being cannot be attained, fulfilment of all our desires cannot occur in this life ‘since the more a

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475 ST I-II, Q2, A8.
476 SCG III, C45, 5; C47, 9. ST II-II, Q180, A7, R3.
477 ST I, Q12, A11 – 12.
478 ST II-II, Q180, A5, R2.
479 SCG III, C45, 9-10.
480 SCG III, C47, 2; C49, 15-16 & IV, C91, 2. ST I, Q12, A11; II-II, Q180, A5. ‘… We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord…’ - 2 Cor. 5:6 & ‘Man shall not see Me and live.’ – Ex. 33:20.
481 Commentary on N.E., 129.
person understands, the more is the desire to understand increased in him. It must be
reinforced that this is not due to merely coincidental, accidental or moral circumstances of
any one’s life, but rather essential to the current human condition.

Even the act of contemplation, man’s highest operation which most resembles
perfect happiness, can neither be carried out continually or uninterrupted and must always
start anew. Not only that, but also it constantly remains under risk due to other
involuntary factors such as forgetfulness or the vast array of decaying mental illnesses. It
is subject to voluntary factors such as for those burdened by hard manual labour in order
to put bread on the table. The consumerist and materialist attitude droned into many
young people has them prepared for decades of work where they do not expect to find any
intrinsic reward for their time and effort. Many would say their pay is the single biggest
motivation for their activities. Eventually one has worked for so long and so hard, that he
does not know what he would do even if he had more leisure time. In this case, his work
then morphs to become the solution to the very problem it caused in the first place – lack
of reflection. It becomes a distraction from having to face deeper existential issues about
happiness and success ‘on the outside.’ This will become a particular problem as the
‘iGeneration’ continue through life: the constant availability of smart phones and other
mobile devices presents the possibility of such a continuous stream of mindless games,
music and video clips, that one may never have to reflect on the internal and external
challenges confronting them.

Another reason perfect happiness cannot be attained in this life is that the
conversion to vice from virtue, ‘in whose act that happiness principally consists,’ is
always a constant possibility. The possibility of sin always remains in this life since we
have only an imperfect knowledge of God, the Ultimate Good, and ‘even when we
recognise that God is indeed the fulfilment of all our desires, we can nonetheless treat
Him as one good among others and prefer lesser goods to Him.’

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482 SCG III, C48, 2.
484 One is reminded of a line from the movie, ‘Shawshank Redemption.’ One of the characters spent over
40 years in prison, and not long after being released, committed suicide. On hearing of the suicide, it was
remarked by one of the prisoners, ‘These walls are funny. First you hate ‘em, then you get used to ‘em.
Enough time passes, you get so you depend on them. That’s institutionalised.’
485 ST I-II, Q5, A4.
486 McInerny, Ethica Thomistica, 31.
through the decades of earthly life. As one’s circumstances change, the vices of envy, wrath, avarice or pride can easily slip in so slowly over time that the person can be almost unaware of his changed character.

Even if one does not fall into vice, the loss of external goods and other factors, such as friendships, can hinder his virtuous operations. Aquinas emphatically rejects the Stoic view that the virtuous man ought not to be saddened by the loss of external goods.\(^{487}\) Even though in these cases ‘there still remains an act of virtue, whereby man bears these trials in a praiseworthy manner,’ this is very far from happiness as fulfilment of all desire.\(^{488}\) That being said, to reach a stage in one’s character where one can sustain significant loss of external goods and loved ones is unlikely until a long time has elapsed – a length of time which many do not even live to learn these lessons.\(^{489}\) Many people do not even live to become middle aged, and even those who do may not have had the formation to be able to face evil in such a way.

In summary, there are many corporeal and intellectual evils to contend with in this life. Corporeal deficiencies such as hunger, sleep, weather, and intellectual deficiencies such as unruly passions, mistakes in calculations, ignorance and uncertainty, all provide involuntary or voluntary opportunities for misery. ‘As long as we are journeying in exile over this earth, our peace and happiness will be imperfect. For such peace is not completely untroubled and serene; it is active, not calm and motionless. In short, this is a peace that is ever at war.’\(^{490}\) ‘For the edge of that longing for happiness… is whetted even more and more by the experience of deceitfulness of earthly goods, by the unjust violence of wicked men, and by all those other afflictions to which mind and body are subject.’\(^{491}\) Thus in the present state of life, perfect happiness cannot be attained by man.\(^{492}\)

Yet even if man is fortunate enough to have a good lot in this life, regarding nearly all the things he holds dear he must ‘be troubled with the fear of losing it, or with the sorrow of knowing that he will lose it.’\(^{493}\) In the very end at least, even if a person were to have all manners of worldly security, ‘man naturally shrinks from death, and is


\(^{488}\) ST I-II, Q5, A4.

\(^{489}\) SCG III, C48, 4.

\(^{490}\) Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Ad Petri Cathedram*. English Translation: *The Chair of Peter* (29th June 1959) 93.


\(^{492}\) ST I-II, Q3, A2, R4.

\(^{493}\) ST I-II, Q5, A4.
sorrowful at its prospect.'

In a society in which the enduring, necessary and ultimate good is neglected, one can only expect to eventually see the apparent irrationality or absurdity of life mindlessly embraced. The common phrase among the youth, ‘YOLO’ (You Only Live Once), is one of growing popularity. Although the phrase could be taken to imply one needs to be extremely careful and conservative with his life, it is often used to justify irrational or risk-taking behaviour. In one sense it can be described as nihilism in a popular form for the non-academic.

Bradley explains that Aquinas has led us to ‘a disturbing philosophical conclusion: since perfect human happiness must be uninterrupted and unchanging, it cannot be found in this world.’

That is, it requires an activity, contemplation of the Divine Essence, which is impossible in this life. Does this mean that we should refer to all men as miserable in this life? Should this life be described as nothing other than a waiting period for the believer, and as something even worse for the non-believer? Schopenhauer, describing man, says:

the object of his desires continually delude, waver, and fall, and accordingly bring more misery than joy, till at last the whole foundation upon which they all stand gives way, in that his life itself is destroyed and so he receives the last proof that all his striving and wishing was a perversity… Our existence is most happy when we perceive it least, from which it follows that it would be better not to have it.

Yet Thomas does not agree with this extreme conclusion for many reasons. Relevant for the work at hand is that although he ‘judges the happiness of this life to be imperfect… it is happiness in no merely equivocal sense.’ ‘Our happiness in this world is real… because, like the perfect happiness of heaven, it comes from sharing the in the love and goodness of God.’

It remains to be demonstrated how this is so.

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494 SCG III, C48, 6.
495 Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 424.
498 Paul J. Waddell, Happiness and the Christian Moral Life, 11.
Degrees of Imperfect Happiness

Aquinas definitively rejects that no happiness can be had in this life, because a real participation in this perfect happiness is still possible. We do not deny… that some participation of beatitude in this life is possible, primarily, insofar as man is perfect in the goods of speculative reason and, secondarily, in (the goods of) practical reason.

Aquinas interpreted Aristotle to be predominantly dealing (although probably unwittingly) with imperfect happiness in his discussions on happiness. Why is Aristotle not referring to perfect happiness? Although reason alone can arrive at the formal criteria of happiness in Chapter One, Thomas believes that to know the possibility of contemplating the divine essence in eternity requires Revelation, hence it was something which his beloved predecessor was unaware of. Since Revelation provides the ultimate context for understanding perfect happiness, it also allows one to review in a new way the concept of imperfect happiness. Thomas’ understanding of the Eternal Law provides the best hermeneutic key to do this.

‘The rule of human actions is the human reason and the eternal law.’ ‘The eternal law is nothing else that the type of Divine Wisdom, as directing all actions and movements.’ It can be described as the ‘blue-print’ of creation in which through God’s providence, all things are ordered to their proper end. In the particular case of humanity, it has already been demonstrated that his ultimate end is perfect happiness realised in the beatific vision. Since the eternal law is nothing other than the Divine Wisdom, it is nothing other than the Divine Essence Itself, as God is perfectly simple. Therefore, to know the Eternal Law perfectly would be to see God in His essence, which is the very definition of perfect happiness. For earthly man then, to the extent that he

500 Thomas Aquinas, IV Sentences 49, Q1, A1, sol. 4, in Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 518.
502 Commentary on N.E., 113. ST II-II, Q8, A3, R3.
503 ST II-II, Q8, A3, R3 & I-II, Q71, A6.
504 ST I-II, Q93, A1.
505 Waddell, Happiness and the Christian Moral Life, 51.
506 Which is the most one can be ‘conformed to the image of His Son.’ – Romans 8:29.
507 ST I, Q3, A7 & I-II, Q93, A4.
508 ST I-II, Q93, A2.
participates in this life in the eternal law, is the extent to which he can be described as happy.\textsuperscript{509}

‘There are two ways in which a thing is subject to the eternal law… first, by partaking of the eternal law by way of knowledge; secondly, by way of act and passion, i.e., by partaking of the eternal law by way of an inward motive principle: and in this second way, irrational creatures are subject to the eternal law.’\textsuperscript{510} In other words, all creatures act out or achieve the eternal law by rational and/or natural participation. Due to man’s rational nature, he participates in both ways – as a cognitive self-mover and as a being governed and moved by God. Blessed Pope John Paul II explains that ‘God’s wisdom is providence, a love which cares… cares for man not “from without”, through the laws of physical nature, but “from within”, through reason, which by its natural knowledge of God’s eternal law, is… able to manifest to him the requirements and the promptings of eternal wisdom.’\textsuperscript{511} ‘As a created instrument… reason participates in the Eternal Law and… has God as its efficient cause and… its exemplar and final cause.’\textsuperscript{512} To the extent then that man perfects his rational nature through the apprehension of truth (i.e., the intellectual virtues) and his appetitive nature (i.e., the moral virtues), he can be described as imperfectly happy. This then will provide the framework for Thomas’ imperfect happiness.

Aquinas sees four modes of participation in the eternal law, each with ascending degrees of happiness. These four modes can be divided into the three categories of nature, grace and glory.\textsuperscript{513} St John of the Cross sums up the three categories when he says, ‘since He both gives the soul natural being through his essential presence and perfects her through His presence by grace, she begs him to glorify her also with his manifest glory.’\textsuperscript{514} Since the final stage of glory refers to man’s perfect happiness, we need only concern ourselves in this section with the imperfect degrees of happiness.\textsuperscript{515} The three degrees of imperfection can be described as ‘that of the wicked whose natural inclinations are corrupted, that of the good who act according to their natural inclinations, and that of

\textsuperscript{509} Rziha, \textit{Perfecting Human Actions}, 117 & 255.
\textsuperscript{510} ST I-II, Q93, A6.
\textsuperscript{511} John Paul II, \textit{Veritatis Splendor}, 41 & 43.
\textsuperscript{512} Bradley, \textit{Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good}, 134 & 255.
\textsuperscript{513} ST I-II, Q93, A6 & III, Q23, A1, R1.
\textsuperscript{514} St John of the Cross, ‘The Spiritual Canticle’, 511.
\textsuperscript{515} ST I-II, Q5, A6, R2 & III, Q45, A4.
the good who act according to supernatural inclinations. Since man’s happiness lies in his most perfect operation in regards to the most perfect object, each of these stages can also be seen as greater levels of virtue.

**Lowest Level of Imperfect Happiness: Any Satisfaction Of The Will**

This is the very lowest degree of imperfect happiness, since ‘this kind of happiness, unlike the others, can include not only limited and imperfect but downright false kinds of happiness.’ In this regard, one might hesitate to apply the term happiness at all. However, these people still participate, although in the most imperfect degree, in the eternal law, since they still have *synderesis*, the very first principles of speculative and practical reason. This most basic orientation toward truth and goodness in the natural order is still the work of God. In this case however, the eternal law is ultimately to their frustration, since they are working against achieving their ultimate end, which God is trying to bring them to.

Yet this first category is significant since it emphasises the most basic degree of goodness which all beings attain - the very act of existing itself. Thomas describes this as the first perfection of all beings, since in it is their most basic and foundational participation in the Being of God. All further perfections, including virtue and grace, will be in addition to this initial substantial act and therefore described as accidental perfections.

The virtue displayed at this level is ‘imperfect in every respect’ since it is not accompanied by prudence or right reason. It is described as natural virtue since it is simply the involuntary inclinations which people have from either hereditary or nurture, and varies from individual to individual. For example a person may seem ‘naturally’ courageous or temperate, although this is only a psychological or physiological disposition of his since it lacks right practical reason. When the person exercises this natural ‘talent’ he still gains some sense of achievement. However over the life of the

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520 *ST I*, Q6, A3 & I, Q73, A1.
521 *Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General*, A2, R1 in *DQV*.
522 *Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues*, A2 in *DQV. Commentary on N.E.*, 2144
523 *Commentary on N.E.*, 1277.
same individual, since his base character lacks the stability and firmness necessary, his inconsistencies are eventually exposed. Although he seems to be naturally able and gifted (and possibly is), ‘his sensitive and rational appetites push in opposite directions, thus causing the same disharmony in the soul that is present in the incontinent or weak-willed.’

Even at this lowest level of imperfect happiness, Thomas holds that ‘there is a common and confused knowledge of God which is found practically in all men; this is due… to the fact… man can immediately reach some sort of knowledge of God by natural reason’, but this is not the knowledge of God in which happiness consists in. The kind of knowledge he is referring to as universal and almost independent of one’s character is that of some kind of Creator or Orderer, since it is obvious to all that ‘things in nature run according to a definite order.’ This level of knowledge contains many defects since some people hold the Creator/Orderer to be multiple gods, material, impersonal or even evil. Hence it is possible for such erroneous conceptions to lead to atheism in some. In contrast, the knowledge which happiness consists in must be that of God’s actual qualities. Therefore knowing no more of God than that He is, does not perfect the intellect since there still remains the natural desire to know more about God.

**Second Level of Imperfect Happiness: That Which Is Proportionate To Natural Powers**

The next degree of imperfect happiness, and one which truly deserves the name (as opposed to the lowest degree), is when man exercises and perfects his natural powers through the acquired virtues. Since the reason is that which is proper to man, man distinguishes good from evil ‘above all thanks to the light of natural reason… which inclines them towards their right action and end… (and) is none other than the eternal reason of the Creator and Ruler of the Universe.’ For Thomas, ‘the light of natural

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525 SCG III, C38, 1 & 3.
526 SCG III, C38, 1. Aquinas here reflects the thoughts of St Paul, who believed that ‘Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.’ – Rom 1:20.
527 SCG III, C38, 6.
528 ST I-II, Q3, A8.
529 ST I-II, Q5, A5.
530 John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 44.
reason itself is a participation of the divine light.\textsuperscript{531} Therefore the need for right reason in both speculative and practical matters, ‘is not an empty formula or an end in itself, since its ethical character rests on the fact that reason is ordered to God: it is the means by which man orders his acts, and therefore himself, to God.’\textsuperscript{532}

This degree of participation in the eternal law is through the natural faculties and inclinations, guided and perfected by the natural law and acquired virtues. ‘These virtues are perfect in a respect: in relation to the human good… but not absolutely speaking, since they do not attain the first standard that is our ultimate end.’\textsuperscript{533} In this respect once again, one sees that Aquinas holds Aristotle’s works to be dealing with imperfect, but nonetheless true, happiness. Yet since man cannot attain God simply by the natural virtues, they are described as not absolutely perfect.\textsuperscript{534} Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that since this involves man’s natural capacities, it is a level of happiness all men achieve: ‘Being \textit{fully} virtuous does seem to be an ideal that we aspire towards but can never achieve.’\textsuperscript{535} Ralph McInerny warns that since human nature has ‘fallen’, man’s:

ability to achieve his natural end is also affected, with respect to his knowledge of it and, far more, with respect to his appetitive orientation to it... Just as there are certainly naturally knowable truths concerning God that we are nonetheless unlikely to achieve, so there is an imperfect happiness possible of attainment in this life but one nevertheless that few men are likely to attain.\textsuperscript{536}

In both the intellectual and moral realm of human capacity, not many perfect or actualise completely their own powers. Since the virtues can be broken up into the intellectual and moral, with the moral being ordered by and to the intellectual, it is wise to begin by analysing the intellectual.

\textit{Intellectual Virtue & Imperfect Natural Happiness}

\textsuperscript{531} ST I, Q12, A11, R3.
\textsuperscript{532} Di Blasi, \textit{God and the Natural Law}, 191.
\textsuperscript{533} Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues, A2.
\textsuperscript{534} On the virtues in general, A9, R6-7.
\textsuperscript{535} Annas, \textit{Intelligent Virtue}, 64.
\textsuperscript{536} McInerny, \textit{Ethica Thomistica}, 68 & 118.
The most similar thing in this life to ultimate beatitude is the lifestyle of those who explicitly spend their time in contemplation of truth, otherwise known as the contemplative life. Thomas gives three reasons as to why this is so:

First, because it is about incorruptible and unchangeable things; secondly, because it has no contrary, for there is nothing contrary to the pleasure of contemplation... (also) it is continuous both because it is competent to us in respect of the incorruptible part of the soul, namely the intellect, wherefore it can endure after this life, - and (thirdly) because... we work not with our bodies so that we are more able to persevere in the works thereof.

In his first reason, Thomas explains that true contemplation does not regard temporary things. Since then it is not concerned with that which decays with time, one can draw the conclusion that time in contemplation is never time ‘wasted’ as circumstances change or develop. One cannot regret time dedicated to understanding the truth, goodness and beauty of being. Tying in with this is the second reason, that contemplation of truth is the very same activity which ‘reaches its climax in the future; whereas the active and civic life does not go beyond the limits of this life.’ Time spent participating in the eternal, can never be defective. Also, as opposed to goods of the sensitive appetite, there is no accompanying pain which comes from a lack of contemplation. If in a given circumstance, a person is unable to explicitly engage in contemplation, then there is no pain as a result.

Finally, because contemplation itself requires only a minimum (or zero) bodily functioning, it is not something which necessarily deteriorates with age. As a person gets older, the depth or agility of his mind may be affected, yet he is never completely disabled from some apprehension of reality. In fact, we often see that due to increased life experience and reflection, often age is a great contributor to wisdom. In that case, contemplation is an activity which, for one who is so inclined, can be expected to gradually increase as life goes on, with an accompanying increase in happiness. Since the

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537 ST I-II, Q3, A2, R4.
538 ST II-II, Q180, A8.
539 SCG III, C63, 10.
540 ‘... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.’ – Matt. 6:20-21.
541 ‘Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions...’ – Psalm 25:7.
activity of contemplation is so rooted in the goodness of being itself, it is never able to be utterly negated. As will be analysed further below, ‘contemplation does not ignore the “historical Gethsemane,” does not ignore the mystery of evil.’ Even in the most trying circumstances, when one is confronted with loss of other bodily or external goods, one is able to, if his grasp of reality is true and deep enough, to transcend the otherwise devastating effects of evil.

In contemplation, man is ‘most self-sufficient, since he needs fewer things for that purpose.’ This is demonstrated by the endless line of philosophers and theologians through history, all with varying amounts of external goods (including computers), who were nonetheless able to wonder and contemplate the goodness of being. In many cases these thinkers went on to provide reflections which would still be used millennia later. ‘How many experiences life offers us everyday! We let them pass, but a deep thinker gathers them up and makes his treasure of them; they will gradually fill out the framework of his thought.’ Truth is in fact everywhere, revealing itself to us as we encounter new experiences, exposing the depth and grandeur of being, regardless of the external goods in our possession.

Yet, as seen in Chapter Three, contemplation of all objects is not equal - the greater the truths or objects which the intellect is able to contemplate in this life, the greater they participate in perfect happiness. A further distinction can be made since it is not only the object which determines the level of happiness, but also the degree to which the object is grasped by the individual. When the act of contemplation, *intellectus*, is distinguished from other discursive modes of thinking, *ratio*, the more the intellect ‘sees’ the truth, the more it participates in perfect beatitude. In other words, just as there is an act-object distinction in perfect happiness, so there is for imperfect happiness.

Thomas describes six ascending steps of contemplation, each which gradually involves a greater act or object than the previous:

a) Mere consideration of sensible objects
b) Going from sensible to intelligible objects
c) To judge of sensible objects according to intelligible things

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543 ST II-II, Q182, A1; I-II, Q4, A7. SCG III, C37, 6.
544 Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life*, 64.
545 ST II-II, Q180, A4, R3.
d) The absolute consideration of the intelligible objects attained from sensible objects

e) The contemplation of those intelligible objects that are unattainable by means of sensibles, but which reason is able to grasp

f) The consideration of such intelligible things as the reason can neither discover nor grasp, which pertains to the sublime contemplation of divine truth (Properly part of the next level of happiness: imperfect supernatural happiness)

Each subsequent step in the ladder sees a progression from what is more sensible to what is more intelligible and therefore closer to the First Cause and Principal, until one eventually arrives at contemplation of truths unobtainable without Revelation. Even though ‘God alone is truth by His Essence, and contemplation of Him makes man perfectly happy, there is no reason why we should not admit a certain imperfect happiness… in the consideration of speculative science.’\(^{546}\) This participation in happiness through contemplation of created realities ultimately hinges on the analogy of being, a key metaphysical teaching in Thomas’ corpus: ‘Since all beings participate in truth and goodness to the extent they have esse, all beings can bring happiness to humans to the extent the intellect knows them and the will delights in them.’\(^{547}\) Since there is a likeness between created and Uncreated Being, even by apprehending and loving these most base realities, one is also getting the most minimal taste of true happiness.

Therefore another distinction could be made within the category of those who contemplate created truths. This distinction would be between those who have fostered the intellectual virtue of science, but not the greater virtue of wisdom. For example, take two biologists, Albert and Richard, both studying the same data, in this case, the societal habits of ants. Albert, on seeing the activity and efficiency of the ants, links his discoveries with the Author of life, and marvels at the capacity of the Author to instil in non-intelligent natures the pursuit of intelligible ends. He experiences a greater delight due to his more perfect wisdom. However, his fellow scientist, Richard, although working with same data, fails to make the link to First Causes and Principals, and therefore his intellectual operation is less perfect than Alberts, although he still achieves some degree of imperfect happiness.

\(^{546}\) \textit{ST} I-II, Q3, A7.

\(^{547}\) Rziha, \textit{Perfecting Human Actions}, 95.
The difficulty experienced in trying to understand divine things is not that they are unintelligible, but rather *too* intelligible for us. For example, is one was to contemplate the question, ‘What is love,’ his mind may be able to immediately conjure up examples of previous experiences he has had. Yet these are just that – merely examples, not the definition or essence of love. So the person begins to pursue what each of these experiences has in common, transcending the merely physical components of his own best friend’s hand or his spouse’s lips. He has begun to pursue the intelligible species of love. The tonnes of ink which has been spilled to answer this question is not because love is unintelligible, but rather it is inexhaustibly intelligible. However, humanity is limited in this life to the same starting point – that of sense experience. If we are not able to understand purely intelligible species, or even separate substances in this life, how much less could we see the divine essence which transcends all separate substances? \(^{548}\)

When considering imperfect happiness regarding the performance of the intellectual virtues, it is significant to note that the highest act of understanding for a particular person may not be the absolutely best object, and therefore his highest imperfect happiness will consist in understanding the highest thing it can. The crux of this point depends on drawing attention to the wide range of intellectual capacities amongst individuals in the human species. \(^{549}\) ‘However small the amount of divine knowledge that the intellect may be able to grasp, that will be for the intellect, in regard to its ultimate end, much more than the perfect knowledge of lower objects of understanding.’ \(^{550}\) This remark is significant since it addresses the potential happiness of the young, mentally disabled, those restricted by time and other circumstances. The wisdom of Thomas is demonstrated here as he shows there is an element of imperfect happiness which is subjective, yet never conflicting with the objective order. For each individual then, the contemplation of the highest truth they are personally capable of is more perfect and delightful than other operations. \(^{551}\) For some, this means the contemplation of the truth that they are loved by their parents, or that there is a warm caring touch from someone they cannot recognise, while for others it may be the realisation they are willed into existence from all eternity. In all cases though, there is the need to apprehend the greatest truths one is able to.

\(^{548}\) SCG III, C47, 1.  
\(^{549}\) SCG III, C25, 4.  
\(^{550}\) SCG III, C25, 6.  
\(^{551}\) SCG III, C25, 7. *ST* II-II, Q180, A7, R3.
The level of knowledge of God appropriate to this level is that which is obtained by the intellectual virtues and is gathered through demonstration. In particular, that God is immutable, eternal, one and perfect.\textsuperscript{552} This level of knowledge is an improvement on the base level of happiness since it rules out erroneous concepts of God, and also comes with a certainty that the general conception doesn’t. However, since all the sensible effects of God are not equal to His power, one cannot move from knowledge of them to knowledge of the divine essence. It is only through the analogy of being, or through knowledge of causes, that man can maximise the natural knowledge he has of God and its accompanying imperfect happiness.\textsuperscript{553}

Still, even for those who do acquire knowledge of God via demonstration, it leaves much to be known. Many who have learned truths about God by way of demonstration, follow their own opinions on areas where demonstration remains quiet and have fallen into error.\textsuperscript{554} As historically shown by those who have tried to acquire knowledge of God through reason alone, many uncertainties arise as proven by the diversity among those who have tried to acquire it. Thomas clearly has in mind the great Pagan philosophers as well as those from the non-Christian monotheistic traditions. This falls short of the requirements of perfect operation, since ‘certainty is required for perfect knowledge; for this reason we cannot be said to know unless we learn something that cannot be otherwise.’\textsuperscript{555}

\textit{Moral Virtue & Imperfect Natural Happiness}

‘Rectitude of the will is necessary for happiness… to desire nothing amiss is… a necessary disposition.’\textsuperscript{556} The inability of a man to regulate his concupiscible and irascible passions through the use of reason is detrimental to imperfect happiness. If one allows the sensitive appetite, which has only immediate and particular goods within its radar, to drive away greater goods through pleasure or fear, it affects one’s ability to guide his life in any consistent way. ‘Rectitude of the will consists in being duly ordered to the last end… (and) nothing gains an end, except it be duly ordained thereto.’\textsuperscript{557}

\textsuperscript{552} SCG III, C39, 1.
\textsuperscript{553} Di Blasi, \textit{God and the Natural Law}, 87.
\textsuperscript{554} SCG III, C39, 4.
\textsuperscript{555} SCG III, C39, 5.
\textsuperscript{556} ST I-II, Q3, A4, R5.
\textsuperscript{557} ST I-II, Q4, A4 & Q5, A4.
Since it has already been discussed that the intellect is at the core of human happiness, it is appropriate that ‘a kind of secondary happiness arises from the activity of the moral virtues… as he lives by prudence, which directs all the moral virtues.’ That is, the intellectual virtue of prudence allows external goods, bodily goods and passions of the soul to participate in reason. In fact, in the order of generation, these ‘moral virtues are habits or dispositions necessary for attaining intellectual virtue.’ This is because good intellectual activity, which is truly an act of the whole man, ‘requires the purification of all the imperfections, rebellions, and imperfect habits of the lower part, which… is surrendered and made subject to the higher part.’

In a particularly concise section, Aquinas explains the significance of both the intellect and appetite for achieving virtue:

Two things are needed in a work of virtue. One is that a man has a right intention for the end, which moral virtue provides in inclining the appetitive faculty to a proper end. The other is to be well disposed towards the means. This is done by prudence, which gives good advice, judges and orders the means to the end… prudence perfecting the part rational by essence, and moral virtue perfecting the appetitive part, rational by participation.

Without this correct appetite for the end, it is impossible for the person to pursue the true good. It is obvious to all who have encountered a wide range of characters that ‘the supreme good is not apparent except to the good or virtuous man who has the proper evaluation of the end, since moral virtue rectifies the conception of the end.’ It has been mentioned above on several occasions that what materially instantiates happiness is a source of disagreement – the moral character of those involved is no small cause of this. The avaricious man perceives external goods as happiness, the intemperate man considers pleasure as happiness and the just man considers justice as happiness. In all cases, the way a person views happiness is intimately related to his character. Therefore the challenge is to form one’s character, both in its essentially rational aspects (via the intellectual virtues) and those aspects which are rational by participation (the passions).

558 Commentary on N.E., 2111.
559 Commentary on N.E., 2112-2113.
560 Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 386.
562 Commentary on N.E., 1269.
563 Commentary on N.E., 1273.
Without this awareness and conscious effort, any ‘habituated vice, peer pressure, irrationality, mental illness, and the like can often deform our subjective desires so that they turn us away from… what is good for us.’

The moral virtues belong to the contemplative life as providing disposition, since the act of contemplation is ‘hindered both by the impetuosity of the passions which withdraw the soul’s intention from intelligible to sensible things, and by outward disturbances.’ This interior freedom to pursue greater goods is provided by the moral virtues, whose role is one of service rather than command. Once again, we see Thomas contradicting our often dualistic understandings of what exactly intellectual work consists in. It is the whole man who performs intellectual activity, not some kind of mind-in-a-vacuum: ‘Vices relax attention, scatters it, leads it astray; and they injure the judgment in roundabout ways… The man who engages in the work must not be the creature of passion, vanity, ambition, or vain desire to please.’ Therefore the moral virtues are not only crucial in order to contemplate, but are ‘traits of character that persons must possess if they are able to sustain (any) course of activity.’ Any long term project ultimately requires the capacity of the person involved to regulate short, often intense, inclinations in order to persist. It should be noted however that the ability to resist these temptations, say with continence, is only a lower form of moral virtue, since the truly moral character will not experience these disturbing movements in the first place, contributing even further to his happiness in this life.

It is here that we would be able to find the cause of what we might imagine is many people’s disdain for contemplative activities. Although contemplation is an act of the intellect, in regards to its ‘motive cause’ it requires an act of the will: ‘The appetitive power moves one to observe things either with the senses or with the intellect, sometimes for love of the thing seen… (or) love of the very knowledge that one acquires…’ In either case, love is a key element in attracting one to act. Therefore the character who resists moments of reflection and thought must not hold these as ultimate goods in his life.

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564 Feser, Aquinas, 179.
565 ST II-II, Q180, A2.
566 ST II-II, Q182, A1, R2.
568 Porter, The Recovery of Virtue, 70.
569 ST II-II, Q155, A1.
570 ST II-II, Q180, A1.
for one reason or another. It is possible he experiences boredom very easily, cannot stop thinking about what is coming up for dinner, his next pay day, previous or future sexual encounters or even a relationship conflict. In all these cases, it is the person’s inability to regulate his passions which reflect a strong attachment or love elsewhere. Therefore for Thomas, a properly ordered appetite and emotional life is ‘requisite for the contemplative life.’

Third Level of Imperfect Happiness: That Which Is Proportionate To Grace

As has already been discussed, ‘on earth, the greatest natural happiness comes from contemplating God as known through created effects and delighting in Him as loved more than any other good’, what remains now is to show how ‘the greatest supernatural happiness on earth comes from contemplating and delighting in God as known through faith and loved through charity.’

In light of Revelation, more specifically the everlasting covenant centred around the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, there is a greater participation in the eternal law available to humanity. This further participation amounts to the next level of imperfect happiness one can attain in this life. Therefore on top of (rather than instead of) the already mentioned natural principles, habits and laws, supernatural participation includes grace, the divine law, the theological virtues, infused moral virtues, gifts of the Holy Spirit and beatitudes. These enhance man’s continued ‘discernment of good from evil which he himself carries out by his reason, in particular by his reason enlightened by Divine Revelation and by faith.’

‘It is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles.’ Grace is that very supernatural principle, which ‘is not a term of movement, as happiness is; rather it is the principle of the movement that tends towards happiness.’ Therefore the receiving of grace is the most basic supernatural accidental change to the human, and the necessary beginning to any

571 ST II-II, Q180, A2, R1.
572 Rziha, Perfecting Human Actions, 95 (italics are mine).
573 John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor, 44.
574 ST I-II, Q62, A1. Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General, A10 in DQV.
575 ST I-II, Q5, A7, R3.
operations which could merit the ultimate good. All of the habits then which will allow grace-principled acts to take place, are referred to as infused rather than acquired, since one must receive the supernatural principle, grace, as a gift.\textsuperscript{576} All one can hope to do in the natural order is predispose themselves to receive this gift. However, once this principle of grace is received, just as one increases and affirms his habits through repeated activity stemming from a natural principle, he can do so from a supernatural.\textsuperscript{577}

Since the natural virtues, building on mans natural principles fall short, there must be another order of virtues which build on grace.\textsuperscript{578} These are the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, which ‘are conceived by Aquinas as stages in a process reaching its fulfilment in friendship with God.’\textsuperscript{579} The reason this set of virtues can direct man toward perfect happiness is that they have God for their object.\textsuperscript{580}

‘First, as regards the intellect, man receives certain supernatural principles which are held by means of a Divine light: these are the articles of faith.’\textsuperscript{581} As was seen above when looking at imperfect natural happiness, there were both inherent limitations to humanity as a species as well as specific individual limitations, regarding one’s ability to contemplate ultimate truths. All knowledge which natural reason obtains occurs through two things: ‘images derived from the sensible objects; and the natural intelligible light, enabling us to abstract from them intelligible conceptions.’\textsuperscript{582} Since grace does not destroy nature, but rather perfects it, one should expect to find that the supernatural virtue of faith works through both of these avenues.\textsuperscript{583} This is in fact what is found since Revelation is exposed to the senses, and the intellect’s natural light is strengthened by grace in order to believe what is being heard or read. Revelation allows the person to ‘know some things through faith which, because of their sublimity, demonstrative reason cannot attain.’\textsuperscript{584} Aquinas has in mind here the Christian mysteries, which include the Trinity, incarnation, salvation history and the sacraments. It is therefore a progression on

\begin{footnotes}
\item[576] \textit{ST} I-II, Q62, A1 & II-II, Q6, A1.
\item[577] \textit{Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General}, A11.
\item[578] \textit{Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas}, 340.
\item[579] Schwartz, \textit{Aquinas on Friendship}, p.14. ‘No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.’ – John 15:15.
\item[580] \textit{ST} II-II, Q17, A5.
\item[581] \textit{ST} I-Ii, Q62, A3.
\item[582] \textit{ST} I, Q12, A13.
\item[583] \textit{ST}, Q1, A8 & II-II, Q8, A1, R2.
\item[584] \textit{SCG} III, C40, 1.
\end{footnotes}
natural imperfect happiness since once can ‘know Him more fully according as many and more excellent of His effects are demonstrated to us.’

‘In order that activities be directed to an end without error it is necessary for the end to be known.’ Knowledge of man’s supernatural vocation, as well as the means to achieving it, is provided by faith. Without this faith, a person would not have this ‘kind of knowledge about… the opportunities and resources that are out there’ in order to achieve perfect happiness.

Yet, as with imperfect natural happiness, mere knowledge of the good is not enough. ‘One could accept all the truths of faith and still despair.’ The good itself must be approached by the individual. This is where the second theological virtue, hope, plays its role, since by it ‘the will is directed to this end… which tends to that end as something attainable.’ This builds further onto imperfect supernatural happiness since ‘some are said to be happy in his life… on account of the hope of obtaining Happiness in the life to come… or on account of a certain participation of Happiness, by reason of a kind of enjoyment of the Sovereign Good.’ Hence, although the person with the theological virtue of hope is imperfect since they still have not attained God Himself, ‘he is perfect, in so far as he already attains his proper rule, God, on whose help he leans.’ This hope which a person has, rooted in the goodness of God, causes a joy proper to it.

However faith and hope are still not sufficient to attain the end, since one can act against such knowledge, as if another good was in fact the Ultimate. Therefore, the theological virtue of charity becomes the necessary component for attaining the Ultimate End, since it informs all the other actions of the person, ordering them to perfect happiness. It is by charity that ‘a certain spiritual union’ occurs. It is by the theological virtue of charity that the person loves God for who He is in Himself, and not merely for what good He can provide the person.

585 ST I, Q12, A13, R1.
586 Commentary on N.E., 2065.
587 Schwartz, Aquinas on Friendship, 116.
588 Schwartz, Aquinas on Friendship, 116.
589 ST I-II, Q62, A3.
590 ST I-II, Q5, A3, R1.
591 ST II-II, Q17, A1, R3.
592 ST II-II, Q18, A3.
593 Such is the case with ‘lifeless faith’ (ST II-II, Q4, A4).
595 ST I-II, Q62, A3.
Since charity, like all the supernatural virtues, is an intellectual virtue, ‘it cannot be exercised without the moral virtues.’\(^{595}\) Therefore to express themselves in the practical realm, they are also accompanied by the infused cardinal virtues, enabling a person to counsel, judge and command his actions toward perfect happiness. Like their natural counterparts, these infused virtues also seek the mean, but unlike them they seek it not only in regard to the natural law, but also ‘on the basis of considerations belonging to the divine law, considerations we accept from their bearing on the ultimate end.’\(^{596}\) ‘Since a greater understanding of the end changes the means that are chosen’, the person will often carry out actions or lifestyles not contradictory to, but rather surpassing what is normally demanded.\(^{597}\) For example, the mean amount of food to be consumed during the period of lent, would differ for the Christian in contrast to the non-Christian. Other aspects of virtuous acts such as a life committed to celibacy, or love of one’s enemies also surpass what the natural virtues would require, but would be enabled (or required) by the infused moral and intellectual virtues. Finally, in contrast to the natural virtues, that which flows from these infused virtues makes ‘a person’s activity good absolutely speaking, since they enable it to reach even the ultimate end.’\(^{598}\) Therefore for Aquinas, ‘the actual presence of the ultimate end in the intention of the agent emerges as the ultimate ethical truth of human action.’\(^{599}\)

As seen above in imperfect natural happiness, it is the rectitude of the will which was a significantly determining factor as to whether one could enjoy the act of contemplation, and therefore maximise his happiness. Aquinas particularly highlights the act of contemplating God as necessarily requiring charity in the appetite.\(^{600}\) Without charity, the person will find it impossible (or even torturous if coerced) to think about the divine mysteries.

In a similar way, once again showcasing the continuity between the natural and supernatural, Aquinas explains that although ‘the manner of contemplation is not the same here as in heaven: yet the contemplative life is said to remain by reason of charity,

\(^{595}\) McCabe, *The Good Life*, 94.
\(^{596}\) *Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General*, A10, R8.
\(^{597}\) Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions*, 89.
\(^{598}\) *Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues*, A2.
\(^{600}\) ST II-II, Q180, A7, R1.
wherein it has both its beginning and end. Therefore the supernatural virtue of charity is the most continual act or habit, bridging both imperfect and perfect happiness. It is the ultimate participation in this life of perfect happiness, and also the single most decisive point as to whether one will attain perfect happiness, and if so, to what degree. ‘The intellect… will have a fuller participation in the Light of Glory who has more charity; because where there is the greater charity, there is the more desire; and desire in a certain degree makes the one desiring apt and prepared to receive the object desire.’

‘It is not by change of place that we come nearer to Him who is in every place, but by the cultivation of pure desires and virtuous habits.’ This in fact gets to the heart of what must be understood if contemplation of God is to be properly seen as that which happiness consists in, even in this earthly life. Augustine and Aquinas are both at pains to mention that it is not simply attending Church services, or mechanically going through the words of the ‘Our Father’ which bring someone closer to happiness. Although all of these are necessary, they cannot substitute for a lack of character formation in the moral (then intellectual) spheres of life, something regularly emphasised in recent Church documents. It is only in as much as their own desires align with those of the First Will that they participate more deeply in the Eternal Law, leading them eventually to the final cause of both wills – God Himself. ‘An intellectual substance, through its own operation, attains to God, not only by understanding, but also through an act of the will, by desiring and loving Him and by taking delight in Him.’

601 ST II-II, Q180, A8, R1.
602 ‘There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead.’ – 1 Cor. 15:41-42.
603 ST I, Q12, A6.
604 Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, X & XVII.
605 ‘Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.’ – Eph. 4:22-23, and, ‘… do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, be yourselves holy in conduct; since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”’ – 1 Peter 1:14-16.
606 ‘Man achieves such dignity when he frees himself from all subservience to his feelings, and in a free choice of the good, pursues his own end by effectively and assiduously marshalling the appropriate means.’ – Second Vatican Council, Gaudium Et Spes, 17; ‘If the moral order is fully and faithfully observed, it leads man to full perfection and happiness.’ – Second Vatican Council, Inter Mififica, 6; ‘In acting ethically, according to a free and rightly tuned will, the human person sets foot upon the path to happiness and moves towards perfection.’ – Pope John Paul II, Fides Et Ratio, 25.
607 SCG III, C1, 1.
608 SCG III, C26, 1.
‘In the conditions of the present life, Thomas values the will more highly than reason, because the will can reach God directly while reason remains subjected to the senses.’ The reason is that although ‘love presupposes knowledge of the object loved… nevertheless love is not measured by knowledge. We can love perfectly an object very imperfectly known.’ Therefore in regards to God, the ultimate object of love and knowledge, charity makes it possible to have ‘a true but nonetheless imperfect enjoyment of the last end even before reaching it.’ Once again, we see this key aspect of Thomas’ teaching being highlighted by recent Popes in their moral theology: ‘Through that life, those who faithfully obey all the precepts and demands of our Redeemer can enjoy even in this life that happiness which is a foretaste and pledge of heaven’s eternal happiness.’ This stands in direct contrast to a Christianity which sees beatitude as utterly independent and arbitrarily awarded by God, regardless of one’s earthly will and state.

Supernatural imperfect happiness is necessarily greater than natural imperfect happiness because ‘there is greater perfection in attaining God in any way at all, even imperfectly, than in attaining other things perfectly.’ This in fact mimics Thomas’ earlier observations in the realm of knowledge – that it is greater to know a little bit about ultimate truths and causes, than a lot about sensible or contingent things. In the same way then in the practical realm, one participates more in the Eternal Law, or comes closer to his ultimate good, when he performs any actions aimed directly toward it, rather than great ones not directed so. It is this which separates the atheist’s monthly donation to a charity, from the simple peasant who consciously carries out his daily labours in the spirit of bringing about the Kingdom of God.

This is the great truth which Josef Pieper so poetically describes when he says:

How splendid is water, a rose, a tree, an apple, a human face – such exclamations can scarcely be spoken without giving tongue to an assent and affirmation which extends

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612 John XXIII, Ad Petri Cathedram, 92.
613 Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General, A12, R7 in DQV.
beyond the object praised and touches upon the origin of the universe... and that, seeing this, he is happy.\textsuperscript{614}

One can see here that in fact the person who contemplates the deepest reality of even the most ordinary things, is in fact constantly verging on the mystical or contemplative in his everyday experiences.

It is appropriate at this time to especially mention those people who historically and presently are encountering the greatest difficulties, misfortunes, oppression or tragedy in their lives. In these cases, persons are often challenged to re-examine what it is they understand their lives, and in the greater context, being itself, to be ordered towards. The reality (or lack thereof) which we call evil, explained in Christian theology by original sin, prods the contemplative mind to go deeper in their understanding. For Christians, it causes them to realise the great need of a Redeemer, as well as a return from illusionary world views they may have sunk into. In fact, many people who have undergone great suffering \textit{used these encounters with evil} to reignite a greater love for truth about humanity, the world and God, in both themselves and others.\textsuperscript{615}

For Thomas, and the thousands of those we call Saints who have preceded and proceeded him, this is the great secret of their happiness. In their case, they were able to draw the connection between the immediate realities they were confronted with and its deeper causes and principles:

Every light striking an object may lead up to the sun; every road opened is a corridor to God… People have passed that way myriads of times and seen nothing; and one day the man of genius notices the links between what we do not know and what is every minute before our eyes.\textsuperscript{616}

On realisation of the ultimate goodness of being, more specifically the Unconditioned, Necessary Being revealed to them through the Person of Jesus, these saints have achieved a level of happiness which was almost untouchable. One has only to think of such examples as St. Maximilian Kolbe who, while being locked in a Nazi prison, waiting to be murdered in the place of another man, was singing hymns of joy.

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\textsuperscript{614} Pieper, \textit{Happiness and Contemplation}, 84-8.
\textsuperscript{615} ‘It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.’ – Psalm 119:71.
\textsuperscript{616} Sertillanges, \textit{The Intellectual Life}, 73 & 77.
\end{flushleft}
Surely this could only be because he had realised the goodness of the Ultimate Cause and Principal of reality – a realisation which left him desiring nothing else in this life.

Although Thomas was extremely realistic regarding the ability of great suffering to influence ones attainment of imperfect happiness, it is important to realise that the most detrimental effect evil can have on a person is to affect his ability to apprehend the truth, goodness and beauty of reality. If external evil is able to penetrate the intellect and will, then it most truly and definitely destroys happiness, even to the point of risking the attainment of perfect happiness. In this case, it is not contemplation which should be blamed, but rather a lack of contemplation.

However, taking all of this into account, faith is still an imperfect act of the intellect. Since faith is an act of believing, ‘the intellect does not grasp the object to which it gives assent.’ The person does not grasp through intellectus the supernatural reality he holds to be true, therefore a conscious act of the will is required. People assent through intellect to what surpasses human reason only because they will to do so. Thomas describes faith as a knowledge more like hearing rather than seeing, since one receives the faith through hearing, based on what another has seen. Therefore all faith, although eventually rooted in someone’s knowledge, is received by the person who is temporarily unable to directly apprehend the reality. However, as already spoken about, happiness cannot be primarily an act of the will, nor is this a perfect operation of the intellect. Therefore knowledge of God through faith is still not perfect happiness. Hence in the example used above, Kolbe knew he had not yet reached his final goal.

Another reason why faith is not happiness is that it does not quench desire but rather inflames it. The believer desires like a lover to be united with the object of his love, which is an indication that he is still yet to achieve it. St John of the Cross, a fellow Doctor of the Church with Thomas says that, ‘Lovers are said to have their heart stolen or seized by the object of their love.’

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617 *SCG III, C40, 2.*
618 It is important to note that this does not make the event any less real, or any less acceptable to hold as true. It is the error of scientism to assume that only that which lends itself to the empirical sciences is worthy of the title ‘real’ or ‘true.’
619 *On the Virtues in General, A7.*
620 *SCG III, C40, 4.*
621 *SCG III, C40, 3.*
622 *SCG III, C40, 5.*
can no longer rest with that little bit, but must be united perfectly to it. The person of faith desires to see God, understanding that faith is only a necessary, imperfect and temporary bridge to perfect possession of the Good. In contrast to the act of faith, in perfect happiness God will be known not ‘by way of a proposition but by way of simple understanding.’ All the creeds, catechisms and journals will be instantly retired, just as the healthy person puts aside his crutches after his leg has healed. Just as all of man’s knowledge begins by an immediate grasp of first principles, so all his discursive thinking will conclude in one perfect act of understanding.

A Natural Supernatural Clarification

It has been demonstrated throughout the entire work thus far that man’s natural principles alone demand, but are unable to achieve solely, vision of the Divine Essence. ‘For even though by nature man is inclined to his ultimate end, he cannot reach it by nature but only by grace, and this owing to the loftiness of that end.’ At this point it is worthy of addressing the potential problem of how man’s natural end can be considered beyond the reach of nature. Doesn’t a nature’s telos by definition demand to be achievable by the being itself? Aquinas is fully aware of the questions that could be raised, and begins his response as follows:

In one way, beatific vision or knowledge is beyond the nature of the rational soul in the sense that the soul cannot reach it by its own power; but in another way it is in accordance with its nature, in the sense that by its very nature the soul has a capacity for it, being made in God’s image.

Man is by his nature made in the image of God, meaning that ‘man is capable of the Perfect Good… because his intellect can apprehend the universal and perfect good, and because his will can desire it.’ Since man’s natural principles are able to comprehend universal being, by properly understanding what is meant by the term capable, light will be shed on the apparent difficulty:

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624 ST II-II, Q1, A2, R3 & I-II, Q4, A5.
625 St Thomas Aquinas, Exposition of the Trinity, Q6, A4, R5, in Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 480.
626 ST III, Q9, A3.
627 ST I-II, Q5, A1 (Italics are mine).
When Thomas, like Augustine, speaks of the human creature’s being capax Dei it must be remembered that capacitas here is understood as a purely passive receptivity, not being “capable” in the modern sense of having the ability or competence to achieve something but in the pre-modern sense of being open to something one can receive only as a gift.\textsuperscript{628}

In Thomas’ metaphysics, the term ‘potential’ is much richer than mere empirical observation. ‘There are two ways an aptitude for a perfection and form can be in a subject: one, because of a passive potentiality only… or two, because of a passive and an active potentiality jointly.’\textsuperscript{629} The latter case refers to when an active aspect of a being, moves a passive aspect of the same being from potentiality to actuality. For example, when a body returns itself to health by overcoming the flu, or when a person who has the virtue of justice, actually reaches for his wallet to pay for his drink. However, the first case, that of a passive potentiality, is the one of particular interest to the topic at hand.

An example of passive potentiality is obediential potency. This is the ability to have a habit or act, but without being able to acquire it by one’s own act.\textsuperscript{630} ‘In the human soul, as in every creature, there is a double passive power: one in comparison with a natural agent; the other in comparison with the first agent, which can reduce any creature to a higher act than a natural agent can reduce it, and this is usually called obediential power of a creature.’\textsuperscript{631} Examples of natural passive powers actualisable by other creatures include the ability to read, write or swim, while examples of obediential potencies which in light of mans great calling ‘can only be moved to act by the divine power’ are the acquisition of grace, the infused virtues, Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Beatific Vision.\textsuperscript{632} ‘The happiness of being created, the existential goodness of things, the participation in the life of God, the overcoming of death – all these… are pure gift.’\textsuperscript{633}

The difference between the two senses of capacity is deeply tied into man’s nature as a social creature. When a new born baby comes into the world, he has the capacity to become the Prime Minister of Australia. Yet this does not mean that he can

\textsuperscript{629} \textit{Disputed Questions On the Virtues in General}, A8 in DQV.
\textsuperscript{630} \textit{Disputed Questions On the Virtues in General}, A9 in DQV.
\textsuperscript{631} ST III, Q11, A1.
\textsuperscript{633} Pieper, \textit{In Tune with the World}, 62.
achieve this in an unaided fashion. In fact, without the help of others, he is unable to even feed himself, let alone study politics. However, with the help of family and friends, he is able to exercise his deeper metaphysical capacity which he has had since conception, in order to achieve this honour. Non-rational animals are not capable either of becoming the Prime Minister at birth, but more importantly, it is not metaphysically possible. Even with all the assistance and human training imaginable, it is not within their capacity. If we now return to the example of perfect happiness, ‘nature… did give man free will, with which he can turn to God, that He may make him happy. For what we do by means of our friends, is done, in a sense, by ourselves.’ Wang elaborates that ‘it is a part of our nature not only to seek happiness but also to have the ability to ask for what we cannot find through our own efforts.’

‘The nature that can attain perfect good, although it needs help from without in order to attain it, is of more noble condition than a nature which cannot attain perfect good, but attains some imperfect good, although it need no help from without in order to attain it.’ Therefore that which a being is capable of, with the help of others, should rightly be considered a natural capacity of that being. In fact, the only being which one can expect to achieve beatitude in utter isolation is the Divine Essence itself which is Beatitude by nature. All other essences can only attain their completion… by accomplishing the transition from potency to act. Hence, ‘this fulfilment can come only from a gift of God: the offer of a share in the Divine Goodness… a possibility opened up to man exclusively by grace.’

Thomas holds then, that the ‘human natural desire can come to rest in nothing but God alone,’ which is not contradicted by the fact they are incapable of fulfilling it on their

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634 Thomas’ distinction between essentia and esse is the key to understanding not only these distinctions, but also solving the contemporary confusion over the ontological status of a newly-conceived baby. The essentia and esse distinction makes intelligible the two indisputable facts: this same being will one day perform rational acts (therefore already is rational to some extent), yet this same being is unable to do so at the moment (therefore is not rational to some extent).

635 ST I-II, Q5, A5, R1 & II-II, Q17, A1. *Commentary on N.E.*, 477.


637 ST I-II, Q5, A5, R2.

638 Disputed Questions on Hope, A1 in DQV.

639 ST I, Q12, A5, R3 & I-II, Q5, A5 & A7.


own. In that sense, Thomas’ philosophical conclusion is that ‘human nature has no ultimately satisfying natural end and that unless a supernatural end (the vision of God) is possible and can be achieved, men are creatures made “in vain.”’. This leads us to the conclusion that ‘for the attaining of beatitude two things are required, nature and grace.’ ‘Mere nature needs the Christian confession for its own perfect development, and that in its turn Christianity needs a distinct nature that it is to perfect and to save.’

This in fact is the Christian paradox: that ‘the soul is naturally open to face-to-face communion with God which can only be granted supernaturally… nature is predisposed for grace, the world is naturally waiting for the gospel.’ However, the point that this is a ‘Christian’ paradox deserves more attention. Although the ‘natural desire to see God is implicitly contained in the necessary desire for the perfect good or happiness that structures the will… this inclination must be carefully distinguished from the explicit or elicited desire to know God that only follows upon antecedent metaphysical knowledge.’ Therefore although man is aware of his calling to happiness, this is distinguishable from his ability to be aware that his happiness consists in attaining perfect being, which is further distinguishable from his awareness that he is called to participate in the Triune Communion through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. In the latter case, it is only revelation which makes this knowledge possible.

This leads to the next logical conclusion regarding the relationship between man’s nature and any external assistance he receives from the Divine. Whatever assistance is received cannot bring about a substantial change, since then the very being in question would no longer be considered properly human. But ‘the reason and will are naturally directed to God, inasmuch as He is the beginning and end of nature.’ ‘If man did not love God naturally, nature would have been created evil, natural love would be perverse… and it would not be perfected but destroyed by charity.’ Also, ‘the gift of the beatific vision would change the person in his or her essence in that the infinity of the

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642 Disputed Questions on the Virtues In General, A10 in DQV.
644 ST I, Q73, A1, R1.
645 Gilson, Moral Values and the Moral Life, 9.
646 Kerr, After Aquinas, 134-5.
647 Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 446-7.
649 Di Blasi, God and the Natural Law, 152.
gazed-upon object would abolish the supposed limitation of the cognitive power.' Therefore ‘grace… is an accidental act of esse changing a human’s manner of being by imparting a likeness through participation in divine nature.’ Grace then, gives humanity a better manner of existence by adding things over and above it’s first perfection, substantial existence, in the same way that the natural virtues, both intellectual and moral, do not make a new being or destroy the old, but rather perfect the existing one. The example par excellence of this is the Hypostatic union of the Divine and human natures of Christ. ‘Just as Christ’s all holy and blameless ensouled flesh was not destroyed by being divinised but remained in its own limit and category, so also his human will has not been destroyed by being divinised, but rather was preserved.’ In the case of grace infiltrating human nature then ‘we are not absorbed… the two beings (God and creature) are brought into a lasting relation that destroys neither.’

If nature was in fact to be destroyed or lost through grace or the Beatific Vision, how could it be described as the same person, with his identity, character and faculties who is beatified? The necessary consequence of incompatibility between the natural and supernatural is a Nirvana-like situation where all self-identity is lost into Divinity, the Beatified state having nothing to do with the earthly man’s character, habits and personality, but rather bringing it all to a destructive end. In that case, any sense of imperfect happiness through participation must be discarded, and the final difference between moral realism and divine command theory obliterated – a situation unfortunately common to modern ethics as highlighted in the Introduction.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this chapter that perfect happiness in this life is not possible for epistemological and ontological reasons. Yet nevertheless a true participation in perfect happiness can be had in this life to various degrees, since it is the same participation in being which is fulfilled in the life to come. Since the Eternal Law is that which guides the creature to its ultimate end, it was chosen as the appropriate lens to

651 Rziha, Perfecting Human Actions, p.146. ST I-II, Q112, A4, R3.
652 ST I, Q25, A6 & I-II, Q52, A1.
654 Kerr, After Aquinas, 158.
measure various degrees of happiness. Three degrees of imperfect participation in the Eternal Law was recognised: firstly, the lowest form of participation which any creature necessarily engages through having substantial being, and continuing to have their first principals as the foundation of their activity. Secondly, that imperfect happiness which is appropriate to mans natural powers perfected through the acquired intellectual and moral virtues. Finally, the highest form of imperfect happiness was found in the life of grace, where through the theological virtues one is able to contemplate truths and perform actions immediately directed to God Himself.

The chapter was concluded with a brief look at how mans supernatural ultimate end is not incompatible with his natural capacities, but rather fulfils them. Through discussing Thomas’ concept of passive potentiality it was seen that even though a creature may need external (or Divine) assistance to achieve something, it should still be considered part of the capacity of that creature in a broader sense of the term. Ultimately it was enforced that grace perfects nature, which seems to be awaiting it, rather than being completely foreign or violent toward it.
Antecedents, Concomitants and Consequences of Happiness

At this stage in Aquinas’ understanding of happiness, some may be surprised at the near absence of many things the average person would associate with such a concept. What about other things such as love, peace and friendship? This is the very material which this chapter incorporates. Up until this chapter, the search has been for the essence of happiness. That is, the very thing which when had brings happiness and, regardless of how much one has apart from it, if it is missing, what remains is not happiness. However, as with other things, there are other aspects of happiness which are not part of its essence. For example, one might say that the essence of a phone is the ability to make and receive calls. This does not preclude the device from being able to send text messages, play music, games and take photos. While these all contribute to making a device more attractive, they remain accidental to the nature of a phone. If one had a device which only played games, music, took photos and could send messages, we would refrain from calling it a phone.

In exactly the same way, Thomas explains that something may belong to happiness in three ways: essentially, antecedently and consequently. What Thomas believes to be essential to happiness has been discussed in Chapters One and Three. Much of what is antecedental to perfect happiness was discussed in chapter Four, yet will also

655 ST I-II, Q3, A3 & A4.
appear regularly in this chapter as appropriate. It remains then to delve into the concomitants and consequences of perfect happiness. 656

Happiness & The Body

Imperfect Happiness

It has been demonstrated in the above that what is essential for man’s happiness, union with the Uncreated Good, cannot happen directly via the senses, therefore it must be an operation of the intellect. However, the senses have an important antecedental role to happiness. This takes two particular forms: firstly, their crucial role in the acquiring of knowledge by the intellect, and secondly, their direct involvement in executing the demands of practical reason.

In regards to the first way, ‘an operation of the intellect in this life cannot be without a phantasm, which is only in a bodily organ.’ 657 This is not to say that the intellect needs a bodily organ to carry out its proper act, but that in this life it is in need of ‘phantasms, wherein it looks on the intelligible truth.’ 658 These phantasms or images are gathered through the activity of the senses and brain, providing the intellect with more data to process. Therefore, although the intellect can carry out its proper act with minimal phantasms, having more data allows it to engage in a wider apprehension of being. By doing so, one increases his degree of imperfect happiness, and also further encounters the Author of Being through analysing more of His effects. Man can truly be described as ‘an intelligence served by organs.’ 659 ‘Man must first of all have a healthy body in order to contemplate, because the sensitive powers he uses in contemplation are weakened by sickness; the mind is diverted from attention to contemplation.’ 660 Therefore, one should

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656 For reasons not to be known until the next life, it was deemed providential that Thomas not finish his Summa Theologica before his death. This means that regarding the concomitants and consequences of happiness, the main source will be the Summa Contra Gentiles. The Supplement to the Summa Theologica will also be used, in the hope that its author reflected Thomas’ thoughts. Either way, when embarking on this area, one must apologise to Thomas and also St Paul, for having the audacity to write on something which, after their respective visions, both thought inexpressible (2 Cor. 12:4).

657 ST I-II, Q4, A5.

658 ST I-II, Q4, A5.


660 Commentary on N.E., 2127.
not neglect the health of his body, lest it hinder his ability to think clearly in the short term, as well as demand more time and energy due to health issues in the future.

In the second of the ways the body is antecedental to happiness, Thomas points out the body’s role in the acquisition (and exercise) of the moral virtues. ‘Good disposition of the body is necessary for happiness,’ since (it) consists ‘in an operation of perfect virtue; and it is clear that man can be hindered, by indisposition of the body, from every operation of virtue.’ Since virtue constitutes such a significant component of imperfect happiness, the person must be able to carry out the acts which would allow them to form a virtuous habit, and then even after the habit is formed, continue to carry out the acts themselves. One can see here the root of the great agony of those who do suffer from physical and mental handicaps – they are unable to develop (if the handicap is from an early age) or manifest their virtue (if the handicap were to come later). They more or less perceive the good to be done, but experience a disjointing between their apprehension and their ability to pursue it. From the child with Downs Syndrome to the elderly man who has become bedridden, their ability to increase their degree of imperfect happiness has been hindered. For those of a vicious character, the fact that they are unable to carry out their evil act is actually to their benefit, but for the virtuous it is a source of genuine pain. By this short glimpse at the negative, one is able to see how those who do have full use of their body have both a capacity and responsibility to pursue greater degrees of imperfect happiness.

Perfect Happiness

Since Thomas sees happiness as materially consisting in the Beatific vision, he does not see the body as concomitantly or consequently necessary, since it is an intellectual apprehension of Perfect Being. In this way he also allows the souls of the saints to already be perfectly happy before the general resurrection. But nevertheless, since the nature of man is that of an intellectual animal, he ‘would have been made in vain, if he were unable to obtain the end for which he was made’ qua intellectual

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661 ST I-II, Q4, A6.
662 This is not to say that the physically (or mentally) handicapped are hindered from achieving perfect happiness in the next life, but only that their capacity to physically (or intellectually) engage with happiness in this life is made more difficult. Although they may be unable to exercise some virtues in common situations, they may still be able to exercise the same virtues in particular ways. For example, although they may not be able to demonstrate courage by rescuing someone from a fire, they can display enormous courage in continuing to pursue the Ultimate Good in spite of their obstacle. It is also significant to note the enormous role the theological virtues can still have.
animal.663 As seen above, one aspect of the Ultimate End of all creatures is to resemble Perfect Being is the way fitting for its essence, and since ‘the soul united to a glorified body is more like God than when separated therefrom,’ it has more perfect being as man when experiencing perfect happiness in the body.664 ‘Man the composite is a more complete and noble being than the human soul which, although more noble than the body, is but a part of a man.’665 Since one of the characteristics of the soul is to be the form of the body, it is perfected further by actually being so.666 Therefore Aquinas sees the body as not part of the nature of happiness (which is attained also by the angels), but rather appropriate according to the nature of a happy man.

In this case, the body benefits from the exalting and perfecting of its form, the soul: ‘the disposition of the body is to be proportioned to that of the soul. But the soul is incorruptible. Hence, the body restored to the soul will be incorruptible,’ without deformity or deficiency.667 Much of what Aquinas says in this area is an incorporation of the work of Augustine, his revered predecessor.668 It is the senses which will benefit from the perfect union with the Uncreated already achieved by the intellect in Heaven. ‘In perfect happiness the entire man is perfected, in the lower part of his nature, by an overflow from the higher (consequently). But in the imperfect happiness of this life, it is otherwise; we advance from the perfection of the lower part to the perfection of the higher part (antecedently).’669 As seen above in the antecedents (or imperfect stages) of happiness, bodily dispositions were crucial in order that the soul may receive and perform its various goods. However, in perfect happiness, ‘the soul and body appear to be related in a different order… In the resurrection, the body is adapted to the pre-existing soul…the life which man acquires by resurrection will be perpetual according to the condition of the incorruptible soul.’670 Therefore in contrast to the order of generation, where lower goods must be attained in order to achieve higher ones (for example, the ability to think

663 ST SUPP. Q79, A2.
664 ST SUPP. Q93, A1, R1.
665 Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good, 386.
666 ST I-II, Q4, A6 & SUPP. Q80, A1.
667 SCG IV, C85, 5; C83 & C86, 4.
668 ‘… not that flesh and blood shall inherit the Kingdom of God (for that is impossible), but that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. And thus the body, being the source of no uneasiness because it can feel no want, shall be animated by a spirit perfectly pure and happy, and shall enjoy unbroken peace.’ – Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, XIX & XXVII. & ‘Revisions’ I, 2 in Trilogy on Faith and Happiness, 21.
669 ST I-II, Q3, A3, R3; II-II, Q25, A5, R2; SUPP. Q79, A3, R3; Q80, A1, R3 & Q92, A2, R6.
670 SCG IV, C82, 7 & ST II-II, Q18, A2, R4.
clearly is largely dependant on basic development and sustenance of the body), in the
resurrected state, since the Ultimate Good has already been attained, all other goods (in
this case, bodily) are received as ‘flowing down’ from the soul.\textsuperscript{671}

In the body’s perfect subjection to the soul, and the soul’s perfect subjection to
God, something of an order of being can be seen in Aquinas’ thought. ‘The human body
and all it contains will be perfectly subject to the rational soul, even as the soul will be
perfectly subject to God.’\textsuperscript{672} It should be remembered that none of these relationships of
subjection are completely new, but rather are simply perfected in beatitude. Since man is
a rational animal, the soul provides the very form of his matter ‘lest it be dissolved by the
contrariety of the elements’, and is also his principle of acting and moving.\textsuperscript{673} The
difference in the resurrected body is that there is ‘nothing in it to resist the will of the
spirit’ so that the soul will have perfect dominion over it – both in regard to its
constitution and act.\textsuperscript{674}

On an interesting theological side-note, it is worthwhile noting that it was the
 corruption of the will, expressed through the consuming of the ‘tree of knowledge of
good and evil’ which led to the barring of man from eating of ‘the tree of life.’\textsuperscript{675} The
‘tree of life’ can be taken as representing immortality, or perfect dominion of the soul
over the body, so that deterioration and eventual separation does not occur. There is then
an intimate connection between the perfection of man’s operation (soul as principle of act)
and his constitution (soul as form of the body). With the ‘tree of life’ removed from the
corrupted soul, death enters into history.\textsuperscript{676} Regarding happiness then, God, by allowing
death to occur, ensured strict limitations to the evil any one person can carry out, and also
offered the chance of avoiding an eternally hellish state (although the possibility of this
state is not completely removed). With the complete rectitude of man’s will in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{671} ST II-II, Q25, A5, R2. Disputed Questions On Charity, A7 & Disputed Questions On Hope, A4 in \textit{DQV}.
\item \textsuperscript{672} ST SUPP. Q82, A1.
\item \textsuperscript{673} SCG IV, C87, 2. ST SUPP. Q81, A4, R3 & Q83, A2.
\item \textsuperscript{674} SCG IV, C85, 7. ST SUPP. Q84, A1, Q93, A1.
\item \textsuperscript{675} Gen. 2:17 & 3:22.
\item \textsuperscript{676} ‘For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of His own eternity, but through the
devil’s envy death entered the world…’ – Wis. 2:23-24. ‘Therefore as sin came into the world through one
man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men have sinned…’ – Rom. 5:12.
Although a typically nominal, obedience based morality may interpret this as God positively punishing
Adam and Eve, a case could be argued from a moral realist perspective that tension between the soul and
body brought about by sin (in the minor form of distorted desire and bodily decay, as well as in the major
form of death) is an inherent consequence of the diabolic which always disintegrates nature.
\end{enumerate}
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perfection of charity, he can then receive perfect and eternal dominion over the body – in other words, once again ‘eat from the tree of life.’

Since then man will experience perfect happiness in the body, ‘a bodily place, viz., the empyrean heaven, will be appointed to the Blessed, not as a need of happiness, but by reason of a certain fitness and adornment.’ In order to demonstrate Thomas’ point, one would do well to consider the way a man looks upon his wife on the night of his wedding - in an ecstatic awe for the beauty of his beloved. How well could he recount the colour or pattern of the expensive hotel carpet? Or the magnificent picture which was hanging in the hallway? Nevertheless, although none of these things make up anything of the essence of the groom’s happiness, they are the appropriate adornment for such a beautiful occasion. In the same way then, the perfected physical environment will be for those who have the Beatific Vision.

With the souls of the perfectly happy reunited to their bodies, one can then ask the question, what will the beatified be doing in the body? Once again, we can see Aquinas’ work in this area reflecting that of Augustine’s. This question can be broken up into two aspects. Firstly, what will be the role of the senses, since it has already been discussed that the Beatific vision is not essentially seen with the eye. Secondly, what physical activities will one be carrying out? After all, the Ultimate Good has already been achieved, and isn’t that the primary motivation for all human acting?

Those experiencing perfect happiness will not be cut off from ‘the modification essential to sense knowledge, for they will use their senses for pleasure in the measure in which this is not incompatible with their state of incorruption.’ ‘Incompatible’ in this context refers to those pleasures which are gained from sexual activity and nourishment – not that he has a problem with these pleasures in themselves, but rather he sees the activities that cause them as perfectly fulfilled and therefore not carried out. That being

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677 ‘Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.’ – Rev. 22:14
678 ST I-II, Q4, A7, R3.
679 ‘It is very credible, that we shall so see the mundane bodies of the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 21:1), as to see most clearly God everywhere present, governing all corporeal things, not as we now see the invisible things of God as understood by what is made (Rom 1:20); but as when we see men among whom we live, living and exercising the functions of human life, we do not believe they live but see it.’ – St Augustine, City of God, XXII, quoted in full by Aquinas in ST I, Q12, A3. Scripture references are mine.
680 ST I-II, Q3, A3 & I, Q12, A3.
681 SCG IV, C86, 4.
682 SCG IV, C83.
said, all the senses of the blessed are still rewarded with that pleasure which consists in their perfect operation.

In order to understand the role of the senses in perfect happiness, Aquinas makes a distinction which is well worth quoting at length:

‘A thing is perceptible to the senses of the body in two ways, directly and indirectly. A thing is perceptible directly if it can act directly on the bodily senses (corporeally)… An indirect object of sense is that which does not act on the sense… but is annexed to those things that act on sense directly: for instance Socrates; the son of Diaries; a friend and the like which are the direct object of the intellect’s knowledge in the universal, and in the particular are the object of the cogitative power in man.’

Thomas reminds us of the distinction between what is seen by the physical eyes themselves (particular things), and what is ‘seen’ by the intellect (universals, relationships, causality, etc). Even though the Divine Essence is impossible to see as a particular object of the eyes, yet it will be seen ‘as an object of indirect vision, because… the bodily sight will see so great a glory of God in bodies, especially in the glorified bodies and most of all in the body of Christ. Even as life is perceived in speech… it will see God in His creatures seen corporeally.’ Therefore although the eyes do not see God directly, they very easily ‘see’ his work in the perfected world around them.

The distinction between direct and indirect perception, also allows Thomas to show that ‘attention to perceiving sensibles, or to contemplating or doing anything else will nowise hinder their contemplation of God, nor conversely.’ To properly understand Thomas here it is necessary to keep in mind the necessary relationship between all created being and Uncreated Being. The Saints will be completely aware that all contingent being participates and reflects Necessary Being. By consistently and easily seeing God via indirect perception, they are constantly ‘refreshed by the beauty of the variety of creatures, in which God’s wisdom will show forth with greater evidence.’ Emphasis must however be drawn to the use of the word ‘refreshed.’ Since perfect happiness has already been attained prior to the use of the resurrected senses, Aquinas

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683 ST SUPP. Q82, A4.
684 ST SUPP. Q92, A2.
685 ST SUPP. Q92, A2.
686 ST SUPP. Q82, A3, R4.
687 ST SUPP. Q84, A2.
cannot say that it somehow enhances or perfects their happiness. If a person knew nothing else except God, ‘he would have a perfect intellect: nor is his intellect more perfect through knowing something else besides Him, except in so far as it sees Him more fully.’\textsuperscript{688} It is possible for the Blessed to ‘see God more fully’ since only the Divine Essence by contemplating itself knows all things, whereas for created intellect there is always a chance to appreciate and praise more the Divine Nature.\textsuperscript{689}

In a way which touches on this paradox of both knowing God but still learning how great He is, Wang says, ‘Perhaps it is possible to have all desire satisfied, and still to act; to understand everything, and still to wonder; to have one’s life completed, and still to live; to arrive, and still to keep moving...’\textsuperscript{690} This seems to be what Aquinas is trying to touch on. It is not ridiculous to think that what the blessed will be looking at, using the eye and central nervous system, will in fact be the humanity of Christ Himself - all his particular accidents, such as hair colour, eye colour, height and weight, will be apparent to the senses. It is not unlikely that what the physical ears will be hearing a dialogue between Chesterton, Augustine and Socrates about their respective childhoods. Possibly, the hands may be passing a football to legends of the past. Although the thought of these things makes one metaphorically salivate, none of these things is what happiness is essentially found in. Not even some (or all) who saw Jesus during His earthly ministry could claim to have the Beatific vision by doing so, since it has primarily to do with the intellect rather than the eyes. But neither are they completely irrelevant to the Beatific Vision, since via indirect perception, seeing Christ’s wounds and hearing Peter recall nights by the campfire with Jesus, God’s glory is displayed even further.

\section*{Happiness & Non-Ultimate Goods}

\subsection*{Imperfect Happiness}

External and bodily goods are necessary for imperfect happiness, not as belonging to the essence of happiness, but by serving as instruments to happiness.\textsuperscript{691} The order of necessity, as mentioned in Chapter One, may demand sleep, meals, house maintenance or

\textsuperscript{688} ST SUPP. Q92, A3, R5.
\textsuperscript{689} ST SUPP. Q92.
\textsuperscript{690} Wang, ‘Aquinas on Human Happiness and the Natural Desire to see God’, 13.
even nappy changes take temporary but real prioritisation, in order for imperfect happiness to be achieved. Yet it should always be remembered that external goods serve those of the body, and the goods of the body are always ordered toward predisposing the person to attain goods of the soul. External and bodily goods ‘are limited goods, that is, good only to the extent that they promote the good of the soul which is found in the moral and intellectual virtues.’

Once again it must be reiterated, this is not to imply that for Thomas the body is a mere tool, but rather it is the great dignity of the intellectual animal that its physicality is so intertwined with the spiritual. Just as the Sacraments have necessary physical components raised to a greater dignity than found elsewhere in nature, so in the acting human person there are necessary physical components which have been raised to participate in the spiritual life.

‘Contemplation, though it cannot be the exclusive activity of any human, is objectively the best activity in which a human can engage.’ However, ‘it is nonetheless a mistake to think that the exercise of theoretical wisdom is in no way subject to practical wisdom.’ For example, to know what to do, even whether to contemplate and for how long, is a work of the practical reason. Without moral virtues such as temperance and justice, it is highly unlikely the ‘circumstances conducive to the acquisition of speculative virtues’ will be obtained. Hence in the earthly life, the requirements of prudence can never be neglected. As per the criteria of happiness being an entire rule of life, it is not possible to love reason or God too much, but one can certainly love external and bodily goods (even one’s own life) in a disordered way.

**Perfect Happiness**

Since the Ultimate Good, God, has been attained in perfect happiness, non-ultimate goods have an inverse relationship to the way they relate to imperfect happiness. Rather than being necessary precursors and antecedents as they are to imperfect happiness, in perfect happiness they flow from the happiness already achieved, as

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694 Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 388.
696 Disputed Questions on Charity, A7, R13 in DQV.
concomitants or consequences of the Beatific vision. This mimics the way the body related to imperfect and perfect happiness as seen above.

Since in earthly life one can only attain finite goods, there is a necessary limitation on the spectrum of goods one can acquire. Whereas in perfect happiness, since the Source and Summit of Goodness has already being attained, every possible finite good is also enjoyed by the Blessed. ‘After all, the created goods are nothing more than an imperfect image of what God is in Himself, and in the order of charity everything is loved for God, in God and through God.’

**Happiness & The Active Life**

**Imperfect Happiness**

The traditional distinction between the contemplative and active life stems from the distinction of the intellect into theoretical and practical functions. The contemplative life is that in which the pursuit of truth can more explicitly and directly be pursued, whereas the active life is that in which the ordering of practical affairs is primary. When the word *primary* is used in this sense, it is important to not take it as implying that truth is secondary. In all human activities *ens* is prior to *bonum* and the principle of contradiction is the absolutely first principle. Theoretical and practical are two uses of the one intellectual power, distinguishable by their different ends; the truth in itself, and the truth ordered to activity. This why Thomas describes the practical intellect as an extension of the speculative. Hence truth is never removed from the person’s pursuit in the active life: ‘Morality is rooted in being and… the parameters of moral choice are found in the structures of being.’

Thomas explains that ‘in a restricted sense and in a particular case one should prefer the active life on account of the needs of the present life.’ Two basic reasons for temporarily prioritising external activity can be discerned. The first is external to man and

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698 ST II-II, Q179, A2.
700 ST I, Q79, A11 & R2.
702 ST II-II, Q182, A1 (Italics are mine).
relates to the common good, while the second relates to the character and vocation of the individual. These will be addressed in order.

Aquinas states that ‘amongst the activities of the moral virtues, political and military actions stand out preeminent,’ yet as has already been established, ‘they are not desirable for their own sakes’ but always ordered to other goods.\textsuperscript{703} More specifically, since the ultimate end of man is contemplation of truth, it is that ‘to which the whole of political life seems directed… Political life establishes and preserves peace, giving men the opportunity of contemplating truth.’\textsuperscript{704} Thomas then sees the ends of the political life fundamentally consisting in providing freedom from external disorder, so that the ultimate end may be pursued.\textsuperscript{705}

‘The moral laws are comprised of the ordering principles that a community must embody if its members are to be able to act in concert while each also seeks his or her good as an individual.’\textsuperscript{706} Jacques Maritain elaborates on Porters point when he distinguishes direct and indirect goals for individual and political ethics: ‘Individual ethics takes into account the subordinate ultimate end (terrestrial common good), but \textit{directly aims} at the absolute ultimate one (transcendent, eternal common good); whereas political ethics takes into account the absolute ultimate end, but its \textit{direct aim} is the subordinate ultimate end.’\textsuperscript{707} Hence there is a distinction, yet also a complementarity, between the goals of the active and contemplative life. Only in the political associations of the city can one ‘establish and preserve that virtuous civil order that allows for contemplation.’\textsuperscript{708}

Maritain also roots this complementarity in a deep understanding of the common good. ‘The common good… includes the sociological integration of all the civic conscience, political virtues and sense of law and freedom, of all the activity, material prosperity and spiritual riches… wisdom, moral rectitude, justice, friendship, happiness, virtue.’\textsuperscript{709} As seen throughout the present work, many of these components are antecedents of perfect happiness, and components of imperfect happiness. ‘The direct

\textsuperscript{703} Commentary on N.E., 2102.
\textsuperscript{704} Commentary on N.E., 2101.
\textsuperscript{705} SCG III, C37, 7.
\textsuperscript{706} Porter, \textit{The Recovery of Virtue}, 70.
\textsuperscript{707} Maritain, \textit{Man and the State}, 62.
\textsuperscript{708} Bradley, \textit{Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good}, 385.
\textsuperscript{709} Maritain, \textit{Man and the State}, 12.
ordination of the human person to God transcends every created common good – both the common good if the political society and the intrinsic common good of the universe.'\textsuperscript{710} The individuals drive toward the infinite truth, good and beauty are ‘objects of the speculative intellect, not of the practical intellect, which is engaged in the community and its good.'\textsuperscript{711} To frame this point in the language used thus far, the active life serves the contemplative life.

When this is forgotten, practical activity begins to inhibit one’s happiness, since on its own, the active life ‘becomes meaningless the moment it sees itself as an end in itself… it is contemplation which preserves in human society the truth which is at one and the same time useless and the yardstick of every possible use.'\textsuperscript{712} When work, as popularly understood, is removed from its ordering toward contemplation, man inevitably becomes a slave to things which are beneath him. In scriptural terminology this is described by the prophets as ‘returning to Egypt.'\textsuperscript{713} In other words, man returns to a state of slavery to that which is beneath him. Most often, since political and military actions are preeminent in the active life, he becomes a slave to government and/or materialism. Once man forgets that he is made for the seventh day, the day of rest and worship, his happiness is immediately jeopardised. His very dignity as a creature willed for his own good (in the form of the Beatific vision) is forgotten, and his worth or success is measured in economic or utilitarian terms.\textsuperscript{714} It is only once seen in light of man's vocation to truth and contemplation, that one can now see how the active life disposes one towards happiness.

Maritain, one of the great Thomistic political philosophers of the twentieth century, saw essentially two alternatives to how a people could understand the role (and therefore goal) of their government.\textsuperscript{715} The first is the ‘moral realisation’ model, already espoused above regarding its common good. The second is the ‘technical or artistic realisation’ model, in which the focus is on the pursuit of things external to man. For a government of the latter kind, education is deemed useful only as much as it serves the

\textsuperscript{710} Maritain, \textit{Man and the State}, 149.
\textsuperscript{711} Clifford G. Kossel, ‘Thomistic Moral Philosophy in the Twentieth Century’ in \textit{The Ethics of Aquinas}, 390.
\textsuperscript{712} Pieper, \textit{Happiness and Contemplation}, 96.
\textsuperscript{713} Hosea 8 – 11.
\textsuperscript{714} One of the great indicators of how our own society has forgotten its seventh-day orientation, is the continued push to remove those who are most ‘unproductive’ – the unborn, disabled and elderly. The utter uniqueness of each human life is neglected, with a common justification being the pointlessness of encouraging life in the face of the ‘economic or psychological burden’ they cause.
\textsuperscript{715} Maritain, \textit{Man and the State}, 56.
workplace, the moral character of individual citizens is not encouraged any further than the civil laws, and economic and technological advancement are seen as the ultimate measurements of civilisation. Since these seem to resemble the time we live in, it is not difficult to see a ‘returning to Egypt’ taking place in the lives of many.

Therefore in conclusion, Thomas sees the temporary prioritisation of the active life as valid, as long as all activities are ordered back toward contemplation, the ultimate good of man himself. The second reason Thomas mentioned for prioritising external activity, regard those internal to the person. It is noticeable that a person who is prone to yield to his passions on account of his impulse to action is simply more apt for the active life by reason of his restless spirit… Others on the contrary, have the mind naturally pure and restful, so that they are apt for contemplation, and if they were to apply themselves wholly to action, this would be detrimental to them.

Thomas, in this passage reveals his truly pastoral nature. By realising that each individual is naturally inclined (in the sense of the ‘natural virtues’ analysed above) to different activities, it would be destructive for them to pursue a life significantly as odds with this all at once. Hence, ones path to realising the goodness of being may involve predominantly charitable works and the corporeal works of mercy, while others may be naturally inclined to pursuing the same goal via reading, writing and the spiritual works of mercy. Man’s character, in all its needs, contingency, moods and psychological episodes, demands some kind of balance between contemplative and active activities according to the individual’s current state. ‘The active life may be considered as quieting and directing the internal passions of the soul, and from this point of view the active life is a help to the contemplative. Ultimately it requires prudence in order to determine what is to be done at any moment:

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716 The current fascination with schools providing laptops to all their students at younger ages is clearly affecting literacy levels. Yet through the lens of a ‘technical realisation’ model of governing, any removal or delaying of access to computers would be interpreted as some kind of anti-progressive sabotage of the child’s education. My own experience in the Notre Dame Core Curriculum reveals that the vast majority of students are happy to have a mobile phone and laptop ban in the classroom. Many report they find the netsurfing of those around them as distracting, and others have expressed that they may very well be addicted to these technologies, but have only come to this realisation when they were trying not to use them.

717 ST II-II, Q182, A4, R3.


719 ST II-II, A3.
Action not only provides us with experience, (but also)… by its difficulties, reverses, successes, by the boredom and weariness it forces us to overcome, by the contradictions it unfailingly arouses; and by the fresh needs it gives rise to, it stimulates us and retempers our powers… The good is the brother of the true: it will help its brother. To be where we ought to be, to do what we ought to do, disposes us for contemplation, and feeds it… On certain days it is only indirectly by way of moral progress, that our intellect will gain… in other circumstances it will gain of itself directly.\footnote{Sertillanges, \textit{The Intellectual Life}, 58 \& 65.}

Hence we see that the active life provides new experience and material for reflection and allows development and exercise of the moral virtues, all which are necessary in order to contemplate well. Sertillanges spends a considerable amount of his treatise on the intellectual life, convincing his readers to treasure all their ‘conversations, chance occurrences, theatres, visits, strolls, the most ordinary books’ since they all provide further data for our contemplative activity.\footnote{Sertillanges, \textit{The Intellectual Life}, 72-3.} However, ultimately the reason that the contemplative and active lives have a profound complementarity is that

at bottom, everything is connected… Thoughts and activities, realities and their reflections, all have one and the same Father. Philosophy, art, travel, domestic cares, finance, poetry, and tennis can be allied with one another, and conflict only through lack of harmony.\footnote{Sertillanges, \textit{The Intellectual Life}, 241-2.}

This individual nature of the pursuit of happiness is best reflected in the Catholic concept of vocation. Individual persons, based on their unique circumstances, capacities and commitments, are called to engage their practical reason to decide how both to pursue the ultimate good now and over a lifetime. It is worthwhile here to remember Aquinas’ distinction between \textit{esse} and \textit{essentia}: objectively speaking, for human nature, happiness is contemplation itself, yet it may happen that particular persons may need to commit more or less time to preparing and predisposing themselves to this activity. In other words, there are multiple kinds of the imperfectly happy life, ordered to an ultimate, unqualifiedly perfect happiness.\footnote{This is a point which the average worker may be subconsciously aware of. While they recognise the necessity of carrying out their particular role now in society or their own personal lives, they do not wish to be doing that same job everyday for the rest of their life. They aspire to a time where they would not} Only conditionally can other activity come ahead of
contemplation in necessary and particular moments. If a person were to neglect the role of contemplation in his life, not ordering his activity to the contemplation of truth and not seeking to improve his character disposition, then it would become a moral issue.\textsuperscript{724}

Finally, a thing is said to precede another in two ways – either by nature or generation. In regards to the order of nature, the contemplative precedes the active since ‘it moves and directs the active life’, however in the order of generation, the active life comes first since ‘it disposes one to it.’\textsuperscript{725} Since the contemplation of truth provides the ends for the active life, it is first in the order of dignity. However, in the lives of each individual, we are keenly aware that much activity and labour, both internal and external, is needed before we can contemplate well. Yet the contemplative and active lives have a mutual benefit since,

well-ordered living is to move on to the contemplative from the active; but often the soul usefully applies to the active what is drawn from the contemplative, such that when the mind is kindled by the contemplative the active is more perfectly lived.\textsuperscript{726}

For example, the man who is aware of his own ignorance or weaknesses through reflection and contemplation will be much humbler in his dealings with others, leading him to carry out his work in greater harmony with others. On the other hand, the unreflective person is often is at the whim of underlying irrational thoughts or emotions, often to the detriment of many areas of activity in his life. When he is asked why he did or said a particular thing, it is not long before the sad answer, ‘I don’t know,’ is heard.

\textit{Perfect Happiness}

As has already been mentioned, ‘in the future life of the blessed the occupation of external actions will cease, and if there be any external actions at all, these will be referred to contemplation as their end.’\textsuperscript{727} One should not interpret this as saying \textit{all} external actions will cease, since elsewhere Thomas elaborates, ‘when a man makes use

\textsuperscript{724} ST II-II, Q182, A1, R3.
\textsuperscript{725} ST II-II, Q182, A4.
\textsuperscript{726} Thomas Aquinas, ‘Disputed Questions on Truth’ in \textit{Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings}, 215.
\textsuperscript{727} ST II-II, Q181, A4.
of things pertaining to the active life, merely as dispositions to contemplation, such things are comprised under the contemplative life. That is, activity that has truth as its direct goal is classed as contemplative. Therefore not all external activity ceases, but only that which contributes to the regulating of the passions and external goods.

If one takes into account that in previous sections it was demonstrated that all our conversations, strolls and seemingly mundane activities can be significant sources of contemplation for the right minded, it may be reasonable to expect that such things will continue in perfect happiness. Since no created intellect can perfectly comprehend the Divine Essence (one would have to be infinite being to do so), there is a variance of knowledge amongst the Blessed. This gap between what the created and Uncreated Intellect can comprehend about the Divine Essence allows for ‘a unity of beatitude, which unity is on the part of the object… (yet a) plurality of mansions corresponds to the differences of beatitude on the part of the blessed.’ Thomas’ use of the word ‘mansions’ is derived from Christ Himself. It is used to describe differences between the perfectly happy. Although each subject is perfectly happy, there are degrees of happiness in regard to the amount that one is united to God through charity. There are also accidental rewards which ‘add to the glory of beatitude’ according to the particular circumstances and actions of the life the person lived. In particular, Aquinas sees teachers, virgins and martyrs as achieving a special reward, since they achieved ‘exceptional victories’ in the virtuous life. Therefore one can imagine that even in the state of perfect happiness, each person has something to share with the other, making activities such as conversations still fruitful, as one even more deeply understands the glory of God revealed through salvation history.

The practical aspect of the intellect is fulfilled through the enacting of truth, that is, managing lower things, civic duties and all the moral virtues. It is these aspects of the active life, ordered ‘to the other necessities of the corruptible life… (which) will come

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728 ST II-II, Q181, A1, R3.
729 ST SUPP. Q92, A3.
730 ST SUPP. Q93, A2.
731 John 14:2.
732 ST SUPP. Q93, A3.
733 ST SUPP. Q96, A1.
734 ST SUPP. Q96, A11.
735 SCG III, C63, 3.
to a halt." It is not that these activities are bad, but rather they are all fulfilled since ‘reason will be at its peak strength, having been so enlightened by the divine light, so that it cannot swerve away from what is right.’ Quoting Augustine, Thomas supports his explanation of how the cardinal virtues are themselves fulfilled in perfect happiness: ‘the role of justice will be to be subject to God the ruler, the role of prudence not to prefer or equate any good to God, the role of courage to cleave to him without the slightest wavering, and the role of temperance not to take pleasure in any harmful defect.’

**Happiness & Friendship**

*Imperfect Happiness*

Friendship is a necessary for imperfect happiness, but not for the reason which the average person might imagine – for example, not for their usefulness is getting favours, cheap deals or pleasure in its sexual or gestational forms. For Thomas, following the Aristotelian tradition, friends are crucial in our life for the development, carrying out and maintenance of virtuous activity. This takes three primary forms: doing good for them, delighting in seeing them do good and finally receiving help in other good works.

‘Friendship is necessary for young men that the help of friends may restrain them from sin… and useful to the old for assistance in their bodily infirmities… and in the very prime of life… for the performance of good actions.’ Although the role that friends play in one’s life may vary, at each stage they are needed in order to live the good life. ‘A life of goodness and happiness depends on having certain kinds of relationships… marked by rich shared history, common ideals, and deep commitment and fidelity.’ The modern reader cannot help but notice that the relationships being described do not typify Facebook friendships. One can see that with only the *guise* of having many friends, sustained through shallow conversations about sport or weather, or even a morbid curiosity to look at pictures of the other, one cannot expect to achieve the imperfect happiness had even according to natural virtue.

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736 SCG IV, C83, 24.
737 SCG III, C63, 3.
738 Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues, A4 in DQV.
740 ST I-II, Q4, A8.
741 Commentary on N.E., 1540.
Without some depth and intimacy to a friendship, one misses out on the mutual assistance each gives to the other in knowing the truth, and the practical component of encouraging the other toward the good and avoiding evil. How often do friends help one to see the truth about oneself, often when one is unwilling or unable to do so? It is also the friend who is in the best position to tell the truth in charity, allowing the best opportunity for the friend to accept what is said, leading to a potential healing of personal wounds and weaknesses. Friends also allow one to persevere amidst moods, circumstances and ideas which are conducive to despair in the virtuous life.

Yet it is not only the most intimate friendships which should be cherished for imperfect happiness: ‘Do not forget that in association with others, even in ordinary everyday meetings, there is something to be gleaned. Too much solitude would impoverish you… The man who is too isolated grows timid, abstracted, a little odd.’ Once again, there is a vital aspect to the everyday encounters, especially amidst the variety of persons which one may not find within their close circles. These encounters challenge one to express and understand new ideas, as well as develop the moral virtues in the wide variety of encounters one comes across.

**Perfect Happiness**

Once again, we see an inverse relationship between a non-ultimate good and imperfect happiness, and the same good with perfect happiness. In ones earthly, the particular good precedes and makes possible imperfect happiness, whereas in the heavenly life the particular good flows from the already attained perfect happiness. Therefore according to perfect happiness, friendship with another than God is not necessary, ‘Since man has the entire fullness of his perfection in God… friendship is, as it were, concomitant with perfect Happiness’ rather than being part of its essence. Once again, the friendship with others, or in theological terms, the Communion of Saints, occurs as an overflowing of one’s union with the Ultimate Good.

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743 SCG III, C128, 2.
745 ‘And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus Himself also, drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held, that they should not know him.’ – Luke 24:15-16. ‘And hospitality do not forget: for by this some, being not aware of it, have entertained angels.’ – Hebrews 13:2.
746 ST I-II, Q4, A8.
According to ‘man’s spiritual life in respect of his mind… there is fellowship between us and both God and the angels, imperfectly indeed in this present state of life… but perfected in Heaven.’\(^{747}\) The bond of this fellowship is nothing other than charity, ‘a friendship involving love towards God and all rational beings capable of loving Him.’\(^{748}\) It is the supernatural virtue of charity, love of God for who He is, which exists in common with all those experiencing perfect happiness.\(^{749}\)

Thomas understanding of the foundation of the friendship between the Blessed, reflects the views of Augustine: ‘For if they would turn to Him, they must of necessity love Him as the supreme good, and love us too as partakers with them in so great a blessing… so that we should fully enjoy Him, and that all who enjoy Him should enjoy one another in Him.’\(^{750}\) This statement sums up well the link between the essence of happiness, the Beatific vision, and its proper accident, loving all those who God loves. ‘The fellowship of friends is not required \textit{de necessitate} for happiness in heaven… (but rather) it befits this status.’\(^{751}\) This in fact is not far from friendship in one’s earthly life, since, as mentioned above, all true friendship ‘is founded on virtue as an effect of it.’\(^{752}\) Without intellectual and moral virtue, it is difficult to imagine someone being able to engage with another person in a non-toxic relationship. How much more then, since the Blessed are perfected in virtue, should one expect them to consequently be friends with all of humanity?

\section*{Happiness & Delight}

\subsection*{Imperfect Happiness}

Delight has an inherent relationship to happiness. This is demonstrated most clearly by Aquinas in a particular passage, where he reminds the reader of the relationship between the will and intellect:

Those things that are required for happiness must be gathered from the way in which man is ordered to an end. Now man is ordered to an intelligible end partly through his

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\(^{747}\) \textit{ST} II-II, Q23, A1, R1.  
\(^{748}\) Schwartz, \textit{Aquinas on Friendship}, 5.  
\(^{749}\) Disputed Questions On Charity, A7 in \textit{DQV}.  
\(^{750}\) Augustine, \textit{On Christian Doctrine}, XXIX & XXXII.  
\(^{751}\) Schwartz, \textit{Aquinas on Happiness}, 4.  
\(^{752}\) Commentary on \textit{N.E.}, 1538.
intellect, and partly through his will: through his intellect, in so far as a certain imperfect knowledge of the end pre-exists in the intellect: through the will, first by love which is the will’s first movement towards anything, secondly, by a real relation of the lover to the thing beloved… Therefore these three must concur in happiness; to wit, vision, which is perfect knowledge of the intelligible end; comprehension, which implies presence of the end; and delight or enjoyment, which implies repose of the lover in the object beloved.753

Up to this point in the present work, emphasis has been placed on the vision and comprehension aspects of happiness, since it is in this that the essence of happiness lies. It is appropriate here to address the third aspect of happiness, enjoyment or delight, which is its proper accident.754 Delight is a concomitant or consequential act of the will, experienced with the attainment of the good.755 The desire for the good being fulfilled, the person rests in a union of joy with it. Sertillanges sums up the two-fold relationship of the will and happiness, by stating that ‘contemplation begins in love and ends in joy; it begins in the love of the object and the love of knowledge as an act of life; it ends in the joy of ideal possession and of the ecstasy it causes.’756

‘In Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy, it is not objectively possible to separate pleasure from the ends of the natural inclinations, because pleasure is precisely the subjective side of the objective satisfaction of a need or potentiality of the human being.’757 Since pleasure is ‘concomitant’ with the achievement of ends, ‘there can be no perfect activity without pleasure.’758 One can understand here how easily it is for pleasure and happiness to be confused with each other, since they are so intimately related, yet it is ‘the nature of joy to be a secondary phenomenon.’759 The presence of delight is analogous to the notion of receiving a reward for excellent work.760 The trophy itself is not the good work, but a consequence of it. In the same way, another concomitant of happiness, peace, is not the essence of man’s ultimate end, but is rather a proper accident of it.761 Activity which is ‘experienced as enjoyable and rewarding, results when a person whose relevant

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753 ST I-II, Q4, A3.
754 ST I-II, Q3, A4.
755 ST I-II, Q3, A4, R3.
756 Sertillanges, The Intellectual Life, 255.
757 Di Blasi, God and the Natural Law, 205.
758 Commentary on N.E., 2038. SCG III, C26, 19.
759 Pieper, In Tune with the World, 22.
760 ST I-II, Q4, A1, R1.
761 ST I-II, Q3, A4, R1.
goals are harmoniously integrated engages in activity… experienced as unhindered, unselfconscious, and effortless.\(^{762}\) In other words, the more efficient or naturally a person achieves their end, the more enjoyable he finds it.

One can see the direct parallels between this description of enjoyable activity, and the way in which a virtuous man carries out a good act. Hence there is an intimate relationship between moral virtue (as antecedental to happiness) and the delight experienced from doing the good. ‘Since everyone delights when he has obtained that which he loves, so the contemplative life ends in delight, which is in the affections.’\(^{763}\) When the virtuous person realises the truth, beauty and goodness of being, it brings a corresponding delight to the concupiscible appetite. Therefore one should not imagine the truly contemplative person as the cold-hearted ‘objective’ old man in a sterile lab coat – in fact that may represent more the intellectual work of the vicious man, who does not delight in truth, but rather only acquires information for pragmatic reasons or material gain. Just as without a rightly ordered will, one is unable to either attain or enjoy the Ultimate Good, it is the same with imperfect happiness.

Since contemplation in this life is not just any activity of man, one should not expect the pleasure associated with it to be like any other. ‘The same activity which we said is most perfect is also most pleasant.’\(^{764}\) As has been demonstrated above, man’s highest and proper operation is that of contemplation. Therefore one should expect that the pleasure associated with successful contemplation is also the most pleasurable, and this is so, since ‘unqualified pleasure for man is what is pleasant according to reason.’\(^{765}\) He does not tire permanently or temporarily from using reason as he does with bodily pleasure. Nor does one suffer as a result of ‘excessive’ reasonable activity, as one does from bodily pleasure.

**Perfect Happiness**

Since delight is nothing other than the appetite being at rest in the good, the delight associated with resting in the Ultimate Good is the most perfect.\(^{766}\) ‘There will be pleasure in activity as long as, on the one hand, the object (sensible or intelligible) and, on

\(^{762}\) Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 72.
\(^{763}\) *ST I-II*, Q180, A7, R3.
\(^{764}\) *Commentary on N.E.*, 2025.
\(^{765}\) *Commentary on N.E.*, 1998.
\(^{766}\) *ST I-II*, Q4, A1.
the other, the agent itself (which perceives by sense or contemplates by intellect) are well conditioned. 767 Hence the Beatific Vision is the most pleasurable of all activities, since the object of contemplation and the act of attainment, are both eternal and without decay. The person can suffer neither from an excess of this good mentally or physically, and he is completely free from fear of loss of the good itself or the faculty by which it is attained. The desire for pleasure is utterly satisfied:

That good in which we shall take delight is greater than any sensible good, and more intimate… Unless, perhaps, someone wants to say that the beatitude of the angels is imperfect because the angels lack the pleasures of the brutes – which is completely absurd. 768

Many are familiar with the joy experienced with the arrival of good news. Whether it is the news that a loved one has returned from far away, that one has done a good job on a difficult project, or that one is loved by his spouse, children or friends. As mentioned above, all of these are nothing other than particular realisations of the goodness of being itself. How great then, will the joy be when absolutely perfect Being is revealed, and one here’s the words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.’ 769

Conclusion

This final chapter discussed how imperfect and perfect happiness are related to other goods which are not part of the essence of happiness. These included the goods of the body, active life, friends, delight and other non-ultimate goods. It was generally found that they all are necessary precursors to happiness, especially in its imperfect form. However, since perfect happiness is already had in the Beatific vision, the person receives these goods as concomitant or consequential.

767 Commentary on N.E., 2032.
768 SCG IV, C83, 13 & III, C63, 7.
Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in the thesis that Aquinas proposes a complex yet deeply integrated answer to the question of the nature of happiness. Happiness, as the ultimate end of all our actions, has a particular framework or structure which can be analysed prior to discussion of what it materially consists in. The nature of man’s ultimate end is that which is a perfect operation which fulfils all desire, is desired for its own sake alone, self-sufficient, without defect, suitable for all persons and able to act as an entire rule of life. A person could not be considered happy in the strictest sense of the word until this criteria had been fulfilled.

Aquinas demonstrates that only the act of contemplating the Divine Essence can be man’s perfect happiness. It is a rational animal’s highest operation in line with its highest operation. It is the fulfilment of all desire since one beholds and is united with the First Cause and Principle, Truth and Goodness itself – that which alone can satisfy a universal appetite. Perfect Being is utterly self-sufficient so that if it alone is grasped, all that is good has been attained. No additional good can be gained which is not essentially present in Perfect Being Himself, which is free from all defect and desired for its own sake alone. By realising that man’s happiness resides in this particular act and object, one is able to make an entire rule of life, ordering one’s activities by the two pillars of love and reason.

It is no wonder that Aquinas places his discussion on the nature of happiness at the beginning of his ethical treatise in the Summa Theologica. It comes immediately after
the metaphysical study in Part One, which asks the question what is, builds on that answer in Part Two when he asks, what is most desirable? The study of ethics is nothing other than the study of what is good, and the study of how that good can be attained – both as act and object. In other words, how is one able to behold the reality of both themselves, the universe, visible and invisible, and truly say, ‘Behold, it is very good.’

In order to truly realise the goodness of being one has to actualise one’s own capacities in the process. Hence the need to develop the moral, intellectual and theological virtues in order to perfect one’s own esse. Education, friends, politics and recreation all contribute their in their appropriate ways to this attainment. Yet this perfection of one’s own being, although necessary, is insufficient for perfect happiness. Being goes beyond the reality of the individual. Therefore, in order to truly grasp the goodness of being, one must apprehend the truth and goodness at the source of all that is around them.

In order to attain perfect happiness then, Thomas saw no other possibility than seeing (not simply believing) that the cause and ground of all contingent and conditional being, the eternal, necessary and infinite Reality, is most truly good and beautiful. It is when the intellectual looks with love upon that unconditioned Reality that they are perfectly happy. It is the eternal moment when that which is within the person is in the most perfect relationship to all that is outside, when his intellect is perfectly united to the first and final Truth, his will perfectly united to the first and final Good, so that there is no searching left to be done, but there is an endless awe of how truly good it all is. St. Thomas holds that man’s ultimate end is found where it all begins. It is only then that one can truly apprehend how good Being is.

The work-at-hand began with a hypothetical story about an alien species studying humanity. As part of their research they wished to know what humans mean by the term happiness. One might further hypothesise their conclusion:

‘Humanity began its story in the Garden, an external environment perfectly ordered to the person, with a perfectly integrated mind and body, perfectly ordered toward love and knowledge of each other and God. Man when he searches within himself could ask nothing more than this and it is only in realising this that he can find his rest.

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770 Genesis 1:28.
He desires to imitate the Source and truly say, “Behold, it is very good.”\textsuperscript{771} In their search to be able to echo these words, some try to collect and consume as many particular goods as possible, while their universal appetite drives them to keep searching. It is unclear how these people hope to be able to say “It is all good”, while the ultimate Cause and End, even of the particular goods they love, remains irrelevant or unknown to them. Others, in their search, hold to “Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”\textsuperscript{772} This plan remains the most intelligible, if it will ever be possible for them to say, ‘It is all good.’

\textsuperscript{771} Gen. 1:28.  
\textsuperscript{772} Matt. 6:33.
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